



LIVING WITH ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE: DIALOGICAL  
EXPERIENCES AND COMMUNITY NEGOTIATIONS AT BAN CHIANG  
WORLD HERITAGE SITE, THAILAND



By  
Mr. Sitta KONGSASANA

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for Doctor of Philosophy Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism  
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By                    Mr. Sitta KONGSASANA  
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Advisor           Associate Professor Dr. Chotima Chaturawong  
Co Advisor       Dr. Russell Staiff

---

Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy

.....Dean of Faculty of  
(Associate Professor Dr. Apiradee Kasemsook) Architecture

Approved by

.....Chairperson  
(Professor Dr. William Chapman)

.....Advisor  
(Associate Professor Dr. Chotima Chaturawong)

.....Co Advisor  
(Dr. Russell Staiff)

.....Committee  
(Associate Professor Dr. Kreangkrai Kirdsiri)

.....Committee  
(Associate Professor Dr. Thanik Lertcharnri)

.....External Examiner  
(Professor Dr. Alici Antonello)



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This dissertation investigates the complex interplay between archaeological heritage management and everyday community life at the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site in Thailand. This study utilized extensive ethnographic fieldwork (2015–2017) and Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA) to investigate the construction of meanings surrounding Ban Chiang heritage by various stakeholders. The study focused on three main domains, including Ban Chiang archaeological artifacts, the heritage mound as a place of daily life, and community cultural traditions shown through the World Heritage Festival.

The research deploys critical heritage theory to critique established methods that grant dominant positions to expert-developed narratives over local knowledge systems. Ban Chiang heritage develops through a dialogical process involving historical and temporal activities that cultural participants undertake. The Tai Puan community implements active strategies to reappropriate, recycle, and renew externally imposed heritage frameworks, transforming archaeological objects into expressions of local identity and economic opportunity.

The Ban Chiang heritage experience encompasses personal spiritual bonds alongside collective memory traditions and normal daily routines that exceed authorized heritage interpretations. The research findings display conflicts between heritage protection needs and community development and reveal the uneven distribution of heritage benefits among community members. The site presents forward-thinking local programs that use pottery reinterpretation and spiritual materiality practices, along with festival performances, to unify disparate sectors.

This research positions Ban Chiang's heritage as both legacy and process, demonstrating how archaeological remains and living traditions can productively coexist. It offers practical insights for sustainable heritage management that honors scientific conservation requirements while fostering meaningful community engagement and shared heritage stewardship.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Research Methodology

#### 1.1 Research Background

In recent decades, heritage studies have gone through a fundamental transformation: It has gone beyond the purely materialistic understanding that focused on preservation of *'things'* to a more pragmatic understanding that sees heritage as a dynamic social process. Moving away from many of the central tenets of traditional heritage management, this paradigmatic shift mirrors wider shifts in how we think about the relationship between past and present, material and immaterial, and official and unofficial heritage practice (Harrison, 2013; L. Smith, 2006). A key part of this evolution is in realizing the heritage is not merely a collection of stand-alone artifacts and sites, but is a process of meaning making, a continual process of active making that includes tangible and intangible dimensions of the human experience.

In search of a less hegemonic and more inclusive discourse, this thesis argues that the traditional hegemony of the authorized heritage discourse (AHD) in heritage management practices and the state sanctioned processes the AHD uses has led to an overemphasis on aesthetic and historical values given to objects or ideas by professional heritage experts. Traditionally based in Western epistemology, this has led to top-down management strategies that have isolated heritage from daily life (L. Smith, 2006, p. 29). Yet these shifts in heritage practice, largely in the West, were also catalyzed by neoliberal economic shifts of the 1980s. In response to the growing integration of heritage sites into the experience economy, institutions broadened their focus away from monumental objects toward unofficial heritage and quotidian practices, balancing between *'high'* and *'popular'* cultural expressions (Harrison, 2013, p. 18).

In the early 2010s, critical heritage studies materialized through the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS), which significantly fractured with authorized heritage discourse. This movement questions not

only what makes heritage but who has the power to do so. The embeddedness of AHD in nationalist, imperialist and colonial power structures is critiqued and the need for approaches not reliant on exclusively white Western epistemological notions of heritage explored, where multiple ways of knowing and experiencing heritage are acknowledged (Waterton & Watson, 2015).

The Ban Chiang Archaeological Site in Udon Thani province of Thailand provides a particularly rich site to consider such developments in heritage studies. The site's heritage significance manifests through three distinct but interconnected dimensions: the social biography of archaeological artifacts, the experience of heritage as lived in the mound, and the movement of community heritage practices through festivals. Each dimension shows what Harrison (2013) calls the '*dialogical*' nature of heritage—the generating of meaning through continuing dialogic interactions between different stakeholders, temporal layers and cultural practices.

The transformation of Ban Chiang's artifacts serves as a complex case for understanding the complexities of heritage meanings and values in Appadurai's (1988) '*social life of things*' discursive concept. These artifacts illustrate how material culture can acquire multiple meanings across time and in different social contexts, from everyday objects in the hands of prehistoric communities, to looted commodities in the '*Ban Chiang Gold Rush*,' to World Heritage protection, and finally as commodities of cultural tourism (Kopytoff, 1986). Mr. Stephen Young's unintentional discovery of a clay pot on a village walk set off the arrival of the first wave of foreign and Thai archaeologists to Ban Chiang, among many other sites on the list. Byrne (2014) writes of this as the junction of local and worldwide historical values. In recent years there have been positive developments within what Greenfield (1996) terms '*cultural repatriation*,' where a notable number of returns of ancient objects has taken place and signifies the '*living dimension*' of archaeological heritage, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) would argue.

Just another dimension of this dynamic landscape is the heritage mound itself, which represents the '*plurality of place*': ancient archaeological remains now lie beneath a living community, as defined by Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge (2007). The site reveals the '*embodied experience*' and the '*performative heritage*' for, according to Haldrup and Bøerenholdt (2015), heritage does not need to be actively performed and practiced, it can also be passively shown through practices of daily life in historically significant spaces. The experience of the Tai Puan community parallels that which Waterton and Watson (2013) define as the '*social production of heritage*,' seeing heritage sites as dynamic, living environments that current communities continue to re-create and maintain cultural traditions within the context of the material remains of the past.

However, the organization of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival exemplifies what Jackson (1988) calls the politics of cultural celebration, in which communities use external imposed heritage frameworks to promote their own local expression. The festival exhibits how Getz (2010) designates '*the institutionalization of cultural celebration*,' in which collaboration thrives between different stakeholders, both local and non-local. Community members exhibit what Schechner (2017) calls '*restored behavior*' through festival activities such as adaption of their practices to more modern contexts within a continuing process of continuity. What Corsane (2004) describes as this '*mechanism for intergenerational transmission*' has become just this, with young people engaging with traditional crafts, performances and practices in a celebratory context.

In examining Ban Chiang's heritage landscape, this study informs broader heritage studies in a number of key respects. First, it offers empirical evidence of the ways in which communities negotiate between official heritage frameworks and local cultural practices. Second, it shows that heritage meaning making is dynamic and contextual to a World Heritage context. Third, it provides insights into sustainable approaches to heritage management that will meet preservation requirements while taking living cultural needs into account. Finally, it advances theoretical understandings of heritage as a dialogical process where meaning is made between the various stakeholders as well as between temporal layers, and between heritage and cultural practices.

The research utilizes a mixed-methods qualitative approach that combines ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, fieldwork documentations, analysis of the museum exhibitions, participation in academic conferences/ seminars/ lectures and archival research to explore Ban Chiang's multi-faceted heritage experience. In this methodological framework the heritage values of the site are interpreted and interacted with differently by different stakeholders. This study seeks to contribute to more inclusive and sustainable approaches to heritage management of the living World Heritage Site and community into the future, by way of careful documentation and analysis of both official heritage practices and everyday community experiences.

## **1.2 Research Question**

This study addresses four interconnected research questions that emerge from the theoretical framework of critical heritage studies and respond to gaps in current understanding of living World Heritage sites:

- 1.2.1 *To what extent do the material forms (objects, places, and practices) and intangible traditions (spiritual connections, memories, and cultural meanings) of Ban Chiang heritage resonate throughout the Ban Chiang landscape? How do local residents, as heritage producers, encounter and engage with Ban Chiang heritage?*

The first question, focusing on individual encounters with heritage through material and intangible dimensions, builds upon Smith's (2006) conceptualization of heritage as a cultural process and Harrison's (2013) dialogical heritage framework. This theoretical foundation is crucial for understanding how heritage meaning emerges through active engagement rather than passive inheritance. The question's emphasis on both material forms and intangible dimensions responds to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) recognition of heritage's living dimension, providing a theoretical basis for examining how individuals actively participate in heritage production.



*1.2.2 How do members of the Tai Puan community negotiate and retain its living cultural heritage, while also stewarding an unrelated prehistoric heritage across the same geographic space?*

The second question extends this theoretical framework to community-level analysis by engaging with Ashworth et al.'s (2007) concept of the '*plurality of place*' and Byrne's (2014) notion of '*one space with two times*.' This theoretical progression reveals how individual heritage experiences, understood through the lens of the first question, contribute to what Waterton and Watson (2013) identify as the '*social production of heritage*.' The incorporation of Tilley's (1994) phenomenological approach provides theoretical tools for understanding how communities develop meaningful connections to archaeological heritage despite the absence of direct historical continuity.

*1.2.3 Which mechanisms enable authorized heritage institutions and management frameworks to interact with local approaches to Ban Chiang heritage given its status as a World Heritage site? Which power relations result from the institutional partnerships?*

The third question, digging into how heritage is actually managed, looking at the power dynamics and institutional forces at play. To do this, it draws on L.Smith's (2006) sharp critique of the '*official*' version of heritage, as well as Logan's (2012) exploration of how big, universal heritage ideas play out in real, local situations. The research looks at heritage authority power through concrete practices and regulation systems and interpretation approaches as well as analyzing the sustainability and opposition of their governing structures within Ban Chiang. The selected framework enables researchers to examine both limitations and possibilities which affect heritage encounters within established institutions.

*1.2.4 As people living in a World Heritage site, how do Ban Chiang residents manage the balance between their local identities and worldwide recognition expectations during their everyday life and festive events?*



The fourth question examines the process through which communities acquire ownership while incorporating creative changes. The research borrows principles from Giblin's (2015) work on *'post-colonial heritage'* analysis together with Kuutma's (2009) *'creative tension'* concept of cultural preservation dynamics. According to Robertson's (2012) concept *'heritage from below,'* communities build their personal heritage expressions which defy official framework standards. Di Giovine (2008) provides important differentiation between heritage displayed in museums and heritage that is actively performed. The way communities show history determines their approach to past management alongside cultural development. Through this approach researchers can understand how community actors use preservation requirements to create new cultural expressions which build their identity. This question asks: How do people, in their everyday actions and during special events, take ownership of their heritage? The research follows communities throughout their process of cultural redefinition which occurs inside organizational boundaries with genuine cultural identification retained.

The four research questions presented above form a theoretically grounded framework for investigating the complex dynamics of heritage experience at Ban Chiang. They systematically engage with key theoretical developments in heritage studies while addressing crucial gaps in current understanding of how living communities negotiate multiple heritage frameworks.

This progressive theoretical development - from individual meaning-making through community negotiations to institutional dynamics and finally to global-local interactions - creates a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding heritage dynamics at Ban Chiang. The questions work together to advance theoretical understanding of heritage as a multi-layered phenomenon that operates simultaneously at individual, community, institutional, and global levels.

Together, these questions contribute to theoretical developments in heritage studies by examining how different theoretical frameworks interact and complement each other in lived contexts. They demonstrate

how theories of heritage as a cultural process (L. Smith, 2006), dialogical relationship (Harrison, 2013), and social production (Waterton & Watson, 2013) manifest in specific contexts while revealing the complex interactions between official and unofficial heritage practices. This theoretical synthesis positions the research to make significant contributions to both theoretical discussions in critical heritage studies and more practical approaches to heritage management that better serve the needs of all stakeholders.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The study pursues four interconnected objectives that align with contemporary developments in heritage theory and practice:

#### ***1.3.1 Advance theoretical understanding of heritage experiences in living World Heritage sites***

This objective focuses on developing theoretical frameworks for understanding heritage experiences in living World Heritage sites. Examining the intersection of critical heritage theory and post-colonial World Heritage practices, reveals how global frameworks interact with local contexts at Ban Chiang. The investigation of dialogical heritage relationships demonstrates how different stakeholders engage with heritage resources, while analysis of official and unofficial practices shows how institutional approaches interact with local traditions. By studying materiality in heritage meaning-making and the evolution of heritage values, this objective contributes to broader theoretical understanding of heritage dynamics in living heritage sites.

#### ***1.3.2 Analyze how Ban Chiang heritage has been constructed and evolved through multiple interpretative frameworks***

This objective explores the interpretative frameworks through which Ban Chiang heritage has been constructed and transformed. It traces the path of archaeological artifacts as they evolved from common objects used by ancient people, to stolen goods, to protected World Heritage items, and finally to commodities of cultural tourism, revealing their changing values and meanings. It analyzes the different roles of various stakeholders, and

how different perspectives shape heritage narratives. The layered nature of heritage value is illustrated through an investigation of multiple heritage significances, here, archaeological, spiritual, cultural and economic. This objective examines World Heritage status impact and community-based interpretation to illustrate how heritage is built by both institutional recognition and local agency.

### ***1.3.3 Investigate the dynamic interactions between different heritage elements and stakeholders***

The dynamic of interactions among various heritage components at Ban Chiang is this objective. It explores how local actors deal with material heritage in everyday life and festive activities. Spatial and temporal negotiations in heritage sites are explored in the investigation of living heritage and archaeological remains in shared spaces. This objective serves to demonstrate the complex web of interactions which constitute heritage experience through studying relationships between official frameworks and local interpretations; tangible and intangible; past and present; and global and local values.

### ***1.3.4 Develop recommendations for more inclusive and sustainable heritage management***

The objective behind this is coming up with practical solutions to heritage management that would best suit all stakeholders. The discourse of developing flexible management approaches within the context of World Heritage conservation requirements and community needs is tackled. Including local knowledge and practices with heritage management embraces community perspective. This objective supports long term heritage sustainability by promoting sustainable community engagement and dialogue between official and unofficial approaches. More inclusive heritage practices are supported by contributions to recommendations for promoting intergenerational transmission, enhancing interpretation and strengthening community agency.

These four objectives contribute to both theoretical advancement in heritage studies and practical improvements in heritage management,

particularly at sites where archaeological significance intersects with living community practices.

#### **1.4 Central Arguments and Thesis Position**

This dissertation challenges conventional approaches to archaeological heritage management and provides fresh insights on how local communities interact with their heritage resources. It proposes a set of integrated arguments about the dialogical nature of heritage experiences at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site as follows:

First, the research argues that heritage is fundamentally dialogical rather than static, emerging through dynamic relationships between people, objects, places, and practices. Ban Chiang witnesses ongoing heritage meaning negotiations because various stakeholders together with temporal layers and cultural practices interact at the site. This dialogical process produces several, sometimes conflicting narratives about the relevance of the site that cannot be limited to a single authorized discourse. The discovery expands Harrison's (2013) dialogical heritage framework because it shows how diverse heritage perspectives operate and connect at the single site. It contradicts the notion that meanings are fixed or predetermined by authorized institutions.

Second, this research confirms how local communities actively negotiate between heritage norms from international frameworks and traditional cultural practices. The Tai Puan people of Ban Chiang have developed sophisticated strategies to adapt UNESCO World Heritage requirements by choosing specific aspects that strengthen their ethnic identity before reshaping other elements according to community needs. This process reveals local agency in heritage production even within internationally imposed conservation systems. This argument draws from Smith (2006) to demonstrate through practical use cases how communities redefine official heritage regulations to align with their indigenous cultural requirements. Local expression demonstrates an active process which both connects with official heritage frameworks and transforms them into new expressions.

Third, the dissertation establishes how archaeological items experience social transitions because their significance shifts according to various environmental contexts. Ban Chiang pottery has traversed multiple cultural biographies—from everyday objects in prehistoric communities to looted commodities during the '*Ban Chiang Gold Rush*,' to protected heritage items, and finally to inspirations for contemporary craft production. Human interaction transforms material culture so it adopts various meanings instead of holding static essential significance. Research extends the theory of '*social life of things*' developed by Appadurai (1988). The document provides comprehensive biographical traces about archaeological artifacts which show their movement through multiple value systems and cultural environments while their meanings and worth transform.

Fourth, the research shows how local experience demonstrates that spiritual heritage connects both spiritually and materially to tangible heritage objects. The modern people living near Ban Chiang sites have formed important spiritual bonds with prehistoric relics through ritual practices, merit-making ceremonies and worshipping ancestors despite the total absence of biological ties. These spiritual connections challenge Western material-focused conservation approaches and reveal alternative ontologies of heritage. The argument develops concepts from Karlstrom's (2005) research about spiritual materiality. The research shows that a person can develop spiritual ties toward archaeological artifacts regardless of their birth origin which provides fresh insights about heritage attachment in Buddhist contexts.

Fifth, this dissertation proposes that heritage management at Ban Chiang exemplifies postcolonial processes of reappropriation, recycling, and renewal. The local community reshapes archaeological narratives along with conservation standards by developing creative processes which transform official heritage concepts into meaningful neighborhood practices and expressions. This finding strengthens Giblin's (2015) postcolonial heritage framework. It highlights specific mechanisms through which communities reclaim authority over heritage interpretation and management in post-colonial contexts.



Finally, the dissertation concludes that managing heritage effectively requires professionals to unite conservation standards with community-driven practices. The Ban Chiang archaeological site illustrates how scientific cultural protection and communal cultural practices do not need to be in opposition but can successfully achieve alignment through joint management schemes which protect integrity of knowledge and cultural heritage. This argument adds to ongoing discussions in heritage management. Evidences suggest that inclusive, participatory approaches can strengthen, rather than weaken, scientific and conservation goals when implemented effectively.

These arguments together challenge the conventional division between archaeological heritage and live culture. The concept proposes integrating scientific significance with contemporary community life for World Heritage Site management through a community-oriented approach.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

The Ban Chiang UNESCO world heritage site is the subject of this dissertation, which explores the dialectic between local communities and archaeological heritage with special attention to the Tai Puan community. The study explores how residents come to experience and negotiate heritage through material culture, spatial relationships and living practices in relation to heritage preservation mandates and living cultural traditions.

### **1.5.1 Research Design**

The methodological framework for the study is qualitative case study focusing on emic perspectives of heritage experiences at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of community-heritage interactions across three primary dimensions:

- **Material Objects:** Study of artifacts representing Ban Chiang culture and their contemporaneous significance
- **Spatial Dynamics:** An investigation of the Ban Chiang heritage mound as a living space

- **Cultural Practices:** This dissertation examines the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival as a nexus of heritage negotiation

Several interconnected imperatives led to selection of qualitative methodology. Fundamentally, the research questions included required a depth of understanding of subjective lived experiences and personal heritage interpretation among the community. However, this approach was warranted given that the sociocultural landscape under investigation was of a high degree of complexity which required a look into the multiple narratives, and inherent power dynamics embedded in heritage management systems. As the study demanded rich descriptive data, this necessitated detailed documentation of local practices and decision-making decisions to help in understanding how communities work with heritage in their daily lives. Qualitative methods were best suited to capturing and representing marginalized perspectives that other methodologies eroded from traditional heritage discourse, and the emphasis on local voices made them essential. Moreover, heritage was conceived as a dynamic and progressing process rather than as a book of facts, such a thinking needed methodological flexibility which was not offered by the quantitative methodology only. Finally, there was a need for research approaches that synthesize multiple views in order to gain a coherent sense of the dynamic of heritage.

### 1.5.2 Theoretical Framework

Critical heritage theory forms the background to the research, interweaving different theoretical strands into a synthesis for the analytical framework of the study. The study interrogates first through the lens of '*Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD)*,' an analysis of how official heritage narratives construct meaning and how those narratives also constrain local meaning at its core. To this analysis, the concept of '*Dialogical Heritage*' offers the insights on the dynamic relationships between stakeholders and heritage resources. '*Heritage from Below*' is a framework that centers grassroots practices and interpretations of heritage to show how communities remobilize and modify the meanings of heritage. In addition to anchoring this work in the economic and social uses of heritage in today's world, '*Use and Commodification*' theory offers tools to look at the economic and



social deployment of heritage within contemporary contexts, while *'Intangible Cultural Heritage'* frameworks enable us to unpack living traditions and evolving cultural practices. Using *'Postcolonial Heritage'* theory as part of the study, this critical examination takes place against power relations and their influences to heritage interpretation. A theoretical lens by which to comprehend such intersections exists in *'Spiritual Materiality.'* Finally, *'Critical Heritage Memory'* theory allows for analysis of the process of how collective memories of a given heritage are formed, transmitted, and transformed.

The Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA) approach enables this research to investigate different methods through which stakeholders at Ban Chiang interpret their heritage meanings together with their negotiations and disputes. HDA incorporates elements of critical discourse analysis and specific heritage theories to deliver an enhanced examination of heritage texts and institutional components and cultural statements inside heritage institutions. The investigation uses heritage language and visual and narrative constructions from official organizations and local communities and tourism stakeholders to identify heritage processes. An examination of official pronouncements needs to be joint with local understandings of heritage at Ban Chiang because this research takes place within its post-colonial context. Both forces determine conservation decisions and community participation strategies.

The diagram of the research conceptual framework is illustrated in *Figure 1*.

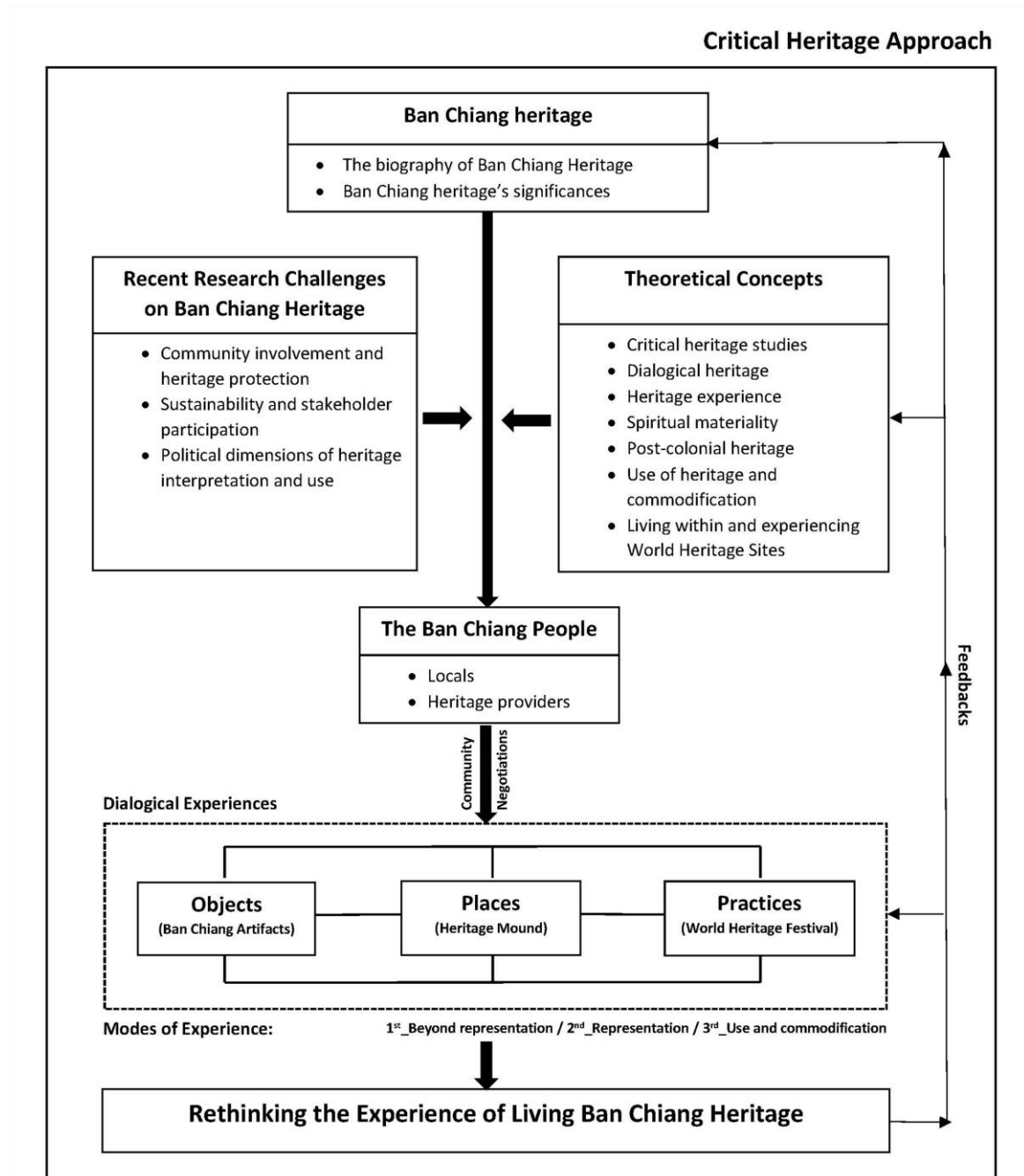


**Figure 1** The research conceptual framework's diagram

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2025)

### 1.5.3 Sample Selection

Ethnological fieldwork in researching dialogical Ban Chiang heritage experiences was conducted following an organized three-phase, non-probability sampling approach in order to gain a holistic view of the heritage experiences. Accidental sampling was utilized in the first phase, whereby the researcher just walked through the village and conducted impromptu interviews of encountered villagers who were willing to participate. This was the method used by which to get preliminary insight and some initial participants who would satisfy the research elements. The secondary phase used snowball sampling, where these initial participants referred additional potential participants according to study criteria, which grew the density of local participants and fostered community trust due to the existing relationships among them. The purposeful sampling phase was the intended last phase wherein purposive sampling involved pre-determined interviews of specific stakeholders identified according to features relevant to the objectives of the study. A sequentially based approach to sampling produced a methodologically robust sample that also generated heterogeneity of views on the issue within the community.

Individuals who lived and or worked in Ban Chiang were strategically selected as key informants but were categorized into three main stakeholder group. The first group included local community members, community members who were willing to share their heritage experiences and Tai Puan community members specifically from the Kum Tai sector of the Ban Chiang heritage mound. The second group consisted of representatives of heritage organizations and agencies such as Ban Chiang National Museum, Tai Puan Ban Chiang Museum, Ban Chiang Pracha Chaing Cherd Elementary School, and Ban Chiang Wittaya Secondary School. They also included Ban Chiang Homestay's Group, Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting Group, Ban Chiang Local Textile Weaving Group, as well as Ban Chiang Folk Dancing Group. The third group included local government officials, especially Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality, the head of the Ban Chiang National Museum, and the Director of the Ban Chiang Pracha Chaing Cherd Elementary School.

### 1.5.4 Data Collection Methods

Field research was conducted between 2015-2017 in Ban Chiang Community<sup>1</sup> through multiple methodological approaches:

- **Onsite Methods**

- Semi-structured interviews with 21 key informants or stakeholders (Comprising of the first group = 7/ the second group = 10/ the third group = 4)
- Open-ended questionnaires (participants were given full discretion regarding personal identification disclosure) focusing on the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival (16 returned questionnaires, comprising of the first group = 5/ the second group = 3/ the third group = 8) (See *Appendix I*)
- Non-participant ethnographic observations:
  - 13-15 February 2015: Three days and two nights during the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival
  - 28 May 2016: One-day community visit with the 5 decades of Ban Chiang discovery conference participants, observing the Ban Chiang Homecoming ceremony
  - 26 January 2017: One-day community visit with the dissertation advisor
- Participant ethnographic observations:
  - 10-14 February 2016: Four days and three nights, residing with a local Ban Chiang family; participated in preparing the Bai-Sri

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<sup>1</sup> The geographical scope of this research concerns the community of Ban Chiang and its linked archaeological World Heritage Site in Nong Han District, Udon Thani Province, Thailand. The study area consists of the World Heritage property's core zone, of about 0.30 square kilometers, and the adjacent buffer zone of about 7.60 square kilometers. The research is also extended to neighboring area and related sites if applicable. (See *Figure 5* and *Figure 6*)

offering for the 2016 Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival competition (awarded second prize)

- Documentation through photography, video recording, visual sketching, and field notes
- Museum exhibition data collection from:
  - Ban Chiang National Museum (permanent and temporary exhibitions)
  - Tai Puan Ban Chiang Museum
- **Offsite Methods**
  - Academic Conference/Seminar/Lecture Participations:
    - 30 January 2015: Special lecture on '*Ban Chiang and South East Asian Archaeology*' by Dr. Joyce White, Thammasat University
    - 5 September 2015: Special lecture on '*Values of Ban Chiang Heritage,*' Silpakorn University
    - 27 January 2016: Academic seminar on '*bâan-chiiang · bpà-tǔm bôt boh-raan ká-dee tai*' (*Ban Chiang: The First Chapter of Thai Archaeology*), Thammasat University
    - 26-27 May 2016: International conference on '*Five decades of Ban Chiang discovery,*' Udon Thani
    - 03 June 2016: Special lecture on '*Hot Pots, Museum Raids, and the Race to Uncover Asia's Archaeological Past*' by Dr. Joyce White, National Museum Bangkok
  - Exhibition Analysis:
    - 03 June 2016: Special exhibition '*Early man of Our Land*' at the National Museum Bangkok
  - Archival Research:

- Historical documents on Ban Chiang Archaeology
- Community life documentation
- Academic papers and articles
- Social media content
- Web resources

### **1.5.5 Data Analysis**

A full analytical framework was employed that combined use of multiple methodologies imposed to guarantee in depth analysis of the collected data. Interview transcripts and field notes were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis in order to determine how heritage is experienced. Critical discourse analysis of heritage documentation also was performed and revealed the underlying power structures and ideological frameworks. The detailed case study approach was used to examine specific heritage elements and the comparative analytical approach was employed to investigate relationships between official and unofficial heritage narratives. Special attention was also given to analyzing connections between the community and the spiritual heritage. Finally, the systematic integration of visual and textual data further enriched the analytical process, allowing a more nuanced account of the material and the symbolic field of heritage.

Heritage Discourse Analysis (HAD) was used to analyze interview transcripts, field notes, promotional materials, and official documents, revealing the main and less common stories about heritage at Ban Chiang. This analysis investigated how language creates certain understandings of heritage, while downplaying others, and how different groups see themselves in relation to these stories. Specifically, the analysis focused on:

- The construction of value and significance in heritage texts
- The framing of expertise and authority in heritage management
- The representation of local communities and their relationship to heritage



- The temporal and spatial dimensions of heritage discourses
- The adaptations of international heritage principles

Through discourse analysis researchers gain an essential viewpoint to observe language-based processes which determine what heritage really means. From conservation initiatives to people's experiences, the approach's strength shows how unconscious language frameworks shape how heritage is utilized in procedures.

### **1.5.6 Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the execution of the research, it followed strictly ethical guidelines. Before they were involved, all participants gave informed consent and their confidentiality and anonymity during data collection and reporting was rigorously maintained. Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees whose full names are used in this thesis. In cases where interviewees requested anonymity, or where the interview content included sensitive information, participants are identified by abbreviated names to ensure confidentiality. Furthermore, no photographs were taken of, or used in this thesis, for any participant who did not explicitly grant permission. Also, this dissertation was careful in its respect of local cultural practice and belief, especially in the regard paid to archaeological heritage as a living community. Particular care was taken regarding proper treatment of spiritual and religious affairs, and local customs and customs were followed in all research activities. The research process was kept transparent by well documented research and clear communications with every one of the stakeholders. In addition, this study also highlights that, in the interest of methodological transparency, AI assisted tools were utilized ethically throughout the writing process, beginning from the original drafts written by the researcher. The language was only refined and the organizational purposes were assisted with this technological assistance, maintaining the original research content, analysis and finding intact.

### **1.5.7 Researcher Positionality**

During the research process, researcher positionality was kept crucially in mind. The researcher identified the self as having a dual role as academic observer and cultural interpreter from the outside and the careful negotiation of these apparently conflicting positions represented a necessary concession. The effort that this duality demanded was the subtlety of working this balance between the academic expertise and the local knowledge systems and always mindful that, unless handled very carefully, the Western heritage theory could influence the interpretation of the local phenomena. During the research there was an unremitting insistence on faithfully representing local voices, especially in the case of the researcher as mediator between official and unofficial heritage narratives.

### **1.5.8 Research Limitations**

The methodological and temporal limitations of the study are described. The primary aims of the study were to stress contemporary analysis rather than historical analysis and the time limitation that restricted the question of a more extended longitudinal observation period. In addition, fieldwork was conducted during the data collection period (2015-2017) and thus posed challenges such as the possible changes in the dynamics of communities and heritage practices following the fieldwork's completion.

There were several methodological constraints that emerged in the process of research. For Instance, limited access to some technical and archaeological data may have reduced the comprehensibility of heritage analysis. In addition, the study found it difficult to fully include all the demographic populations within the community and saw gaps in the sample of participants. Language barriers and cultural translation complexities (including English-Thai-Tai Puan languages) hindered data collection and interpretation, in addition to logistical challenges. Moreover, institutional and social factors restricted the participation of certain groups of stakeholders, resulting in an opportunity to collect only a relatively narrow spectrum of opinions.

Future academic investigations will find productive solutions to this study's inherent problems by implementing longitudinal research designs. An extended observation of heritage management practices and community negotiations in Ban Chiang would highlight important changing factors that cannot be fully detected through a mere snapshot in time. Study of how modern conservation ideas merge with local community reaction systems would lead to important breakthroughs regarding heritage management. A cross-site comparative analysis between World Heritage sites in Southeast Asia with equivalent archaeological richness and surviving population elements would deepen the comprehension of local heritage management techniques throughout this region. Researchers should use mixed methods approaches because they would combine in-depth ethnographic fieldwork findings with broader understanding yielded from quantitative surveys to overcome current research limitations. Digital documentation systems strategically applied would generate comprehensive information about physical site environments and cultural activities when used as a strategic tool. International research collaborations enabled by partnerships between scholars from different backgrounds and local academics and representatives from communities have the capability to overcome challenges of linguistic interpretation and cultural translation by enhancing diverse perspective inclusion. Through these comprehensive research approaches multiple issues in understanding how living communities interact with archaeological heritage within World Heritage settings will be addressed and new ecological valid theoretical frameworks can evolve.

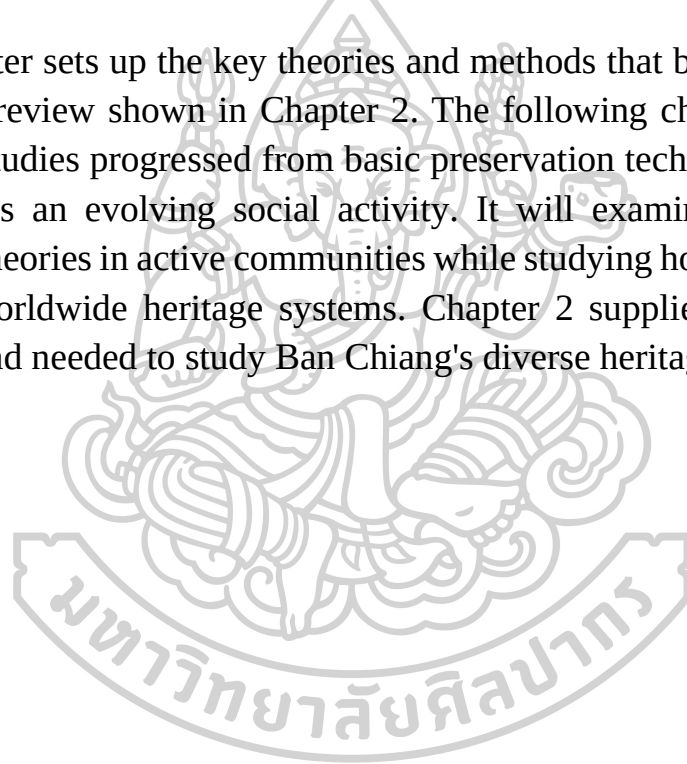
## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter sets up the essential theories and methods to study heritage experiences at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site. The research design and methods used to gather and select data build a strong basis for studying how local communities balance archaeological importance with their ongoing cultural traditions. This research uses both qualitative methods including ethnographic observation plus multiple data techniques to examine heritage patterns in their physical form, space usage, and cultural aspects.

The study seeks to advance understanding and methods for managing World Heritage sites that still serve their present-day functions. It investigates how heritage functions among different social groups to develop better ways to preserve places where traditional and modern cultural elements coexist.

This research methodology establishes a dependable platform to study Ban Chiang heritage experiences although it accepts particular boundaries. It will ensure academic quality by incorporating local insights into the analysis and addressing ethical standards and researcher self-reflection.

This chapter sets up the key theories and methods that build the complete literature review shown in Chapter 2. The following chapter shows how heritage studies progressed from basic preservation techniques to viewing heritage as an evolving social activity. It will examine archaeological heritage theories in active communities while studying how local traditions fit into worldwide heritage systems. Chapter 2 supplies key theoretical background needed to study Ban Chiang's diverse heritage processes.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical approaches and conceptual ideas that are applicable to heritage experiences at the Ban Chiang Heritage site. The chapter is organized into eight sections, each of which deals with an aspect of heritage studies related to the Ban Chiang case study.

At first, the chapter unpicks the elements of critical heritage approaches in current heritage studies, including critical approaches to heritage as a process, and the contested nature of heritage in practice, based around contesting the authorized heritage discourse and setting heritage in its postmodern and global contexts.

Second, a concept of dialogical heritage is proposed, centering on the person, object (artifact), place (site), and practice (festival). This section, by using Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas and several Indigenous ontological approaches, presents a different, broader, dynamic, participatory and relational understanding of heritage.

Thirdly, the chapter discusses heritage experiences which considers the encounter of people with heritage. This introduces the complexity of experience to cultural studies through an exploration of the complexity of human experience, place and power as interrelated aspects of experience, and the value of experience as an intermediary category in cultural studies.

The fourth part of the chapter examines how the complex intersections between people and materiality in heritage differ from these dominant western approaches, and how such popular religiosity has shaped the heritage practices of Southeast Asia.

The fifth part reviews post-colonialism and critical approaches to heritage exploring how post-colonial approaches may be brought to bear on heritage discourse before introducing the 3R model of post-colonial (post-conflict) heritage.

The sixth part covers the uses of heritage and its commodification, including the multi-faceted use of heritage, the process of heritage

commodification and tourism as well as the use of 'creative folklores' in Thai heritage tourism.

The seventh part investigates various scenarios associated with dwelling in and interacting with World Heritage Sites and the challenges and benefits for residents in these habitats. This section focuses on aspects like, communal participation and World heritage management, living cultures and cultural sustainability, political perspectives and entitled construction, socio- economic effects of the World Heritage Site and adaptation and response of the community, a cross generational study, emerging concerns and future prospects for World Heritage Site.

The eighth part surveys some of the most recent perspectives and research on Ban Chiang Heritage, including community involvement and heritage protection, sustainability and stakeholder participation, and the political dimensions of heritage interpretation and use.

In conclusion, the final part of the chapter examines open research areas and imminent directions along with implementation difficulties in heritage studies particularly for Ban Chiang. It integrates the theoretical progress and methodological achievements together with practical ramifications that emerged throughout the text to emphasize major research fronts which need future research attention.

As a result, this literature review discusses various aspects of heritage studies and, therefore, lays a rich theoretical framework for the analysis of the nature of heritage experiences at the Ban Chiang Archaeological World Heritage Site in Thailand.

## **2.2 The essential of critical heritage approaches in contemporary heritage studies**

In recent years, critical heritage studies have emerged as a vital approach to understanding and managing heritage in the context of contemporary global societies. This approach challenges traditional ways of thinking about heritage and advocates for a more holistic, inclusive, and socially engaged perspective. To effectively understand and apply critical heritage approaches, it is essential to consider several key aspects that have shaped



the field of heritage studies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

### **2.2.1 Understanding heritage as a process**

Heritage is predominantly about our relationship with the past, the present, and the future, which is considered an active process of assembling a series of objects, places, and practices or a creative engagement with the (selected) past in the present that focuses our attention (associated with a particular set of values/attitudes) on our ability to take an active and informed role in the production of our tomorrow (Harrison, 2013, p. 4). It is not merely a '*thing*' that concerns solely with heritage objects themselves but also is a cultural and social practice (process) involved in the construction and regulation of diverse values and understandings of meaning and identity-making (L. Smith, 2006, pp. 11,13; Waterton & Watson, 2015, p. 1). This process-oriented view of heritage emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of heritage, as well as the role of human agency in shaping its meaning and significance (Harvey, 2001; L. Smith & Akagawa, 2009).

### **2.2.2 The dominance of authorized heritage discourse (AHD)**

For the past decades, heritage has been generally perceived as a version of the past received through objects and display, representations and engagements, spectacular locations and events, memories and commemorations, and the preparation of places for cultural purposes and consumption. It is generally invoked as a positive quality, assuming some relationship with the past and related to ways of categorizing and classifying '*things*' and traditions in the world. These things and practices have played a central role in structuring and defining how heritage is formally understood within academic debate and public policy (Harrison, 2013, p. 7; Waterton & Watson, 2015, p. 1). Since the 1970s, heritage has been increasingly officially defined (what heritage is, how and why it is significant) and governed (how it should be managed and used) by international institutes of heritage, particularly the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and its advisory bodies. They have actively promoted or applied a particular approach and a series of underlying values towards

heritage in every different cultural context. These values that commonly have their origins in a particular, modern, post-Enlightenment, Western (Euro-American) way of thinking<sup>2</sup> have become a part of a standard, the universal language of heritage management, which is dominated by the 'official' or 'authorized heritage discourse' (AHD) (Harrison, 2013, pp. 7-8, 14, 39; L. Smith, 2006, pp. 29, 87). The official form of heritage management initially tended to recognize only the remarkable – the greatest, oldest, biggest, and best – that the preserved buildings and objects from the past are more important or valuable than those from the quotidian present. However, particularly in the West since the 1980s, due to the neoliberal economically driven approach, heritage was forced to market itself to broader audiences as it was incorporated into an emerging experience economy. Then official heritage attempted to broaden its concern to deal with not only remarkable objects, buildings, and landscapes but also 'unofficial heritage,' traditional social practices and their association with more quotidian or everyday places encompassing both 'high' and 'popular' culture (Harrison, 2013, p. 18). Also, approaching heritage has increasingly shifted away from a concern with 'things' or the materiality of heritage to a concern with cultures, traditions, practices, and 'intangible' discourses and values. As the 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has officially recognized the values or significances of the 'submerged' intangible heritage and extended the scope of the commodification of heritage as merely 'visitable' spectacle, which had been initiated through the World Heritage List and its involvement in the reconfiguration of global tourism, to the cultural spaces in which intangible heritage was performed or constructed. Within the context of a multicultural and postcolonial critique, this broadening agenda introduces new 'representative' models of heritage, replacing older notions of a single definitive 'canon' of heritage (Harrison, 2013, pp. 115-116; Logan, Kockel, & Craith, 2015). Besides, embedded within the AHD is the idea that the proper care of heritage and its associated values depends principally on the experts (in particular archaeologists, architects, and historians) who, alone, have the legitimate abilities and understanding to

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<sup>2</sup> Whether the relationship between the past and present, a desire to order and categorize and a late-modern obsession with vulnerability, uncertainty and risk.

identify the innate (intrinsic) value and knowledge at and with historically significant sites and places (Harrison, 2013, pp. 29-30). The AHD frequently works to exclude the historical, cultural, and social experiences of a range of other groups and also works to constrain and limit their critique by privileging the experts and their values over those of the non-experts and by the self-referential nature of the discourse, which continually legitimized itself based on its values, ideologies, and approaches (L. Smith, 2006, p. 30). *'Heritage'* in the AHD is defined as passively engaged rather than as an active process or *'experience.'* Others or non-expert users - particularly visitors - are led to or instructed about but not invited to engage with heritage actively. Furthermore, currently, outnumbered heritage professionals (particularly in developing countries) have been trained via disciplinary-specific methodologies, often oriented by technical, science-based epistemologies of culture. Several of them have experienced or encountered the socio-political complexities that envelope the field of heritage conservation and management (Winter, 2013, p. 541). As a result, in AHD, there is an absence of a sense of action or critical engagement on the part of non-expert users of heritage in which nowadays there are several dissenting, subaltern, or alternative discourses and critiques about the nature, meaning, and use of heritage by multi-vocalized stakeholders (Harrison et al., 2020; L. Smith, 2006, pp. 31-37)

### **2.2.3 The impact of postmodernism and globalization on heritage**

As we all know, today we are living in postmodern conditioned societies<sup>3</sup> which are fragmented, uncertain, diverse, globalized, multicultural, and

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<sup>3</sup> Postmodernism is a complex philosophical and cultural movement that has significantly shaped contemporary thought and society since the mid-20th century. This intellectual trend challenges traditional notions of truth, reality, and knowledge, proposing instead a more fluid and contextualized understanding of the world. According to Professor Linda Hutcheon, a prominent scholar in postmodern theory, postmodernism is characterized by a *'commitment to doubleness, or duplicity'* that involves both a critique and a complicity with the dominant cultural and social paradigms it seeks to challenge (Hutcheon, 2003, p. 1). This paradoxical nature of postmodernism reflects its tendency to question established norms while acknowledging its own position within the systems it critiques. Fredric Jameson, another influential thinker in postmodern studies, argues that postmodernism represents a cultural logic of late capitalism, characterized by the collapse of traditional distinctions between high and low culture, and the emergence of a new kind of *'depthlessness'* in art and society (Jameson, 2016, p. 6). This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of cultural and economic shifts in the postmodern era. Jean-François Lyotard, in his seminal work *'The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,'* famously defined postmodernism as *'incredulity toward metanarratives'* (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). This skepticism towards grand, overarching explanations of reality and progress marks a significant departure from

hybrid. There seems to be no absolute truth (knowledge) or meta-narrative (big stories) which could clearly explain everything. Since all meanings or realities are now relative and socially constructed depending on varying interpretations or writings/readings' perspectives of the authors/readers, then not only 'our' meaning exists but also 'others.' In terms of the globalization of culture that is considered one of the influential phenomena in postmodern worldviews of heritage, several people are influenced by several globalized ideologies, including those dominated by the standardized ideologies that create knowledge (truth) of development discourses toward the same direction, such as consumerism, cultural commodification, and colonial cultural domination (postcolonialism). Also, those ideologies give them human freedom perspectives, such as individual/collective identity, cultural rights, and environmentalism (Ganjanapan, 2008, pp. 220-221). As a result of heterogeneous ideologies of culture, the meaning of culture in analyzing or explaining the transition of contemporary social phenomena has been theoretically changed in at least two aspects. Firstly, from 'culture as given' to 'culture as social construct,' and secondly, from 'culture as shared value' or 'culture as order' to 'culture as spaces of contesting meaning' (Gupta and Ferguson,

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modernist thought, emphasizing instead the importance of local, contextual, and diverse forms of knowledge. James Powell, a narrative designer, further elaborates on this concept in his book *'Postmodernism for Beginners.'* Powell argues that postmodernism has led us to perceive the world as 'a festivity of colorful and contradictory worldviews,' recognizing that our understanding of reality is not singular but comprises 'many different, often conflicting realities' (Powell, 1998, p. 149). This shift in perspective has prompted a reevaluation of truth as culturally and socially constructed rather than absolute and eternal. Powell contends that postmodern thinking rejects the idea of 'super-myths' or universal utopias that aim to unite humanity under a single philosophical umbrella. Instead, postmodernism embraces the concept of a 'carnival of cultures' or a 'tribal gathering' (heterotopia), where diverse societies coexist in a state of pluralism, characterized by 'incongruities, conflicts, and gaps between various stories' (Powell, 1998, p. 150). A key aspect of postmodernism, according to Powell, is its emphasis on difference and the liberation of marginalized voices. Unlike modernist approaches that claimed to speak for others (such as the colonized, Africans, Orientals, or women), postmodernism encourages 'former silenced others' to express their own stories in their own voices (Powell, 1998, p. 152). This shift has led to the emergence of hybrid identities in postmodern times, as the boundaries between private and public spaces become increasingly blurred (Powell, 1998, p. 153). The impact of postmodernism extends beyond philosophy and culture, influencing fields such as architecture, literature, and social theory. In architecture, for instance, postmodernism rejected the austere functionalism of modernist design in favor of eclectic, playful, and historically referential styles (Jencks, 1977). While postmodernism has been critiqued for its potential to lead to relativism and nihilism, its proponents argue that it offers valuable tools for understanding and navigating an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By challenging established truths, encouraging multiple perspectives, and giving voice to previously marginalized groups, postmodernism continues to shape how we perceive and interact with our social, cultural, and intellectual environments.



1999 cited in Ganjanapan, 2008, pp. 207-208). The two aspects mentioned above could also correspondingly contribute to the contemporary meaning of (cultural) heritage as a social construct and spaces of contested meaning. This postmodern and globalized context has significant implications for how heritage is conceptualized, managed, and experienced, as it challenges the notion of a singular, universal understanding of heritage and highlights the need for more pluralistic and context-specific approaches (Long & Labadi, 2010; Winter, 2013).

## **2.2.4 The emergence of critical heritage studies**

By embracing postmodern world-views, there are reasons to consider heritage in such a holistic, relative, and comparative way to facilitate the acknowledgment of divergent and multiple conceptualizations of history and heritage within academic and public policy contexts (L. Smith, 2006, p. 37). In terms of heritage studies as one of the essential subfields in cultural studies, it does not emerge naturally from any particular academic discipline. However, it is an interdisciplinary field of study considered part of a broader consideration of heritage as a social, economic, and political phenomenon of late-modern societies. It is focusing on various changes that have occurred during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a result of the globalization<sup>4</sup> of heritage which had a significant impact on how heritage is defined, perceived, and managed in contemporary global societies (B. J. Graham & Howard, 2008; Harrison, 2013, pp. 3-4). Recognition of heritage studies has kept growing in importance among scholars and practitioners and institutional experts who draw experience from broad disciplinary perspectives. Each has different focuses, aims, knowledge, and skills due to their ontological, epistemological, or practical differences. Hence, heritage itself may also be comprehended differently (Sorensen & Carman, 2009, p. 3). The topics of heritage studies are diverse and continuously evolving. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, editors of

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'Globalization' is a phenomenon that has limited time and space. It has been all known in how 'international flows – of people, capital, technology, labor, corporations, language and culture – have accelerated, eroding modern states' contours (boundaries). The interconnected nature of contemporary politics, culture, economics, and religion, facilitated by global transport networks and electronic communication systems, has had important implications in the resonances and frictions generated by the interplay of concepts, images and ideologies across and between local, regional, national and international communities (Harrison, 2015, p. 297).

the book, *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, stated that across the timeframe of over more than the last 30 years or so, an emphasis of research in heritage studies has noticeably changed from:

*[...] A concern with objects themselves – their classification, conservation, and interpretation – to the ways in which they are consumed and expressed as notions of culture, identity, and politics. More recently, heritage scholars have also started to concern themselves with processes of engagement and the construction of meaning so that a post-post-structural, or more-than-representational, labyrinth of individuated, affective, experiential, and embodied themes has started to emerge [...]*

*(Waterton & Watson, 2015, p. 1)*

Consequently, in the field of heritage studies, to effectively manifest the complexity of innumerable ways of understanding and relating to heritage, we should critically and actively approach heritage from different perspectives and contexts so that heritage might potentially respond to or be able to make connections with other urgent global contemporary issues and concerns.

### **2.2.5 Advocating for critical heritage approaches**

As intensely influenced by postmodernism world-views and globalization, critical interdisciplinary heritage studies have become progressively acknowledged as an alternative way of making heritage function more positively and productively by commenting critically on new developments in heritage and being more actively engaged with the production of policy and critical discussion of its functions in society (Harrison, 2013, p. 229). Many scholars and heritage organizations have advocated the implication of critical heritage concepts in both academic and professional practices. One of several active bodies, the Association of Critical Heritage Studied (ACHS) – an international organization (formed in the early 2010s) promoting a new way of thinking about and doing heritage, from its 2012 Manifesto, has challenged the old way of looking at heritage – the authorized heritage discourse (AHD) – which influenced



by several ideologies (for instance, nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fixation of Western expert knowledge in archaeology, history, architecture, and art history) and privileges old, grand, prestigious, expert-approved sites, buildings and artifacts that sustain Western narratives of nation, class, and science. It seems to limit what heritage is, how it is defined and how it should be studied, used, and managed in the contemporary world. The ACHS has called for other alternative ways to energize heritage (and museum studies) by enhancing the democratizing heritage concept through various approaches, such as drawing on more comprehensive intellectual sources, increasing dialogue and debate between researchers, practitioners, and communities, vigorously questioning the conservative cultural and economic power relations that outdated understanding of heritage seems to underpin. Moreover, not only the authorized narratives of elites or experts to be emphasized, but also the interests of marginalized and excluded parties should be brought to the forefront and invite the more active participation of people and communities that have been traditionally '*on edge*' in the creation and management of heritage (Association of Critical Heritage Studies, 2012).

#### **2.2.6 Key directions in critical heritage studies**

Similarly, in his paper, Tim Winter, a research professor of cultural heritage, clarifies the critical in critical heritage studies and argued that studying heritage at present should focus primarily on the critical issues that face the world today that they bear upon and extended outwards from heritage itself. Firstly, two key directions have been presented: much to be gained from tackling the uneasy relationship between social science and humanities-based approaches to heritage and the professional conservation sector-oriented by scientific materialism. Secondly, there is a need for heritage studies to account for its relationship to today's regional and global transformations by developing post-western understandings of culture, history, and heritage and the socio-political forces that actualize them (Winter, 2013, p. 532). Also, critical heritage studies' perspectives should address:

*[...] The ways in which existing [heritage] practices underwrite structure of power, injustice and inequality...[should] pays close attention to the intersections of power, identity, and knowledge under conditions of globalization, transnationalism, colonialism, and postcolonialism...[should] addresses class, gender, race, the disempowered, citizenship, and other current issues through methodologies such as ethnography and critical discourse analysis [...]*

*(Silverman, 2013, p. 391)*

Also, a framework of heritage theories should be more critically developed and scrutinized than in the past, since little progress has been made in search of fully understanding the way heritage can or could be theorized. For instance, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, in their article, *'Framing theory: Towards a critical imagination in heritage studies,'* proposed the complementary approaches in constructing frames through which heritage can be viewed in its various guises as theories in, theories of, and theories for heritage. By this framework, it will motivate the development of a critical imagination in heritage studies (Waterton & Watson, 2013, pp. 546-547).

In summary, following the idea of the contemporary meaning of cultural heritage as a social construct and spaces of contesting meaning, over the past decades, cultural heritage has developed radically from monument and museum collection (which are dominantly perceived as objects or things) to encompassing a complex matrix of meaning, values, associations and related concepts (being understood as processes). The study of heritage now has become necessary to totally (re)engage with the complex theoretical dimensions of cultural heritage and its multifaceted implications (Viejo-Rose, 2015, p. e018). Then, there is inevitably a call for critical and interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary heritage studies to productively encounter issues or *'crises'* of the global situation. However, there are still a lot of criticism of the works of critical heritage scholars in the field, for instance; it is too idealistic, too destructive, cannot effectively apply to the actual practice, or merely criticize without any

suggestion (talks only, no actions) and so on. Then, as Tim Winter suggested, a critical approach to heritage should not only be about remaining cognizant of contestation, competing values, economics, or the advancement of critical theory in areas like memory, consumption, or identity (a familiar analytical triad: monuments, memorials, and memory). Such works have been valuable, but many other pressing issues receive much less attention within the field, and it should be more ambitiously engaging with and responding to the critical issues facing us in the contemporary global world (Winter, 2013, p. 541). That is why we need to search for a better way to integrate a critical approach to the practical sphere of heritage.

### **2.3 Dialogical heritage: of people, objects (artifacts), places (sites), and practices**

A critical approach to managing heritage in the contemporary globalized world is the concept of dialogue heritage. In developing this approach, it draws on the ideas of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin in his work, *'Dialogic imagination'* (Robinson, 2011), and a range of Indigenous ontological perspectives to mount a challenge to the dominant authorized heritage discourse and to offer an alternative, more inclusive, dynamic, relational understanding of heritage. This section will now look at dialogical heritage, its philosophical background, and what its implications are for this heritage studies and practices today.

#### **2.3.1 Life and language as dialogical**

According to Bakhtin, life is inherently dialogic, and to live means to participate in an ongoing dialogue: asking questions, heeding, responding, agreeing and all that. As he states:

*[...] Life is by its very nature dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask a question, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds [...]*

*(Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984, p. 293)*

Also, language (including thoughts, ideas, and knowledge) is dialogical, dynamic, relational, engaged in the task of constant re-descriptions of the world. People are swept up in the responses, because (according to Bakhtin this response always takes place from the position of another competing other) everything that is said is always in a response to something said before and in anticipation of things to be said in a response (Ehre, Bakhtin, Holquist, & Emerson, 1981; Holquist, 2002). The process tends to stay unresolved and open-ended—the open dialogical process—which is closer to facilitation of coexistence in dealing with complex issues (Shotter, 2009; Wegerif, 2008). Based on this dialogical understanding of life and language, heritage is recast as dynamic, relational, and collaborative. From this standpoint heritage emerges through social connections between individuals who construct it by participating in shared activities (Ritella & Ligorio, 2016; Shotter, 1997)

### **2.3.2 Challenging the authorized heritage discourse**

Recently the idea of '*dialogism*' or '*dialogic*' has been slowly introduced into contemporary heritage studies and practices, in an attempt to subvert the sense of '*grand narratives*,' through the concepts of universal value, authenticity, significance and historical monuments, that characterize the authorized heritage discourse, and which holds power over the field of mainstream heritage. Primarily dialogism attempts to extend the definition, encourages more integration of the various stakeholders, and attempts to temper frictions between the particular set of Euro American ideas regarding heritage (initially packaged in the World Heritage Convention) and the alternative Indigenous and non-Western conceptions of heritage (Harrison, 2013; L. Smith, 2006; Tolou, 2013). Instead, the dialogical approach instills a desire for a critical examination of power relations and inequalities which remain within the hegemonic discourse about authorized heritage and the position of expressions of marginalized and underrepresented communities (Denes, 2012; Hall, 1999).

### 2.3.3 A relational and dialogical model of heritage

Drawing on various Indigenous ontological perspectives and a broad ontology of connectivity<sup>5</sup>, Rodney Harrison proposes a relational or dialogical model, which sees heritage as part of diverse conversations or dialogues emerging from the relationship between multiple subjects (including both a range of human and non-human actors) and their environments. As he states:

*[...] A 'dialogical' model in which heritage is seen as emerging from the relationship between people, objects, places and practices, and that does not distinguish between or prioritize what is 'natural' and what is 'cultural,' but is instead concerned with the various way in which humans and non-humans are linked by chains of connectivity and work together to keep the past alive in the present for the future [...]*

*(Harrison, 2015, p. 309)*

This relational, dialogical heritage model helps us consider the interconnection between heritage and other broader social, economic, political, and environmental issues in fundamental and complex ways. It might also manifest the understanding about frictions/contestations between authorized and non-authorized heritage (e.g., the World Heritage and particular local traditions) (Harrison, 2013, pp. 205, 217). The dialogical model stresses the agency of (human and non-human) actors in heritage making as an ongoing process and emphasizes the need to think of the broader ecological and social context in which heritage is situated (Harrison, 2015; Olsen, 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> A 'connectivity ontology' is a concept that draws on traditions from the humanities, ecology, philosophy, and political theory, which suggests that being is inherently, inescapably, and necessarily relational. It entails mutual causality: organism and environment modify each other. Relations between organism and environment are recursive, meaning that 'events continually enter into, become entangled with, and then re-enter the universe they describe' (Rose and Robin, 2004, cited in Harrison, 2013, p. 215).



### 2.3.4 Dialogical heritage and sustainability

A connectivity ontology and dialogical model of heritage might lead us to sustainability in which they force us to broaden our apprehensions, including the maintenance of human quality and the endurance of other non-human actors (Harrison, 2013, p. 220). By acknowledging and conceptualizing being in the world from various perspectives, it might be helpful for understanding heritage in the contemporary, globalized world and provide an essential basis for thinking productively and actively about heritage in the future (Harrison, 2013, pp. 215, 226). The dialogical approach to heritage highlights the long-term sustainability and resilience of cultural and natural heritage as well as the requirement of more integrated and holistic heritage management (Holtorf, 2018; Throsby, 1997).

### 2.3.5 Contrasting dialogical heritage with postmodern approaches

The dialogical heritage model is differentiated from contemporary postmodern approaches to heritage, particularly Laurajane Smith's approach, which has adopted the '*critical realism perspective*.' Smith's approach considers that while there may be a physical reality or aspect to heritage (as the world exists), any knowledge of it arises only through discourses that we construct about it (L. Smith, 2006, p. 54). This approach tends to view that reality has little value or meaning until humans start to invest meaning into it (or ultimately admit that there is no such thing as reality). It primarily concerns human-made values and meaning that are symbolized, and representation reproduces the mind-matter dualism in suggesting that the material world has no values or meaning in and of itself (Harrison & Rose, 2010, p. 264).

In contrast, the dialogical model of heritage, principally influenced by Indigenous perspectives, accepts that all meaning comes from the land (the natural world). Communication runs through living systems, including land and people. We (as humans) are not alone and not the only meaning-making beings. The world is not only present to us through language. We are not discourse isolated, but we work with others (living organisms, responsive places) to bind past, present, and future. Into this broader view



of meaning and communication, there will be more space for ‘*alternative*’ stories and analyses that are continuously becoming open to the world with new narratives and new encounters (Harrison & Rose, 2010, p. 265). The dialogical approach challenges the anthropocentric and discursive focus of postmodern heritage theories, and advocates for a more inclusive and relational understanding of heritage that acknowledges the agency and significance of non-human actors (Fredengren, 2015; Olsen & Pétursdóttir, 2014).

### **2.3.6 Rethinking heritage as a collaborative process for heritage decision-making**

After Laurajane Smith's ideas that shifted the term ‘*heritage*’ away from things or objects and towards experience and practice, the Indigenous ontologies as part of a dialogical model of heritage push us to rethink the idea of heritage as a process by which only human meaning makers engage in heritage practices by making meanings in or through physical realities. We are somewhat pushed to imagine that humans and other sentient beings bind time collaboratively. Thus, heritage is tangible and intangible, embodied, material, and equally mindful and emergent (Harrison & Rose, 2010, p. 266).

A dialogical model of heritage suggests a crucial dialogical model of heritage decision-making in hybrid forums, which breaks down the convention barriers between experts, politicians, bureaucrats, and interested laypersons or stakeholders (Harrison, 2013, p. 226). In the face of the manifold challenges and conflicts to heritage, this approach makes possible more inclusive and collaborative processes of managing and safeguarding heritage. It suggests the value of bringing together multiple stakeholders and communities in the heritage decision-making process and, by extension, a greater utilization of deliberative as well as participatory forms of heritage governance (Chitty, 2017; Taylor & Lennon, 2012).

The dialogical model of heritage makes up one of the critical approaches to present day heritage issues and simultaneously endows heritage with a more inclusive, dynamic, and relational approach which recognizes the

involvement of both human and non-human actors in the on-going process of producing and reproducing heritage. This dialogical perspective presents a productive framework for heritage scholars and practitioners alike to adopt as it provides useful principles for developing more effective and sustainable strategies of safeguarding and promoting heritage in the contemporary globalized world.

## **2.4 Heritage experiences – The encounter of people and heritage**

The concept of heritage experience has gained significant attention in recent years, as scholars and practitioners seek to understand the complex and dynamic interactions between people and heritage. This section explores the nature of human experience, its relationship to place and cultural studies, and its relevance to contemporary heritage studies and practices. By examining the various ways in which people encounter, engage with, and make sense of heritage, we can develop a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the role of heritage in shaping individual and collective identities, memories, and aspirations.

### **2.4.1 Understanding the complexity of human experience**

The definitions of ‘(human) experience’ from several sources<sup>6</sup> suggest that people experience something when they personally encounter, undergo, or have been affected by or gained knowledge through direct/indirect observation or participation in events or occurrences. Yi-Fu Tuan, a Chinese-American geographer, wrote in his famous book, *Space and place: The perspective of experience*, that human experience is generally complex in nature. It covers various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality. These modes range from the more direct and intimate feeling or passive sensation to active visual perception and the indirect and conceptual mode of symbolization (Tuan, 2001, pp. v, 6, 8). Experience is also compounded by feelings and thoughts. They are commonly regarded as opposed states which the former associate more

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<sup>6</sup> The definitions were obtained from several sources, including Merriam-Webster (<https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/experience>), Oxford Dictionaries (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experience>), and Cambridge Dictionary (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/experience>)

with subjectivity and the later more with objectivity. However, they are both located near the two ends of an experiential continuum and have impacts on shifting streams of experience ranging from sensation to perception and conception (Tuan, 2001, p. 10). Yi-Fu Tuan also wrote:

*[...] To experience is to learn from what one has undergone; it means acting on the given and creating out of the given. The given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought [...]*

*(Tuan, 2001, p. 9)*

Our bodies are perceived as fundamental entities within which experiences occurred. Several things happen inside our bodies (interiority), especially when we are being in any place (my place, unusual place or exteriority) such as memories, referencing, emotions, imagination, knowledge, dreaming, temporal, spatial mobility and being (Staiff, 2014a, p. 51). John Russon, a Canadian philosopher, in his book, *Human experience, philosophy, neurosis, and the elements of everyday life*, proposed the form of human experience that lays out the fundamental principle for the method of analyzing human experience. It comprises of three related elements which are interpretation, embodiment and memory. Firstly, *'interpretation,'* focuses on the way in which we are active in making sense of our experience, and on the notion that the way we make sense of things (experience) fundamentally, is to draw on personal patterns of memory and expectation *'from the inside.'* Secondly, *'embodiment,'* where he argues that all modes of experience are forms of bodily engagement with the world because the patterns of memory and expectation (that shape the sense of our experience) have their own terms set primarily by our bodily capacities and by the kinds of significance to which they open us. Then the body is a self-developing reality that, through process of habituation, allows us to enter into ever more sophisticated ways of experiencing ourselves and our world. Thirdly, *'memory,'* where he argues that in addition to our habitual, bodily schemata of interpretation that shape the actual form in which we experience; the identities of objects which are meaningful to us in ways that resonate with our own past involvements are in fact the repositories of

our memories (Russon, 2003, pp. 4-5). Memory, whether implicit or explicit, is an act of cognition in the present in which we make explicit the identities of objects in terms of how they carry for us our commitments (Russon, 2003, p. 42).

#### **2.4.2 Place, power, and the social construction of experience**

As we all know in general, experience is directed by the internal world (the self), it also engaged to something beyond the self or influenced by the external world (the others). Within humanistic geographical approaches, there is an argument calling for more awareness of the ways in which we inhabit and experience the world by applying the concept of place as central to this awareness. This conception of place, mainly influenced by Martin Heidegger's notion of dwelling, describes how people related to the world through the realm of experience and people carry a burden of making their own meaning in the world through their own activities. As humans, are in-the-world, we unavoidably relate to our environment and make it 'our place' (Cresswell, 2009, p. 4). Since the 1980's, scholars inspired by both humanism and the radical approaches of Marxists, feminism, and post-structuralism began to develop a critical approach to place by challenging the kind of organic, rooted, and bounded place (evoked by the Heidegger's notion of dwelling) because it seemed to be limiting and exclusionary. Even though a rich idea of place as experience, felt, and sensed has been produced, not much, however, has been said about how power is associated in the construction, reproduction, and contestation of places and their meanings. Marxists in particular began to point out that the social processes (particularly under capitalism) are involved in the construction of place. The material structure of place is often the result of decisions made by the very powerful to serve their ends through which they have chosen, consciously or unconsciously, to exclude (other) people and the meanings they represent (Cresswell, 2009, p. 5). David Harvey, an anthropologist and geographer, also wrote:

*[...] Place in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct. The only interesting question that can be asked is, by what social process(es) is(are) place(s) constructed? [...]*

(Harvey, 1993, p.5, cited in Cresswell, 2009, p. 6)

However, when any kinds of places are constructed, they are never truly finished and always open to question and transformation (Cresswell, 2009, p. 6; Pickering, 2008b). Therefore, the social construction of place concept should be continually scrutinized in order to gain a better understanding of how people (the self) experience the outside world (the others).

### **2.4.3 Experience as an intermediary category in cultural studies**

In cultural studies, experience has always been an important term and a significant concept in the field. Michael Pickering, a professor of media and cultural analysis, writes a chapter on experience and the social world in his edited book *Research methods for cultural studies*, claimed that experience has been considered a primary resource, providing evidence of and giving insight into everyday cultures, past and present. It is also a cultural category and a critical tool which has been subject to incisive criticism of those scholars (particularly poststructuralists) (Pickering, 2008b, p. 6). For him, the greatest significance of experience in cultural analysis is as an intermediary category coming between ways of being (who we are) and way of knowing (what we know). Experience seems at some points to confirm what we know, and at the others might surprise us into rethinking (reassess) what we have previously accepted or taken for granted (Pickering, 2008a, p. 27; 2008b, p. 6). It constitutes '*the meeting-place of individual perception and cultural meaning, self and symbolic forms, life-story and social conditions of existence*' (Pickering, 2008a, p. 27). In his chapter, Pickering pointed out several interesting aspects and draws on the conceptual properties of experience in terms of various dualities operative within categories (such as proximity and distance, experience as process and product, situated and mediated experience and the balance between speaking and listening) which are very useful for studying about experience in cultural studies (Pickering, 2008a, pp. 17-18). Firstly, he mentioned that experience is always to be interrogated and has to be approached carefully and critically because it is not simply equivalent to what happens to us. There are undeniably experiences we choose to have, for whatever reason, and experiences that are imposed on us, sometimes against our will or because they are seem unavoidable



(Pickering, 2008a, p. 19). Our lives are a particular compound of various forms of experience which there can be no absolute definition of the category. It means we have to think of it in both general and specific terms as we use it to develop knowledge about our lives and the lives of the others, in other places and circumstances, other periods and historical formations (Pickering, 2008a, p. 20). Secondly, experience is never pure or transparent. It depends on how experience is given the quality of narrative<sup>7</sup> or how they come into expression and are conceptualized, organized and giving temporal identity (Pickering, 2008a, pp. 19, 28). We cannot make sense of any experience, our own or those of other people without reference to conceptual and theoretical ideas of one kind or another, or without carefully applying the methods we bring to bear on eliciting and helping bring into being stories of the experience of social world (Pickering, 2008a, p. 28). Moreover, experience does not attain meaning once and for all, since some stories are told and retold, and often enhanced or polished in the retelling. Then, how they are heard and understood depends on the social location and historicity of their auditors (Pickering, 2008a, p. 29). Thirdly, in cultural analysis, the connection between what is experientially proximate and distance (experience-near concept or first-hand experience and experience-far concept or second-hand experience) should be established. It ought to bring both '*the active and creative human agent*' and '*the ideologically construct subject*' into continual view of each other rather than swinging between the two poles they represent. This will cease the dead-end canyon of impossible dualism by bringing acted-upon experience to bear on ideological structures and also showing long term structural determinants in terms of everyday social practice (Pickering, 2008a, pp. 20-21). In addition, we certainly cannot clearly draw lines between first-hand experience (or situated-experience which occurs to us in an immediate and relatively direct way) and second-hand experience (or mediated-experience which occurs to us at a distance,

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<sup>7</sup> Somers and Gibson describes how experience is constituted through narratives that '*people make sense of what happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings with one or more narratives: and people are guided to act in certain ways and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately linked repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives*' (Somers and Gibson, 1994, p.38-39 cited in Lawler, 2008, p. 38).



in some unfamiliar elsewhere). We are living in an increasingly mediated world where much of what we experience comes to us from a source that is not local or proximate to our material existence or particular cultural body of knowledge. There may be moments when such contact affects us in an immediate and direct way, making it difficult to dissociate from events that are tangible and here-and-now. Then, today our lives are a complex mixture of both situated and mediated experience which what is experienced symbolically becoming increasingly entwined with what is experienced through our own sensory perception (Pickering, 2008a, p. 24). Finally, attending to experience in cultural studies for gathering material about other social lives and other cultural mappings of the social world, the focus should be balanced between any speaking of self or from the perspective given to us by our own positions and cultural mappings and any listening to others and investigating the matrix of experience from which they speak of themselves (Pickering, 2008a, p. 25). How experience is expressed has always to be questioned, but questioning experience is different from using our positionality and way of knowing about the world to displace other's accounts of their experience, or from misusing an assumed intellectual authority to dismiss such accounts as falsely conscious and politically compromised, seeking certainly in theory instead. Interestingly, experience always has the potential to offer empirical exceptions that do not fit the theoretical rule, that disrupt intellectual exposition, and contradict ideas (Pickering, 2008a, pp. 26-27).

#### **2.4.4 Heritage as experience and performance**

As part of critical heritage studies, heritage is generally considered as a continuing dialogue between people and things. It is not merely '*being a thing*' (as a noun or a product), but also refers to '*doing*' (as a verb or a process) a set of attitudes to, and relationship with, the present past relating to the future (Emerick, 2014, p. 19; Harrison, 2013, p. xiii; Harvey, 2001, p. 327; L. Smith, 2006, pp. 44-45). Laurajane Smith, an archaeologist and a critical heritage scholar, (and others) proposed that heritage is itself the experience because it had to be experienced for it to be heritage (L. Smith, Morgan, & Meer, 2003, p. 75). Heritage as experience meant that heritage was not the site itself nor is it static or '*frozen in time*,' but rather was a

process that while it passed on established values and meanings in the culturally correct or appropriate contexts and times, it was also creating new meanings and values ((L. Smith, 2006, pp. 46-48). Russell Staiff referred to the term '*excess*,' coined by Elizabeth Grosz, in her book, *Architecture from the outside* (2001), that means '*something else (more) beyond the physical entity (surplus)*,' is uncontrollable and constantly breaks down the boundaries/borders between the physical entity and itself. In heritage, there is always '*something else*' outside the materiality of heritage that constitute the excess, for instance the discourses, technologies, system of regulation and the way things and places are valued, felt, experienced, internalized, consumed (and so on) which give the physical its legibility, its aura, its power, its intimacy (all of which occurs inside bodies) (Staiff, 2014a, p. 53).

Following the realm of non-representation or more-than-representational theories which challenging researches to go beyond the representational (Thrift, 1996), focusing on '*embodied*' experience and its utility for heritage studies, heritage could be perceived as people's active performances of, at and with heritage (sites) which are practiced and performed, subjective and situational, and emergent in particular setting (Haldrup & Børenholdt, 2015, pp. 52-53). Heritage performances are not only physical experiences of '*doing*', but also emotional experiences of '*being*'. The emotional content of performance is a significant aspect of the '*heritage experience*,' which itself not only makes, transmits and maintains social values and meaning, but does so in a manner that invokes, and indeed requires, self-conscious emotional acts of remembering and memory making (L. Smith, 2006, p. 71). David Crouch, a cultural geographer, also called for more attention on the energies, feelings, affects and emotions of the ordinary individuals when people encounter with heritage in order to democratize the understanding of heritage in an effort to reach wider audiences in people's heritage (Crouch, 2015, pp. 177, 187).

#### **2.4.5 The variability and subjectivity of heritage experiences**

It is noteworthy that the experience of (cultural) heritage is varied according to the person's realm of experience, the setting of the experience, and the intent of the experience from the point of view of the participator

and the provider (Baxter, 2014, pp. 2714-2716). The interest and knowledge of the individual, combined with chance encounters and varying perspectives, ensures that no two individuals will have exactly the same experience (Selby, 2010, p. 46). Like Baxter and Selby, Duncan Light, a human geographer, conceptualized heritage audiences as performers who actively engage with – rather than simply react to – heritage presentations, stated that each visitor will experience a (heritage) site differently, since the visitor's positionality and individual biography (such as background knowledge or prior experiences of other heritage places) will influence how they make sense of what they encounter and the meaning they will make during their visit (Light, 2015, p. 152). He also showed a number of recent studies that have explored the performance of visitors to heritage attractions which the experience of being at a heritage site is more open, emergent and full of possibilities than has been previously recognized. Some studies illustrated that visitors to heritage places are far from being passive consumers, but they are '*skillful and reflexive performers*' (Bagnall, 2003: 95, cited in Light, 2015, p. 153), which can consume and appropriate a heritage place in a wide variety of ways. Undeniably, they may (intentionally or unintentionally) '*mis-read*' a heritage attraction (Hannam and Knox, 2010, cited in Light, 2015, p. 153) and construct meanings and understandings that are entirely different from what the managers and heritage professionals (experts) intended (Light, 2015, p. 153). In addition, the concepts of '*non-authorized, unofficial or subaltern heritage*' (L. Smith, 2006) or '*heritage from below*' (Robertson, 2012) have opened up the way for understanding our engagement of the past as an active, emotional and embodied process – performative emotional engagement- of those marginal people who normally have unheard voices in heritage discourse and also extend these subaltern discourses to non-material and intangible forms of heritage (Robertson, 2012, pp. 11-12, 15)(Robertson, 2012, pp. 11-12, 15). The heritage, then, is about more than visitors, audience and consumption. It should include the sense of inheritance of 'ordinary people', both in the collective and the individual senses, concerning their experiences (feeling and thought) about their own heritage as well (Robertson, 2012, p. 1).

In conclusion, experience is approached as a vital analytical resource for cultural studies which is always in need of interrogation from heterogeneous perspectives. Focusing on experience in heritage, it is a dialectic process involving the integrative/contested relationship among the people, heritage (in the forms of objects, places and practices) and its 'excess' - something beyond heritage. This experiencing process can generally range from sensation to perception and conception of individual(s)/ collective groups that will encounter, engage, respond or attach to heritage in different ways. The '*embodied experience*' and '*performative heritage*' are both acceptable and renowned approaches for manifesting the understanding of how people and heritage interact and intervene with each other. Thus, not only the experiences of the outsiders (consumers or tourists) that should be emphasized in future studies, but also include the comprehension of insiders (providers or locals)'s experiences.

## **2.5 Postcolonialism and critical approach to heritage**

Postcolonialism has emerged as a significant theoretical framework for critically examining the complex legacies of colonialism and imperialism in contemporary society. By challenging the dominant discourses and power structures that have shaped the production and dissemination of knowledge, postcolonialism seeks to destabilize and transform the unequal relationships between the colonizers and the colonized. In recent years, postcolonial perspectives have also been applied to the field of heritage studies, offering new insights into the ways in which heritage is conceptualized, managed, and experienced in postcolonial contexts. This section explores the key concepts and approaches of postcolonialism and their relevance to critical heritage studies.

### **2.5.1 Understanding postcolonialism as a reaction to colonialism and imperialism**

Postcolonialism is an ideology or worldview that is typically considered as a reaction to or departure from colonialism and imperialism's thoughts, addressing the politics of knowledge (the generation, production, and

distribution of knowledge) which constitute the postcolonial identity<sup>8</sup> of a decolonized people (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013; Hall, 1996). It aims to destabilize those theories/logics (especially those that are still activated and practiced in contemporary society or had effects on the decolonized world<sup>9</sup>) which were constructed by the colonialists through their perceiving, understanding, and knowing of the world (Chakrabarty, 2009; Spivak, 2023). Since the postcolonialism concept offers a way of experiencing things differently from the others' perspectives, it involves a wide variety of approaches that people may not always agree on a common set of definitions. However, on a simple level, it may search for a better understanding of colonial life from the point of view of the colonized people (how differently things look and why) and on a deeper level, it should examine more on an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies, rather than merely the chronological construction of post-independence and/or just the discursive experience of imperialism (Gilbert, Tompkins, & Boire, 1998; R. J. C. Young, 2003, p. 2). The concept of postcolonialism is not only confined to the results representing the aftermath of Western colonialism (began about 1500 A.D.), but it can also be applied to the concurrent situations in which people today are still subordinated under various forms of imperialism (including new forms of global empire/imperialism, internal colonization, or crypto-colonialism<sup>10</sup>) or even someone who is part of a culture and yet excluded by its dominant voices,

<sup>8</sup> The postcolonial identity of a decolonized people derives from two aspects. The first one is the colonizer's generation of cultural knowledge about the colonized people, and another is how that Western cultural knowledge was applied to overpower a non-European people into a colony of the European mother country, which after initial invasion, was affected by means of the cultural identities of 'colonizer' and 'colonized' (Fontein, 2006; E. W. Said, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> The Dictionary of Human Geography indicates some characteristics of the decolonized world as an intellectual space of contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, of hybridity, and of liminalities (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Herzfeld proposes the term 'crypto-colonialism' to transcend the binarism of colonizers and colonized to generate a tripartite taxonomy of colonialism, in his article '*The absence presence: Discourses of crypto-colonialism.*' He defines that it is '*the curious alchemy where certain countries, buffer zone (contact zone) between the colonized lands and those as yet untamed, were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models. Such countries were and are living in paradoxes: they are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a sometimes-humiliating form of effective dependence*' (Herzfeld, 2002, pp. 900-901). He names the two countries, Greece and Thailand, which deliberately display some common characteristics of crypto-colonialism condition.



*'inside yet outside'* (R. J. C. Young, 2003, p. 2). Postcolonialism might be used to refer to the struggles of indigenous people in many parts of the world and also helps to establish intellectual spaces for the others, subaltern or subordinated peoples in various forms to speak out for themselves, in their own voices, from their own perspectives in order to balance the imbalanced us-and-them binary power-relationship between the colonist and the colonized peoples (Iverson, 2018; Loomba, 2015). Above all, postcolonialism claims the right of all people on this planet to the same material and cultural well-being and seeks to intervene or to enforce its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west in order to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples of the world (R. J. C. Young, 2003, pp. 2, 6-7).

### **2.5.2 Applying postcolonial perspectives to heritage discourse**

As a part of critical approaches to heritage, postcolonialism concept has also been applied to heritage discourse. John Giblin, one of the heritage scholars who introduce the postcolonial critical approach to heritage, in his writing, *Critical approaches to postcolonial (post-conflict) heritage*, he refers to George Orwell's famous quote:

*[...] Who controls the past controls the future...who controls the present controls the pasts' which might be implied that...heritage broadly conceived as the use of the past in the present, is a locus of (invested and contested political, sacred, economic and cultural) power, through the appropriation of which the dominant in the society may attempt to control the future by creating historical justification for contemporary goals [...]*

*(Giblin, 2015, pp. 313, 315)*

He also suggests using the postcolonialism ideas for:

*[...] Exploring the history and legacy of the relationship between political power, colonialism and heritage and related lingering heritage colonialities in post-colonial contexts...together with*



*...considering more generally on the colonial nature of authorized heritage professional discourse and practice [...]*

*(Giblin, 2015, p. 313)*

For his post-colonial approach to heritage, which began in the colonial period with the arrival of Western heritage practices but continue today as acts of colonial-style authorized heritage practices in the postcolonial era, he draws upon the theoretical findings of two critiques under the Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis, the first one is Edward Said's post-colonial critique and another is Laurajane Smith's authorized conceptions of heritage (Giblin, 2015, pp. 313, 317).

### **2.5.3 The 3R's model of postcolonial (post-conflict) heritage**

John Giblin proposes the re-triangle of postcolonial (post-conflict) heritage model (3R's) which includes three connected elements: reappropriation, recycling and renewal of the concepts (worldviews/approaches), the attached meanings (significances/identities) and the making uses (functions/commodification) of heritage rhetoric and 'things' from the pasts for achieving socio-economic and political goals within the changing spatial and historical context of wider discourses, struggles and contestations in the new present and the upcoming future (Fontein, 2006, p. 213; Giblin, 2015, pp. 317, 318-325). Then, at the end, he concludes and defines the critical approaches to postcolonial (post-conflict) heritage as:

*[...] A typical exploring the cycling, 're' or otherwise, of power through heritage sites, events, practices and other heritage 'things' as these have moved from precolonial, to colonial and to post-colonial ownership [...]*

*(Giblin, 2015, p. 325)*

## **2.6 A multi-dimensional dialogue between people and materiality in heritage**

In recent years, the study of material culture and the associated heritage have become more important as scholars and practitioners continue to work on comprehending the intricate, living relationships between people and

the material world. This section draws on interdisciplinary approaches from archaeology, anthropology, and cultural studies in order to elaborate the various ways in which people negotiate with materiality in heritage contexts and the relative need for critical and inclusive approaches that are cognizant of a diversity of cultural perspectives and practices.

### **2.6.1 The significance of material culture and materiality in heritage studies**

Material culture is the physical aspect of culture in the '*things*' (material world) that surround people. It includes usage, consumption, creation, and trade of things as well as the behaviors, norms, and rituals that the things create or involve. The studies of material culture require interdisciplinary approaches to scrutinize the complex relationships between human individuals and between humans and their environments (including the making, history, preservation and interpretation of things). It is strongly believed that by focusing on the use and status of material evidences (mainly created objects or artifacts), it can attribute or facilitate the analysis and understanding of cultural change in the past or present (Hicks & Beaudry, 2010; Renfrew, 2004, p. 23). Material past, which is considered as things that have survived from a distant or recent past down to modern (contemporary) times (Karlstrom, 2005, p. 340), has also played significant roles in various fields of social sciences and humanities, such as art history, archaeology, anthropology, history, historic preservation, folklore, literary criticism, and museum studies, among others (Buchli, 2002; Tilley, Keane, Kuechler, Rowlands, & Spyer, 2006). Anna Karlstrom, a lecturer and researcher in heritage studies, suggests using the term '*materiality*' instead of '*material culture*' since she claims that the reader will better appreciate the materiality of cultural life and better approach objects as things embodied, as material characters. Also, it allows us to reveal materiality's aftereffect, or rather complement, namely '*spirituality*' (Karlstrom, 2005, p. 340).

Material things can hold for us other properties than purely physical ones (for instance, masses, size, color and others). Those properties are generally socially determined, to name a few, '*value*' is clearly ascribed socially in which nothing is '*of value*' unless it is '*valued*' by people

(Renfrew, 2004, p. 26). For that reason, people will engage with materiality in a different way subject to various aspects including their worldviews, backgrounds or past experiences. In heritage practices, for instance, Denis Byrne, a senior heritage researcher experienced in cultural politics of heritage practice in Australia and Southeast Asia, indicates that many archaeological sites in Southeast Asia have their underground antiquities perceived differently by various groups of people as numinous, collectable or archaeological objects (Byrne, 2014, p. 16). Thus, there is, predictably, a call for critical and interdisciplinary approaches to materiality engagement in order to effectively and efficiently support various groups of people encountering with the material things in the ever-changing contexts.

### **2.6.2 Challenging the dominant Western approaches to heritage and materiality**

As we all know, historically, heritage discourse has been generally dominated by the Western (European) scholars and the modern<sup>11</sup>, Cartesian, scientific approaches in which simply privilege the material, the linear and the grand heritage (Karlstorm, 2016). It shares the view that matter is inert and passive or secular-mundane (Olsen, 2010, cited in Byrne, 2014, p. 5), and then they tend to '*manage*' or treat heritage substance as purely human artefacts which are taken against dispersion and seeks to stabilize built fabric (Byrne, 2014, p. 4). However, unlike the mainstream, conventional approaches to heritage (or secular-rationalist Western worldviews), the practices of '*popular religions*'<sup>12</sup>, which are still

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<sup>11</sup> The modern state wanted to know everything (unlike the pre-modern that knew very little about its subjects). But in order to know its subject, it has had to standardized, simplified, made legible and thus rendered more governable across disparate fields in their lives (Byrne, 2014, p. 57).

<sup>12</sup> Popular religions have been involving a great deal of heritage discourses in many places outside the Western. Denis Byrne indicates that '*Popular religions are beliefs and practices, distinguished from those characterized institutional text-based, mainstream religions, which believers have faith in material agency or numinous and efficacious materiality. The followers have in common belief that the places, buildings and objects associated with the spirits and deities they worship are animated by miraculously efficacious supernatural power or imbued with magical power. They apprehend the materiality of these places and things to be continuous with the divinities they worship or pacify. The efficacy can be transferred via contagion between human bodies and magical objects and that it can be mobilized for human ends by the practice of magic*' (Byrne, 2014, pp. 1-3). '*The relationship between people and empowered objects is considered interdependence, since people hope to benefit from the objects' power, but the object is seen as needing the prayers, offerings, or other support of people in order to maximize its efficacy*' (Byrne, 2014, p. 28).

flourishing in modern contemporary Asia, Africa, Latin America and parts of Europe exercised by millions of people<sup>13</sup>, normally treat heritage ingredients as sacred objects and sites or phenomena<sup>14</sup> that have supernatural qualities arising from the pushed effects of divine and human agency in a web of connectivity (Byrne, 2011, p. 4; 2014, pp. 3.5, 31). In this conception, materiality is far from being inert: it has agency which, in this sense, is not (readily) available to be managed (Byrne, 2011, p. 7).

### **2.6.3 The influence of popular religions on heritage practices in Southeast Asia**

In Southeast Asia, before the arrival of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam to the region, animist in nature is the earliest religious practices which still carried on and merged with later religions. So nowadays, we can perceive mixed-believed practices at the local level. For example, in heritage practices, we regularly find local people believing that archaeological sites (along with natural landscape features) have spirits existing in them or associated with them. Then, it is common to find shrines worshipping such spirits at archaeological sites or to find offerings or wrapped in Buddhist monastic ropes on archaeological objects. Also, in Thailand archaeological sites and ruins may be considered as occupied by spirits (*Phi*) and guardian deities. Where sites and ruins are newly discovered or before starting excavation, the locals customarily suggest the '*outsiders*' experts to bring in local mediums (who claim that they could communicate with the spirits) for leading the worship ceremonies to the resident spirits in order to pay respect and grant a permission to work properly and peacefully at the sites or even foreseen the location of the buried materials. (Byrne, 2011, p. 4; 2014, p. 27; Peleggi, 2012, p. 65). Therefore, the practices of popular

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<sup>13</sup> As in many parts of Asia, especially South East Asia, even though, belief in the numinous is overridden and be prioritized by modernity and rationality, it seem clears that the popular belief (which its very nature as uninstitutionalized, unorthodox and undergrounded, then makes it relatively invisible to outsider) considering old and ancient objects and places have supernatural qualities has never totally abandoned since the gods, spirits and the divine have not only confined to heaven but are regarded as a living force in the contemporary landscape (Byrne, 2011, p. 7; 2014, p. 3).

<sup>14</sup> Those sacred matters which some people believing that they have magical vibrancy or spirits residing at them or associate with them include archaeological sites and remains (e.g., monumental ruins, prehistoric pottery, stone tolls, glass beads and objects associated with important historical figures, etc.) and natural landscape features (e.g., rocks and stones of unusual shape, certain trees and springs, caves, mountains, etc.) (Byrne, 2011, p. 4; 2014, p. 31).

religions (together with canonical religions) still intensely influence the archaeological heritage discourse across the Southeast Asia region.

#### **2.6.4 The contradiction between Buddhist ideology and heritage conservation**

Anna Karlstrom raises an interesting issue about heritage conservation and materiality in her article, *Spiritual materiality: Heritage preservation in a Buddhist world?* After her archaeological heritage work in Laos, for more than 10 years, she points out a contradiction between archaeology and heritage management and Buddhist ideology proposing that there are two opposing Utopia, dealing with the same material things. On one hand, Buddhism ideology deals considerably with materiality<sup>15</sup> where the impermanence of matter is one of the three characteristics of existence in Buddhism<sup>16</sup> implying that the decay of a material world is inevitable and necessary for the continuation of life and rebirth and finally enlightenment, the ultimate goal, in another word, everything is unstable and ever-changing, and therefore nothing can be or should be preserved. On the other hand, the ideal goal of heritage conservation and management is that all valuable things from the past must be maintained, unaltered (or preserve everything). In addition, in Western societies, inherent in the heritage ideas is a desire to pass on the perceived '*valuable things*' to the next generation or even inventing new things for now and the future, whereas in a strictly Buddhist worldview such desire is one of the main reasons for unsatisfactoriness in which the ongoing thirst for possession and satisfaction of desires without realizing that there are no ends for such desires which will be forever bound to the wheel of existence and will never reach the

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<sup>15</sup> There is a general distinction between canonical and popular Buddhism concerning the materiality. Karlstrom states that '*...In canonical Buddhism, which is more or less institutionalized, materiality is a matter of no concern, whereas in popular Buddhism, materiality becomes extremely significant as people gain merit and tangible benefits through constantly performing 'material' acts, such as offerings...*' (Karlstrom, 2005, p. 341).

<sup>16</sup> Karlstrom indicates the three interdependent elements in the central teaching of Buddha (Dharma) comprising of unsatisfactoriness (Duhkla), absence of a Self (Anatman) and impermanence (Anitya). She further explains the interrelation between the three as such: '*...Happiness in life is dependent on 'unsatisfaction' to the extent that both happiness and life are impermanent. That is, things are unsatisfactory because they are impermanent. They do not last forever, or even for a moment, but are in a constant state of change. As a consequence of this, neither feelings, thoughts, things nor life are completely under control and therefore cannot be regarded as one's identity, as identity denies the existence of a self-underlying the phenomenon of experience...*' (Karlstrom, 2005, pp. 347-348).



ultimate goal (nirvana). Consequently, since the desire would be considered the fundamental motive for preserving heritage, then from a strictly Buddhist perspective, the three characteristics of existence thus make heritage preservation irrelevant or even impossible (Karlstrom, 2005, pp. 338-339, 348). She also puts forward the following analogy that ‘...*In a Buddhist world, spirituality is experienced through materiality, and in a non-Buddhist world, identity is preserved through materiality...*’ (Karlstrom, 2005, p.352, cited in Peleggi, 2012, p. 65). However, for her article, she does not suggest that we need to choose between these two extreme approaches (non-preservationist ideals delivered through Buddhist ideologies vs. preserving all conservationist ideal delivered through present scientific principles of preservation), but rather she suggests a need to challenge current heritage management practices, broadening their point of views, by including more of those ‘*other*’ practices into their discourses (Karlstrom, 2005, pp. 352-353).

#### **2.6.5 Contested practices and the need for inclusive approaches**

As a result of their different viewpoints, the practices on material past by the experts and the locals might be occasionally contested with each other over physical fabric, since local people tend to see the sacredness of old things not as something (only) historical but as a dynamic, living force that is continuously firmly situated in the present (Byrne, 2011, p. 6). Similarly, Alexandra Denes, a cultural anthropologist focusing on critical heritage studies and practice in Southeast Asia, agrees with several scholars that within the fusion religious epistemology of popular Buddhism, historical religious structures are not regarded as archaeological sites belonging to the past. Rather, they are regarded as sites of forceful spiritual power that can be connected through propitiation, worship, and renovation (Denes, 2012, p. 186). An example of this difference has been further revealed by Denis Byrne who points out that:



*[...] Unlike the heritage conservation practice that takes against dispersion and seeks to stabilize built fabric, popular religion favors the piling up of fabric, renovation upon renovation, according to the logic that spirits and deities are honor by the labor and funding expended in the renewal and elaboration of the fabric of their temples and shrines [...]*

*(Byrne, 2014, p. 4)*

In addition, the associations which contemporary local people have with archaeological sites and landscape tend to be overlooked. The experts are mainly concerned with the archaeological record for any one period as a part of landscape that belongs to 'in' and 'to' that period. They think of it as relating to the society that produced it and tend not to see it as an integrated part of the present-day human landscapes (Byrne, 2011, p. 9). Therefore, the gaps between these two approaches require further examination in order to create a more comprehensive understanding of the multitude of conceptions that relate to these material things in a wider context.

In the regime of critical heritage studies, there is a call for presenting new ways (possibilities) of thinking about and doing heritage by bringing those marginalized and excluded to the forefront. Anna Karlstorm mentions the 'Asian' approaches to heritage which have been identified as being important to embrace, since such approaches represent the 'other' non-Western cultural heritage tradition which show partiality towards the spiritual, the immaterial, and the imaginative. She also notes that these alternative approaches might be necessary for challenging a global heritage practice with its international and well-established standards based on European notions of time, materiality, and aesthetics (Karlstorm, 2016). In order to bridge the local/professional practices in heritage, Denis Byrne asks the experts preparing to meet the locals halfway, at minimum, by 'giving weight'<sup>17</sup> to local beliefs and that, for example, certain old places have supernatural significant and agency. An ethical issue, such as this,

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<sup>17</sup> For Byrne, he does not mean that everyone has to believe in supernatural power, but just only prepare to imagine what it would be like to experience them that way.

shows how far experts respect other people's beliefs and how sincere they are in regard to working with them (Information Technology Center Cultural Heritage, 2015, p. 1). This is certainly one of the most important key factors for enacting successful heritage conservation policies and programs at local level.

## **2.7 The uses of heritage and its commodification**

Heritage is a multi-faceted resource that is valued and used for a variety of purposes in contemporary society. From economic development and tourism promotion to the construction of individual and collective identities, heritage plays a significant role in shaping our understanding of the past, present, and future. This section explores the various uses of heritage, with a particular focus on the process of commodification and its implications for heritage tourism and the creative use of folklore in Thailand.

### **2.7.1 The multi-dimensional use of heritage**

Heritage can be simply perceived as a resource which is generally given values and purposefully used in a plurality of aspects. As J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth note:

*[...] When people produce heritage, the present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future [...]*

*(Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 6)*

We normally engage with heritage by using it as a view from the present, either backward to a selected (constructed) past or forward to an imagined future in order to meet the contemporary economic, cultural, political or social purposes (B. Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000, pp. 9, 22). Heritage is not only commodified as a major economic resource (tool/goods) and employed in strategies to promote tourism, economic development and rural/urban regeneration, it also has a crucial socio-political function helping to define the meaning of culture and power and being as a part of both individual and communal representations of identity in many societies (B. Graham et al., 2000, pp. 22-23). Heritage is

*'...commonly used to build nationalism and patriotism at the domestic level and spread propaganda or the advantages of particular political ideologies to international visitors...'* (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 3). For instance, in Maurizio Peleggi's book, *the politics of ruins and the business of nostalgia* (2002), he points out that several selected national heritage sites in Thailand are both utilized as national tourist attractions in which they are apparently commodified and consumed for, and by, the Thai tourism industry and, at the same time, are also parts of the construction of Thai national identity or *'Thai imagined communities'* (Anderson, 1991; Peleggi, 2002).

Heritage is a complex and highly political phenomenon. Nonetheless, heritage is obviously not the totality of the history of a place or a fixed and describable truth (which is expressed through preserved and presented artefacts and interpretations). In fact, there is no such thing as a single history (story) of places, events or objects. Heritage, then, is rather recognized as *'...A created phenomenon continuously recreated anew according to changing attitudes and demand...'* (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, pp. 2-3; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 10). Consequently, the multiple uses and consumptions of heritage by various involved interest groups across a variety of scales, might, potentially, exhibit in a variety of ways an intrinsic quality of heritage called *'heritage contestation or dissonance'* in many ways (B. Graham et al., 2000, p. 12). The foundational cause of the contested nature of heritage is that the selected resources (places, buildings, sites, etc.) are generally converted into heritage products through an interpretation process – basically the art of telling the story of place<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> From *'a model of heritage production'* by Tunbridge and Ashworth, in the transformation (interpretation or packaging) process, they suggest that it is not (only) the physical components of heritage (e.g. historic sites or artefacts) that are actually trade, sold or transmitted into the *'core heritage product,'* but also the tangible ideas, feelings or experiences (e.g. fantasy, nostalgia, pleasure, pride, etc.) which are communicated or exchanged through thematic interpretation of the physical elements. The model generally implicates with three aspects; firstly, there is the absence of a fixed and once-for-ever endowed quality of heritage resource in which the heritage product is rather determined by the requirements of the consumer (market-driven models), not solely, the existence of the resources in an ultimately listable, agreed and fixed quality; Secondly, the production of heritage, particularly in a market-driven system, becomes the matter for deliberate goal-directed choice by various stakeholders on both the consumer and producer sides; Lastly, the definition of authenticity (as a primary tool contributing the construction of accuracy in preserving heritage or as a self-explanatory justification and criterion for heritage selection and interpretation) in this model is not only provided by the producers (the experts or external authentication), but also is derived from the experience of the consumers (internal

(Walsh-Heron and Stevens, 1990, cited in Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 8). At that juncture, what is interpreted (what story is told), how it is interpreted and by whom will create different messages about the values and meanings of specific heritage places and the past being represented. Dissonant views of history and the perceived superiority of various heritages have been at the root of many conflicts. Each view of the past and each way it is presented will be subjective in nature. This undoubtedly causes the discrepancies among various stakeholders who interpret and use heritage differently (Bui & Lee, 2015, p. 190; Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 3; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 8).

### **2.7.2 Heritage commodification and tourism**

Heritage commodification is the process through which cultural themes or expressions and aspects of heritage become '*cultural commodities*' which are to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value and transformed into commodities to be bought, sold, and profited from (Cohen, 1988, p. 8; B. Graham et al., 2000). The opinions of various heritage stakeholders concerning commodifying heritage are diverse, '*...ranging from the acceptance of some form of commodification as a means of attracting interest and revenue to those who argue that the process causes loss of authenticity and meaning...*' (Prideaux, 2003, p. 1). Heritage tourism<sup>19</sup>, which typically comes under the realm of cultural tourism, as part of a modern consumption of entertainment, is a form of economic use of heritage, normally entailing the transformation of those potential cultural expressions into '*cultural goods*' or '*heritage products*' in which tourists can consume or experience heritage at different depths or qualities through a process of commodification (Bui & Lee, 2015, pp. 189-190; Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 1).

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authentication), specifically, from the extent that the product satisfies whatever expectation of the consumer in the past (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, pp. 6-11).

<sup>19</sup> In the past, heritage tourism, which entails visiting sites where historic events occurred or where interesting and significant cultures stand out, was once regarded as a specialist, niche activity that was thought to be sought by a small number of better educated, more affluent tourists who were looking for something other than the standard sun, sand, and sea holiday. But today, it is more likely to be placed at the forefront of mainstream global tourism, since the widespread importance of heritage resources dealing with a number of people and attractions in many parts of the world (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 2).

Drawing various ideas from consumer marketing perspectives along with an understanding of the influence of the past on people's lives from David Lowenthal's renowned and highly significant book, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), Georgios Papageorgiou proposes three distinct but interrelated categories of how people use the past (heritage) for contemporary marketing purposes (commercial heritage industry): (a) nostalgia and retro-making, in the sense of the romanticizing and idealizing of the past – '*yesterday is better*'; (b) reliving or re-creating the past, in the sense of projecting older values, fashions and so on onto later societies, centering on concepts such as '*vintage*,' '*classic*,' '*old's cool*,' '*retro*' and so forth; and (c) longevity and tradition, in the sense of a guarantee of quality and the interpretation of time as 'the secret ingredient' (Papageorgiou, 2015, pp. 478-491).

It is widely known that each cultural tourist attraction generally needs to define its '*selling point*' or establishing a set of specific characteristics that set itself apart from other destinations in order to draw more tourist attention (capital). Cultural tourism allows local communities associated with each attraction to choose how they will present themselves to the world by defining who they are, what are their prides and strengthening their identities through the commodification of certain cultural aspects that each community values or considers important and worthy of reproduction as '*authentic experiences*'<sup>20</sup> to satisfy tourists (Adams, 2006; Chambers, 2009). John Urry who coined the well-known term '*tourist gaze*' (Urry, 1990) indicated that when tourists participated in heritage tourism at local level, they had a particular set of expectations that were placed on local people in their constant search for so called authentic experiences. Locals members of host communities would generally respond back to the '*gaze*' of tourist expectations for their financial benefits (Stronza, 2001, cited in Woodside & Martin, 2015, p. 2). However, when the pasts in heritage tourism have been distorted, sanitized or invented as idealized pasts to

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<sup>20</sup> Dallen Timothy and Stephen Boyd suggest that from various scholars' perspectives, not all the tourists do seek for truly authentic experiences from their destinations. Moreover, some of them are not be able to distinguish artificial from authentic heritage. Rather seeking reality, most visitors commonly require a holiday experience that is entertaining, enjoyable and memorable in which the destination promotional efforts that frequently '*present fairy tales as facts and replicas as reality*' will lure the visitors to believe that inauthentic heritage is authentic (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 5).



please the visitors (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, pp. 5-6), the gaze is often regarded as a destructive process. This is particularly so when the locals excessively reduce certain important (local) cultural themes/traditions to commodities and, at the same time, neglect other cultural expressions that cannot be commoditized (or cultural expressions not in the tourism spotlights). The risk is that these will eventually disappear (Woodside & Martin, 2015, p. 2). To minimize this dissonance, it is argued that there should be a balance between the multifaceted uses of heritage in tourism – economical, social and political.

### **2.7.3 The use of 'creative folklores' in Thai heritage tourism**

As one of the essential parts of local heritage, folklore is an expressive cultural pattern of ideas, beliefs, and customs shared by a particular group of people in various forms encompassing oral traditions (such as myths, legends, tales, proverbs, and jokes), material culture (ranging from traditional building styles to handmade tools or toys), and also customary lore, the form and rituals of celebrations (for instance, local ceremonies and festivals, folk dances, local music, and initiation rites). Generally, these folklore traditions or artifacts are transmitted informally from one region to another, or from one generation to the next, either through verbal instruction or demonstration; in other words, not typically gained through established institutions (Bronner, 2019; Duangwises, 2019; Sims & Stephens, 2011). Siraporn Nathalang, in her editorial book titled *'Praphēnī sāngsan nai sangkhom Thai rūamsamai'* (*The creative traditions in contemporary Thai society*), reveals that for the last one to two decades in Thailand, society has changed dramatically through those years, and reflected in a number of new emerging socio-cultural phenomena. The dynamic phenomena of folklore as *'modern folklore'* are also continuously taking place by applying traditional folklore to new social contexts in the present, such as using mythological stories for tourism, changing or inventing new traditions to create local or ethnic identities for *'commercial'* purposes (Nathalang, 2015, p. 386). She also indicates that globalized tourism is one of several socio-cultural contexts which urges contemporary Thai society to apply and use its own tradition (folklore) differently from the past. Within the globalization context in which people

are more comfortable making contacts with each other and learning and exchanging cultures with others become more convenient, a number of Thai development policies and campaigns continuously target supporting the tourism industry, for instance, *'Visit Thailand Year,' 'Amazing Thailand,' 'Unseen Thailand,'* and *'Discover Thainess'*. This is considered a primary reason why folk cultures and traditional rituals have been widely revived or invented as heritage capital and become 'value-added' and 'selling products' for heritage tourism (Nathalang, 2015, pp. 386-387). The term *'creative folklore'*<sup>21</sup> has also been firstly defined by Nathalang, in her another book, *'Khati chon sāngsan bot sangkhrō læ thritsadī'* (*Creative folklore: dynamics and application of folklore in contemporary Thai society*). By drawing the conforming idea from the *'creative economy'* concept together with several others<sup>22</sup>, she defines the term *'creative folklore'* as:

*[...] Those folklores with new creations or reproductions in contemporary Thai context that have been cumulated, applied, reinterpreted and given new meanings in order to purposely utilize folklores 'to create more value' or 'to create local (ethnic) identity' [...]*

*(Nathalang, 2016, pp. 18-20)*

Further, she claims that there are four fundamental cultural factors that influence the emergence of creative folklore phenomena in contemporary Thai society, including the improvisation nature of Thai oral tradition, the patron-client system between the Thai state and the public, the reliance on external forces in religious/spiritual rituals, and modern Thai social life in

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<sup>21</sup> Even in the Royal society of Thailand's Dictionary 2011, the word *'creative,'* if used as an adverb, means *'be initiated in a good way'* which is meant to be *'positive'*. However, in Nathalang's book, the term *'creative'* is used in the sense that it is something *'rebuilt'* in a new context and has neutral meaning without judging or assessing whether *'creative'* things are positive or negative. In this way, the words *'creative folks'* and *'creative traditions'* emphasize issues that are *'rebuilt'* without saying that those rebuilt folklores or traditions are right or wrong (suitable or not suitable), because the value judgment can be viewed differently from many aspects depending on the position of the viewers.

<sup>22</sup> Those concepts include, for instance, dynamics of folklore, transmission of folklore, cultural reproduction, invented tradition, applied folklore, cultural hybridization, popular culture, ethnic identity and etc.

cyberspace<sup>23</sup>. Nathalang also mentions '*creative tradition*' as a part of dynamic folklore, following the concept of '*invented tradition*' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992). It points out that those continuously emerging creative traditions in Thai contemporary tourism are normally evolved, developed, adapted, reproduced, or invented from the basis of old traditions or past culture, especially based on the history of political and governmental affairs or Buddhist ideology. It adds that those newly invented traditions will typically tend to be more acceptable and extensively continued by the general public if they are organized or (financially) supported by the government or official agencies<sup>24</sup> (Nathalang, 2016, pp. 52-53). Then, a number of Thai folklore traditions or rituals today are becoming more like '*festivals*' or '*performances*' for

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<sup>23</sup> In addition, Nathalang has elaborately described the relationships between the creative folklore dynamic and these four cultural factors. Firstly, the improvisation nature of Thai oral tradition. Since from the past, Thai society has relied more on 'oral culture' than '*reading and writing culture*'. This causes its cultural patterns to be loosely structured and not strictly confined. Then, there are possibilities for Thais to comfortably apply or freely improvise their own culture, especially, their arts and folklores. As the improvised culture tends to emphasize on the new creation, thus, most of the Thais usually manipulate, adapt or apply their traditional culture (folklore) into new forms in the new contexts. Secondly, the patron-client system between the Thai states and the publics. From the long past, Thai society has been fundamentally based on the patron-client system (feudal system) which tremendously values the '*vertical reciprocal relationship*' between the patrons (protectors) and the clients (servant). After the arriving of bureaucratic system in which obviously inherit the patron-client concept from the past, the relationship between '*government officers*' and '*ordinary people*' tends to be '*the superiors*' and '*the follows*.' Today, the dynamic of Thai culture is determined by a number of governmental sectors who act like '*commanders*' in supporting the traditional activities/events at the local by providing budgets or giving guidelines and policies. Consequently, the locals have revived and transformed their old traditions (or even invented new forms) into the contemporary cultural practices in order to follow the authorized directions, at the same time, trying to please and making profits from the visitors. As a result, several traditional customs or local rituals have become tourism festivals or performances. Thirdly, the reliant on external forces in religious/spiritual rituals. Although, nowadays, the majority of Thais are Buddhists who are taught and expected to principally use their own wisdom and consciousness in considering any problems, a number of them are considered as '*dependent Buddhists*' which are still asking for the '*external*' or '*supernatural*' power to help to protect, relieve or eliminate their sufferings and fulfill their wishes (as influenced by the Animism or Supernaturalism before the arriving of Buddhism) instead of relying on themselves. Therefore, new forms of creative tradition (folklore) are introduced in order to serve the demands of establishing the '*blessing*' or '*life guarantee*' for people who are struggling in the Capitalism and Consumerism societies. Lastly, the modern Thai social life in cyberspaces. As today, social networks have become major tools for Thais to communicate and share their social life with others. The organizers of several traditional events or festivals in Thailand have been using these tools for promoting and encouraging people to visit and participate in their activities by creating the new culture of '*shopping-tasting-taking photos and sharing on social media*' in the contemporary society. This culture emphasis more on the beauty, the spectacle and the fascinating narration that could be efficiently commodified or sold rather than searching for the authenticity or the actual meaning of the traditions or practices (Nathalang, 2016, pp. 152-172).

<sup>24</sup> For instance, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Provincial Administrative Organization, Local Administrative Organization or Municipalities, etc.

'outsiders' rather than autonomously belonging to the locals or 'insiders' as in the past. Several of them have been transformed from 'folk traditions' into 'nation-state traditions' (Nathalang, 2016, p. 113).

In addition, the dynamics of creative folklore phenomena have also been extensively explored in the Northeastern part of Thailand, particularly the Mekong River's sub-region, by Pathom Hongsuwan, in his research writing, *'Phonlawat læ kānsāng praphēnī pradit nai chumchon 'Īsān'* (*Dynamics and creation of invented traditions in the Isan community*). After researching more than 30 contemporary invented traditions in several communities along the Mekong River, he states that those traditions, which are both long-time invented or recently invented,<sup>25</sup> could be classified into 5 categories in which they are created to serve several purposes including traditional beliefs (e.g., animism, superstition, popular religion, etc.), (Popular) Buddhist philosophy, natural resource conservation, cross-national relationship promotion, and ethnic tourism (Hongsuwan, 2015, pp. 260-269). He also adds that a number of them tend to be changed from sacred practices into profane traditions by deemphasizing the importance of their religious/spiritual values and driving them into the cultural politics sphere. For instance, using the invented traditions for prolonging their ethnic identities, for constructing citizenships of nation-states and supporting nationalism or localism ideologies, for advocating transnationalism relationships, and for the commodification of culture in heritage tourism (Hongsuwan, 2015, p. 259). Similar to other regions of Thailand that are encountering the clash of global and local cultures, in terms of heritage tourism, the Mekong River communities gradually adapt and compatibly transform their cultures with the development policies of the nation-state. For example, the Thai government has classified the traditions/festivals in the *'Hêet sîp sǒng'* (*Twelve Annual Festivals of Isan people observed one per month*)<sup>26</sup> and appointed each province in the northeastern region to be the main host of each festival each month all year

<sup>25</sup> Including those traditions that are revived from their own pasts, applied from their own traditions, borrowed from others and newly invented (Hongsuwan, 2015, p. 279).

<sup>26</sup> *'Hêet sîp sǒng'* tradition is the connectivity of Isan's living in a year that combines the folk Buddhism ideology and indigenous beliefs in which the folk Buddhism's rituals mainly concern with *'Bun baa-rá-mee'* (Merits and good deeds), at the same time, the indigenous beliefs generally relate to making merits to the spirits or the supernatural being (Hongsuwan, 2015, pp. 307-308).



round. Then, each province (and local communities) is willing to '*readjust*' or '*sanitize*' their folk customs to be compatible with the '*Thainess*' ideology of the central government, which tends to particularly focus on '*appealing*' practices/traditions as '*cultural products*' that are attractive and saleable to visitors. As a result, the locals have lost their self-directed rights to culture (Hongsuwan, 2015, p. 306). Although a number of people might consider that those contemporary invented traditions are particularly generated for '*cost benefits*' rather than '*sentimental values*' like in the past, some of them are still searching for better ways to maintain, restore, and pass on the spirit of their own traditions properly to the next generation. The study of these invented traditions will help us to understand more about the complexity of cultural adaptation in which each community tries to survive in the contemporary world with creativity (Hongsuwan, 2015, p. 314).

## **2.8 Living within and Experiencing World Heritage Sites**

Inclusion on the World Heritage List (WHL) can significantly alter the existence of communities, their everyday activities, value systems, and the manner in which individuals engage with the cultural dynamics of the area. The challenges of living and existing in World Heritage Sites (WHS) as well as experiences and corresponding transformations are also described in this section.

### **2.8.1 Impacts of World Heritage Designation on Local Cultures**

WHS designation can create a divide between areas inside and outside the WHS, affecting stakeholder engagement and socio-economic conditions (Della Lucia & Franch, 2017). Being named a WHS has varying effects on regional cultures and spillovers can be either beneficial or negative. On the positive side, heritage sites can cultivate the feelings of identity and community pride among residents, and those people can form a deep emotional attachment to their heritage sites (Hoang, Brown, & Kim, 2020; Nian et al., 2019; Yuan, Song, Chen, & Shang, 2019). Place attachment and community satisfaction linked to perception of benefits from tourism, specifically economic gains, and infrastructure development (Nian, Liu, Chen, & Cheng, 2023). World Heritage tourism leads to cultural exchanges and increase of knowledge and awareness and appreciation of regional



culture and heritage. S. Y. Said, N. S. Abdullah and Z. Ithnin found that tourism fostered social contact between villagers and visitors, aroused a feeling of community oneness, and revitalized local customs and handicraft at Kampung Morten, a historically traditional Malay village in Malacca, Malaysia (listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 2008) where the respondents acknowledged that tourism promoted better social contact and increase the unity between local communities and the visitors (S. Said, Abdullah, & Ithnin, 2017). Also, it brings great value economically by improving the quality of life of the community and sustaining job and household income, as well as it does to the famous Angkor Wat of Cambodia (Included in UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1992) where it become a living laboratory demonstrating the potential projects aimed at improving the lives of communities (around 700,000 inhabitants) through the implementation of sustainable tourism that respects local sensitivities and capably support some five million visitors each year (UNESCO, 2023).

There are also the negative ones, unlike the positive. Cultural traditions tend to get commoditized, turning from cultural practices into marketable products spurred by economic imperatives (Bruckermann, 2016; Maags, 2021; Wells, 2006). Such process has tendency to distort the real cultural values and practices. Commercialization of cultural heritage both magnifies and transforms the perceived value of cultural heritage. However, it raises recognition and valorization, it also brings 'fake' or luxury versions that scramble authentic practices, leading to mixed impact on cultural integrity (Maags, 2021). Overcrowding, disruption of daily life and erosion of the privacy of local residents all lead to tensions between tourists and their host community (Community Research and Development Information Service, 2024; S. Said et al., 2017). Additionally, long-term residents may be displaced as a result of tourism development; this is demonstrated by the conversion of residential properties into tourist lodgings, which marginalizes the local populace (Gant, 2016). Certain community members are marginalized by power imbalances in tourist locations, resulting in their receiving fewer benefits from tourism (Abdullah, Lee, & Carr, 2023). More tourists also may degrade a society's environment, cultural landmarks, and natural resources (UNESCO, 2023). Yet, this is not necessarily true and residents residing closer to the heritage

sites may perceive them less positively than those farther away from heritage sites (Rasoolimanesh, Taheri, Gannon, Vafaei-Zadeh, & Hanifah, 2019). There is a need to balance the preservation of cultural heritage with its contemporary use. An overemphasis on preservation can prevent the community from experiencing its heritage. The pragmatic management and proactive presentation of heritage sites can both conserve sites and support local communities (Carter & Grimwade, 1997; Grimwade & Carter, 2000). Local stakeholders, cross cultural understanding and responsible tourism practices, allowed these World Heritage sites to strike a fine line encouraging preservation and progress to guarantee that future generations can also enjoy these unique cultural assets.

### **2.8.2 Community Involvement and Heritage Management**

In recent decades, local community involvement in the management of cultural assets has been a prominent topic in heritage literature. The two researches by Marie Nakamura clarify the conversion of villagers into stewards of the Ban Chiang world heritage site. This shift in focus opposed the prevailing hierarchical approach to maintaining valued artifacts and integrated the local community's understanding of these items (Nakamura, 2017a, 2017b). Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton, in the book, *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology*, correctly assert that community engagement is essential for the improved management of heritage sites (L. Smith & Waterton, 2013). As Shadreck Chirikure and others discuss in their examination of World Heritage operations in southern Africa, more than a superficial consultative procedure at the local level is needed. As a result, they claim that the inclusion of the concerns and knowledge of the local community in the development of management frameworks will lead to the formulation of better, and the more sustainable, management policies that will result in better conservation (Chirikure, Manyanga, Ndoro, & Pwiti, 2010).

### **2.8.3 Political Dimensions and Identity Construction**

Being a part of the World Heritage has much more social meaning connected with the subjectivity of people and nations. Penny Van Esterik's study on politicization of heritage in Ban Chiang supports this (Van

Esterik, 2023) and Udomluck Hoontrakul's work on reduction of Ban Chiang to Thai nationalist history (Hoontrakul, 2016). Critics of World Heritage politics, therefore, management would benefit from the book by Sophia Labadi, *'UNESCO, Cultural heritage, and Outstanding Universal Value: Value-based Analysis of the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions'* that provides a good account of the World Heritage Convention and its paradigm with an aim of opening the eyes of critics on the political consideration. This book demonstrates that her work helps to conceptualize *'Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)'* as a hegemonic structure that undertakes and transmits European imperialism and colonialism paradigm erasing indigenous knowledge and idea in the process (Labadi, 2013). Being in a World Heritage Site means the permanently performed spatial and personal environment. In their article, Hazel Tucker and Elizabeth Carnegie focus on an understanding of the issues that the residents of Göreme, Turkey, used to live in a World Heritage site, experience when their home becomes a tourist attraction. It paints a possibility of how people experience resilience, resistance and coping with change around World Heritage transitions while urging the acknowledgement of local agency in inhabiting (Tucker & Carnegie, 2014).

#### **2.8.4 A World Heritage Setting in Everyday Life**

Living in a World Heritage Site implies the constant experience of a highly branded global environment with a mostly local particular one. This is strongly supported by Hiriko Yasuda, who conducted an ethnographic study in Luang Prabang, Laos. He records how residents modify their daily practices and the architectural form of their homes in accordance with the tourism industry and the requirements of the World Heritage Conservation Agency, leading to the reconfiguration of traditional practices and spatial arrangements (Yasuda, 2010). In addition, Kristina Svets' research on the impact of living in the locality of a World Heritage site of which their environment is part, shows how the latter alter views of those who inhabit the site. Svets' research discusses, through the fact that a global recognized landscape is likely to promote a reconsideration of the local identity and a

growth of pride, but will also bring about new issues in daily life (Svels, 2015).

### **2.8.5 Balancing Universal Value and Local Sustainability**

Top-down planning strategies that place national cultural values above local ones frequently cause local inhabitants to feel alienated (Wall & Black, 2004). Then, managing a more sustainable World Heritage Site introduces some rather peculiar features of how to demand both '*Outstanding Universal Value*' (OUV) and the community's development objectives. This balance is extensively illustrated through the paper by P. C. Gozzoli and R. B. Gozzoli on '*Outstanding Universal Value and Sustainability at Ban Chiang World Heritage*.' They argue that an effective management of World Heritage Sites relies on moderation between universal conservation standards and economic forces in the surrounding environment (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021). Takamitsu Jimura conducts a detailed study of Shirakawa-mura, a World Heritage Site in Japan, to further elucidate this paradigm. He elucidated the impact of the World Heritage Site on the local communities, highlighting the advantages such as pride and economic benefits, as well as the disadvantages such as overexploitation of tourist attractions and alterations to the community's lifestyle (Jimura, 2011). Also, Putra and Hitchcock where they discuss the Subak Irrigation System in Bali which is listed on the cultural landscape World Heritage Site. They explain how local farmers have to continue with activities associated with normal farming while at the same time being forced to adhere to new heritage management issues, which often create confusion between the needs to preserve heritage and the need to feed the families (Putra & Hitchcock, 2005).

### **2.8.6 Adaptations and Community Responses**

Only the residents' creativity can solve the many problems associated with housing in a World Heritage Site. Comparative case study analysis of six cultural World Heritage Sites, presented in Christine Landorf's work, underlines the necessity of implementing specific management approaches addressing the emerging site needs of the site as well as the inhabitants (Landorf, 2009). Focusing on the challenges faced by Ban Chiang, P.C.

Gozzoli and R. B. Gozzoli, demonstrated that stakeholder participation can aid in overcoming these issues through the application of unified decision-making methods (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2022). Ming Ming Su and Geoffrey Wall's (2014) series of investigations provide further examples of these dynamics in the context of the World Heritage site at Mutianyu Great Wall in China, demonstrating how World Heritage can serve as both an enabling and limiting factor for minorities (Su & Wall, 2014).

### **2.8.7 Emerging Challenges of Future Directions**

- **Virtual experiences and digital technologies**

As digital technologies change, people are seeing and representing their World Heritages in new ways. Stefano Brusaporci also affirms in his paper on digital heritage that VR and AR technologies are used to offer new ways of narrating culture for local communities and the world. These are not only technologies of conservation, education, and knowledge sharing; they also foreground concerns about the reproduction of heritage and how it's experienced in contemporary society (Brusaporci, 2015). In the case of specific sites, for example Ban Chiang, the internet and digital technologies can offer an avenue for local people to be actively involved in the interpretation of the cultural past evinced by their localities, in an attempt to be a more active and relevant part of the international discourse on world cultural heritage.

- **Climate Change and Environmental Challenges**

The challenges of climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly becoming part of living with World Heritage. In their research paper, A. S. Dastgerdi, M. Sargolini and I. Pierantoni focus on the issues related to coastal World Heritage Site, especially on how the communities should manage to respond to climate change impacts and continue the conservation of cultural heritage at the same time (Dastgerdi, Sargolini, & Pierantoni, 2019). Since pottery and other artifacts found at places such as Ban Chiang are vulnerable to fluctuations in the physical environment, the issue of '*conservation-with-change*' is particularly relevant. Heritage



management can be improved by studying the strategies that communities would employ to adjust to comparable challenges. It is suggested that these lessons will have a significant positive impact on heritage management. It can be stated that local insights are capable of providing key answers to the challenges of sustainable protection of heritage against environmental problems, as demonstrated in research by Jim Perry and Charlie Falzon on the Pacific Island World Heritage Sites (Perry & Falzon, 2014).

- **Contested Heritage and Decolonization**

Decolonization and the return of cultural property progressively inform the discussion of living with World Heritage. N. B. Salazar's work on colonialism in Indonesia's World Heritage reveals how colonialism permeates the world heritage system and shapes stakeholders' interactions with heritage assets (Salazar, 2014). This perspective compels us to contemplate the decolonization and expansion of the World Heritage framework to encompass a diverse range of cultural epistemologies. For such archaeological sites as Ban Chiang, this might imply a reconsideration of how the relationship between the ancestors of the local population and the site is currently defined and addressed in the framework of management plans and practices; this may involve more culturally sensitive and appropriate approaches to conservation.

- **Diversification of the Economy and Sustainable Livelihoods**

Communities are starting to realize that the pursuit of economically viable activities may be a result of the same heritage treasures that were hailed as their '*savior*,' despite the common misconception that listing benefits primarily the tourism industry. B. P. Kaltenborn and others discuss the creation of a long-term sustainable tourism regime that is based on community advantage and control in the regions of the West Norwegian Fjords World Heritage Site. As the conclusion of their study states, if management goes above confrontations and focuses on the local community, many inscribed places to World Heritage could also act as powerful stimuli for local sustainable development. (Kaltenborn,

Thomassen, Wold, Linnell, & Skar, 2013). For Ban Chiang, understanding how alternative economic activities can coexist and contribute to heritage conservation could provide longer term benefits for those involved.

- **Reimagining Community Participation**

New thinking has emerged, which has urged for a rethinking of community engagement in World Heritage governance. In Gill Chitty's collection of papers on heritage, conservation and communities, there is a call for better and more equitable involvement of people and communities in the processes of heritage management. It challenges the expert controlled heritage preservation mode that solely rests on local populations as passive bearers, but active contributors to heritage management (Chitty, 2017).

In summary, World Heritage Site (WHS) can be seen as a part of peoples' everyday lives and a way for them to create their own cultural standpoint; WHS can be very broad that can be molded by structural and functional settings like politics, the economy, society, generation comparison and others. The review studies the tension between the global approach and its local applicability and calls for further democratization of the heritage conservation practices.

It is remarkable that the Ban Chiang Archaeological World Heritage Site in Thailand provides a case of the challenges in the area integration and the World Heritage living. Taking Ban Chiang as a case study, this research aims to show that community involvement, stakeholders, politization of the heritage are the essential elements of understanding the plight of those community members and managing the heritage site.

As this field of study diversifies, diversely and as the world changes, new enabling factors like digital technologies, climatic change, heritage contestation and sustainable livelihoods are destined to become more important to the community of residents living in World Heritage Sites. These issues need to be solved by searching for biological and innovative solutions within sustainable development principles and stakeholders' participation. The solutions must respect the vision and needs of local

communities while the conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of these sites is maintained.

## **2.9 Ban Chiang Heritage: Recent Research and Perspectives**

Recent studies of the Ban Chiang heritage have included about various aspects of the site's management such as community participation, sustainability, stakeholders' involvement, politics of heritage among others. Such studies add to the knowledge of the more intricate issues and challenges in the conservation and enhancement of this valued World Heritage Site in Northeast Thailand.

### **2.9.1 Community Participation and Maintaining Heritage**

Marie Nakamura's two papers present very interesting considerations on the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site and its relationship with the local community (Nakamura, 2017a, 2017b). In her first paper, '*How Did Villagers Become Preservers of the World Heritage? A Case Study of Ban Chiang Archaeological Site*,' presented at the 13th International Thai Studies Conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Nakamura observes the shift of villagers' attitude towards the archaeological site in the course of half a century. Villagers at first showed no interest in the artifacts but things changed during the 1970s, when the '*Ban Chiang's boom*' started, and villagers regarded them as valuable commodities. However, in the 1980s this practice started to fall out of practice because of artifact scarcity and people becoming more aware of the legalities of it. Today, villagers have been made into '*preservers*' of their heritage – they are involved in participating in cultural events and involvement in roles of cultural tourism (Nakamura, 2017b).

In Nakamura's second paper, entitled '*Community and Individuality: Sharing Memories about Relics in Ban Chiang*,' presented at the 13th International Conference on Humanities & Social Sciences 2017 (IC-HUSO 2017) in Khon Kaen, Thailand, Nakamura explores how different individual experiences influence villagers' relationships with the artifacts. Nakamura explores how personal memories and experiences—from a life history, especially that of a woman named Mrs. N—all helped to form such connections with cultural relics. The study demonstrates that both shared

communal memories and individual experiences of locality have been crucial in generating identity and pride in local heritage (Nakamura, 2017a).

Generally, these studies emphasize the role of local people in regards to heritage management and conservation. Through this they demonstrate how villagers' relationship to their World Heritage site evolved from indifference to commercialization, to even deeper levels, as a source of cultural attachment and pride. These changes reflect a trend within heritage studies which has a growing need for the local experience and local knowledge to be brought into heritage planning and management.

Nakamura's research findings coincide with more general scholarly perspectives on community engagement in heritage conservation. According to the work of Smith and Waterton, and the book edited by Chitty, an effective heritage intervention strategy ought to be concerned with the local experiences, and practical knowledge. To preserve a site is to create opportunities not only for greater cultural heritage preservation, but also to maintain the significance and meaning a place has to the lives of the people in direct proximity with it on a daily basis (Chitty, 2017; L. Smith & Waterton, 2013). Nakamura's work provides an important contribution to our appreciation of how world heritage sites can become intimately linked to local identity and pride, and in doing so make heritage preservation a more sustainable, community led approach.

### **2.9.2 Ban Chiang: Evaluating World Heritage Sustainability**

UNESCO World Heritage (WH) designation is aimed at preservation of the cultural heritage on one hand, and promoting sustainable tourism development on the other. While some of this dual mandate works well, it must be closely scrutinized when sites are struggling with sustaining Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) while working with local communities on sustainable development activities.

P.C. Gozzoli and R.B. Gozzoli's two papers provide a thorough analysis of the World Heritage status of Ban Chiang, Thailand, in complementary studies. Rather, in their 2021 research, they show that the site poses several

challenges to its 1992 registering of WH status based on the purportedly ancient bronze casting technology (circa 3600 BCE) and the threat of looting. Later research has moved these dates to around 1500 BCE negating its OUV credibility. One of the challenges the site offers is that archaeological remains are buried under a modern village, with the primary tourist attraction a museum outside a heritage property (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021). In 2022, their follow up study uses GIS spatial analysis and the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) to assess local stakeholder participation as well as tourism development. Research showed little tourism activity in the heritage property and few economic benefits, as only 22 percent of households earned tourism related income. Residents are satisfied with their WH status and they support tourism development, but their limited political participation; their little tourism skills; and inadequate infrastructure hinder their sustainable development (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2022). Taken together, these papers offer evidence that the original registration criteria for World Heritage sites are often no longer relevant and that local community involvement is fundamental, but has been lacking.

Through these two closely linked studies, these contribute to the wider understanding of the World Heritage management challenges, particularly in the context of sites whose OUV justification is in question and where there continues to be limited local stakeholder participation. Last, the research identifies the need for a more holistic heritage management approach, or a blend of archaeological resource preservation with community and economic development, and important questions that the UNESCO list raises regarding which criteria should be used to retain World Heritage status when the original justifications are no longer valid. Finally, the authors present their proposed theoretical framework for sustainable heritage development, by way of guiding the continuum towards sustainable heritage development through emphasizing preservation balanced with local empowerment and sustainable tourism development. These studies augment the expanding written works on natural resource heritage and a more incorporated money related administration of it, just as more comprehensive contribution amid choices (Landorf, 2009; Nitzky, 2012).



### 2.9.3 Ban Chiang's Political Dimensions of Heritage

The archaeological site of Ban Chiang in northeastern Thailand is far more than just a prehistoric settlement with superb pottery and bronze artifacts. This provides an excellent case study for the way in which archaeological sites can get entangled in modern political and social narratives of place, national identity, and heritage management, with real weight in contemporary political discourse. Two major academic works offer contrasting yet complementary perspectives on these aspects:

First, Penny Van Esterik's book in 2023, *'Designs on Pots: Ban Chiang and the Politics of Heritage in Thailand,'* examine Ban Chiang through six different lenses: personal encounters; archaeological evidence (2100 BCE-200 CE); pottery design analysis; the history of looting; the manufacture of forgery; and connections to national identity. The author has a unique argument that Ban Chiang is *'regional civility,'* characterized by non-state level, peaceful, creative, and egalitarian societies of prehistoric Southeast Asian societies, noting that the site runs counter to Thai heritage narratives being predating both Buddhism and the Thai state (Van Esterik, 2023).

Second, in contrast, Udonluck Hoontrakul's Thai article in 2016 *'Gaan meuang kǒng gaan cháí à-dèet : bôt bàat kǒng mor-rá-dòk lôhk bâan-chiang nai bprà-wàt-dtì-sàat-châat-ní-yom-má-tai (The Politics of Using the Past: The Role of Ban Chiang's World Heritage Site in the history of Thai Nationalism),'* focuses on Ban Chiang's role in Thai nationalist historiography, arguing that its prominence in the 1970s-80s stemmed from two factors: Post-WWII socioeconomic changes that produced a scientifically-minded middle class and increased awareness of a prehistoric past with prehistoric findings from Ban Chiang (especially advanced bronze technology) that bolstered nationalist arguments (in the past and being made today) by illustrating Southeast Asia's independent technological development and legitimizing migration theories about the origins of the Thais—which include the discontinuity of Ban Chiang with later periods (Hoontrakul, 2016).

While both works examine Ban Chiang's significance to Thai identity, they approach it from different angles—Van Esterik highlighting its challenge

to traditional narratives, and Hoontrakul examining how it was incorporated into nationalist historiography. These two studies amplify and emphasize political dimensions of cultural heritage such as political exploitation of the past (Peleggi, 2002; Shoocongdej, 2011).

To conclude, recent researches and perspectives highlight several key themes in the study of Ban Chiang heritage, including:

- The evolving role of local communities in heritage preservation
- The challenges of balancing universal value with local sustainability
- The importance of stakeholder participation in heritage management
- The political dimensions of heritage interpretation and use

The studies demonstrate that Ban Chiang's heritage is neither an archaeological site conservation project that has been frozen in time, nor the aggregate of a single community's efforts to protect that heritage, but rather one that has developed as the result of a complicated history of intertwined local communities, national heritage policies, and international heritage frameworks. Then, Ban Chiang heritage management has to become more integrated, comprising the tangible as well as intangible dimension of heritage, together with the variety of positionalities of diverse stakeholders (Labadi, 2013; Logan, 2012).

As such, these works provide a proven ground of literature to explore the various perspective of heritage experiences that people experience at Ban Chiang, as well as theoretical discourses and practical management actions for this landmark World Heritage place. In this changing heritage studies field, however, it is imperative to gather together as many diverse perspectives as possible, and tabulate the disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies available to deal with the multitude of challenges many are faced with regarding the protection and improvement of the cultural heritage in the contemporary globalized world (Harrison, 2013; Winter, 2013).

## **2.10 Literature Review Synthesis: Critical Heritage Studies and Ban Chiang Heritage Experience**

### **2.10.1 Introduction**

This dissertation analyzes current theories and methods used to study heritage experiences at the Ban Chiang Archaeological World Heritage Site. The study shows heritage management is changing from old methods of preserving artifacts to new methods that support dynamic preservation and embrace cultural diversity.

The review investigates heritage studies through five critical perspectives: conceptual evolution and key themes, research evolution patterns, theme integration and intersections, research frontiers, and implementation challenges. In this organization, the study follows heritage studies' progression from trying to save physical artifacts to tackling today's world issues through various scientific fields, all while honoring traditional local expertise.

This research studies Western heritage management methods in partnership with Southeast Asian cultural traditions by focusing on Buddhist religious beliefs and community habits. Analyzing Ban Chiang heritage can show the connection between international and local heritage practices while uncovering their conflicts and enhancing heritage preservation methods.

The review synthesizes existing studies, identifies gaps in knowledge, and explores novel opportunities to enhance theory and methods. This study shows how combining worldwide heritage rules with local traditions helps find ways to support global protection plans and meet what local communities require.

This study focuses on summarizing learned facts while highlighting research areas that need deeper investigation and future method development. This analysis shows how heritage management can better serve local populations and global standards through studying how local practices connect with worldwide heritage systems.

### 2.10.2 Conceptual Evolution and Key Themes

- **Critical Heritage Approaches**

The understanding of heritage underwent a major change when critical heritage studies developed as a new analytical approach. At its essence, this development signifies a change in thinking of heritage as static set of things to view it as a set of cultural processes in motion. Laurajane Smith's critique of authorized heritage discourse (AHD) is at best Western AHD skeptical and reveals that the dominant institutional practices have always favored the expert knowledge and neglected other ways of knowing (L. Smith, 2006). Rodney Harrison expands upon this critique by detailing the postmodern changes to heritage that have moved it from a focus on preservation to a set of dynamic processes that interact with contemporary society (Harrison, 2013).

The democracy of heritage practices develops out of changes of the above, for example decolonization of the management of heritage is one of the developments incarnated by the 2012 manifesto by Association of Critical Heritage Studies. Tim Winter's contribution to this is particularly important, he underscores the benefits which lie in utilizing more creative and pluralistic approaches to '*understand*' and '*value*' heritage (Winter, 2013). This development indeed is in line with other global developments because rather than try to explain heritage with a single model, it is increasingly accepted that there are different cultures and different ways of knowing.

- **Dialogical Heritage Framework**

The dialogical heritage method creates fresh theoretical perspectives to understand heritage through its relationships. Rodney Harrison develops a detailed structure that shows the evolving connections between all living and lifeless entities within the system (Harrison, 2013, 2015). The new framework uses Mikhail Bakhtin and Caryl Emerson's philosophical ideas to describe how heritage develops from many interacting processes (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984). Harrison and Rose show how Indigenous worldviews transform heritage management by presenting evidence that

land actively creates understanding which opposes human-centered preservation models (Harrison & Rose, 2010). The new viewpoint makes space for professionals and stakeholders to work together in decision-making which removes traditional knowledge divisions and ensures respectful handling of heritage resources.

- **Heritage Experiences**

Scholars now study heritage experiences using multiple perspectives on how people interact with heritage. By studying embodied experience, Yi Fu Tuan set key groundwork while John Russon explores the important connections between interpretation bodily experiences and memory creation (Russon, 2003; Tuan, 2001). According to David Crouch, emotional attachment to location and personal meaning takes center stage when studying visitor connections at heritage sites (Crouch, 2015).

Duncan Light studies how power structures affect what people experience at heritage sites. The research shows that everyone from nearby residents to international tourists creates unique interpretations based on their interactions with heritage destinations (Light, 2015). Through his research Pickering studies how experience bridges the gap between individual interpretations and wider cultural meaning systems (Pickering, 2008a).

- **Material Culture and Religious Practice**

Southeast Asia's heritage management faces specific problems when handling places of worship and religious artifacts. According to Denis Byrne's research archaeological sites acquire diverse meanings for multiple groups because of mainstream religious impacts (Byrne, 2014). This research shows that local communities often see heritage sites as active religious places instead of frozen historical clues.

According to Anna Karlstrom's studies, she explains how Buddhist beliefs about impermanence clash with Western conservation methods. Heritage management shows distinct conflicts between expert conservation methods and local religious customs (Karlstrom, 2005, 2016). These conflicts appear most strongly during arguments about how to properly maintain heritage sites between strict preservation and ongoing religious traditions.



- **Heritage Uses and Commodification**

When heritage becomes a product, it shows how culture and money impact each other. Graham and others study the way tourism and economic evaluation change heritage resources. Heritage sites now support both protecting culture and generating income (B. Graham et al., 2000). According to Maurizio Peleggi's research Thai heritage sites show how people build their personal identities (Peleggi, 2002). Through her works, Siraporn Nathalang shows us the ways Thai traditional customs are updated for today's tourist market without losing their original value. Research shows how heritage sites balance the act of protecting history with adapting traditions to develop economically (Nathalang, 2015, 2016).

- **World Heritage Site Management**

A complex World Heritage Site management needs advanced strategies to satisfy all stakeholder groups. Studies by Marie Nakamura at Ban Chiang show that local community involvement brings vital benefits to heritage management efforts (Nakamura, 2017a, 2017b). The research of P. C. Gozzoli and R.B. Gozzoli helps to explain sustainable development problems found in World Heritage sites (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021, 2022).

Penny Van Esterik and Udomluck Hoontrakul closely study Thai heritage site management complexities. These works show the way international heritage standards link with national rules and community activities (Hoontrakul, 2016; Van Esterik, 2023). Through their research, Shareck Chirikure et al. identify key elements of stakeholder engagement that lead to management systems which respect local customs and meet worldwide conservation requirements (Chirikure et al., 2010).

By connecting ancient knowledge with present understanding heritage studies create powerful methods to address today's challenges. Researchers explore how heritage exists at personal, local and global scales while identifying the need to save both real-world sites and cultural traditions.

### **2.10.3 Research Evolution Patterns**

- **Temporal Development**

Heritage study development passed through different chronological phases that brought distinct approaches along with their unique theoretical questions. These periods are as follows:

○ **Foundation Period (1970s-1980s)**

The establishment of core heritage management systems took place at this moment in time. Timothy and Boyd establish heritage tourism as an important economic driving force in their study (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). The research of Harrison unveils how early UNESCO conventions demonstrated the dominant preservation approach of the period which emphasized both physical substances and monumental architecture. The expert-led approach dominated this period because architects and archaeologists focused on architectural and archaeological preservation (Harrison, 2013).

○ **Transition Period (1990s)**

The 1990s marked crucial shifts in heritage understanding. Laurajane Smith names this time crucial for heritage communities to appreciate the significance of intangible heritage (L. Smith, 2006). According to Nakamura's study, Ban Chiang receives the World Heritage inscription in 1992 which showcases modern methods of managing archaeological heritage (Nakamura, 2017a). J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth describe how heritage tourism impacts gained greater recognition during this particular period (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

○ **Critical Turn (2000s)**

The twentieth decade brought about transformative changes to how heritage ideas were perceived. According to Tim Winter, critical heritage studies developed to establish its own academic identity (Winter, 2013) and Rodney Harrison introduces indigenous cultural perspectives to heritage management (Harrison, 2013). According to Brian Graham et al., analysis of sustainability in heritage practices take focus as a main priority (B. Graham et al., 2000).

○ **Contemporary Developments (2010s-Present)**

New intellectual developments combined with emerging difficulties have appeared in recent times. The papers by Stefano Brusaporci studies digital heritage advancement (Brusaporci, 2015), and A.S. Dastgerdi et al. explore climate change effects on heritage sites (Dastgerdi et al., 2019). The field of decolonial studies rises to significance, according to Penny Van Esterik, together with improved community involvement and empowered stakeholders (Van Esterik, 2023). According to Anna Karlstrom, the ‘Asian’ heritage management approach partially adopts growing immaterial and place-based spiritual perspectives (Karlstorm, 2016).

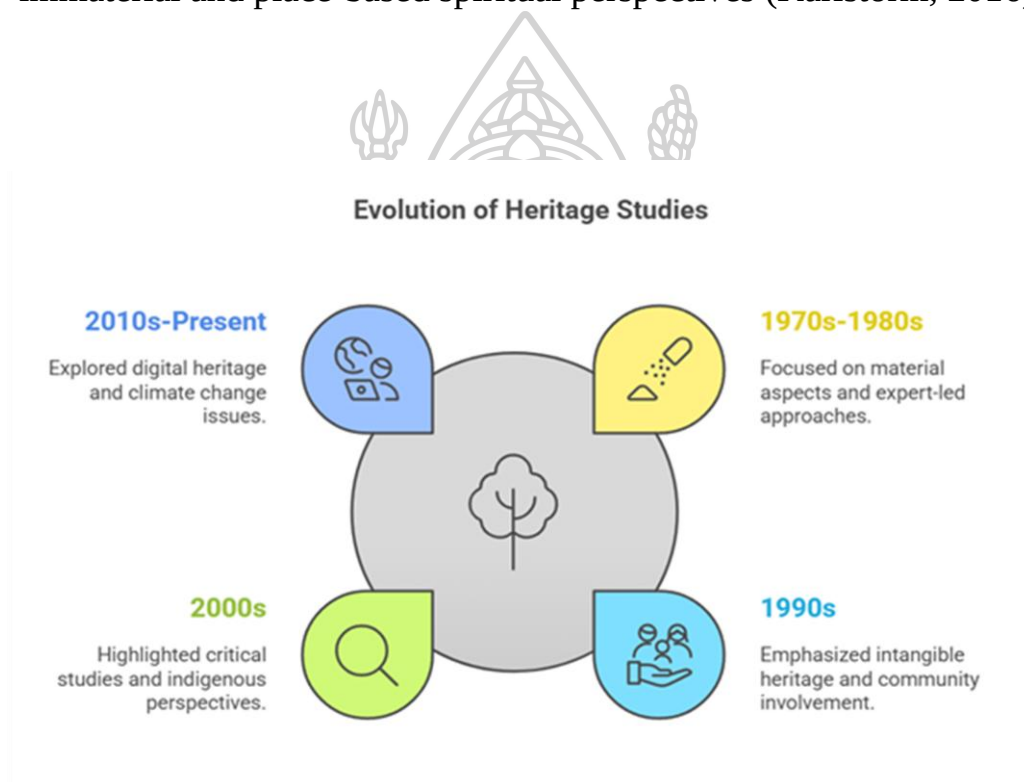


**Figure 2** The timeline of heritage studies’ evolution

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2025)

- **Theoretical Evolution**

Social science understanding has driven fundamental theoretical changes within the field through broader conceptual shifts. Laurajane Smith criticizes heritage management through her approach to process-focused

heritage studies (L. Smith, 2006) which Harrison later developed (Harrison, 2013). The research on heritage by Emma Waterton and Steve Watson show how experts have moved toward sharing authority with communities (Waterton & Watson, 2015), yet Tim Winter reveals the transformation from heritage conservation toward sustainable development (Winter, 2013).

Rodney Harrison and et al. provide extensive documentation of the academic move from Western-centric to multicultural heritage practices in their research (Harrison et al., 2020). The critical heritage theory reached its peak with the Association of Critical Heritage Studies' manifesto released in 2012 by emphasizing inclusive heritage management practices (Association of Critical Heritage Studies, 2012). Helaine Silverman highlights how this transformation within heritage studies emerged because of increasing awareness about heritage as an instrument for dealing with identity and power structure together with knowledge-building under globalization and postcolonial dynamics (Silverman, 2013).



**Figure 3** The theoretical revolution of heritage studies

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2025)

- **Methodological Advancement**

Research methodologies show increasing sophistication and diversity across multiple approaches:

- **Ethnographic Methods**

The prominence of ethnographic research increased during the time research focusing on Ban Chiang communities by Marie Nakamura. These studies show how extensive research with heritage communities provides essential benefits (Nakamura, 2017a, 2017b) which Anna Karlstrom continues to develop in her heritage management research about Buddhist perspectives (Karlstrom, 2005, 2016). Ethnographic methods help Alexandra Denes understand the practices related to living heritage sites through her research (Denes, 2012).

- **Participatory Research**

Based on their investigations at Ban Chiang, P.C. Gozzoli and R.B. Gozzoli show that participatory research techniques are the major trend in heritage studies (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021, 2022). The research methodologies follow the definition of '*critical imagination*' from Waterton and Watson in heritage studies (Waterton & Watson, 2013). Heritage management programs come under community control through participatory approaches (Chirikure et al., 2010).

- **Indigenous Knowledge Integration**

The inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems marks an essential progress in methodological approaches for research on heritage. The study conducted by Harrison and Rose shows native perspectives as a source to develop heritage methodology (Harrison & Rose, 2010), together with the frameworks presented by M.L.S. Sorensen and John Carman which integrate diverse knowledge systems for heritage research (Sorensen & Carman, 2009).

- **Geographical Perspective Integration**

The literature reveals complex interactions between different geographical scales of analysis:



### ▪ **Global-Local Dynamics**

The World Heritage system maintained by UNESCO predominantly dictates local operational practices in heritage management. The World Heritage conventions received criticism from Sophia Labadi which established vital principles about these aspects (Labadi, 2013) while Logan et al. conducted studies on how international heritage standards connect to native cultural performances (Logan et al., 2015).

### ▪ **Regional Perspectives**

The Southeast Asian heritage practices exhibit their own unique characteristics together with specific complexity issues. Denis Byrne obtained fundamental regional insights about popular religion and heritage practices through his analysis (Byrne, 2014), while Maurizio Peleggi explains the specific challenges within Buddhist heritage contexts (Peleggi, 2012).

### ▪ **National-Local Interface**

The policies established by Thai authorities create unique contexts for heritage management. The heritage politics of Thailand and Ban Chiang's nationalistic role are investigated through the analysis conducted by Maurizio Peleggi and Udomluck Hoontrakul (Hoontrakul, 2016; Peleggi, 2002). According to Penny Van Esterik, a complete analysis reveals the practical relations between different levels of heritage management systems (Van Esterik, 2023).

## **2.10.4 Theme Integration and Intersections**

The integration of heritage management with community participation emerges as a central concern:

### • **Knowledge Integration**

Local knowledge integration has become increasingly crucial, as demonstrated in Shadreck Chirikure et al.'s work on community involvement in heritage management (Chirikure et al., 2010). Laurajane

Smith and Emma Waterton document how this integration transforms traditional management approaches (L. Smith & Waterton, 2013).

- **Power Dynamics**

Stakeholder engagement processes reveal complex power dynamics. Brian Graham and et al. examine how these dynamics influence heritage decision-making, (B. J. Graham & Howard, 2008), while D.J. Timothy and S.W. Boyd analyze their impact on heritage tourism development (Timothy & Boyd, 2006).

- **Tourism Development and Cultural Preservation**

The intersection of tourism development with cultural preservation presents both opportunities and challenges:

- **Economic-Cultural Balance**

Brian Graham and et al. examine the complex balance between economic benefits and cultural preservation (B. Graham et al., 2000) J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth's analysis of heritage dissonance provides crucial insights into these tensions (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

- **Sustainable Practices**

According to P.C. Gozzoli and R.B.Gozzoli, sustainable tourism practices stand as crucial issues when discussing Ban Chiang's sustainability problems (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021). Siraporn Nathalang through her researches on creative folklore adaptation showed traditional cultural practices adapt through evolution which keeps cultural integrity intact (Nathalang, 2015, 2016).

- **Religious Practice and Heritage Conservation**

The intersection of religious practice with heritage conservation presents unique challenges:

- **Sacred-Secular Tensions**

Anna Karlstrom demonstrates fundamental tensions between Buddhist perspectives and Western conservation approaches (Karlstorm, 2005). Indeed, Denis Byrne documents how local communities view heritage sites as living spiritual entities (Byrne, 2011, 2014).

#### ○ **Traditional-Modern Integration**

There are both challenges and opportunities to combine traditional religious practices with modern conservation techniques. Alexandra Denes investigates the operational phenomenon between traditional practices and modern conservation methods in living heritage sites (Denes, 2012). Also, Maurizio Peleggi conducts research on Buddhist heritage sites (Peleggi, 2012).

To conclude, from these above examples, it's clear that heritage studies are growing more sophisticated. It's addressing complex contemporary challenges while staying connected to traditional knowledge. We're gaining a more nuanced understanding of how heritage works across different scales and situations.

#### **2.10.5 Research Frontiers and Future Directions**

The research field of heritage studies needs new theoretical responses to essential challenges because modern frameworks cannot address existing problems. In the context of Southeast Asian, Anna Karlstrom presents an analysis demonstrating why Buddhism needs to incorporate its philosophy with heritage management approaches due to significant conflicts between Buddhist impermanence and Western conservation practices (Karlstorm, 2005, 2016). The theoretical shortfall gains more relevance as heritage management works with Southeast Asian locations because Buddhist beliefs significantly influence regional approaches to conservation practices.

In the digital domain, Stefano Brusaporci stresses the need for digital heritage theory advancement which will handle virtual experience implications in his study about digital documentation and interpretation issues in order to improve heritage authenticity rather than diminish authentic experiences (Brusaporci, 2015). Theoretical frameworks need to

develop new methods to interpret heritage experiences that result from virtual and augmented reality implementations in heritage sites.

Environmental challenges present another critical frontier. According to A.S. Dastgerdi and et al., climate resilience models for heritage sites require theoretical study because of their analysis on heritage sites' environmental change vulnerability with a rising number of unprecedented environmental challenges (Dastgerdi et al., 2019).

The transmission of knowledge between generations must be a theoretical priority for future development. Nakamura's research suggests that the Ban Chiang site is key to understanding the challenges of heritage knowledge transfer between age groups in rapidly changing social environments (Nakamura, 2017a, 2017b). However, existing theoretical approaches fail to address the central question of how to maintain traditional knowledge frameworks for heritage preservation in a way that resonates with new generations.

Methodological innovation represents another critical frontier. Research approaches in heritage studies need to evolve into better solutions for modern-day issues. Long-term impact assessment techniques used for World Heritage sites should advance above existing approaches because of their critical importance. The research conducted by P.C. Gozzoli and R.B. Gozzoli at Ban Chiang highlights an opportunity to build advanced quantitative evaluation methods that track tangible and intangible heritage changes throughout time (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021, 2022).

Rodney Harrison and et al.'s research advocates for the development of nuanced cross-cultural comparative methodologies according to their work about global heritage practices. The methodologies need to develop in order to properly study how heritage management methods work between distinct cultural regions without neglecting local cultural principles (Harrison et al., 2020).

Community engagement emerges as a critical strategic priority in applied research. Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton state that modern heritage management needs more practical ways to achieve authentic community

involvement. Approval methods currently in use fail to extract the comprehensive collection of community needs and attitudes according to their investigation (L. Smith & Waterton, 2013).

A key obstacle exists in creating sustainable tourism models due to findings from Brian Graham et al.'s study about heritage tourism's double impact on cultural resources (B. Graham et al., 2000). The authors demonstrate the importance of creating new management systems that merge cultural protection with economic gain.

#### **2.10.6 Implementation Challenges and Opportunities**

- **Contemporary Implementation Challenges**

The combination of worldwide heritage values and local traditions creates sophisticated management difficulties at heritage locations. At Ban Chiang, Penny Van Esterik documents how site managers face operational challenges when international heritage frameworks conflict with traditional cultural practices (Van Esterik, 2023). Another critical problem stems from bringing digital technology into historical sites without losing their authentic elements especially during the adoption of novel interpretation technology and documentation techniques.

The growing environmental issues affecting heritage sites require innovative strategies for sheltering these sites while designing new strategies to handle site operations (Dastgerdi et al., 2019). Economic sustainability stands as a key difficulty in protecting cultural resources because developing regions face the pressing problems examined by P.C. Gozzoli and R.B. Gozzoli through their Ban Chiang management research (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021).

- **Emerging Opportunities and Strategic Priorities**

Heritage management discovers major opportunities to grow even though several obstacles exist. Site preservation benefits from integration between Western conservation techniques and local practices through united preservation approaches. Denis Byrne illustrates through his study that



implementing such cultural integration creates effective management strategies which align with cultural needs (Byrne, 2014).

Strategic planning must prioritize the enhancement of local heritage management capabilities through improved training opportunities and resource allocation. Diverse environmental conditions require sustainable funding models which should adapt to modern adaptation management practices for securing site viability. According to Shadreck Chirikure et al., effective site management needs better stakeholder collaboration systems which represent a crucial need (Chirikure et al., 2010).

- **Synthesis and Future Directions**

Heritage studies continues to evolve through contemporary challenges and opportunities, maintaining crucial connections between traditional knowledge and innovative solutions. The achievement of present-day objectives together with future strategic outcomes demands a balanced integration of worldwide heritage standards with indigenous cultural traditions to make sure environmentally sustainable development advantages entire stakeholders and protects cultural assets for upcoming generations.

The diagram of the research theoretical concept is illustrated in (*Figure 4*)

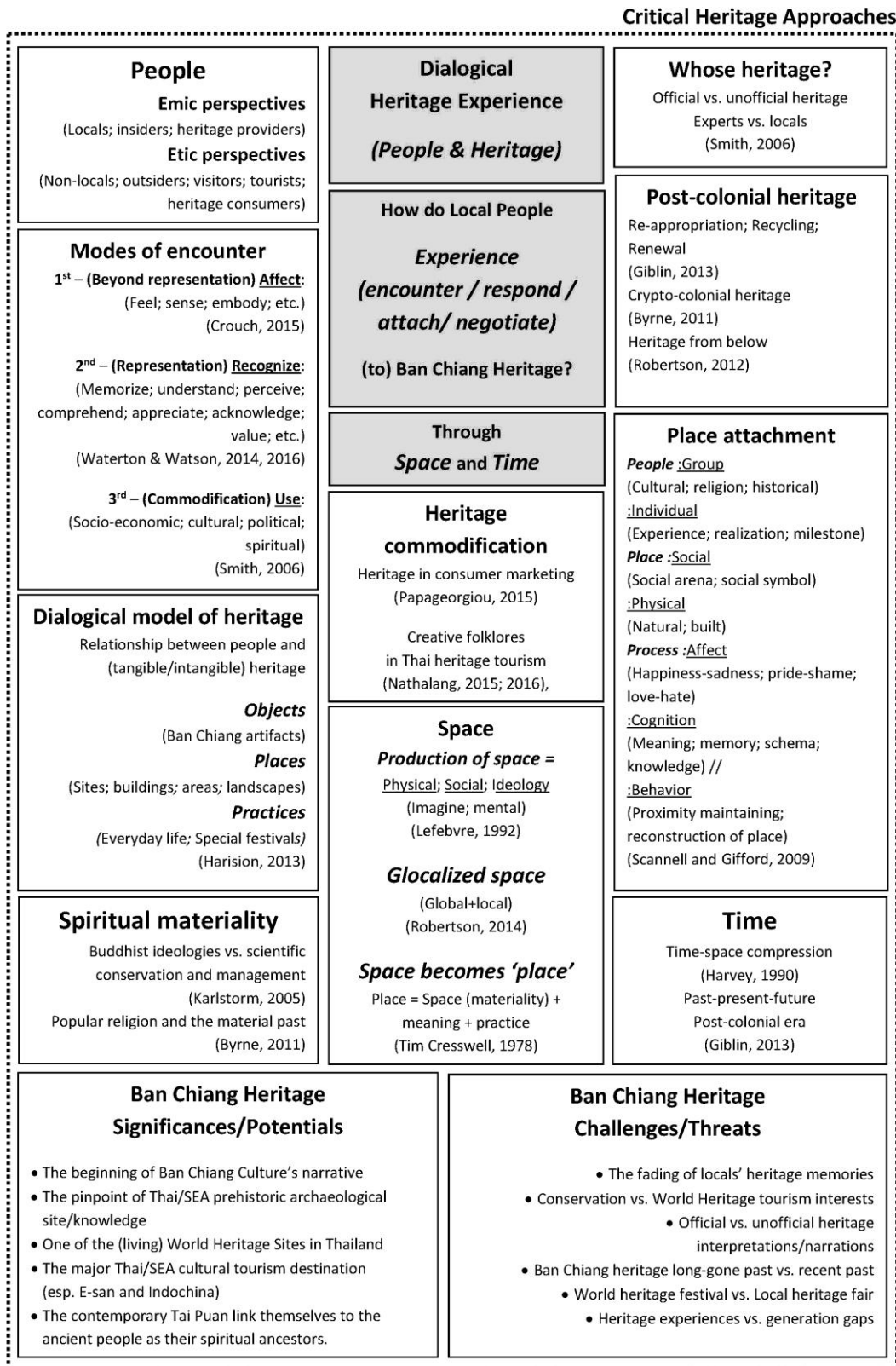


**Figure 4** The research theoretical concept's diagram

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2025)

## 2.11 Conclusion

A systematic review demonstrates important discoveries regarding the historical development as well as present conditions of heritage research for Southeast Asian archaeological sites. Academic theory relating to heritage studies has executed fundamental developments from object-focused methods toward process-based multiple perspective approaches that embrace diverse approaches to heritage value. Various scholars documented this theoretical transformation in cultural heritage administration that represents larger shifting views of heritage management.

The review establishes fundamental conflicting elements between universal heritage standards and native cultural practices which manifest prominently during Buddhist and popular religious heritage protection circumstances. The competing priorities make it difficult for site managers yet open space for developing culturally appropriate methods to conserve heritage and reconstruct its meaning.

Rising challenges resulting from climate change together with digital breakthroughs and sustainable development need creative theoretical foundations alongside new research approaches. Based on the review, several knowledge points—from local customs to modern conservation science—must combine to provide efficient answers for these new problems.

Multiple priorities need attention for the progress of heritage studies and practice in the future. The following examples illustrate these priorities:

- Research should create conceptual structures to unite Buddhist and local spiritual perspectives with heritage management systems.
- There is a need to develop advanced methods which will enhance the evaluation of the extended-lasting results from heritage designation along with management processes.
- Community engagement systems should incorporate genuine mechanisms to use local practices with local knowledge.

- The development of sustainable strategies must achieve a proper balance between preserving historical monuments and promoting community development.

Research shows that deeper studies about how local Ban Chiang residents relate to World Heritage status need to become a priority. Additional research needs to examine how traditional beliefs meet popular religious practices alongside archaeological heritage management approaches through comprehensive study of evolving cultural dynamics. Researchers need to study how Ban Chiang residents translate universal heritage concepts into local needs as well as understand their reactions to external heritage methodologies.

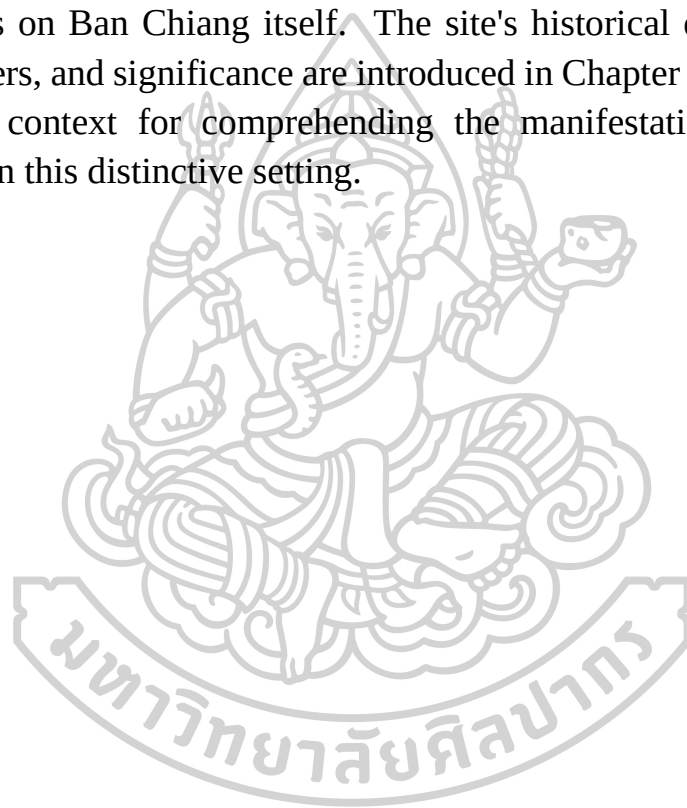
The initiative should also evaluate sustainable approaches to tourist-based heritage preservation that manage local economic development with conservation goals. World Heritage designation requires special attention toward local social systems and the changing relationship between generations toward heritage. Research in this field would demonstrate how World Heritage Sites transform their heritage ideals and customs because generations change.

The research direction will substantially increase comprehension regarding interpretation processes and management methods at World Heritage sites within Southeast Asian regions. These studies would reveal how national policies interact with local authenticity alongside international heritage standards which could direct better sustainable heritage approaches into the future.

Future success in Ban Chiang heritage management requires developing techniques to harmonize international heritage values with regional cultural traditions and create lasting improvements benefiting every sociopolitical group. The field needs both innovative theoretical work and methodological improvements with experimental testing which combine international standards of conservation practice with respect for local values.

The noted review indicates heritage studies possesses adequate capacity to tackle these difficulties because it has established advanced conceptual structures and experimental ways of research that handle various degrees of understanding. To evolve further the field needs dedicated efforts toward new challenges alongside maintaining ties to traditional indigenous knowledge alongside regional cultural traditions.

After a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical underpinnings and present condition of heritage research in Chapter 2, the next chapter will now focus on Ban Chiang itself. The site's historical development, key stakeholders, and significance are introduced in Chapter 3, which provides a critical context for comprehending the manifestation of theoretical concepts in this distinctive setting.





## Chapter 3

### Ban Chiang and Its Heritage

#### 3.1 Introduction

*[...] Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know  
what you're gonna get [...]*

*Forrest Gump from the movie 'Forrest Gump' (Zemeckis, 1994)*

As we generally acknowledged, it is not straightforward for us to visualize and foresee our future. Ban Chiang's community, once a typical, remote, and obscure village in the Northeastern part of Thailand, has unexpectedly gained international attention and transformed into one of the well-known archaeological World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia (SEA) nowadays. The intent of this chapter is to develop a chronological step that outlines the establishment and maintaining of Ban Chiang heritage through the time, the journey of Ban Chiang heritage, Ban Chiang locals' and heritage providers' roles, and concluding with the significance of Ban Chiang heritage.

#### 3.2 Geography and settlement

Ban Chiang community is situated in Udon Thani province, the northern part of the Khorat Plateau, Thailand. It is in the Nong Han district, about 55 km southeast of the Udon Thani city centre, in the Ban Chiang sub-district (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 40). The village sits in a transition zone between the lowland flood plains of the Songkhram River to the north and the rolling hills of the Phu Phan Mountain range to the south. For millennia, the ecological setting of a mosaic of paddy fields, streams, and forested uplands has supported human settlement and agriculture in the region (C. Higham & Thosarat, 2012).

The earlier settlements of the village are to be found on a long oval earthen mound, about 1,350 m east to west by 500 m wide, over about half a square kilometer in extent including single family houses and two important local 'Wats' (Buddhist temples). From the surrounding rice fields the mound reaches 8 meters in height to become its dominant elevation. At the

intersection of two small streams, Huai Na Kham and Huai Ban (or Huai Yang Sa Bang), the mound links to the Na Kham Great Pond to the west (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 40). The more recently settled areas of Ban Chiang, located to the west, show gridded settlement and include mostly habitation of the later period and some public service facilities and other local facilities that were built at this time, including an elementary school, a fresh market and the local health promotion hospital. Moreover, today, this area is considered the community's central cultural-economic zone. It houses various cultural heritage tourism spaces, such as the Ban Chiang National Museum, souvenir shops, homestays, exhibition spaces of the local heritage groups, and the Ban Chiang Cultural Plaza for performances and events.



**Figure 5** Ban Chiang and its location in Udon Thani province, at the northeastern part of Thailand

Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-illustrating-the-location-of-Ban-Chiang-in-Udon-Thani-Province-northeast-Thailand\\_fig1\\_331309949](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-illustrating-the-location-of-Ban-Chiang-in-Udon-Thani-Province-northeast-Thailand_fig1_331309949)

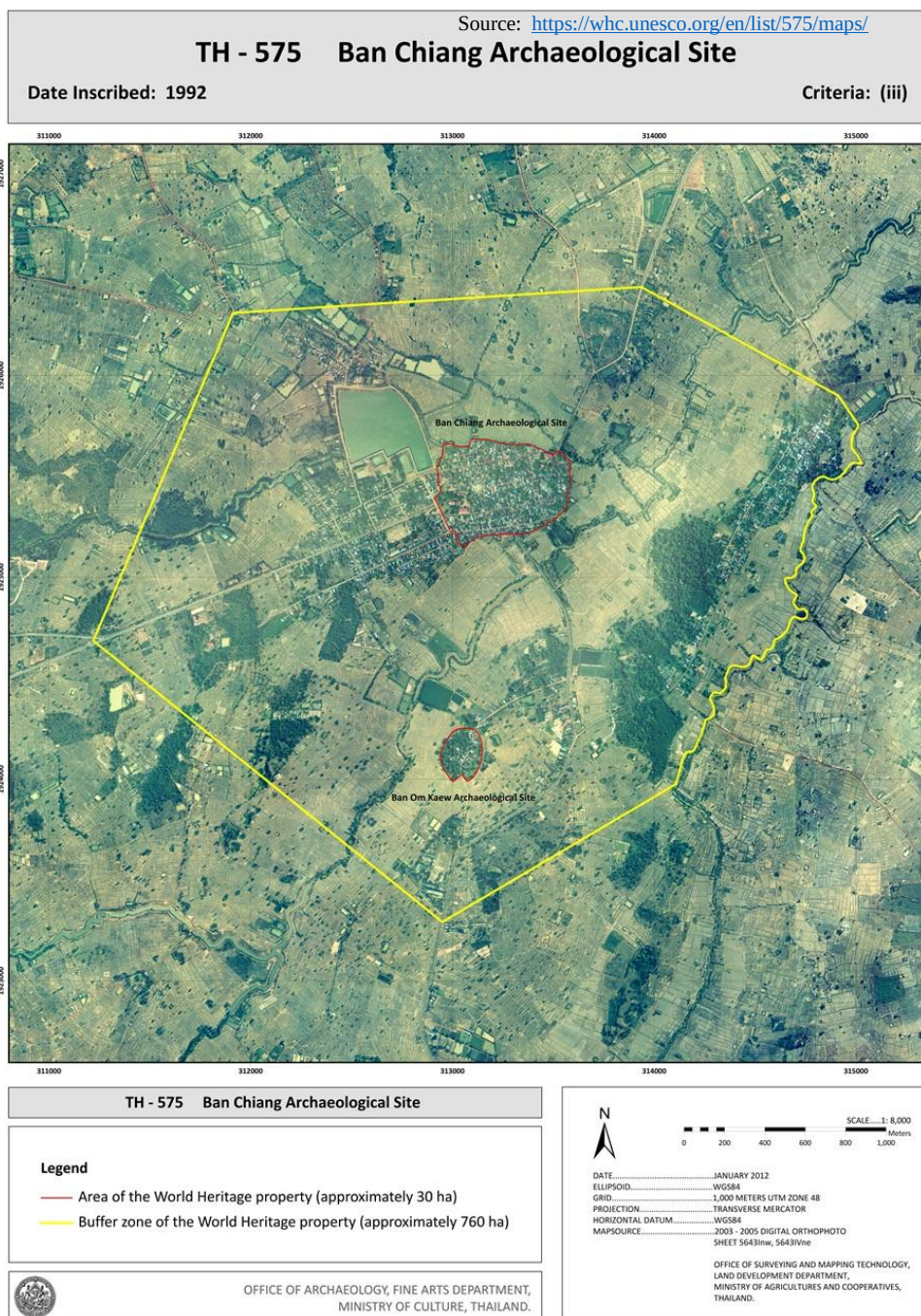


**Figure 6** The map of Ban Chiang World Heritage Archaeological Site (including Ban Om Kaew Archaeological Site) inscribed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 1992







**Figure 7** The aerial map of Ban Chiang World Heritage property and its adjacent area in the Buffer zone

Source: Adapted by Sitta Kongsasana from <https://earth.google.com/web/>

Without any awareness of the significant underground, the Ban Chiang settlement's existence is dated back to the early Rattanakosin period during

King Rama the 3<sup>rd</sup> (ruling from 1824-1851). The 'Tai Puan' ethnic group from Xiang Khouang province (in present-day Lao People's Democratic Republic) initially established in the village of Ban Chiang (on the mound). The Tai Puan population migrated several times to the western Mekong bank of Thailand, establishing settlements in various places, including Udon Thani province (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 41; Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017, p. 5). The first four Tai Puan people who brought their families to this area, '*Thao Chaingyai, Thao Chiangboonma, Thao Chiangkha, and Thao Chiangpin,*' are believed to have inspired the name Ban Chiang (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 138). '*Khun Chiangsawat,*' also known as '*Mr. Promma Kieowichien,*' held the position of '*Gam-nan*' (village leader) in Ban Chiang village from 1906 until 1930, during King Rama's 6<sup>th</sup> Reign (ruling from 1910-1925). While he was on duty, he devoted himself to hard work. He led the community to prosperity in various aspects, including good governance, supporting education for locals, nourishing religion, local culture (folk music band), road construction, water supply provision, and protection against outlaws. For his honesty and courage, King Rama the 6<sup>th</sup> named him as '*Muan Wichienbumrung*' in 1910 and '*Khun Chiangsawat*' in 1913, respectively. After he passed away in 1930, the villagers of Ban Chiang and nearby continued to pay respect to him and built a shrine to house his spirit, which had become the Ban Chiang community's guardian since that time. An annual ritual to worship Khun Chiangsawat's spirit is performed at his shrine on the Ban Chiang National Museum grounds. The highlight of this ceremony is the local female folk dancing in tribute to his sanctity. (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 156-157; Boonpong, 2010, pp. 72-78). Khun Chiangsawat's time brought shifts to the Ban Chiang community which resulted in its growth into a prominent settlement among its surrounding villages. Not until around 1957, its archaeological significance became recognized and valued by outsiders.





**Figure 8** Khun Chiangsawat and his family's portrait

Source: (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 156)



**Figure 9** Khun Chiangsawat's shrine at the Ban Chiang National Museum

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=886816628691963&set=a.384275315612766>

### 3.3 A brief journey of Ban Chiang heritage

Before 1957, no one appeared to recognize any historical/archaeological significance of what lies beneath the Ban Chiang community's earth. Pre-historic artifacts along with painted potteries have been discovered by chance by the present-day Ban Chiang people when they dug into the ground or when floodwaters scoured artifacts onto the surface. The objects remained unnoticed to their attention although they encountered them. Some of them even used the found objects, such as painted potteries, to store food for pigs and poultry or as litter vessels in their households (Bhamorabutr, 1988, pp. 7-8). From 1957 to 1965, the headmaster and teachers of the school established the school museum hall, which also served as a public museum, to gather and exhibit all discovered ancient potteries, regardless of their condition. The potteries were occasionally presented to the school's visitors, and some were handed over to the FAD for further analysis; however, no additional action was conducted (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 41-42; Sangvichien, 1979, p. 76).

Mr. Stephen Young discovered the clay pot on the village path when an exposed tree root forced him to stumble onto the edge where the pot lay partially buried. This event happened during his visit to Thailand in 1966. The discovery led Mr. Stephen Young to exhibit clay fragments with Processor Chin Yoodee, the Curator of the Fine Arts Department (FAD), and Princess Chumpot Nakhon Sawan who was both an antique collector and friend of his parents at Suan Pukgard Palace (Bhamorabutr, 1988, p. 23; Yoodee, 1972, p. 2). The thermoluminescence method supplied false information that demonstrated Ban Chiang red-on-buff pottery originated more than 6000 years ago. Research today has established new dating parameters for Ban Chiang sites to span from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. Throughout its history Ban Chiang evolved from a typical small village within Thailand's northeastern (Isan) rural region into its first archaeological site which became the most substantial prehistoric settlement discovered in Southeast Asia to date. Ban Chiang's discovery has challenged prevailing ideas about the prehistory of Southeast Asia (SEA) by marking the beginning and demonstrating the development of the wet-rice culture typical to the region. Additionally, early bronze finds

have established the site as a metal tool production site in East and Southeast Asia (Metcalf, 2016; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2020). Scientific chronometric methods (C-14 and thermoluminescence) confirmed the site's continuous occupation from 1495 BC to approximately 900 BC. Neolithic and Bronze Age people introduced pre-historic civilization to the underground, revealing traces of a settled ancient agrarian community, the associated technological complex of domesticated farm animals, unique potteries/artifacts or ceramic manufacture, and bronze tool-making technology or ancient metallurgy (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2020). The site certainly includes pre-metal, Bronze Age, and Iron Age assemblages (Brown, 2003, p. 390).

Unfortunately, the discoveries not only drew several foreign archeological experts to work with Thais in Ban Chiang (and related areas), but also attracted a large number of antiquities collectors and dealers, or in a sense, '*looters*' from outside Ban Chiang to engage in '*digging*' business with the locals (Nakamura, 2017a, 2017b). The situation was exacerbated by the fact that countless Ban Chiang artifacts (and other ancient objects) were unofficially reported in trafficking to private collectors in the U.S. during the Vietnam War period (1955-1975) in which the United States Air Force (USAF) deployed combat aircraft to Thailand (1961-1975), mainly to Udon Thani Province (1964-1976) (Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 7). These dilemmas led to the extensive destruction of Ban Chiang and nearby archaeological sites, as their '*in situ*' evidence and knowledge were almost entirely lost.

After the Royals visited Ban Chiang on March 20, 1972, and urged better protection of Thai cultural heritage, Thailand expanded on the 1961 law by enacting the 189th Revolutionary Decree, which prohibited the illegal digging, moving, and trading of artifacts in Ban Chiang and nearby locations without approval. (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 45; Metcalf, 2016). Several interventions from the outside had been conducted to preserve the values of Ban Chiang's (archeological) heritage and raised public awareness on heritage protection for competing against pillaging. For instance, FAD carried out two official excavations in 1972 and 1973, and two joint Thai-American archaeological expeditions visited Ban Chiang in 1974 and 1975.



The Ban Chiang National Museum started collecting and displaying discovered artifacts during its establishment in 1975. The Ban Chiang National Museum added outdoor archaeological exhibition space at Wat Pho Sri Nai among various exhibition and museum building developments (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 45-46). The looting activities in Ban Chiang experienced a notable decline yet its neighboring areas and settlements continued to offer attractive targets for illegal excavators. Authoritative law enforcement combined with heritage awareness outreach programs has strongly minimized underground heritage destruction within Ban Chiang. Some claimed the main reason for stopping (or slowing down) the illegal excavations was that, in the soil, almost everything was dug up and taken away from the community (C. Higham, 2016, p. 1).

Between the 1980s and early 1990s, the cycle of Ban Chiang artifacts' trafficking was continuously carried on by the running of the dark business, particularly between customers and art dealers in the U.S., the in-country agents or intermediaries in Thailand, and the local diggers (Charnes, 2017). During this period, there was also a flourishing in the production and sale of copied Ban Chiang's ancient artifacts in Thailand. Following this, the reproduction of Ban Chiang's ancient pottery as a tourist souvenir began (Sakulpanich, 2012).

In 1982, the University of Pennsylvania and the Smithsonian Institute prepared a traveling exhibition on '*Ban Chiang: Discovery of a Lost Bronze Age*,' which toured the United States for four years and then traveled to Singapore for one year. After that, the exhibition has been on permanent display at the Ban Chiang National Museum since 1987. Between 1983 and 1987, the FAD renovated several parts of the Ban Chiang National Museum, including the exhibitions and an additional exhibition building granted from the John F. Kennedy Foundation (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 47-48).

In 1992, UNESCO declared the Ban Chiang site as the 359th World Heritage Site, making it the fourth world heritage site in Thailand. Soon after, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and other partners provided significant support, leading to the annual holding of the first Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival in early February since 1996. Currently,

the organization of this event and other related events reveals a strong collaboration between several local and non-local parties, who play essential roles in promoting Ban Chiang as a major cultural tourist destination in this region.

In the last 20 years (2000–2020), there have been Thai efforts to reclaim artifacts smuggled or illegally taken out of the Kingdom (Royal Thai Embassy, 2017). In 2003, Ban Chiang garnered international attention when the United States Department of Justice prosecuted several smugglers and museums for trafficking and using Ban Chiang antiquities in '*defrauding tax*' schemes, resulting in financial damages to the US tax system (Thiranet, 2016). These looted artifacts have been claimed more than 175 times as Ban Chiang artifacts from the FAD and the University of Pennsylvania's legally scientific excavations conducted in the 1970s (Thiranet, 2018). From 2014 to 2018, the Thai government received eight returns of ancient, looted objects from other countries, including seven from the US and one from Australia (Khosod Online, 2019). In 2019, the Thai government also received 104 historical artifacts (including Ban Chiang items) from a Thai private collector (Bangkok Post, 2019). Moreover, in 2017, the Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology (ISEAA) revealed that the Faculty of Anthropology, the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH), returned '*The Wilhelm Solheim's Ban Chiang Culture Collection*,' comprising 175,000 archaeological samplings obtained from ten of Ban Chiang Culture archaeological sites throughout the Northeast region and delivered to the laboratories in Hawaii for analyzing processes since July 1966. The returning also included 54 and 82 skeletons taken from the Ban Chiang excavation pits in 1974 and 1975, respectively (Matichon Online, 2017).

The FAD and the Ban Chiang National Museum are also looking to develop a new archaeological research center at the plot of the Ban Chiang National Museum to accommodate future repatriated artifacts and ongoing investigations into the prehistory of the site into the future. As there will be more possibilities for Ban Chiang artifacts to return '*home*' shortly, this facility aims to support the advancement of pre-historic study in the Northeast and collect those returning objects now and in the future. The



research center will include open storage areas accessible to the public, allowing for greater engagement with the material heritage of Ban Chiang (INTW07, 2017; Thiranet, 2018; Thongpan, 2018).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the tourism industry at large due to travel limitations and less demand. The Ban Chiang community also experienced this phenomenon of slowing down cultural heritage tourism due to this reason. Due to a COVID-19 situation, the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival has been indefinitely postponed for the first time in several years (Thongyai Na Ayutthaya, 2021). The heritage tourism of Ban Chiang is expected to adopt (if it has not already) the approach of '*New Normal*,' which means more limitations and restrictions in the near future (Manager Online, 2020). In the post-COVID era, the community and their tourism industry will need to use the resilience and creativity of the people, tempered with their strong identity, to find sustainable strategies for promoting and sustaining the heritage while making sure their people remain well.

A summary of significant moments in the heritage of Ban Chiang can be found in *Table 1 of Appendix II*.

### **3.4 Ban Chiang locals**

Evidence shows that Ban Chiang functions as a settlement containing remains of a vanished (extinct) ancient people who inhabited the site long ago. The two completed and published Ban Chiang monographs on the study of human skeletons (Pietrusewsky & Douglas, 2002) and metallurgy (White & Hamilton, 2020) showed that the metal age agrarian societies of the Ban Chiang Culture in the northeastern part of Thailand were remarkably healthy and peaceful. Interpersonal violence and warfare were absent at this site even though later Iron Age cultural regions in the Upper Mun Valley (especially at Noen U-Loke) had shown clear evidence of such events (Metcalf, 2016). Ban Chiang's metallurgy primarily served symbolic and utilitarian purposes. Nevertheless, the Ban Chiang location is also an early settlement of '*Tai Puan's community*' who were relocated from Lao PDR to Thailand more than 200 years ago, situated above the prehistoric settlement (different times, different layers, but in the same

place). There are no biological connections between the prehistoric people and the present Tai Puan community (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 34). However, there appears to be a continuous and evolving tangible and intangible heritage or ways of living from the past to the present, such as the continuation of the agricultural landscape, the production of pottery, and weaving. There is a spiritual connection between the two since most of the Tai Puan's people today also accept the prehistoric spirits as their ancestors. They occasionally have worship and give offerings to the spirits (INTW03, 2017; INTW08, 2017; INTW11, 2017; INTW13, 2017; INTW14, 2017). At the moment, the descendants of Tai Puan from the near past try to conserve and prolong their identity through the globalized, complex world by strengthening Tai Puan's ways of living in their everyday and festive life, including teaching and practicing Tai Puan's way of living for the younger generation at schools or using their unique characteristics and traditions as commodities in local heritage tourism (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03 & INTW15, 2017; INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; INTW08, 2017; INTW09, 2017; INTW10, 2017; INTW14, 2017; INTW16 & INTW17, 2017). These are shreds of evidence to illustrate the intertwining between the lost and living heritage at Ban Chiang in the contemporary epoch.

The unique personalities of the people who lived in Tai Puan's Ban Chiang are part of the report on *'The study of the community and archaeological excavation at Ban Chiang'* (Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, pp. 33-35) and together with reflections from the locals' interviews by the author (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03, 2017; INTW04 & INTW05, 2017). It is not inclusive and does not intentionally represent the stereotype of the Tai Puan locals' characters. In this circumstance, their unique characters are summarized as follows:

#### **3.4.1 An enthusiastic and meticulous personality**

In general, both privately and collectively, people perceive the Tai Puan's Ban Chiang as hard-working and diligent. In the past, Ban Chiang's people received early training to assume responsibility for their lives. After finishing daily household tasks each day, the school children usually spend time after school with textbooks and homework, not playing around like

the preschool kids (Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, pp. 33-35). Many of them founded the achievements in their careers and became publicly well known<sup>27</sup> (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016). Before 1957, some of the Ban Chiang's locals, after finishing their routine farming, often looked for additional jobs/earning activities in the community and nearby or set up goods caravans and wandered to trade outside the community. Later, during the 1980s-1990s, some locals brought their products to Chatuchak's Weekend Market in Bangkok almost every week (INTW06, 2017). Besides, several young, unemployed locals historically went away from Ban Chiang to find working opportunities and send money back to families, for instance, the U.S. Airforce Base at Udon Thani (1961-1975), the Middle-East countries (1977-1987), or Japan and Taiwan (after 1987) (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03, 2016).



27 Among  
individuals  
the Role  
Around  
career

the public are  
high ranks in  
medical fields  
utilizing it as a

**Figure 10** Exhibition of stories about famous people from Ban Chiang at the Tai Puan Ban Chiang Museum



### 3.4.2 A strong sense of pride in its ethnicity

The Tai Puan's Ban Chiang is proud of its ethnicity and clannishly values its brotherhood and kinship. It usually prioritizes its community members' benefits and helps each other, preventing other groups' exploitation from threatening the community. For instance, in the past, Ban Chiang villagers refused to support or permit '*others*,' such as the Chinese or Vietnamese, to establish businesses in Ban Chiang. These other ethnic groups stopped their operational activities as a result of this action and were compelled to move their businesses elsewhere. The Tai Puan continue their historical mutual assistance through public charitable work including utility fundraising and charitable donations and community service participation (INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, pp. 33-35). The Tai Puan locals preserve and prolong their traditional way of life, including language, clothing, food, music, and dance, by incorporating them into heritage tourism-related activities today.



Ban Chiang women, dressed in traditional attire, welcomed visitors with a dance performance

Source: <https://www.naewna.com/lady/698798>



Káo pát káa · jàew hǒm wǎan (Galangal Fried Rice with sweet and fragrant chili dip): A recent culinary innovation from Tai Puan Ban Chiang, attracting visitors.

Source: <https://photoxyl.co.in/NEhUQ>

### 3.4.3 An active citizen with a sense of welcoming guests

Ban Chiang villagers maintain extensive experience in self-governance and take a strong part in multiple community events. Their leaders (with strong support from the locals) efficiently communicate or negotiate with the governmental agencies, not allowing them to decide and implement anything without their involvement (Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, p. 34). For instance, since 1917, the community's leader, '*Khun Chiangsawat*,' and locals started to provide basic education for Ban Chiang members (including grown-ups and adults) in the place that was donated by one of the village elders and moved into the local temple to set up the first '*informal*' village school, which was established before the central government had issued the Primary Education Act in 1921. Subsequently, Khun Chiangsawat and the locals petitioned the government to establish the '*official*' Ban Chiang elementary school, '*Ban Chiang Pracha Chaing Cherd*,' in 1927 (Boonpong, 2010, p. 73). In 1966, Ban Chiang became the first community in Thailand to officially establish a sub-district administrative organization, following a request from the locals. After implementing self-administrative rule, people in the region started various community development projects to benefit from their donations and volunteer work. Community utility services received major upgrades between those years through the installation of electricity and road graveling and water pipe construction and the establishment of both underground water and village ponds for drinking. The community had provided more classes to local primary schools extending to the seventh grade and also encouraged the establishment of '*Rat Samitwittaya School*' - the first private secondary school in the community that provided education to the tenth grade (Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, pp. 17-18).



The villagers also requested that the central government preserve artifacts from Ban Chiang's excavations in the community by donating their properties to establish a museum (Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, p. 34).

According to Dr. Stephen Young, who made the ‘world-famous stumble’ at Ban Chiang in 1966, he had expressed his gratitude to all the people of Ban Chiang who ‘...were extremely welcoming, helpful, and friendly...’ to him during his Ph.D.'s research in Ban Chiang at the International Conference on ‘The five decades of Ban Chiang's Discovery’ held in Udon Thani (S. Young, 2016b). Nowadays, with a sense of hospitality, locals still actively participate in cultural tourism-related activities organized by locals and non-local agencies (INTW03, 2017; INTW06, 2017). One Malaysian travel blogger, who participated in the ‘Thailand Village Academy Program’<sup>28</sup> in 2019 and won the first prize in ‘The Village Story Competition’ expressed that ‘...the friendliness of the Tai Puan Community is the spirit of this village...’ (Tan, 2019). Thus, Ban Chiang exemplifies how strong community leadership and civic engagement, coupled with genuine hospitality, have enabled the village to preserve its heritage while embracing progress. The villagers' welcoming spirit remains a hallmark of their community, bridging their rich past with present-day cultural tourism.



<sup>28</sup> At the (across The assigned in life in the ‘Cultural’ as winners Malaysia, <https://real>

villages in their everyday ‘Hero’ or bloggers can from blog at



In brief, Ban Chiang community is a product of the ancient and the contemporary, a marriage of the lost civilization of early times with the living traditions of the Tai Puan people. Although they had no direct biological links, their close spiritual and cultural bond with their forebears has been maintained by the Tai Puan through the continued practice of ancestor worship, and by the continuation of agrarian and artistic traditions.

Distinctive characteristic of the Tai Puan such as their diligence, their pride in being one of them (ethnicity), and their involvement in community affairs have been the basis for Ban Chiang's development and its ability to weather change. While the Tai Puan work to maintain and celebrate their heritage in a globalized world, their endeavors to transmit this special life style to younger generations and their efforts to unfold their culture to visitors through tourism initiatives attest to the continuing vigor and adaptability of this exceptional group.

### **3.5 Ban Chiang's heritage providers**

The stewardship and interpretation of Ban Chiang's heritage involve a complex network of local and non-local stakeholders, each contributing to the production and dissemination of knowledge about the site's prehistoric and contemporary cultural significance. Initially, national and international agencies such as The Fine Arts Department (FAD), The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized, valued, and promoted the site primarily for its archaeological (buried) significance, with minimal involvement from the local people (insiders). However, international politics and Thailand's World Heritage Convention membership from 1987 played the most significant role in obtaining Ban Chiang's registration (Hoontrakul, 2016, p. 71). Most of Ban Chiang's interests center on past buried artifacts and archaeological sites currently housed in museums and outdoor displays at archaeological sites that seldom present stories directly associated with modern local residents. The mainstream of heritage management and interpretation typically employs *'formal, authorized, top-down'* approaches, which *'colonize'* the direction of heritage practices in the community towards archaeological education and tourism-oriented interests. It undoubtedly leads the community to emphasize the heritage tourism sector, leaving limited spaces for locals to speak about their own *'ordinary'* or *'everyday'* heritage. By *'reproducing'* and *'reinterpreting'* the living *'Tai Puan's heritage'* in the tourism realm, the locals domestically learn to adapt themselves to the global arena to earn their livings, at the same time, continuing and strengthening their shared

memories and local identities. Several stakeholders or parties, both outsiders and insiders, actively play significant roles as '*providers*' or '*producers*' in creating Ban Chiang heritage through time, particularly at the local level. It includes the following groups/individuals:

### **3.5.1 Ban Chiang National Museum**

Since the Fine Arts Department (FAD) first established the Ban Chiang National Museum in 1975 following the Royal Visit in 1972 and has periodically renovated its exhibitions and museum spaces, it has gained widespread recognition as one of the leading institutions offering the most comprehensive understanding of Ban Chiang Culture and related archaeological knowledge to the public. It fundamentally aims to collect found artifacts and accumulate archaeological information from the site and nearby areas to celebrate Ban Chiang's archaeological significance and raise the locals' and visitors' awareness to preserve the site (including other sites in Ban Chiang Culture) against antiquity smuggling. The FAD renovated the current permanent exhibition in 2006, dividing it into ten sections (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 9-12). In addition to the indoor exhibitions within the museum, visitors can experience the 'in situ-like exhibition' of Ban Chiang's excavation pit at the first outdoor archaeological exhibition in Thailand, located at Wat Po Sri Nai, about 500 meters to the east of the museum. Also, the Tai Puan Exhibition House is an outdoor exhibition. The owner, Mr. Poj Montripitak, authorized the FAD to excavate on his property in 1972. King Rama 9th and the Queen visited the house, and they donated the house and the surrounding land to the FAD for conservation and as a memorial for the Royal Visit.

After establishing the museum in Ban Chiang, the FAD was able to effectively communicate its conservation concerns to both locals and the public through museum operations. This approach proved to be more effective than relying on archaeologists, who were often criticized for their poor presentation skills. The museum staff, acting as FAD authorities, not only enforced anti-smuggling laws against looters, but also received calls from individuals seeking to return archaeological artifacts they had unintentionally unearthed underground or salvaged from smuggling trades (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016).



Later, between 2014-2015, the FAD by the Information Technology Center Cultural Heritage had launched the six languages of the ‘Ban Chiang Virtual Museum’ for the public to experience Ban Chiang’s heritage from afar, including exhibition sections, virtual model 360, VR high angle, and photos, videos, and e-books (Information Technology Center Cultural Heritage, 2015).

Currently, the Ban Chiang National Museum is the primary tourist attraction in Udon Thani province and its surrounding regions, and it has undoubtedly been the most influential institution in constructing ‘official’ Ban Chiang heritage both domestically and internationally.



World Heritage sign in front of the main building of Ban Chiang National Museum



Display of potteries and artifacts inside Ban Chiang National Museum

Source: <https://www.thaizer.com/ban-chiang-national-museum-udon-thani/>

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2015)





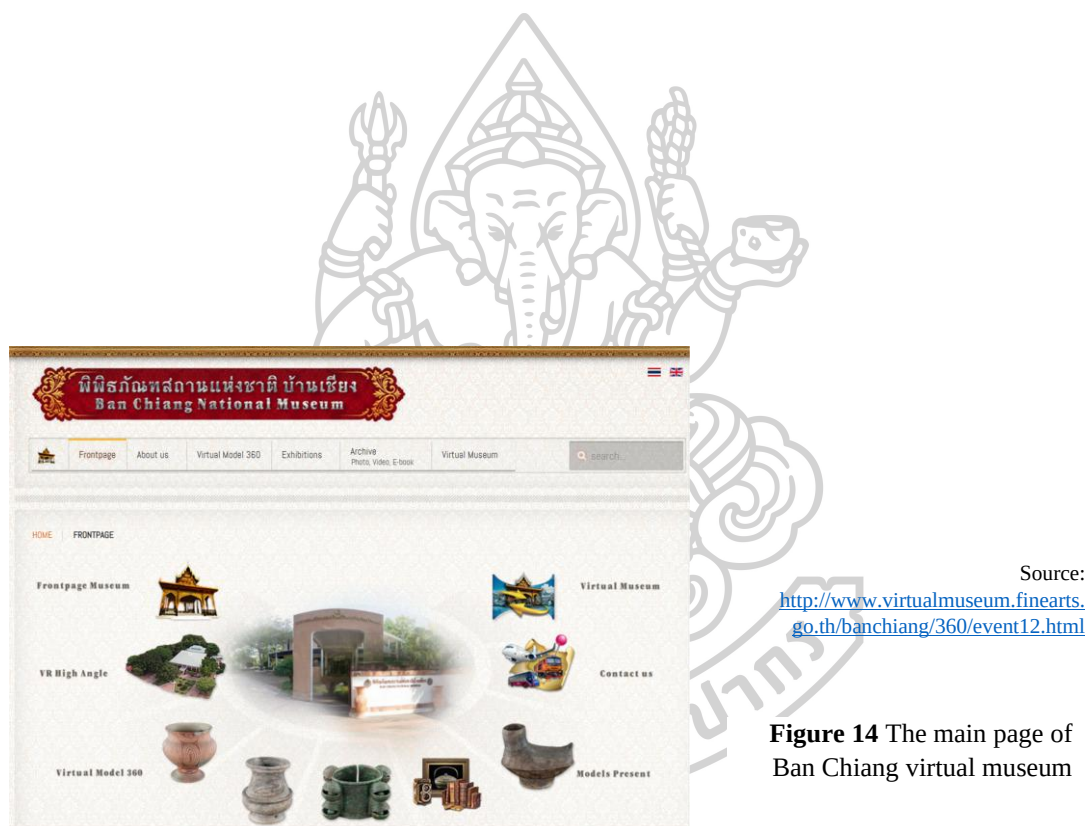
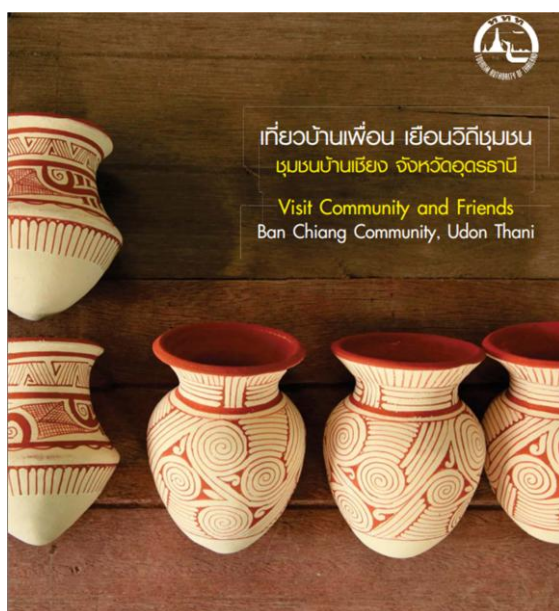
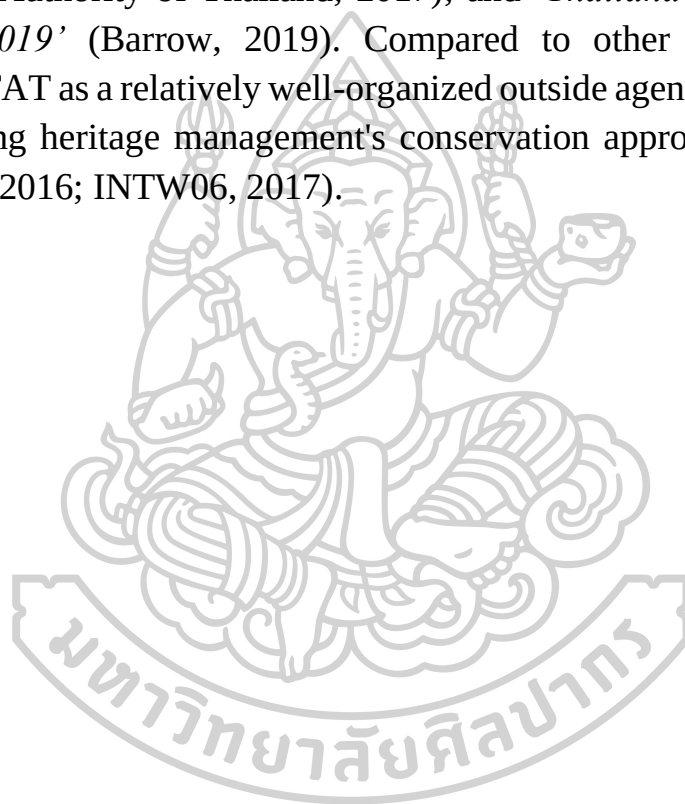


**Figure 14** The main page of Ban Chiang virtual museum

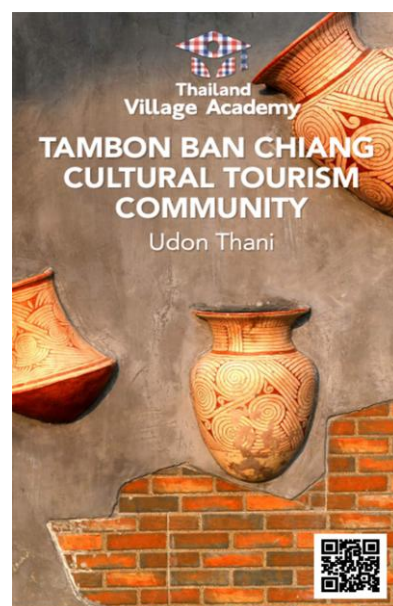
### 3.5.2 Tourism Authority of Thailand

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), a primary partner supporting Ban Chiang heritage tourism from the outside, frequently promotes the heritage tourism-related activities of Ban Chiang in various aspects, especially after Ban Chiang's induction as a World Heritage site in 1992. TAT was a vital agency assisting the locals to establish (together with other outside parties) the first '*Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival*' in 1996, which now becomes one of the most significant annual festivals of the community and the Udon Thani province (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016).

The TAT (and its partners) has introduced a variety of tourism promotion methods and campaigns to Ban Chiang. For instance, *'The passport of seven amazing in Ban Chiang,'* a collection card of seven stamps obtained from visiting seven tourist attractions in Ban Chiang during the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival 2015, can be exchanged for souvenirs, and *'Ban Chiang Marathon,'* a part of the World Heritage Runs Project, launched annually in 2017 (Jurong Media, 2017), the tourism e-book *'Visit community and friends: Ban Chiang community, Udon Thani'* in 2017 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017), and *'Thailand Village Academy Project 2019'* (Barrow, 2019). Compared to other agencies, people perceive TAT as a relatively well-organized outside agency that aligns with Ban Chiang heritage management's conservation approach. (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW06, 2017).



Visit community and friends: Ban Chiang community, Udon Thani (E-book)



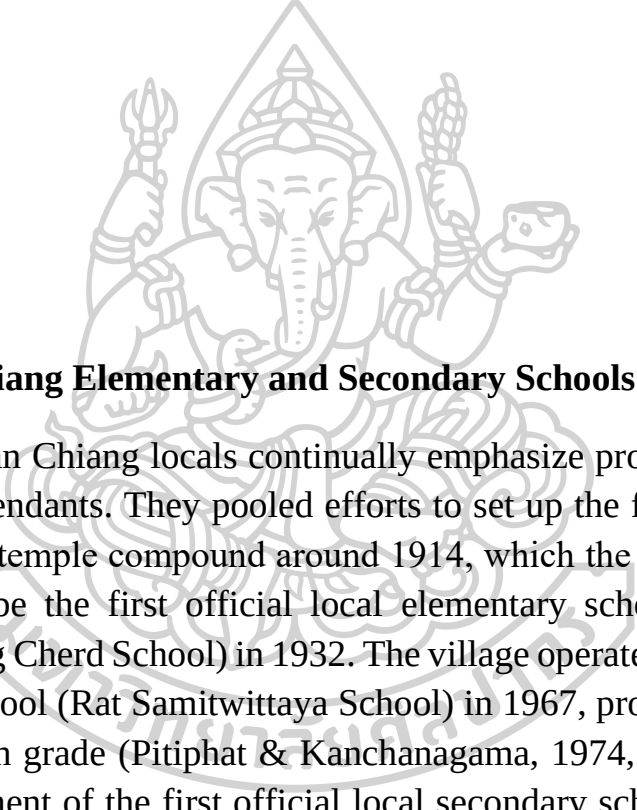
Thailand Village Academy Project 2019: Tambon Ban Chiang cultural tourism

**Figure 15** Ban Chiang heritage tourism supported by the Tourism of Thailand (TAT)

### 3.5.3 Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality

Since it converted from '*Ban Chiang Sanitation District*,' which comprised ten '*Mòo bâan*' (villages) in Ban Chiang '*Dtam-bon*' (sub-district), to '*Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality*' in 1999 (Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality, 2020), it plays a more significant role in supporting or organizing heritage activities in the community and coordinating with other outside agencies. For instance, it annually subsidizes various local heritage groups to carry out their activities or coordinates numerous governmental projects, including The Five Stars OTOP Village and Creative Industry Village (CIV) (INTW06, 2017). At present, it has been the main funder of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival by supporting almost half of the annual budget and providing other resources for organizing the festival (Udon Thani Provincial Cultural Office, 2019, p. 17). While the Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality plays a crucial role in promoting local heritage, there have been allegations that some locals hold high-ranking positions within the Municipality and operate their heritage businesses, potentially creating conflicts of interest (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03, 2017; INTW07, 2017). Furthermore, there are occasional disagreements in the approaches or conduct of heritage-related practices between the museum (FAD), which emphasizes the conservation approach (heritage for conservation), and the municipality (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03, 2017; INTW07, 2017).





#### **3.5.4 Ban Chiang Elementary and Secondary Schools**

In general, Ban Chiang locals continually emphasize providing education for their descendants. They pooled efforts to set up the first school in the community's temple compound around 1914, which the government later upgraded to be the first official local elementary school (Ban Chiang Pracha Chaing Cherd School) in 1932. The village operated the first private secondary school (Rat Samitwittaya School) in 1967, providing education up to the tenth grade (Pitiphat & Kanchanagama, 1974, p. 23). In 1979, the establishment of the first official local secondary school, Ban Chiang Wittaya School (Ban Chiang Pracha Chiang Cherd School, 2019; Ban Chiang Wittaya School, 2020; Boonpong, 2014, pp. 7-8) followed a trend of locals frequently sending their offspring for secondary or high school education outside the community for several years (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016).

Local school members used to take part in different heritage activities during the past era. When Ban Chiang Elementary School operated under full provincial authorization in 1972, the school governors regularly selected local teachers to welcome pre-arranged visitors who visited



without external assistance (INTW06, 2017). Since teaching was a popular career path for the locals in the past (INTW08, 2017), teachers gradually became the community's influencers in various parts, including raising conservation awareness among young generations (INTW04 & INTW05, 2017). Today, local school students (both from elementary and secondary schools) are encouraged to participate in numerous heritage activities to prolong and strengthen Ban Chiang's (and Tai Puan's) heritage values. Students engage in activities such as speaking in Tai Puan, dressing in Tai Puan attire, creating designs on ceramics, executing Ban Chiang's traditional dance, and playing instruments such as '*Bpohng laang*' (Isan xylophone) and other instruments in bands. During the Ban Chiang World Heritage Celebration Festival, a number of students participate in various events such as the Youth Tour Guide Project, the Ban Chiang Heritage Painting Competition, and the World Heritage Celebration Parade (INTW09, 2017).

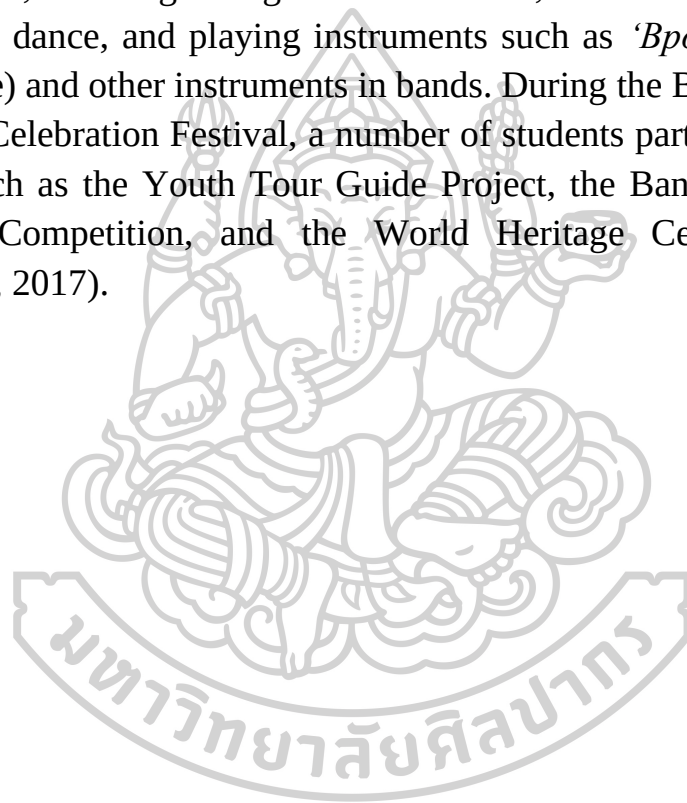




**Figure 17** Students from Ban Chiang Elementary and Secondary Schools annually participate in the worship dance of Khun Chiangsawat's spirit at Ban Chiang National Museum

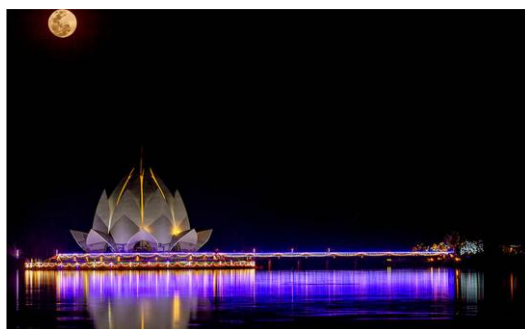
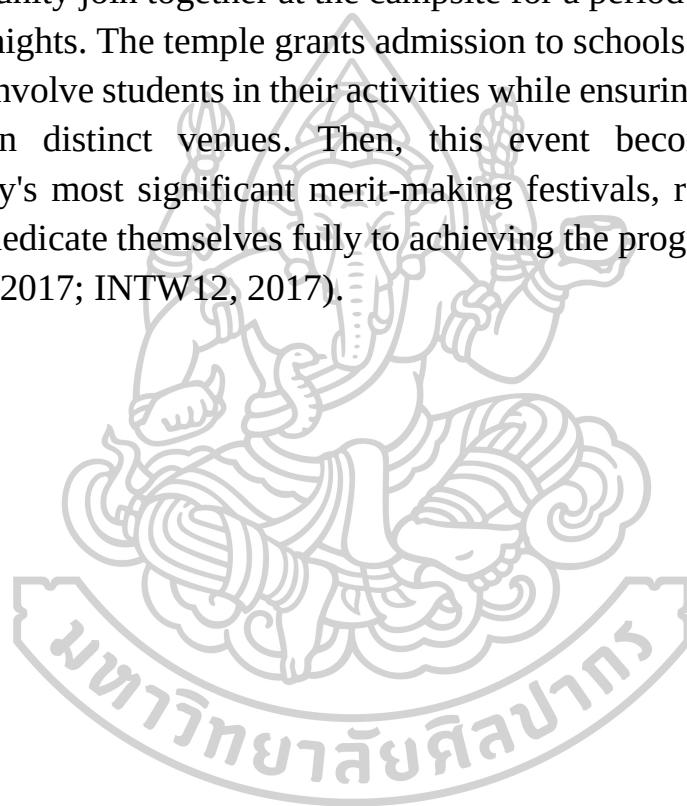
Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=491238553221701&set=a.490017186677171>

### 3.5.5 Ban Chiang's local temples

The Tai Puan of Ban Chiang has passed on a rich cultural heritage and fine traditions in Buddhism and Hinduism from generation to generation, as seen by their everyday life practices and regular major merit-making traditions for each month year-round (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). Despite not being as enthusiastic about religious belief and practice as they were in the past, the majority of locals today continue to actively participate in various merit-making activities within the community. These activities include providing food to the monks, praying and listening to sermons on various occasions, and making donations for religious constructions and activities (INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; INTW12, 2017). Among all Ban Chiang local temples, three are actively used by the community at present. Wat Pho Sri Nai stands as the initial temple founded in 1774 which exists within the Ban Chiang mound on its eastern border. The site holds two essential meanings as Thailand's initial public open-air museum along with being the first destination where King Rama the 9th and his Queen stepped on March 20, 1972 (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 159; Boonpong, 2010, p. 39). It also serves as a central hub for locals to engage in essential religious and spiritual activities year-round, including the annual ancestral spirits-worshipping tradition during the Ban Chiang World Heritage Celebration festival, which takes place at the beginning of February. The second temple, Wat Santi Wanaram, was first found in 1937, about 3 kilometers north of Ban Chiang. It had a major restoration in 1990 after the construction of a 320,000-square-meter reservoir next to the temple property. The site's proximity to the community forest, home to a diverse range of wildlife, attracts a significant number of visitors who seek to immerse themselves in the temple's natural aesthetic atmosphere. After the construction of the giant lotus-shaped

chapel on the lake<sup>29</sup>, which was completed in 2019, the temple has emerged as a popular tourist destination in Udon Thani province and its surrounding areas (Barrow, 2019; Boonpong, 2010, pp. 45-47). Due to its peaceful environment, the temple has consistently organized ‘*Dharma camps*’ at the beginning of January every year for more than 40 years, extending the programs of another temple in the community (the third temple), Wat Pah Lay Lai, which organizes this type of Dharma camp in December every year for four days. Hundreds of monks and nuns from within and outside the community join together at the campsite for a period of ten subsequent days and nights. The temple grants admission to schools near the religious center to involve students in their activities while ensuring students receive training in distinct venues. Then, this event becomes one of the community's most significant merit-making festivals, requiring locals to annually dedicate themselves fully to achieving the programs (INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; INTW12, 2017).



Lotus-shaped chapel at Wat Santi Wanaram



Gigantic Bodhi Tree at Wat Pho Sri Nai

Source:

Source:

<sup>29</sup> [https://cms.dmpcdn.com/travel/2021/02/01/eabc5590-644e-11eb-b3a0-c5960e49b0b3\\_original.jpg](https://cms.dmpcdn.com/travel/2021/02/01/eabc5590-644e-11eb-b3a0-c5960e49b0b3_original.jpg)  
The unique lotus-shaped chapel at Wat Santi Wanaram, situated in the middle of water, was inspired by a former abbot's travels to India. It holds the distinction of being Thailand's first and only chapel of its kind (Chanatip Travel, 2020).

<https://thailandtourismdirectory.go.th/attraction/1254>





### 3.5.6 Ban Chiang heritage-related occupational groups

As previously mentioned, Ban Chiang locals gradually recognize how valuable their own heritage is to the world, particularly the archaeological significance, which was solely established by several official or outside parties. However, especially after Ban Chiang was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1992, the locals began to realize the significance of their collective contemporary heritage - *The Tai Puan culture* - in Ban Chiang's heritage tourism. They introduce their own 'versions' of Ban Chiang heritage's interpretations through initiating several Ban Chiang heritage-

related occupational groups to exercise heritage practices in the community. In 2017, the fruitful efforts of these groups' endeavors had put the community on the first nine pilot projects of the Creative Industry Village (CIV) of Thailand (integrating the local product development with the community-based tourism), sponsored by the Ministry of Industry (INTW06, 2017; Technology Promotion Association, 2017). The following groups are active local agents currently conducting various heritage activities and considering the community's heritage-related providers, or '*heritage ambassadors*.'

- **Ban Chiang Homestay Group**

As it might be seen, the Home-Stay group is the most active local heritage group in the community. Since its official founding on April 1, 2004, the group has continuously upgraded its performance on heritage-related activities and services, contributing to Ban Chiang heritage tourism (INTW06, 2017). By coordinating with other local heritage groups, the visitors can experience various heritage activities representing the ways of Ban Chiang people's life as a part of local tourism packages. For example, receiving the blessing from the '*Bai sri su kwan*' ceremonies (*A Hindu-influenced rite of inviting 'Kwan' or spirits to people and blessing inauspicious occasions, such as weddings, recoveries from an illness, or visits by guests*); serving local food (including the famous local dish, the Galangal Fried Rice); pottery painting and making earthenware souvenirs; weaving indigo-dyed textile; weaving bamboo products, learning the local instruments and Ban Chiang Folk Dancing; and visiting the local temples for offering food and making merits to the monks (Tan, 2019; Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). Until now, the Ban Chiang Homestay Group is widely recognized by its accepted standard and becomes one of the well-known homestay best practices in Thailand that has continuously received awards from several institutions (INTW06, 2017).

- **Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting Group**

The group is a fine example of how locals reinterpret their perceived Ban Chiang heritage. In the past, besides exploring experts' reports on the classification of found motifs on Ban Chiang's ancient potteries and copying them, locals also created new motifs inspired by the originals,

painted them on the copy vessels, and sold them as unique souvenirs of the community. Additionally, locals reconstructed a blend of old and new Ban Chiang potteries by collecting and combining old sheds, adding new (painted) pieces to complete the potteries' forms, and displaying them for customers who optionally sought out '*semi-authentic*' Ban Chiang pottery in the legal market (INTW06, 2017; INTW10, 2017). Following the establishment of the Pottery Crafting and Painting Group, the locals could teach pot-painting skills within local school programs (INTW09, 2017; INTW10, 2017). Pottery workshops operate as one of the leading attractions that draw visitors to Ban Chiang during current times. These activities involve making pottery in the workshop space and collecting black clay from the original raw material source on the bank of a stream near the community (Tan, 2019).

- **Ban Chiang Local Textile Weaving Group**

Although the locals had established textile weaving groups in the community in the past, the current group is regarded as the most active and advanced in its techniques for delivering local textile weaving products and knowledge to the public. For instance, the group employed mechanical instruments to support the hand-weaving process for years and later used the Microsoft Excel program to create various possibilities for applied Ban Chiang patterns on weaving fabrics, which had won numerous prizes from competitions for their distinctiveness. The group center operates as a well-visited workshop destination welcoming people who wish to understand local textile weaving wisdom. The local textile artists weave two significant fabrics in northeastern Thailand known as '*Mát mène*' (*A type of Thai silk woven in northeastern Thailand*) and indigo-dyed textiles that expert archaeologists found as a tiny fragment preserved on ancient potsherds stretching from 1,800 to 900 years ago (INTW11, 2017; Phuraksa, 2017; Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017).

- **Ban Chiang Bamboo Weaving Product Group**

A workplace in Ban Dong Yen operates as a workshop station for locals situated 1.5 kilometers east from Ban Chiang Village. A number of households in the village possessed members who practiced weaving local materials into household products including traps and fishery containers



and nets when they finished their agricultural responsibilities. Bamboo weaving was an essential skill of locals in producing those kits (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). Later, as the popularity of using hand-made tools faded, a few locals continued this skill. However, the community's flourishing cultural heritage tourism led to the establishment of the Bamboo Weaving Product's Group, which not only perpetuated this traditional skill but also supported Ban Chiang's tourism activities as an active heritage provider.

- **Ban Chiang Folk Dancing and Music Instrumental Group**

The group demonstrates the diverse contributions of both local females and males to the Ban Chiang heritage performance activities. Local females primarily run the folk dancing section of the group, while local males primarily operate the folk music instruments section. The two sections are generally separated while they rehearse, but they will join each other when cooperating in public performances. Typically, they will perform together to greet and welcome the pre-appointed groups of visitors who have just arrived at Ban Chiang, particularly in front of the museum or the Ban Chiang Cultural Plaza. Occasionally, they contribute to community tourism packages by setting up a station where visitors can spend their time learning how to dance and play traditional instruments such as the Tai Puan of Ban Chiang (Tan, 2019). In the annual special events like the Ban Chiang World Heritage Celebration Festival, the folk music instrument section plays on several stages. The folk dancing section engages in a variety of performing activities, such as practicing and leading a group of voluntary dancers who participate in the worship dance of Khun Chiangsawat's spirit, with a particular focus on working with the youth dancers from local schools (Q01, 2017).



Ban Chiang Homestay Group

Source: <https://pantip.com/topic/37963169>



Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting Group

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=9121305909346508&set=ar.6121305909346508&type=3>



- **Ban Chiang homecomers group**

In 2024 a ‘new’ generation of locals formed the ‘*Jûm bâan-chiiang*’ (Ban Chiang Come Together Group). Despite their diverse talents and skills, they share a common goal: to freshen up their hometown with the perspective and creativity that would make it one of the most livable places in the world. During this process, in collaboration with local authorities and external partners, the group launched the first Ban Chiang Art and Craft Festival in the Na Kham Great Pond area on September 27–28, 2024. Young locals and young returnees from different regions were able to use the festival as a platform to organize events and display products

demonstrating the skills of Ban Chiang's new generation. Featuring art exhibitions, food and beverage, crafts, handmade products, and musical performances, the festival embodied their core vision: the fact that it should be inclusive and the right to shape their hometown belongs to people of all generations (Louder, 2024).



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1055967853195346&set=pcb.1055968903195241>

**Figure 20** The first Ban Chiang Art and Craft Festival in the Na Kham Great Pond area on September 27–28, 2024

Therefore, Ban Chiang is a vibrant and rich, as demonstrated by the large number of people involved in protecting and explaining the heritage. Prehistoric archaeology is the main focus of the national museum, and living traditions are the main focus of the Thai Puan Museum. Local schools run educational programs, and community groups and young professionals work on creative projects. Each of these groups adds a different voice to the ongoing conversation about Ban Chiang's past, present, and future. This multifaceted approach to heritage management is in line with the principles of *'The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.'* This convention stresses how important it is for the community to be involved and how



methods for living heritage are always changing (UNESCO, 2023). It is the goal of these different groups to show that cultural management can be more open and include everyone, with the community's needs, wants, and health coming first. This is important as the community tries to find a balance between conservation, development, and sustainable tourism. Ban Chiang could be a model for other heritage places that are trying to find a balance between conservation, development, and community empowerment. It achieves this by making it easier for these different groups to work together and share their knowledge.



### 3.6 Conclusion: Ban Chiang heritage's significance

*[...] From the first human hand-printed on the cave wall, we are part of something continuous. So, we don't really die [...]*

*Basil Brown from the movie 'The Dig' (Stone, 2021)*

To briefly summarize, the significance of Ban Chiang heritage is multifaceted and extends beyond the archaeological significance established by outsiders in the past. However, contemporary Ban Chiang locals celebrate the value of heritage by continuously practicing their living or unofficial heritage, either by reaffirming or reinterpreting already designated heritage, or by adding new heritage through their own

vocabularies. From being passive heritage consumers, some locals have become active heritage providers, amplifying and enhancing Ban Chiang heritage in diverse ways. The approaches in this research are derived from the interpretation of The Bura Charter of the Australian ICOMOS ‘*The Practice Note on Understanding and Assessing Cultural Significance*’ (AUSTRALIA ICOMOS, 2013) and ‘*The Guidelines for Writing Effective Statements of Significance*’ (British Columbia Heritage Branch, 2013), to highlight the cultural importance and meaning of Ban Chiang's heritage. It also looks at the founding and the experience through time of Ban Chiang heritage as described by various fieldwork groups. For this research, the cultural significance of Ban Chiang heritage is defined as follows:

### 3.6.1 Scientific/ archaeological significance

- **The paradigm shifting of prehistoric knowledge in the Southeast Asian (SEA) region**

Adding to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Ban Chiang Archaeological Site stated by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in Criterion iii ‘...*The centre of a remarkable phenomenon of human cultural, social, and technological evolution which occurred independently in this area of Southeast Asia and began at Ban Chiang around 1500 B.C. and spread widely over the whole region...*’ (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2020), the scientific or archaeological importance of Ban Chiang heritage for this research is primarily based on the proposals by Dr. Joyce White<sup>30</sup>,

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<sup>30</sup> Dr. Joyce White, an American archaeologist, previously served as the director of the Ban Chiang Project at the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, USA. She also founded and served as the executive director of the Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology (ISAA). She collaborated with other archaeologists, conducting research and analyzing evidence from the Ban Chiang excavation from 1974 to 1975. Following the passing of Dr. Chester Gorman, the joint director of the Ban Chiang 1974-1975 Project and her Ph.D. supervisor, she took over as the director of the Ban Chiang Project at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. She also had an essential role in organizing a traveling exhibition, ‘*Ban Chiang: Discovery of the Lost Bronze Age*,’ which toured the United States and Singapore for two years (1982–1983). The archaeological field has widely accepted her arguments and conclusions, which divide the cultural development of the prehistoric communities at Ban Chiang into three periods based on burial and pottery styles. In 2008, she gained experience as an expert witness for US investigations into trafficked Ban Chiang antiquities from various museums and private collections, successfully authenticating over 10,000 prehistoric Thai artifacts smuggled from Thailand since about 2003. Nowadays (2021), as the executive director of ISEAA, Dr. White and her staff work on several archaeological research pieces in Laos, expanding knowledge from fields beyond Ban Chiang (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009; Metcalfe, 2016; Rattanamahatana, 2018).



obtained from her interviews in the articles (Metcalf, 2016; Rattanamahatana, 2018) and other documents (White, 2016a; S. Young, 2016a). Dr. White's involvement in two thoroughly studied and published monographs on human skeletons and metallurgy by the University of Pennsylvania Museum, along with a lengthy investigation in Ban Chiang since 1976, led her to assert that the discovery of Ban Chiang Culture revealed unexpected technological and artistic development among the region's people, challenging prevailing ideas about the SEA's prehistory. It deflated long-held stereotypes about the human past derived from long-term archeological research in the Near East, Europe, and Central America (Metcalf, 2016). The findings have proved that '*...Southeast Asia was not a cultural vacuum to be filled with imports from China, India, and later Europe...*' (S. Young, 2016a). The skeletal remains and metallurgical finds suggest that the Ban Chiang community and other metal age agrarian societies in this part of Thailand were notably healthy and peaceful. The skeletal findings showed no evidence of interpersonal violence, which is consistent with regular warfare (Metcalf, 2016). Metallurgy served symbolic and utilitarian purposes, not combat. Additionally, the skeletal remains suggest that the Ban Chiang ancient people had a healthy diet and were not significantly ill, in contrast to other parts of the world where the '*upper classes*' in agrarian societies were healthier than the '*lower classes*.' In general, population health declined with the adoption of agricultural economies, and metallurgy stimulated warring interactions and social hierarchies (Metcalf, 2016; Rattanamahatana, 2018; White, 2016a).

- **The benchmark of prehistoric knowledge resource center of the Southeast Asian (SEA) region**

Ban Chiang National Museum (with its Wat Pho Sri Nai Archaeological Excavation Pit Museum and the Tai Puan House in commemoration of Their Majesties 1972 Visit) is broadly recognized as an international standardized prehistoric museum or '*world-classed site museum*' in the Southeast Asian region (White, 2016b). The main museum buildings comprehensively exhibit nine permanent galleries relating to Ban Chiang archaeological works and pre-historic sites of Ban Chiang culture, and another gallery presents the Tai Puan locals' ways of life (Ban Chiang

National Museum, 2009). Every year, the museum draws in thousands of visitors to explore its indoor and outdoor exhibitions, especially those on group excursions. Professional experts officially documented and explained the Ban Chiang archaeological stories at the museum to provide academic value for visiting groups as an exceptional educational site. Ban Chiang will ultimately retrieve all artifacts from the United States through the completion of their research study including two hundred ancient skeletons in addition to many depleted pot shreds. The Fine Art Department and the Ban Chiang National Museum plan to further their services by establishing the Ban Chiang Pre-Historical Research Center, which will include facilities supporting Ban Chiang archaeological research and the open storage of Ban Chiang's artifacts, which occasionally allow public visits (INTW07, 2017; Thongpan, 2018).

- **The testimony of continuous settlements in the upper part of Thai's northeastern region**

Ban Chiang, located in the upper region (Sakon Nakhon Basin) of the Northeastern Plateau (Khorat Plateau), exemplifies the typical Tai Culture settlement. It is called '*Naa · náam · nern*' (*Rice field–Waterbody–Mound*) habitation (Sutthitham, 2001), which generally comprises setting residences on the mound near the free-flow waterways (or water bodies) and surrounded by rice paddies (Sujit, 1994). In Ban Chiang, people constructed their homes on the oval mound, known as the '*core zone*' of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site, situated near the confluence of two streams, Huai Na Kham and Huan Ban or Yang Sa Bang (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 40) and surrounded by rice fields landscape. Researchers have discovered evidence of continuous habitation from pre-historic times to early historic communities approximately one thousand years ago (1,000-1,200 AD), after which they abandoned the location. Around 1,800 AD., the Tai Puan people from Xiang Khouang province in Laos PDR migrated to the area and established the village of Ban Chiang (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 34, 41), thereby becoming the '*biological ancestors*' of the contemporary Ban Chiang locals.

### 3.6.2 Historic value

- **The most significant chain of Thai pre-historic archaeological development**

As part of archaeological rescue efforts to restore evidence in a heavily looted site, Ban Chiang was thought to be the first scientific and interdisciplinary field study to be done by foreigners and Thai scholars with a wide range of expertise.<sup>31</sup> The goal was to build up knowledge (both techniques and theories) about the people, culture, and environment of prehistoric Ban Chiang and Southeast Asia (Charoenwongsa, 2015; Natapintu, 2015). It was once called '*Ban Chiang University*' (Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 11). The location operated as an international fieldwork site which scholars called the first '*field school in the small village.*' This established an educational environment through which Thai along with Southeast Asian and international students received instruction from diverse international academic experts during their research activities. (Charoenwongsa, 2015). Later, some of the '*Ban Chiang Field School Alumni,*' particularly Thai students, became specialists in various archaeological fields or held high-ranked positions in the government or academic institutes (INTW03, 2016; Katuthat, 2016b, p. 30). Therefore, the Ban Chiang site had attracted several international archaeological institutions to conduct their research, which consequently influenced the paradigms and working processes of Thai archeologists (Katuthat, 2016b, p. 12; Natapintu, 2015).

- **The Thai nation-building strategic point in the northeast during the Cold War Era**

The political context of the Cold War era in Southeast Asia, particularly during the Vietnam War (1955-1975)<sup>32</sup>, revealed the United States'

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<sup>31</sup> The interdisciplinary '*Ban Chiang fieldworks*' were not limited to only the experts in archaeology, but also those in relating skills such as anatomy, socio-anthropology, geology, soil science, animal science, botany and etc. (Charoenwongsa, 2015).

<sup>32</sup> In the Thai context during the Cold War period, there was widespread acceptance that the United States and the Thai government had secretly collaborated to prevent the expansion of the Communist insurgency in the region. Several endeavors had been conducted, including the Thai nation-building process toward modernization and establishing the status of the Thai monarchy as the center of the nation's spirit (Chuengsatiansup, Duangwises, & Kaenmee, 2021, p. 13).

extensive efforts to suppress the communist insurgents in the northeastern part of Thailand. In addition to providing hundreds of millions of US dollars in economic support, Thailand also received millions of US dollars in defense and security financing. For instance, several airbases were established in the region, the Friendship Highways were constructed to serve the network of military airbases, and a significant budget was allocated for training Thai police and military forces to enhance rural security and combat communism (Peleggi, 2016, pp. 97-98). Beginning in mid-1960, several American social scientists received American research grants and scholarships, dubbed ‘...*the most explicit and systematic blueprint ever created by Americans for reshaping foreign societies...*’ (Gilman, 2003, p. 5), to conduct research projects in Thailand specifically designed to combat communism. Additionally, American universities trained a new generation of Thai technocrats who later played significant roles in Thai society, receiving a number of scholarships (Peleggi, 2016, p. 98). At that time, Thai archaeology had generally been ‘...*the production of American archaeological knowledge on Southeast Asian prehistory in relation to the Cold War politics, and more specifically of Thailand’s neocolonial dependence on the United States...*’ (Peleggi, 2016, p. 94). Numerous funding projects enabled American universities to join forces with Thai government agencies for joint social science and archaeology research (Peleggi, 2016, p. 98). For decades, the US had shipped tons of found artifacts, particularly from the Ban Chiang excavation sites, for further analysis and interpretation in laboratories (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 109; Katuthat, 2016b, p. 30). However, since 2017, these artifacts have returned to Thailand (Matichon Online, 2017; Thongpan, 2018). Also, Thai archaeologists had epistemologically and methodologically grounded in the American archaeological knowledge - the ‘*New Archaeology*’<sup>33</sup> approach - from experiencing the joint fieldworks or receiving scholarships to further their educations in the US (Hoontrakul, 2016, p. 68; Peleggi, 2016, pp. 98-99). Moreover, there was an intensive concern of King Rama IX about the communist insurgency in the northeast,

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<sup>33</sup> According to Smith ((2004) p.39, cited in Peleggi, 2016, p. 99), the New Archaeology, or the Processual theory, was the dominant position in American prehistoric archaeology by the turn of the 1970s, which aims ‘...*to produce objective, ethically neutral generalizations that were useful for management of modern societies...*’ (Trigger (2006), p. 407, cited in Peleggi, 2016, p. 99)

which called for various ‘*soft*’ strategic attempts to win the hearts of locals over the insurrections (Charoenwongsa, 1975, pp. 44, 63). The King himself was interested in the people's evidence from the past and how it related to the Thai nation at present. He frequently expressed concern about the looting at Ban Chiang, which had severely damaged the in-situ evidence (Charoenwongsa, 1975, p. 80). Then, the royal visit to Ban Chiang during a two-day trip to the northeastern province of Udon Thani on March 20, 1972, had emphasized the importance of Ban Chiang, not only on its archeological significance but also the recognition of Ban Chiang Culture integrated into Thai national (official) heritage in the process of Thai nation-building or ‘*the construction of Thai Past*’ (Hoontrakul, 2016, p. 76) during the Cold War period (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 37; Hoontrakul, 2016, pp. 72-76; Peleggi, 2016, p. 95).

### **3.6.3 Social and spiritual value**

- **The active local involvement in preserving Ban Chiang Heritage**

Unlike other World Heritage Sites in Thailand, which are primarily dominated and operated by the national government, Ban Chiang's people have been gradually involved and cultivated a sense of pride and appreciation for their underground heritage, which the outsiders first introduced. The royal visit to Ban Chiang in 1972 created a far-ranging effect towards recognizing Ban Chiang as a national heritage archaeological site. His Majesty had recommended cooperation with overseas institutions on further scientific research and emphasized the importance of broadening Ban Chiang's awareness to the villagers and visitors (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 25, 37) with empathy, not only law enforcement (INTW03, 2017; INTW15, 2017). Several consequence actions were conducted in Ban Chiang to safeguard the site. For instance, the national law to ban all illegal digging, moving, and trading of artifacts in Ban Chiang and nearby in 1972; the joint excavation project between the Fine Arts Department and the University of Pennsylvania in 1974-1975; the establishment of Ban Chiang National Museum at the original site in 1975, as well as the opening of the Wat Pho Sri Nai excavation pit to the public (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 45-



46, 63). Then, the villagers of Ban Chiang were inspired and began to participate in preserving the site, which was severely looted of archaeological artifacts for illegal trading at the time (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 9). During the fieldwork in Ban Chiang, some of the villagers actively participated in the excavation projects. For instance, assisting experts in fieldwork and taking care of researcher needs, housing them and their work items and using their houses as educational centers for archaeological students (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 63; Rattanamahatana, 2018). Additionally, the local schools consistently highlight the significance of Ban Chiang heritage values to their students through their local curriculums, school activities, and related cultural projects. This emphasis has motivated several local youths to actively participate in the conservation process of Ban Chiang heritage (INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; INTW08, 2017; INTW09, 2017; INTW10, 2017; INTW12, 2017; INTW16 & INTW17, 2017). Later, especially after Ban Chiang was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1992, the locals proudly showcased their recent past, the Tai Puan living heritage, to the public as a supplement to their ancient underground heritage. It indeed reveals how the local community adapts and interprets Ban Chiang's heritage in its vocabularies.

- **The spiritual connection between the ancient and the present people of Ban Chiang**

As it becomes apprehended by the found evidence, there was no biological relationship between the ancient people who settled in Ban Chiang around five thousand years ago and the present locals descended from the Tai Puan ethnic group who migrated from Laos around two hundred years ago (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 34). However, the current Ban Chiang locals associate themselves with the ancient people who inhabited the same space, but at different times, as their '*spiritual ancestors*.' The community annually organizes the Ban Chiang Ancestor Spirits Worshipping Ceremony to respect the lost forerunner at the Wat Pho Sri Nai Excavation Site Museum. Some of the villagers still pay homage and consign merit to the ancestor souls of Ban Chiang while attending the merit-making ceremony (INTW08, 2017; INTW13, 2017). Some locals, who used to unearth these

underground artifacts on their properties, asserted that they were incidentally inherited objects from their '*anonymous predecessors*,' who sold them to earn a living, particularly to fund their children's education (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03, 2017). In contrast, some locals believe that the buried ancient objects belong to '*phi*' (the death spirit) and should not be taken away from their original locations without the consent of the deaths (INTW12, 2017; INTW14, 2017; Timeline Suthichai, 2016). The concept of '*Mai cheua ya lop loo*', which means '*If you do not believe it, do not disrespect it*', has led to numerous stories of people experiencing bad fortunes or catastrophic situations after taking objects from the pit (INTW03, 2017; INTW11, 2017). Those narrations, somehow, provide an alternative measure to protect the heritage of Ban Chiang and keep the tie that binds people from today and the past together.

#### 3.6.4 Aesthetic value

- **The cultural landscape that reflects the symbiosis between human settlement and nature**

Although the settlement of the Ban Chiang community today has been gradually altered from a small agricultural, rural village surrounded by rice fields and woodland to a more 'urbanized' local center of cultural tourism village, the landscape of the Ban Chiang community has still partially shown the attractiveness of mutual supports between locals and its natural setting. For instance, in the northern part of the community, the village mound's panoramic views from the rice field near the streams reveal the '*Naa · náam · nern*' (*Rice field–Waterbody– Mound*) settlement with seasonal beauty of rice paddies against the greenery background of the inhabitant mound. The public finds the sunset views by the Na Kham Great Pond in the west remarkably impressive, as they immerse themselves in the twilight atmosphere of the community. The shady greenery of vegetation integrated into housing plots as residential gardens on the mound was a dominant visual character of the community for a long time. Unfortunately, the use of household gardens has changed from the past, putting this peaceful and pleasant landscape at risk of disappearing from the Ban Chiang area. Compared to the past, front-back-side residential gardens are now used for more minor purposes. Housing extensions or

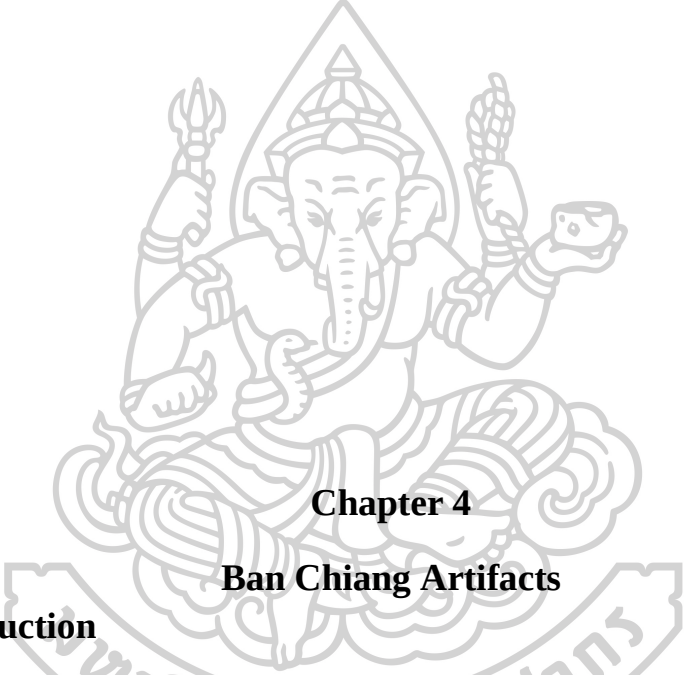
other necessary spaces, aligning with locals' everyday lives, have replaced several gardens.

- **The beauty of slow living on the Ban Chiang heritage mound**

Unlike the western part of the community near the museum, which is dominated by commercial use relating to the cultural tourism activities, there are more vibrant and dynamic activities. The life on the Ban Chiang heritage mound (as the core center of the World Heritage site) is passive and peaceful. It might be because almost all the properties are continuous residential use (with only some small local shops and two temples), which people calmly inhabit and gradually embed their memories on the mound for a long time. Also, it might be a result of several laws and regulations enforcements that control the land and building uses on the mound, which seems to '*slow down*' the new development (changes) and preserve the '*slow pace of living*' on the heritage mound of Ban Chiang until the present day. Fortunately, the beauty of 'slowness' is undoubtedly a desirable condition for people living in the unrested contemporary world.

To conclude, recognizing and valuing the multiple layers and meanings of Ban Chiang's heritage is essential for developing inclusive and collaborative approaches to its management. In a complex and rapidly changing world, it will be critical to maintain the community at the forefront of decision-making processes, as the community surmounted challenges and seized on opportunities to manage conservation and development balance.

The following chapters will explore in greater depth how people, especially the locals, experience Ban Chiang's heritage through its objects, places, and practices, offering insights into the dialogical relationships that shape the production and consumption of heritage in this unique setting. The next chapter starts this examination by looking at how the artifacts from Ban Chiang have affected and are influencing community heritage experiences.



## Chapter 4

### Ban Chiang Artifacts

#### 4.1 Introduction

Ban Chiang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northeastern Thailand, is renowned for its archaeological significance and distinctive pottery. This chapter examines how the local community experiences and interprets the material cultural heritage of Ban Chiang, focusing on the transformation of objects into artifacts that represent the community's history and identity. This transformation process is deeply intertwined with the site's World Heritage status, which, as Sophia Labadi notes, can significantly impact local perceptions and interpretations of heritage (Labadi, 2013).

The chapter adopts Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA) for analyzing the transformative process of meaning construction regarding Ban Chiang artifacts. Through local community member narratives and interpretations, they actively build the meanings associated with these objects. The

research endeavors to reveal how power relationships together with intricate interpretation methods form the basis of heritage experiences in Ban Chiang.

The key question of this dissertation relates to the ways people, particularly the local community, experience Ban Chiang heritage. This experience is presumed to occur through a dialogic relationship between objects, places, and practices. As Nicholas Thomas aptly states, '*Objects are not what they were made to be, but what they have become*' (Thomas, 1991, p. 4). This perspective serves as a foundation for understanding how Ban Chiang artifacts transcend their status as mere physical objects or ceramic pots to become representational of broader cultural significance.

## 4.2 Theoretical Framework

The study of material culture and objects has a long history across various academic disciplines. Researchers have long explored physical artifacts and material culture to gain insights into past societies and ways of life (Kim, 2023; Norton Antro, 2016). This tradition continues today, with a growing focus on understanding the roles that objects play in contemporary societies as well (Wilton, 2008).

This chapter adopts the influential concept of the '*social life of things*' developed by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. Appadurai posits that objects, like people, have dynamic social lives. He argues that life patterns of objects and their relationships with people evolve over time and space, forming a kind of '*biography of things*' (Appadurai, 1988). Igor Kopytoff further expands on this idea with the concept of the '*cultural biography of objects*,' emphasizing how objects accumulate histories and meanings over time (Kopytoff, 1986). For archaeological artifacts, archaeologist Cornelius Holtorf proposes a novel perspective: the '*life history of things*.' Instead of solely focusing on their past, he suggests examining how their significance and meaning evolve over time, both in the present and future (Holtorf, 2002).

The significance of an object, according to this view, is not inherent but is provided by what is done to it and how it is used in various contexts. This perspective is now widespread in heritage theory and practice, best



exemplified in Laura-Jane Smith's influential book *'The Uses of Heritage'* (L. Smith, 2006). Objects, especially in the domains of art and architecture, often possess a variety of potential meanings that remain latent until mobilized in particular use-contexts. This aligns with David C. Harvey's understanding of heritage as a process, continuously reinterpreted and reconstructed in the present (Harvey, 2001).

#### **4.3 Shifting Definitions: Multifaceted Meanings of Ban Chiang Artifacts**

The meanings associated with Ban Chiang objects have undergone a dynamic transformation over time, especially since their 'discovery' by outsiders, particularly archaeologists. This discovery triggered a chain of events that led to a major archaeological revelation in the 20th century, captivating the world's imagination. Before the re-writing of the objects as significant archaeological history in Southeast Asia, Ban Chiang was a typical rural area, a quiet place rarely visited by outsiders. No one in the village attributed special significance to the objects that locals 'simply found' in their everyday life and landscape, particularly during the rainy seasons when falling rain flooded the ground, unveiling pottery buried under the surface (Bhamorabutr, 1988, pp. 7-8; Nakamura, 2017b).

A villager from Ban Chiang, Ms. Siriphan Sutthibun, was interviewed in Ban Chiang National Museum's video presentation at the second room (Archaeology in Ban Chiang), Ban Chiang National Museum, as follows:

*[...] When we dug post-holes in house building, dug water drains or when it was raining and the surface soil was eroded away, we always found fragments of painted pottery... We did not know the value of the pottery fragments. Children made throwing toys out of the pottery fragments. Sometimes the complete pots were used as house decoration objects or used as spittoons by the elderly who chewed areca nut or used as water and food containers for dogs... We were not interested in these objects. We thought they belonged to the dead and have no value to us [...]*

*(Ban Chiang National Museum, 2010)*

According to Ms. Y, an 88-year-old villager, she and the other villagers had always been familiar with the presence of relics in the area. Here's what she said about her experience:

*[...] Earthenware was found in the basement of the house when I was eight years old. Since the human bones came out together, I thought the pottery belonged to the ghosts. After that, a number of earthenware pots often appeared but as they were used by ghosts, we could not use them as containers for drinking water but only keep in them the indigo dye for dying or use them as containers for tools [...]*

(Nakamura, 2017b, p. 1080)

Interestingly, in the words of Ms. Siriphan and Ms. Y, while finding relics was commonplace, they believed these belonged to ghosts. This instilled a sense of reverence for the pottery.



**Figure 21** Artist's conception (by Ardeth Anderson) of the village of Ban Chiang in 1966 showing pot rims emerging from the road

Source: <https://iseaarchaeology.org/ban-chiang-project/background/>

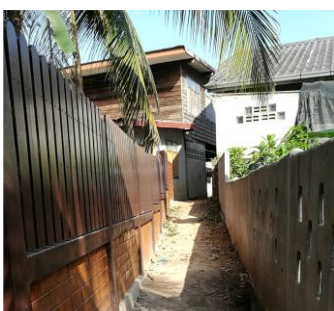




**Figure 24** Additional potsherds were discovered by the researcher and the local land owner in a cultivated plot at the Ban Om Kaew archaeological site, located approximately 2 kilometers south of Ban Chiang archaeological site

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2017)



### 4.3.1 The Discovery and Early Excavations

A chance discovery in 1966 imbued ordinary objects with immense significance. During research for his thesis, Stephen Young who studied at Harvard came to Ban Chiang in northeastern Thailand (Timeline Suthichai, 2016). He uncovered a collection of painted pottery artifacts through the accident that occurred as he stepped on a Kapok tree root (Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology, 2019). Some had painted designs on them, while others were unpainted. Investigating further, he found pots on display in the library of the primary school (MaCarthy, 1969, p. 103). Intrigued, he collected samples and presented them to Professor Chin Yoodee, curator at the Fine Arts Department. Professor Yoodee, recognizing the potential significance, believed these were prehistoric Metal Age artifacts, previously unknown in Thailand. He proposed excavation and dating the samples abroad.

The Fine Arts Department conducted the first scientific excavation at Ban Chiang in 1967. Potsherd samples were sent to the University of Pennsylvania for thermoluminescence dating (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009). Beyond presenting his findings to the authorities, Stephen Young also shared them with Princess Pantip Boriphat, a close friend of his parents and a renowned patron of art and culture. Princess Pantip, intrigued by the relics, dispatched a team of specialists from Suan Pakkad Palace to investigate the site where the artifacts were found in 1967. Below is an excerpt from their report:

*[...] Our team set off early in the morning in a Land Rover. The journey was very comfortable. We stopped along the way and arrived at Ban Chiang at around 8 pm. The moon was in its waning phase that night, so it was very dark. The area was better suited for relaxation purposes rather than any other activities. Everyone moved to their personal activities after showering and costume change since some preferred sleeping while others did not. Our guide led us to the site where Mr. Stephen Young had discovered the pottery during the following morning. The site was about 40 meters from our accommodation. The whole area was littered with red-painted pottery fragments. After walking around the area, we found*

*that the most pottery was found along the road leading into the village, which had been eroded by water to a level lower than the original road surface. We tested our available tools while conducting our excavation work in the research area. The initial work projects received positive reactions from the villagers due to ordinary human curiosity. Our full cooperation arrived from the villagers after we had explained our visit and spent time looking around and gradually started digging up the road. The unscientific excavation continued for some time, and we eventually found a clay pot by the side of the road near the fence of a house. Some villagers told us that in the past, villagers often found them, but they had to be thrown away because they were of no use. After that, we went to pay our respects to the abbot of the temple. When we learned that he had kept a clay pot filled with holy water, we took the opportunity to make a donation to the temple in exchange for the pot. The entire process to obtain his blessing lasted for quite a long time. We organized a banquet on the last night to welcome multiple Ban Chiang village leaders including the Gam-nan along with the elders. Everyone enjoyed the banquet which made the villagers express happiness when they discovered their community also possessed valuable offerings. [...]*

*(Boriphat, 1969, p. 100)*

Upon receiving the report and acquiring several Ban Chiang pots for the Suan Pakkad Collection, Princess Pantip Boriphat, intrigued by the discovery, embarked on a personal visit to Ban Chiang in April 1969. This visit formed part of her larger excursion to northeastern Thailand (Boriphat, 1969; McCarthy, 1969, p. 101). Here's her account of her experience in Ban Chiang:

*[...] Upon arriving in Udon Thani Province, we set off for Ban Chiang early the next morning. We passed through Nong Han District and arrived at Ban Chiang. We visited the headmaster of Ban Chiang School, Mr. Phrommi Srisunakhrua, who took us to the school to show us the artifacts he had excavated in the village. He gave us a clay pot and took us to dig along the fence, along the path,*



*and to a house where they were digging new post holes. All of the digging holes contained fragments of broken pottery items. The Fine Arts Department should perform a proper excavation here. It would better produce further archaeological discoveries at this location...*

*We decided to leave the site behind since traveling to Loei Province became our main priority. Before leaving Ban Chiang, we did not forget to visit the local textile industry. Ban Chiang fabrics have very interesting colors and are not expensive. Everyone in our group bought one or two pieces....*

*It was a pity that we did not have time to study the art and ancient history of Ban Chiang further. However, we hope that the Fine Arts Department will expedite the reporting of the results of the Ban Chiang survey so that people interested in archaeology in Thailand and abroad can learn about it [...]*

*(Boriphat, 1969, p. 101)*

Mr. Sombat Manyahong (65), senior advisor to the Ban Chiang Local Textile Weaving Group, described a long-standing connection between Suan Pakkard Palace and Ban Chiang. He has a unique perspective on this relationship, being the son-in-law of a local family who provided the palace with both Ban Chiang artifacts and textiles for weaving:

*[...] I came to Ban Chiang in 1973, just when foreigners and the Fine Arts Department folks started digging around. It took a while, but before long, everyone was talking about these ancient artifacts they were finding. And let me tell you, the prices they were fetching! We're talking tens of thousands of baht per piece, depending on how complete and fancy it looked....*

*There was even this whole underground network of traders, both local and foreign, working together to buy these artifacts. They'd pack them up in crates, load them onto containers or trains, and ship them off to Bangkok or even across the border to Laos....*

*Princess Pantip Boriphat from Suan Pakkard Palace used to come here too. We'd sell her hundreds of meters of cloth every month, but then one day, she sent word that she was interested in the artifacts, particularly interested in the unique stuff. She wasn't looking to just resell them. She wanted to keep them safe for future generations. Now they're part of a museum collection. A reminder of our village's history and significance [...]*

(INTW11, 2017)

These quoted dialogues and the interview offer valuable glimpses into the early exploration of Ban Chiang and the impact of archaeological discoveries there. The sheer abundance of pottery fragments, evident from the dialogues, hints at the potential for significant archaeological finds. However, this potential came with challenges. The villagers' initial curiosity, followed by their eventual cooperation with archaeologists, as highlighted in the interviews, proved crucial. Unfortunately, the interview also exposes the rise of an artifact trade network, highlighting concerns about the preservation of these valuable finds. Thankfully, the involvement of Princess Pantip Boriphat, as revealed by the interview, demonstrates a pivotal shift towards safeguarding the artifacts for future generations. Her interest, along with visits from other prestigious or authorized guests, particularly those with a keen eye for Ban Chiang pottery, contributed to opening the village to the wider world. Ultimately, these dialogues and the interview showcase the complex interplay of economic opportunities and challenges that arose from Ban Chiang's newfound significance.



**Figure 4-05** – One of the original Ban Chiang painted pottery



Ban Chiang's legendary spot (Stephen Young's tripping point)  
near a giant kapok tree on the mound

Source: (Boonpong, 2010, p. 81)



Stephen Young and villagers at the tripping point

Source: Photographed from the temporary exhibition at the 5 decades  
of Ban Chiang discovery, at Udon Thani, on May 26, 2017, by Sitta  
Kongsasana (2017)

**Figure 25** Historical photographs of Ban Chiang's discovery site  
(Stephen Young's tripping point)





**Figure 26** Stephen Young and Siripong, a villager from Ban Chiang who was with Young at the time of the incident, demonstrated how Young tripped and was helped up by Siripong, to the group of attendees at the 2016 conference commemorating five decades since the discovery of Ban Chiang

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)



The tripping spot in 2017

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2017)



A villager, 35-year-old-man, showed his old photos taken in front of his house at the tripping spot

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2017)

**Figure 27** The historical tripping spot at Ban Chiang - past and present (2017)



### 4.3.2 The Rise of the Antiquities Market

With the arrival of archaeologists in Ban Chiang, the everyday objects familiar to the local people were radically transformed into archaeological evidence of a highly significant Neolithic site in Southeast Asia. Experts changed the meaning of the pottery (and other artifacts such as bronzeware and beads), and what was once '*ordinary*' became internationally labeled as '*crucial historic artifacts*.' The archaeological interpretation of Ban Chiang artifacts, attaching a significant historical narrative, also brought unintended consequences.

Thermoluminescence dating at the University of Pennsylvania revealed pottery to be 5,000-7,000 years old. This age, significantly older than previously thought, challenged the existing view of Southeast Asia as a mere buffer zone between China and the Indus Valley. It revolutionized the understanding of the region's independent and ancient civilization. Adding to the excitement, some relics, particularly those with the unique red-on-buff painted swirls and bands, further amplified Ban Chiang's fame (Nitta, 2017; Peleggi, 2015, cited in Nakamura, 2017b, pp. 1080-1081).

Then, a new meaning arose, and a new '*social life*' began for the distinctive artifacts: they were labeled as '*antiquities*,' which attracted attention from antique and art collectors. This was a drastic conversion of the archaeological significance of the pottery, and what was suddenly created was a high demand for these antiquities on the international black market.

### 4.3.3 The 'Ban Chiang Gold Rush'

The Vietnam War further intensified the situation. The village, previously isolated, saw an influx of outsiders. Foreigners – Americans, Japanese, and Europeans – alongside Thai officials, all flocked to the site. American soldiers from nearby Udon Thani bases also began visiting and purchasing artifacts (Nakamura, 2017b, p. 1081). This incursion of '*Farang*' (foreigners in Thai) to this remote corner of northeastern Thailand propelled Ban Chiang onto a much wider stage.

Elizabeth Lyons, a Southeast Asia Art and Archaeology Specialist for the Ford Foundation, visited Ban Chiang during the Gold Rush era. She

witnessed firsthand the excitement and chaos that ensued as people flocked to the area in search of riches:

*[...] The whole village acted like Bargain Day at Gimbels. Some houses had the merchandise set up on tables beside the house, or on the ladder-like steps. Fresh pits under and around every house showed where the stock had come from, and here and there were clusters of Thai and American soldiers bargaining and buying. We were invited into the town's largest house and in ten minutes it was crowded with sellers and the wares spread out all over the floor. I went back to Bangkok very much disturbed, and deter-mined to campaign for protection and excavation [...]*

*(Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 7)*

Froelich Rainey, who served as the Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology from 1947 to 1977, also recounted his experience leading a team to Ban Chiang during the Gold Rush period. The purpose of this visit was to assess the site prior to initiating a joint excavation project between the Fine Arts Department of Thailand and the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, which spanned the years 1974 to 1975:

*[...] In February 1973, I stopped in Bangkok and Lisa made arrangements with the Fine Arts Department for Marina and me to visit the site. With Nikhom, who had been one of the excavators, we took a night train to Udon and then drove to Ban Chiang. Nikhom seemed very popular with the villagers and we had a very friendly welcome. At house after house, we climbed up ladders to the veranda and living room, were given tea and then shown the collec-tion they had dug up under the chicken coops under the house. (Judging from the freshness of the holes all around the village they were still digging in spite of the law.)*

*The bronze and iron objects, mostly tools, knives or weapons and bracelets had little value in their eyes. When we showed our interest, they simply offered them to us as presents to guests. And when we ex-plained that we did not buy antiques, they tried to*

*present us with the valuable pots as well. (Nikhom must have given us quite an introduction!)*

*Not only at Ban Chiang but at four or five other villages in the vicinity, we found the same profitable mining going on beneath the pile-supported houses. Marina was shocked at the sight of chickens eating or drinking from only slightly broken ancient painted pottery [...]*

*(Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 9)*

The new players from outside, driven by monetary gain, fueled the ‘Ban Chiang Gold Rush,’ a destructive scramble for antiquities. Prior to the Gold Rush period, villagers viewed the relics as unremarkable objects simply part of their surroundings. However, the Rush sparked a shift in perception. Villagers recognized the newfound value of these artifacts and began collecting them. Brokers, merchants, and foreigners, particularly those from Bangkok, flocked to the village, eager to purchase these underground treasures. This newfound market led to a significant financial windfall for some villagers, fundamentally altering their relationship with the relics. What were once seen as everyday objects were now a lucrative commodity (Nakamura, 2017b, p. 1081).

Tensions escalated between various stakeholders. Villagers, aware of the newfound value of the artifacts, challenged excavation laws and resorted to concealed digging on their own land. Driven by the desire to improve their lives, they were motivated by the chance to earn more money through the sale of these marketable objects (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; Kanchanakom, 2016; Katuthat, 2016a).

As part of the fieldwork research, some local residents shared their experiences related to the looting of Ban Chiang artifacts in the past. A former staff member of the Ban Chiang National Museum, a 60-year-old woman who now splits her time between Ban Chiang and the US, reflected on her experience during the Gold Rush:

*[...] Throughout the boom period, almost every household was digging for ancient artifacts.... My mother used to hire people to dig in our backyard garden. They were paid 200 baht per antique*

*item found. She saved the money to pay for her children's education....*

*Actually, there was a law prohibiting illegal digging enacted in 1972, but our house (and others) still did secret digging, especially at night. They would lift up the wooden floorboards under the house to dig, avoiding inspection by officials....*

*You can't really blame the villagers, because they didn't understand the value of the artifacts. But once they had a "monetary value", everyone wanted to make money, so everyone dug....*

*During the Vietnam War, there were middlemen in the community who knew who was digging where (or had reserved digging pits in advance). They would go buy the artifacts cheaply for 50, 200, 500 baht, with nice pieces fetching over 1,000 baht. Every Friday, military trucks would come into Ban Chiang to collect the "goods" that had been gathered, buying them to take out of the village [...]*

*(INTW01, 2016)*

A 75-year-old retired elementary school teacher and Bai-Sri (Thai blessing ceremony) maker recounted her experience as a part-time pot hunter:

*[...] At that time, I was a teacher at a private school, earning only 300 baht per month, which wasn't enough to live on. On Saturdays and Sundays, I would go to the pits where people were digging and negotiate to buy artifacts from the diggers. I would collect and keep them to sell to buyers. There were 2-3 times when my friends and I took a boat across the Mekong River into Laos to sell pottery jars to a foreign agent based there. Sometimes the Lao police would catch us and we had to pay them money before they would let us go....*

*Once I sold pots for 15,000 baht, but my friend sold them for 30,000-40,000 baht.... Some of the jars I sold were reproductions, pieced together from broken shards, or with ancient patterns repainted by local craftsmen...You couldn't tell with the naked eye, but when the jars got wet, the patterns would wash off*

*completely...The foreign agent was very angry at being duped into buying fakes, but I didn't care because he had already bought them (laughs) [...]*

*(INTW03, 2017)*

A 39-year-old male, local vendor from Ban Chiang, shared his experience as a part of an antique trading family:

*[...] My mother has been in the antique trade since before I was born. When I was a young child in elementary school, I still saw her selling them. However, she stopped selling them when I was in middle school and switched to selling silk instead. She told me that she would go around collecting antiques from Ban Chiang and other nearby villages. Once she had collected the items, she would store them in her rice barn. She had everything from pottery and beads to bracelets and skulls, just like what you would find in a museum. She said that she would set up a stall to sell them, just like selling vegetables or fish in front of the house. People would come to her to buy antiques for their bosses, high-ranking military officers, and foreigners who often bought them to collect...*

*I learned from the villagers that it was my parents who let them dig up my garden. They would buy whatever the villagers dug up. My mother told me that someone once came to my garden and offered to buy the land for excavation, promising a million baht (about \$30,000 at the time, 30 years ago). But my family didn't sell because we had already made a huge profit from the antique. It's a shame that it's all gone now, and we didn't keep it to speculate on (laughs) [...]*

*(INTW18, 2017)*

These interviews paint a picture of a period driven by economic desperation and a lack of understanding of the historical importance of the artifacts. It also highlights the involvement of middlemen and the black market, leading to the loss of valuable archaeological information. Interestingly, all interviewees, despite their involvements, express some regret for the loss of these historical pieces.



Obviously, the illegal trade also involved middlemen and collectors who partnered with locals. Some prominent Thai collectors justified their actions as patriotic. They argued they were rescuing the artifacts from becoming mere souvenirs for the foreigners, claiming the authorities were failing to prevent looting on private property (Lyons & Rainey, 1982, pp. 7-11). Thai collectors used the belief of foreigners taking artifacts as an excuse to collect them themselves. As Thamnoon Ladpli explained:

*[...] When the Government cannot do anything to preserve it [the pottery], I as a Thai have the duty to save it from being pilfered by foreigners so that these Thai objects can be saved for our own posterity [...]*

*(Bangkok Word, June 26, 1972, cited in Esterik, 2023, p. 110)*

Princess Chumbhot (Princess Pantip Boriphat), often criticized for popularizing the collection of ancient artifacts, initiated the Suan Pakkad collection in her home. Her goal was to protect valuable pieces from being looted by American soldiers stationed at the Udon Thani air base near Ban Chiang. As quoted her fumed concern by Elizabeth Lyons:

*[...] They will ship them all out of the country before the Fine Arts Department does anything! [...]*

*(Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 7)*

On the other hand, archaeological experts determined to prevent the severe looting and rescue the historical artifacts in situ by undertaking excavations mainly in Ban Chiang's public spaces. Further, as a consequence, they attempted to educate locals about the value of preservation and the implications of the nation's antiquity laws (Charoenwongsa, 2015; Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 11). The conflict between the stakeholders raised concerns in Ban Chiang about the ownership of heritage, particularly the objects found on private property and whether Ban Chiang heritage was a precious gift or a burden on the local community (Charoenwongsa, 2015).

#### 4.3.4 Preservation Efforts and the Impact of the Royal Visit

A pivotal moment for Ban Chiang arrived on March 20, 1972, with the Royal visit<sup>34</sup>. This prestigious event not only solidified Ban Chiang's recognition as a significant national archaeological heritage site but also served as a powerful impetus for ongoing collaboration in its preservation and development.

After the Visit, there were various '*official*' interventions from outside parties designed to actively preserve the values of Ban Chiang's archaeological heritage, raising public awareness about heritage protection and the need to prevent looting and antiquity trafficking (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 45-46). For instance, the government passed the 189th Revolutionary Decree on July 23, 1972, to stop illegal digging, moving, and trading of artifacts in Ban Chiang and nearby locations. In addition, preservation efforts for Udon Thani's archaeological treasures took root with a dedicated working group. A concurrent research project about Ban Chiang prehistoric culture started by conducting excavations in nearby locations Ban That along with Ban Om-Kaew.

The Fine Arts Department continued these excavations under the project in 1973. To further explore Ban Chiang, the department partnered with the University of Pennsylvania to establish the Northeast Thailand Archaeological Project (1974-1975) and conduct additional excavations. This collaboration expanded in a joint project, bringing together the Fine Arts Department, the University of Pennsylvania, and a team of international experts (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, pp. 45-46, 63).

The Ban Chiang National Museum was finally established in 1975 for collecting and displaying artifacts from excavations (including the opening of Wat Pho Sri Nai excavation pit to the public). Later, Mr. Pot Montripitak, the owner of the house and land visited by Their Majesties, generously donated his property to the Fine Arts Department for further

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<sup>34</sup> The Royal visit to Ban Chiang appears to echo Prakan Klinfoong's thesis (2008), which identified a pattern of increased royal visits to rural areas during the rise of Communism, a time when the kingdom perceived communism as a significant threat (Dhansandors, 2019).

study. This land is now part of the Ban Chiang National Museum's exhibition space.

Following its major renovation in 2005, the Ban Chiang National Museum's permanent exhibition dedicates its first room to the historic royal visit of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1972. Photographs and accompanying text showcase the King's profound interest in the artifacts, prompting insightful questions to officials. This display resonates with similar photos exhibited within the community and the cherished memories recounted by locals who witnessed the event firsthand. It underscores the strong connection forged between the King, the Royal Family, and the Ban Chiang villagers. The Royal Visit not only propelled Ban Chiang into the international spotlight, but it also fostered a mutual sense of pride (INTW03 & INTW15, 2017; INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; INTW19, 2017). Villagers developed a deeper awareness of their role in safeguarding these treasures as part of their own heritage and a national legacy (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 46; INTW01, 2016; Nakamura, 2017b, p. 1082).

However, Marie Nakamura argues that the portrayal of the King's visit in the play as the sole reason villagers stopped selling artifacts in Ban Chiang is an oversimplification. While the visit likely raised awareness of heritage preservation, the enactment of the Relics Act and the dwindling supply due to looting probably had a more significant impact. The play prioritizes a clear narrative but overlooks the villagers' complex experiences, including the lasting positive memory of the King's visit and the multifaceted reasons for stopping artifact sales (Nakamura, 2017b, pp. 1085-1086). The involvement of royalty shifted the conversation for the locals, fostering a sense of responsibility as guardians of their heritage. Despite this, it's possible the visit simply inflated the value of artifacts, potentially fueling further looting (Esterik, 2023, p. 171). Stephen Young's account in the media supports this notion. He describes how:

*[...] In the aftermath of His Majesty's visit to Ban Chiang, villagers realized the value of the unique pottery beneath their feet. This unrestrained digging unearthed over 40,000 pots from Ban Chiang, but not for archaeological purposes [...]*

*(Timeline Suthichai, 2016)*



March 20, 1972, marked a historic moment when His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej set foot on Ban Chiang soil

Source: Photographed from the exhibition gallery of Ban Chiang National Museum, on February, 12, 2017, by Sitta Kongsasana



Their Majesty graciously talked to villagers who came for an audience during their visit

Source: (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 24)

**Figure 28** The Royal Visit of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit to Ban Chiang in 1972





**Figure 29** Their Majesties visited an excavation site at Mr. Pot Montripitak's residence and talked to the owner about his living with great interest

Source: (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 24)



**Figure 30** Ms. Angkana Boonpong, daughter of Mr. Pot Montripitak, shared her memories of the royal visit. She also presented an old photograph depicting the King and his father at the site

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)



#### 4.3.5 Connecting Artifacts to the Local Community

A defining characteristic of Ban Chiang's archaeological significance is the ongoing effort to connect the artifacts to the local community, particularly younger generations. This connection is fostered through various initiatives. Students not only participate in Ban Chiang heritage activities<sup>35</sup> but also connect with the objects through school-based pot painting workshops. Additionally, some students participate in the Ban Chiang National Museum's annual youth guide program, co-sponsored by the museum and Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality. These young guides present artifacts and their stories to visitors, revealing a successful attempt to instill a sense of pride and historical continuity in preserving and passing on the heritage value across generations (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016; INTW03, 2017; INTW04 & INTW05, 2017; INTW08, 2017; INTW09, 2017; INTW10, 2017; INTW12, 2017; INTW16, 2017; INTW17, 2017).

Two former Ban Chiang youth guides shared their experiences regarding Ban Chiang's heritage and artifacts. First, a 24-year-old woman revealed her stories:

*[...] It's a source of great pride to be born in a place like Ban Chiang, where I get to meet people from all over the world. We owe a lot of gratitude to foreigners, especially Stephen Young, for putting Ban Chiang on the map. That's why I'm passionate about sharing the stories and history of our community. My involvement in the Youth Guide Program has been instrumental in my learning journey. It's given me the opportunity to delve into our heritage and share that knowledge with visitors. Beyond reading books, attending classes, and interviewing elders about our past, this program has left a lasting impact on me, even now that I'm a trainee teacher at our local elementary school...*

*Today, I am worried about some of our traditional cultural activities that we passed down through schools, like Ban Chiang pottery*

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<sup>35</sup> The Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival embodies this commitment. School youth actively participate in parades, World Heritage painting competitions, and stage shows during the festival. They also learn and use Tai Puan alongside Thai and English, donning Tai Puan costumes for events, and some join the folkdance group or form a youth band to perform publicly.

*painting, are losing their appeal among younger generations. Seems like they're all about social media and stuff. It's a shame, because these activities are important, they help us keep our heritage alive. We need to work together to instill a sense of conservation in our children and youth. This could involve workshops, field trips, encouraging traditional attire and language use, and introducing them to our local cuisine. These experiences will help them develop a deep appreciation for their own culture...*

*We don't need to necessarily add new traditions, but we can't let the old ones die out either. We just got to find ways to make them relevant and exciting for the younger generation. It's up to all of us to keep our cultural heritage alive [...]*

(INTW16, 2017)

Another 25-year-old woman also described her experience:

*[...] Being a youth guide totally changed how I see Ban Chiang. Sure, the pottery is cool, but it's just a piece of the puzzle. As a guide, I learned about how people lived back then, everything from their houses and tools to their beliefs and stuff. It wasn't just reading textbooks, you know? The museum exhibits recreated the whole thing, like a trip back in time!...*

*And that experience stuck with me. Even now, when friends and family visit, I take them around the museum, explain the exhibits. Sometimes even strangers join in, and we all learn something new together...*

*The future of the Youth Guide Program? I'd love to see it bigger! Right now, it's just a few days during the festival. But back in my day, we did Saturdays and Sundays! We'd wait at the entrance, all hyped up, ready to explain things to visitors...*

*The museum? Absolutely, it fills a huge gap. With no more digging allowed, the museum's one of the few places to learn about Ban Chiang. Hearing stories and seeing the artifacts firsthand, that can be just as powerful as an actual dig, you know?...*

*You know, those artifacts still buried? That's a real puzzle. They're absolutely part of who we are, and we're aware they're down there. But unearthing them all? That's a huge undertaking. And we have to be certain they're looked after the right way, don't we? So, for now, let's all work together to protect the site, and make sure everyone knows what we've already learned from it. That's where we'll get the most bang for our buck, I reckon [...]*

(INTW17, 2017)



**Figure 31** Ban Chiang youth participate in pot painting activities on occasion, either in school or during special events

Source: <https://www.xn--22c9bf4cwc6d5bk.com/2020/09/blog-post.html>



**Figure 32** A Ban Chiang youth guide presented the stories of artifacts to museum visitors

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2015)

According to the former youth guides of Ban Chiang, they showed mutual respect toward community heritage together with a unified concern for its

future. Their experiences with the Youth Guide Program underscored its effectiveness in fostering cultural understanding. However, both interviewees expressed concern about the declining interest in traditional activities among current youth. This highlights the need for innovative educational strategies to ensure Ban Chiang's rich history is preserved and transmitted to future generations. Both of them also acknowledged the limitations of further excavation. However, they identified museums and engaging programs as crucial tools for safeguarding cultural heritage. Interestingly, the emphasis on knowledge dissemination by the former youth guides aligns with the Ban Chiang National Museum's knowledge transfer approach, which prioritizes an academic, technical, and expert-based approach (L. Smith, 2006).

#### 4.3.6 The Emergence of a Local Symbol

Another significant consequence is the widespread adoption of the pottery's distinctive swirling red pattern. This design element has become a widely reproduced symbol, representing both the Ban Chiang community and Udon Thani Province. Locals have embraced the notion that the artifacts unearthed in their village represent a frozen moment in history, roughly 5,000 years ago (Thiranet, 2016). This timeframe is prominently used to promote the artifacts locally and globally. *'5,000-year-old civilization'* has become a popular label, endorsing the heritage of Udon Thani Province, Nong Han District, and the Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality. It's even used in the titles of events like the *'5,000 Years Civilization Retracing Parade'* and the *'5,000 Years' Ban Chiang (old) Women's Folk Dancing Group.'*

This 5,000-year timeframe seems to resonate with locals, fostering a sense of ownership over their heritage. However, this simplified narrative overlooks the ongoing scientific debate surrounding the precise age of the artifacts<sup>36</sup>. Consequently, the popular representation of Ban Chiang's

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<sup>36</sup> The age of Ban Chiang has been a topic of debate among researchers. Following the initial excavations in 1974-1975, Chester Gorman and Pisit Charoenwongsa published an article suggesting Ban Chiang held the earliest evidence for bronze casting and ironworking on the planet ((Gorman & Charoenwongsa, 1976). The first attempts at dating used thermoluminescence (TL), a then-experimental technique. These initial efforts suggested a range of 4420-3400 BCE, which would have made Ban Chiang the world's first Bronze Age culture (White, 1986, 2008). This sparked significant global interest (Alsop, 1975; Wilford,



heritage has evolved into a distinct entity, somewhat separate from the ongoing archaeological investigations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, it became apparent that Ban Chiang's pottery and human remains had become significant on several levels. The archaeological finds were now internationally acclaimed heritage, national Thai heritage, and local inheritance, the past having become an integral part of the everyday fabric of village life. By the 1990s, strict national and international laws provided strict protections through a myriad of regulatory regimes (INTW10, 2017), especially the inclusion of Ban Chiang on the World Heritage list by UNESCO in December 1992. The consequences of this were profound. A shortage of 'high quality' looted artifacts from the field and the virtual disappearance of antiquities from Ban Chiang from the illegal market was one result (C. Higham, 2016, p. 1). This was the cue for the development of an entirely new industry in Ban Chiang: the (re) production of replica pots and vases by the many Ban Chiang potteries that began the commercial manufacture and distribution of the imitation pottery for, in the main, the souvenir tourist market (Sakulpanich, 2012). The UNESCO declaration in 1992 added impetus to the nascent local industry.



However, Charles Higham of the University of Otago conducted a contrasting analysis. He used Bayesian statistics to analyze the dates derived from the bones of the inhabitants and those of animals buried with them. This analysis suggested a much later initial settlement date of around 1500 BCE, with the transition to the Bronze Age occurring around 1000 BCE. (C. F. Higham, Douka, & Higham, 2015). This ongoing discussion highlights the importance of critical evaluation of data and the need for further archaeological exploration to refine our understanding of Ban Chiang's history.

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)







#### 4.4 Ban Chiang Pottery Reproduction: From ‘Fake’ Pots to ‘Authentic’ Local Products

Ban Chiang pottery reproduction is a good example of how the local population has found its own voice and ways to speak publicly about the archaeological objects in their midst. It reflects something that has been evident, worldwide, in heritage theory and practice. Critical approaches to postcolonial and post-conflict heritage give space for others, the subaltern or subordinated people, migrant groups, minority ethnic groups, women, and others not considered as being at the center of power, to express their own voices about heritage places and objects. In so doing, they provide a sort of balance to the us-and-them binary power relationship that has so often characterized heritage processes until relatively (Giblin, 2015; Ivison, 2018).

As already discussed, Ban Chiang's heritage has been ‘colonized’ or determined by outsiders who establish the value and significance of Ban Chiang's archaeology and then produce a dominant discourse for the local people. But over time, local people began to recognize the ‘constructed’ nature of the discourses and the practices introduced by outsiders, by non-local experts and authorities.

##### 4.4.1 The Emergence of ‘Semi-Authentic’ Pottery

Regaining some semblance of local power and control came in an unexpected way. After the ‘authentic’ Ban Chiang pottery vanished from the community – by either being looted and sent away to the antique black-market or being ‘seized’ by the state authorities as significant national and international heritage and thus beyond the reach of the locals – it was realized that there was still a demand for the distinctive red-designs of the pottery, especially in the antiquities market.

Groups of Ban Chiang people, in response, began creating what they referred to as ‘semi-authentic’ pottery - a hybrid combining ancient shards with newly made pieces, for this market. These ‘old-new’ versions of Ban Chiang pottery were then classified according to the ratio of ancient and authentic shards and new pieces. These ‘semi-authentic’ pots were well received by the market as a substitute for ‘complete’ archaeological

earthenware objects. The hybrid pots were regarded as a creative practice that circumvented the national laws on the illegal excavation, transfer, and trade of ancient artifacts (INTW06, 2017; INTW10, 2017).

A 65-year-old retired teacher, Mr. Chumporn Suthiboon, who is the Deputy Mayor of Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality and the head of the Ban Chiang homestay group. He recalled his involvement in the creation of replica pottery:

*[...] After those massive digs back in mid-seventies, Ban Chiang really put itself on the map. Folks started coming from all over, Thai and foreigners alike, eager to see the site. Back then, there weren't any fancy tourist companies or government folks helping out. So, it fell on us, the villagers, to show everyone around....*

*We saw an opportunity there too. We figured, if we could teach folks in the community some business skills, how to make things and sell them, that could be a good thing. So, around 1979 or 1980, we started making replica Ban Chiang pottery. People from Ban Kham Aor did the molding, and Ban Pulu folks painted on the traditional designs....*

*We even had some broken pieces of old pottery, like a jigsaw puzzle missing bits. The folks in Kham Aor would recreate those missing parts, and then the Pulu villagers would paint the designs on them. The finished product looked amazing, just like the real thing from way back....*

*Antique dealers especially, they were real interested in buying these old-new replicas. We set our prices based on how much of the piece was original and how much work went into the recreation (classified by the percentage of their compositions between the ancient and remade pieces). Then, it turned out to be a big hit! [...]*

*(INTW06, 2017)*

According to Mr. Chumporn, the collaborative network between Ban Chiang, Ban Kham Aor, and Ban Pulu demonstrates the villagers' resourcefulness and entrepreneurial spirit. It also highlights a key aspect of

postcolonial heritage, where local communities reclaim control over the narratives surrounding their past.

Eventually, the supply of shards was reduced and the production of the 'semi-authentic' pots came to an end. But the demand for the distinctive designs remained. Various attempts were made to make reproductions, based on the ancient patterns, in contemporary potteries in the district. A network of ceramic enterprises was established that included nearby potteries in a collaboration to produce 'full-copy' pots. Local people studied the various patterns and designs on the pots that had been initially collected in Ban Chiang and studied by the scholars working on the excavations. Other locals went to the Ban Chiang National Museum to copy the designs of the pots in the collection (INTW10, 2017). Some artists created completely new patterns and designs drawing inspiration from the ancient objects (INTW11, 2017). A 52-year-old male, Mr. Chatree Tajoparang, the Chairman of Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting group, recounted his experiences with pot painting in the past:

*[...] Our pottery painting is all about copying the old designs. We compete to see who can do it the best, the most beautiful, and the smoothest. The most valued artist is the one who can faithfully recreate the original designs...*

*In the early days, our painters used patterns from documents and museum exhibits as their references. They started with simple designs, just the basics. But once their hands were steady and they had a good eye for the patterns, they could just look at a design and start drawing it....*

*To be a painter, you have to love art. You have to appreciate the beauty of the patterns. You have to be able to capture the essence of the old designs, so that we don't have to dig them up. We can create them anew, and that's valuable work. You need to be focused, and you need to have the basic skills. It all comes down to passion, and you also need to make a decent living [...]*

(INTW10, 2017)

This dedication to replicating and reinterpreting past designs has fostered a vibrant local pottery industry. It has also empowered local artisans and preserved the knowledge of traditional pottery-making techniques.



**Figure 34** In the past, field restoration techniques involved reconstructing pottery vessels wherever possible to study their shapes and evolution over time. This approach noticeably mirrored the local practice of piecing together found shards to create their own versions of complete pots for sale

Source: Photographed from the temporary exhibition at the ‘5 decades of Ban Chiang discovery’ event in Udon Thani on May 26, 2017, by Sitta Kongsasana (2017)

#### 4.4.2 The Impact of World Heritage Designation

Ban Chiang's inscription as a World Heritage Site in 1992 significantly impacted the local pottery industry. The influx of tourists fueled a demand for locally-produced souvenirs, leading to the emergence of reproductions and locally-designed pottery as a key souvenir category. This shift transformed the previously struggling pottery industry into a sustainable enterprise that now thrives on cultural tourism.

Initially, a collaborative network emerged between Ban Chiang and two neighboring villages, Kham Aor and Pulu. This network streamlined production, with Kham Aor residents specializing in crafting unfired pots, Pulu residents focusing on painting, and Ban Chiang serving as the primary sales point. However, as tourist demand grew, Ban Chiang residents gradually assumed both production and sales responsibilities,



consolidating their role within the pottery industry (INTW06, 2017; INTW10, 2017; INTW11, 2017).

The official establishment of the Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting Group in 2022 further solidified the industry's structure. The group actively promotes pottery reproductions through various initiatives and recognizes the importance of knowledge transmission. By incorporating pottery workshops into local schools (INTW10, 2017), they ensure the continuation of this cultural tradition and the preservation of Ban Chiang's unique heritage through pottery-making techniques passed down through generations.

Today, pottery painting and related activities have become a cornerstone of Ban Chiang's cultural tourism experience. Visitors can now engage with local knowledge firsthand, learning the art of pottery making and crafting related products. This shift reflects a transformation in the villagers' relationship with their heritage. By adapting and replicating traditional techniques, they've empowered themselves to cater to tourists, creating a sustainable livelihood. This initiative is further bolstered by external support aiming to develop Ban Chiang pottery into a broader ceramic art form (Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting Group, 2024). This collaborative effort not only benefits the villagers economically but also allows them to share their cultural heritage and creativity with a wider audience.

#### **4.4.3 Re-Triangulation in Postcolonial Heritage**

The story of Ban Chiang pottery reproductions exemplifies John Giblin's concept of '*re-triangulation*' in postcolonial heritage. Here, the villagers have not merely copied the past but '*re-cycled, re-newed and re-appropriated*' (Giblin, 2015, p. 317) their heritage. By transforming archaeological artifacts into a source of local development and cultural identity, they have asserted agency and created a sustainable future rooted in their past. Without debates surrounding replicas and their impact on the value of originals, the Ban Chiang case highlights the potential of heritage as a resource for local empowerment and cultural continuity.



Source: [https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2113800621991791&set=pcb.2113801085325078&locale=th\\_TH](https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2113800621991791&set=pcb.2113801085325078&locale=th_TH)



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Source: <https://shorturl.asia/1sza6>



Source: <https://shorturl.asia/nuzvZ>

**Figure 35** Since 2022, the Ban Chiang Pottery Crafting and Painting Group's space has officially established becoming a vibrant gathering place and learning hub for the community

## 4.5 Spiritual Materiality: The Intangible Connection Between Ban Chiang People and Artifacts

The concept of '*the social construction of reality*,' developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, suggests our understanding of the world, including material objects, isn't objective. It's shaped by social interaction and shared experiences. This includes how we perceive and interpret the world around us, as well as how we interact with others. The meaning and value we assign to objects are deeply personal, influenced by our individual experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds (Berger & Luckmann, 2016).

This applies equally to heritage sites and objects. With the rise of intangible heritage discourses, acknowledging multiple interpretations of heritage has become increasingly important in theory and practice (L. Smith & Akagawa, 2009). In Southeast Asian heritage management, the concept of '*converging forces and conflicting values*' (Daly & Winter, 2012) holds particular relevance.

### 4.5.1 Animistic Beliefs and Archaeological Sites

Traditionally, heritage experts viewed '*old things*' primarily as historical remnants requiring preservation for the future, with a focus on their physical form. However, in Buddhist cultures, local communities often see '*old things*' as inherently sacred; while old, they remain a dynamic and living force in their contemporary lives. This creates tension and sometimes contestation between different stakeholders regarding material cultural entities (Byrne, 2011, p. 6; 2014, p. 16).

In many Thai communities where centuries-old philosophies and spiritualities blend Brahmanism and Buddhism, archaeological sites and ruins are often believed to be inhabited by '*Phi*,' or animistic protective spirits (guardian deities). Locals pay homage to these entities, hoping for blessings (Karlström, 2009, p. 149; Lokulprakit, 2018, p. 267). When new discoveries are made, before '*outsiders*' begin excavation, local customs dictate involving mediums, who claim to communicate with the spirits, in ceremonies and rituals. These practices show respect and '*seek permission*' from the '*Phi*,' the spirits of place, for smooth and peaceful work.



Sometimes, mediums even assist in locating buried materials (Byrne, 2011, p. 4; Peleggi, 2012, p. 65).

#### **4.5.2 Ownership and Spiritual Connections**

Furthermore, objects found on private property can be seen simultaneously as both '*national (public) heritage*' and '*individual heritage*.' Current residents may believe they have rightfully inherited these objects from past owners or their '*spiritual ancestors*,' even if there's no biological connection. Driven by a '*sense of belonging*,' these landowners often seek permission from the spirits to unearth and sell their personal heritage outside their communities (Lokulprakit, 2018, p. 268).

Conversely, fearing the potent presence of '*Phi*' in unearthed objects, some residents may not want them on their property. This results in a desire to have the objects removed, either donated or sold. Consequently, countless archaeological objects have been displaced, with some finding their way onto the antiquities market (Phanomvan, 2021).

#### **4.5.3 Spiritual Practices in Ban Chiang**

The belief in a spiritual connection to unearthed artifacts transcends Ban Chiang. Fieldwork reveals that locals there often express this connection in various ways, fostering a unique relationship with the archaeological finds. One example is the practice, during past excavation periods, of archaeologists performing rituals of sacrifice on private property. These rituals involved worshiping holy objects and appeasing the spirits believed to inhabit the land. A picture displayed in the Ban Chiang National Museum's gallery illustrates this practice (*Figure 36*).



**Figure 36** An archaeologist together with villagers performs a ritual to worship the holy things before excavation

Source: Photographed from the exhibition gallery of Ban Chiang National Museum, on February, 12, 2017, by Sitta Kongsasana (2017)

In addition, some locals were very wary of the presence of the objects and were disinclined to dig them up on their own properties or to keep these so-called ‘ghost objects’ to avoid the bad consequences of trucking with the spirits of the dead (INTW12, 2017; INTW14, 2017). A 58-year-old elementary school teacher recounted her personal experience of avoiding keeping objects associated with the dead nearby:

*[...] Before the excavation of this area, which is adjacent to the back fence of our house, I often sneaked out through the fence to play in this area. Back then, before the authorities banned looting, villagers flocked here to dig, each with their own pit. When the adults brought up soil from the pit, it held these little green and dark blue beads with holes. As soon as they poured it out, we kids would snatch them up to play with. But they were just toys to us then, so we'd end up throwing them away, never guessing they had any value. The adults didn't collect them either; they were only interested in the jars. We*



*didn't think of keeping them... we were afraid (of the ghosts) coming to haunt us... we didn't want to keep them; they belonged to the dead. We thought we were taking their things, even though we told them we were taking them... deep down, we didn't feel comfortable because we considered them to be old things, belongings of the dead... our parents usually told us not to take their things, so they never went out to dig for antiques [...]*

(INTW12, 2017)

A number of mysterious tales of Ban Chiang's pots and artifacts were recounted to the researcher during fieldwork through the narratives of local residents. For example, Ms. Angkana Boonpong as a retired English teacher (69) and president of Ban Chiang's Council of Cultural Affairs contributes a special viewpoint during the discussion:

*[...] There was an elderly professor who once taught at a teacher's college recounted a story in his book about a Vietnamese man who purchased two or three Ban Chiang antiques. The man later had nightmares and was compelled to return the artifacts to Ban Chiang through the professor...*

*Likewise, there was a northeastern-style singer (Mo Lam) from Roi Et province once revered a Ban Chiang pot in her home. However, she fell ill and was hesitant to return the pot. She had to make three pilgrimages to Ban Chiang before she could keep the pot at home...*

*My family also owns two registered Ban Chiang pots. We obtained official permission from the district chief and the Fine Arts Department to legally possess them. Before bringing them home, we performed a proper ritual, akin to inviting a Buddha statue into our home. Initially, we offered frequent prayers to the pots. Later, we treated them like ordinary religious objects in our room [...]*

(INTW03, 2017)

Mr. Sombat Manyahong (65), senior advisor to the Ban Chiang Local Textile Weaving Group, revealed his own experience with mysterious incidents:

*[...] I once had a personal experience with the purported supernatural powers of Ban Chiang pots. Back when I was working in Bangkok, I would spend weekends at my mother-in-law's house in Ban Chiang. During that time, I began making replicas of Ban Chiang pots by painting designs on them. However, my designs were quite different from the originals. For instance, while others would only use one design per pot, I would incorporate three different designs – one on the bottom, one in the middle, and one on the top...*

*Interestingly, while others who made replicas could sell a pair for 700 baht, I was able to sell each of my pots for 2,000 baht. I would honestly tell the buyers that my pots were replicas, but they were still drawn to them and purchased them...*

*I continued making these replica pots with my unique designs until one day, around 2 or 3 pm, after spending a long-time painting. I decided to take a nap on the second floor of the house. As I drifted off to sleep, I started feeling a heavy weight pressing down on me. I opened my eyes to see hundreds of human skulls hovering above me, completely covering my body. I felt like I couldn't breathe and started struggling and screaming loudly. The commotion woke up my family members, who rushed to my room and asked what was wrong...*

*My mother-in-law then pointed out that I hadn't sought permission from the local spirits. I explained that I didn't think it was necessary since I considered them like family and was only making the pots for fun and profit. Realizing my mistake, I immediately came downstairs and lit incense and candles to apologize. After that incident, I stopped making the replicas altogether (laughs) [...]*

(INTW11, 2017)

Both interviews reveal a shared belief in the supernatural power of Ban Chiang pots. The consequences faced by those who disrespect the objects

(nightmares, illness, visions) underscore the importance of treating them with reverence, as evidenced by rituals and permission seeking. Additionally, the interviews highlight the challenges of navigating the validity of supernatural beliefs and the potential exploitation of such beliefs. However, the commercialization of these artifacts, highlighted by selling replicas, raises concerns about balancing respect for cultural heritage with economic gain. Ultimately, these interviews offer a glimpse into the complexities surrounding Ban Chiang's legacy, where respect for tradition must coexist with education and economic opportunities.

However, not all villagers fear the negative consequences of keeping Ban Chiang artifacts. In fact, some residents continue to hold onto them as personal mementos, a tangible link to their ancestry and the past. A 62-year-old local woman who participated in the excavations shared her story, revealing the deep ties that bind her to these objects from Ban Chiang:

*[...] I was engaged in the excavation work around the ages of fourteen and fifteen. Mostly, I was in charge of washing the relics with a wage of 30B per day. That wage, at that time, was very good and I was able to help my family with this money...*

*The researchers of the Agency for Cultural Affairs were very kind. When taking a holiday, they took us to another prefecture in their Land Rover and we were treated to a delicious meal. Working with them was a lot of fun and I cried when my excavation work finished after His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej came. I really wanted to work with them again but, when the next excavation work began, I was sorry that I could not participate in it because I was married...*

*When I was working washing the relics, there were very beautiful beads, so I stole three of them in commemoration. My friend also stole two beads. Archaeologists had not counted them, so I thought it was fine. Then, the next morning, an archaeologist said at the meeting, 'Beads are missing, I think that someone stole them. Please return them'. I was very embarrassed and returned them. I promised not to steal them ever again, and he said that he believed me...*

*Even now, I have some relics, such as pottery and bead bracelets. The museum researchers gave them to me without any problems because they were not complete so they could not be used as materials for research. But to me, they are beautiful and important. Actually, other villagers also have relics like me but they are not willing to talk about it. But in my case, I have permission to keep them so I can talk about them. I think it is better that we people of Ban Chiang have these relics than outsiders have them. I have the relics because I had an experience of working at the excavation site and I want to keep them as a souvenir. This is also an important point to me. Occasionally, some people want them and contact me to buy them but I am not going to sell them [...]*

*(Nakamura, 2017b, pp. 1081-1082)*

Fieldwork revealed that many locals treasure various keepsakes passed down from their ancestors. These include bead necklaces worn publicly (Figure 37), bead amulets (Figure 38), potsherds used as decorative wall hangings (Figure 39), and items in personal collections (Figure 40). More than just mementos, these objects serve as tangible reminders, binding villagers to the enduring values inherited from Ban Chiang's past.

Ms. Sureethip, a 55-year-old secondary school teacher, shared her experiences of owning Ban Chiang artifacts:

*[...] Back in the day, large beads as big as a thumb were sold for 400-500 baht each. Smaller ones were typically 100 baht. If you want to see authentic and sizable beads today, go visit Ms.K. at the market since her previous family residence stood near Wat Pho Sri Nai. She creates enormous beads which arranged on gold necklaces. I regularly joke with her that she has an exceptional fortune with her preserved items. I have smaller beads compared to the ones I possess yet my older sister obtained larger ones than mine. She made a necklace with them and gave me some beads. When I wear my Tai Puan outfit, I sometimes wear that necklace. I also string King Rama IX coins on one side and King Rama IX's mother coins on the other. It's a commemorative piece of jewelry that reminds me of the time His Majesty visited this place. It's a*



*treasured possession that goes perfectly with my Tai Puan clothing  
[...]*

(INTW08, 2017)

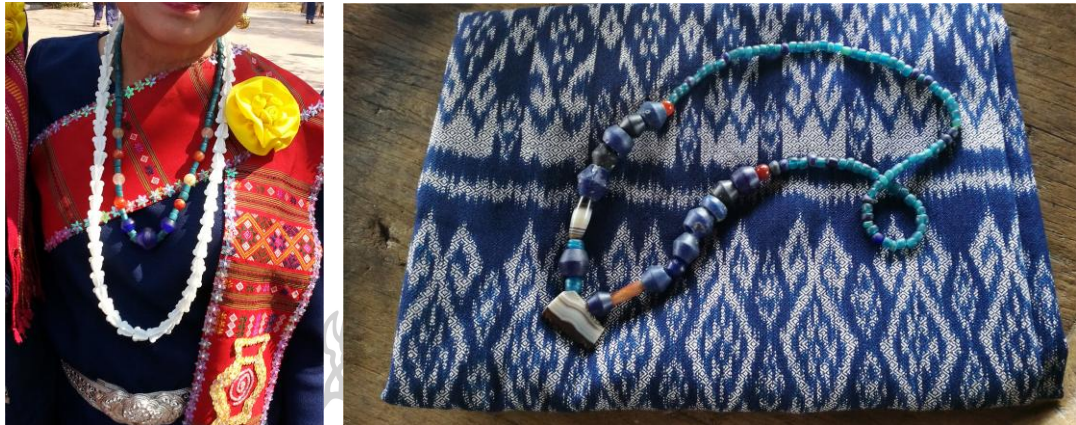


**Figure 37** Bead necklaces worn or present publicly

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2017)



**Figure 38** Bead amulets

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2017)







**Figure 40** A friendly exchange takes place between a 58-year-old villager and the researcher. The villager offers an artifact from her personal collection after the interview, while the researcher respectfully declines the gift

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2017)

#### 4.5.4 Reincarnation and Merit Dedication

A fascinating aspect emerged from all the interviews. Despite being separated by millennia, the interviewees shared a strong sense of obligation

towards those who once inhabited the same space – the ancient people buried beneath Ban Chiang. Their belief in reincarnation motivates them to pay homage and dedicate merit to these spirits. This practice maintains a spiritual connection with their long-departed neighbors. By wishing for the peaceful rest (or a good rebirth) of these ancient souls, the locals hope to ensure their own prosperity (INTW03, 2017; INTW08, 2017; INTW12, 2017; INTW13, 2017; INTW14, 2017).

Ms. Sureethip, a 55-year-old secondary school teacher, shared her experiences of performing merit-making rituals to honor the spirits:

*[...] Before we started digging in the past, we always had to ask permission from the spirits of the land. This is because in the painted pottery we found, there were often personal belongings and offerings buried with the deceased. The provided items consisted of beads and jewelry bracelets for females alongside tools for males. We would cremate their bones while creating merit for them after removing pots along with jars and bronze bracelets from their remains. We practice regular offerings as well as memorial events for them even in modern times. While the younger generation in Ban Chiang may have forgotten these traditions, those aged 40-60 and older still hold onto these practices [...]*

(INTW08, 2017)

A retired elementary school teacher (75), who also makes Bai-Sri (Thai blessing ceremonies), shared about her connection to the artifacts and making merit for the spirits:

*[...] The feeling I have with the antiques I used to keep at home is like... I don't know, it's like a warm love having these things in our house. I regret the beads I used to keep; they were stolen when someone broke into the house... Back then, I used to dream of three big men with red heads, like the spirits of my house. So, I often made merit for them by pouring water and giving alms when I went to the temple every morning. I called them to come and receive the sweet and savory food, not to go hungry or suffer, not to have grudges against each other. Then we would be fine and could keep the*

*antiques with us. Unlike some people who couldn't keep them for long because they were haunted and had to return them... Looking back, I think of their value the most... What the ancients left behind at Ban Chiang is our treasure, our nation's treasure, and the world's treasure. It's like we have parents, we still know the value of our parents and ancestors, we still remember them, go to pray to them, and offer them food. It's a good thing to do [...]*

*(INTW13, 2017)*

Today, annually, a community-wide officially sanctioned ritual sacrifice to the ancient spirits is organized at Wat Pho Sri Nai's excavation site during the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival, usually in February (*Figure 41*). It is, therefore, arguable that the people of Ban Chiang have developed a sense of belonging through their spiritual practices and have managed to incorporate the internationally recognized heritage from the past into the present. It is highly significant that this community-based cultural and religious process of connecting to historical objects is outside the officially sanctioned heritage processes of the Thai state.







**Figure 41** Formal communal ceremony to appease the spirits of the ancestors is organized annually at Wat Pho Sri Nai's excavation site during the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)

## **4.6 Chapter Analysis: Ban Chiang Artifacts**

In this chapter, the transformation of Ban Chiang artifacts into cultural heritage symbols gets examined through Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA) by integrating theoretical information together with interview data in this chapter. This introduction defines the research scope by using Sophia Labadi's (2013) and Nicholas Thomas' (1991) theories while backing their work through personal accounts obtained from INTW03 and INTW11. The local stories demonstrate vividly that UNESCO World Heritage status transforms both personal identities and communal identities of the communities. Findings from the chapter analysis are illustrated below:

### **4.6.1 Theoretical Framework**

The research uses a solid theoretical approach which borrows principles from material culture studies. Ban Chiang artifacts develop new significances throughout time because of Appadurai's (1988) social life of things framework and Kopytoff's (1986) cultural biography of objects perspective. The life history of things developed by Holtorf (2002) extends traditional understanding by exploring present-day and future cultural values that align with current reinterpretations of heritage. Laurajane Smith (2006) presents heritage as a socially made process in her processual understanding of heritage. The testimonials provided by INTW12 and INTW13 enrich the discussion by outlining spiritual relationships with artifacts.

### **4.6.2 Shifting Definitions and Local Experiences**

According to villagers including Ms. Siriphan Sutthibun and interviewees of INTW01 and INTW02 the understanding of Ban Chiang artifacts has transformed from ordinary value to spiritual importance for their culture. Local knowledge emerges as a vital element which helps people experience heritage based on Harvey's (2001) definition while showing powerful emotional responses to heritage changes.



### **4.6.3 Historical Narratives and Economic Dynamics**

Various historical records and personal interviews demonstrate the complex relationship between economic systems and cultural preservation. Local economies face significant effects from the antiquities market according to statements from INTW18 and INTW01. The accounts by Lyons and Rainey (1982) reflect the dual cultural effects together with economic benefits of archaeological findings.

### **4.6.4 Preservation Efforts and Local Engagement**

The Youth Guide Program's success has been demonstrated through interviews with former participants INTW16 and INTW17. The interviewees demonstrate why heritage engagement requires community participation according to Laurajane Smith's (2006) framework which links education to cultural conservation.

### **4.6.5 Cultural Symbolism and Identity**

Thomas (1991) supported by interviews INTW06 and INTW10. These dialogues reflect how locals reclaim traditional designs to affirm their cultural identity, engaging with Smith and Akagawa's (2009) exploration of intangible heritage.

### **4.6.6 Material and Spiritual Connections**

The interview comments from INTW12 and INTW13 explain the spiritual importance of Ban Chiang artifacts while validating Byne's (2011) concept of dynamic '*old things*.' People use these connections to reveal how spirituality connects with material heritage thus strengthening the socio-cultural value of these objects.

### **4.6.7 Reproduction and Modern Cultural Enterprise**

The reproduction of pottery represents both a business prospect and cultural maintenance practice according to Mr. Chumporn Suthiboon (INTW06) and Mr. Chatree Tajoparang (INTW10) in their interviews. Heritage reproduction practices meet specifications from Giblin's (2015) postcolonial re-triangulation model which highlights native communities' action toward heritage commercialization.

In summary of the analysis, the evaluation of Ban Chiang artifacts transition from regular objects to cultural heritage symbols uses Heritage Discourse Analysis for this investigation. The research links theoretical models of Labadi (2013), Thomas (1991), and Appadurai (1988) through interview data to understand the years-long growth of artifact meanings.

The research detects how World Heritage status bestowed by UNESCO leads to changes in personal and communal group identity. Local residents now view artifacts through different lens as culture-significant objects instead of simply everyday items while developing spiritual links to these artifacts with deep emotional connections.

The economic market forces have a significant role because how antiquities impact local economic development represents heritage as a vital experience. The Youth Guide Program represents one of the preservation initiatives that proves community participation maintains cultural pride.

The community has started openly expressing cultural symbolism through their recovery of traditional elements while spiritual methods unite with material heritage to elevate its cultural value. Local artisans practice pottery reproduction to protect cultural heritage and generate economic chances while demonstrating their initiative during heritage transformation processes.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates how cultural, economic and spiritual conditions create Ban Chiang artifacts into cultural identity symbols.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The case of Ban Chiang artifacts serves as a powerful illustration of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of heritage experience. As the objects transformed from everyday items to archaeological artifacts, and finally to symbols of local identity and pride, the Ban Chiang community actively engaged in shaping the narratives surrounding their material heritage. This process underscores the importance of considering the '*social life*' of objects (Appadurai, 1988), their '*cultural biography*' (Kopytoff, 1986) and the '*life history of things*' (Holtorf, 2002) in understanding the complex relationships between material culture and local communities.

The Ban Chiang community's agency in reclaiming and reinterpreting their heritage through practices such as pottery reproduction and spiritual connections with the artifacts highlights the need to move beyond expert-driven narratives and engage with diverse local voices and experiences (Giblin, 2015; Ivison, 2018; L. Smith, 2006). By transforming their material heritage into a source of economic opportunity through cultural tourism and the pottery industry, the Ban Chiang community demonstrates the potential for objects to serve as a catalyst for local empowerment and sustainable development.

However, the case study also reveals the challenges and complexities of managing material heritage in postcolonial contexts (Giblin, 2015), particularly when local, national, and international interests intersect. The debates surrounding the ownership and interpretation of Ban Chiang's artifacts underscore the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to heritage management that prioritize the needs and aspirations of local communities while also considering broader conservation and research goals.

The experiences and lessons learned from Ban Chiang's artifacts have significant implications for understanding the role of objects in shaping heritage experiences and identities. The case study emphasizes the potential for material culture to foster community empowerment, cultural resilience, and sustainable development, while also acknowledging the challenges and complexities involved in achieving these goals.

As we continue to explore the dialogical nature of heritage (Harrison, 2015, p. 309), the Ban Chiang case study serves as a valuable starting point for understanding the complex interplay between objects, places, and practices in shaping community experiences and identities. The insights gained from examining the shifting meanings and values associated with Ban Chiang's artifacts will undoubtedly inform our analysis of the heritage experiences connected to the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound (place) and the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival (practice) in the upcoming chapters.

By engaging with the multiple layers of meaning and value that communities ascribe to their material heritage, we can work towards a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of the role of objects in

shaping dialogical heritage experiences. This understanding will contribute to the development of more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable approaches to heritage management that respect the agency and aspirations of local communities while also contributing to broader goals of conservation, research, and sustainable development.

After having explored how Ban Chiang's artifacts serve as tangible connections to heritage in Chapter 4, the next chapter examines how the local population encounters heritage places in Ban Chiang by selecting the '*Ban Chiang Heritage Mound*' as an example that calls for further examination of the phenomenon of heritage attachment and meaning making. This spatial dimension adds another crucial layer to understanding the dialogical nature of heritage at Ban Chiang.



## Chapter 5

### Ban Chiang Heritage Mound

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how the local population encounters heritage places in Ban Chiang by selecting the '*Ban Chiang Heritage Mound*' as an example that calls for further examination of the phenomenon of heritage attachment and meaning making. As theorists in the spatial sciences (for example, architecture, geography, landscape studies, and so on) have argued, when people invest meaning into the spaces they occupy and become attached to them in some way, these spaces are transformed into '*places*' (Cresswell, 2015, p. 32). The concept of 'place' refers to the subjective experience of embodied human experience in the material world (Morgan, 2010, p. 1). Physical places acquire meanings through personal and group memories, religious and national symbols, and through the multi-sensory feelings experienced when being-in-place or attached in some way – physically, emotionally, somatically, and intellectually – to a place (Lewicka, 2011, p. 221).

The research employs Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA) for analyzing complicated territorial connections at the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. The research investigates how inhabitants of the area together with heritage providers describe their bond with the physical location. Several place-related narratives overlap with one another as they create both supportive and contradictory relationships. The framework provides enhanced perspectives on how collective place relationships merge with regulations as well as ordinary activities to form ongoing heritage meanings at this active World Heritage location.

As Manzo aptly states, '*It is not simply the places themselves that are significant, but rather what can be called 'experience-in-place' that creates meaning*' (Manzo, 2005, p. 74). This concept highlights the importance of understanding the lived experiences and emotional connections that people form with the places they inhabit, as these experiences shape the meanings and values attributed to these places.



## 5.2 Theoretical Framework: Place Attachment

According to the three-dimensional framework of place attachment proposed by Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, attachment comprises interrelated '3P' dimensions: person, process, and place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, pp. 1-5).

- **Person:** The first dimension refers to the individual or group who is attached to the place. It considers the extent to which the attachment is based on personal experiences and collectively held meanings.
- **Process:** The second dimension focuses on the psychological interactions that occur in the environments that are significant to the people in them. It examines how affect, cognition, and behavior are manifested in the attachment to the place.
- **Place:** The third dimension is the place itself, including its characteristics and the prominence of social or physical elements. It considers what the attachment is to and the nature of the place.

In recent studies, place attachment has been conceived of through the prism of dynamism, and this can vary in terms of spatial level, degree of specificity, and the social or physical elements of the place (Hay, 1998; Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 5). Some scholars believe that when people experience a long-term affective bond with a particular geographic area and attribute meaning to that bond, they will often develop feelings of affection for, or a sense of belonging, or being of the place, all of which play important roles in identity formation (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993; Hay 1998; cited in Morgan, 2010, pp. 1-2).

However, it is important to note that while being connected to a place may give some people a positive sense of belonging, for others it might reveal the '*shadow side*' of their relationships with places, leading to oppressive and restrictive feelings (Relph, 1976; Chawla, 1992; cited in Manzo, 2005, p. 70) or even fear and anxiety (Tuan, 1979). Therefore, as Relph argues, '*Any exploration of place as a phenomenon of direct experience... must be concerned with the entire range of experience through which we all know and make places*' (Relph, 1976, p. 6).

### 5.3 The Ban Chiang Heritage Mound

Designated a World Heritage core zone in 1991 for its role as a cradle of the Ban Chiang civilization, the mound conceals a rich archaeological record beneath its surface. While visitors might anticipate grand monuments, the reality is more subdued. Original structures, surviving past looting, are largely buried beneath modern settlements, with only reconstructed elements, such as those at Wat Pho Sri Nai (Byrne, 2014, p. 173), visible today. Full excavation, especially of the necropolis, is essential for comprehending the site's full potential, though preservation challenges due to water damage persist (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021, p. 201). Consequently, much of the site's story remains untold.



**Figure 42** A drone photo of Ban Chiang Heritage Mound, captured from an East to West perspective in 2019

Source: [www.thailandfromabove.com/udon-thani/ban-chiang-world-heritage-site/](http://www.thailandfromabove.com/udon-thani/ban-chiang-world-heritage-site/)



Ban Chiang along Chareon Panich Road in the past

Ban Chiang along the Chareon Panich Road in 2022

**Figure 43** Street views of Chareon Panich, the main road that runs east-west through Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. The image on the left is a historical photograph, likely taken before or during the mound was excavated. It was captured from the Ban Chiang National Museum Exhibition's gallery in 2016. The image on the right is a recent Google Street View capture from August 2022

Beyond its archaeological significance, Ban Chiang holds profound meaning for local residents. As an early settlement for Tai Puan ancestors, continuously inhabited for over two centuries, long before its inclusion on the World Heritage List, the mound has fostered a deep-rooted connection across generations. Living on the site has created unique experiences that highlight the intricate relationship between the community and their heritage. Learning from personal or collective experiences of living on the mound helps demonstrate the connections between local people and their heritage place.





**Figure 44** Ms. Orathai Chaiwaree (58), a Tai Puan descendant and elementary school teacher, showcased her childhood home at the Ban Chiang National Museum. Dressed in traditional attire, she pointed out its location on an aerial map and shared personal stories from the time her family granted permission for archaeological excavations on their property (INTW21, 2016)

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)



**Figure 45** Ms. Orathai wore a traditional Tai Puan shirt adorned with silver buttons, a family heirloom passed down from her ancestors in Xieng Khuang, Laos (INTW21, 2016)

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)

#### 5.4 A Forgotten Mound: The Fading Memories of Ban Chiang's Ordinary Heritage in Place

Individuals often perceive places as portals to the past because their memories of places from their past or repeated use of those same places remain with them over time. Both the past engagement of places and the current experiences of place use are integral components of the equation of people-places-experiences, and the feelings associated with the participants' lived experiences, all combine to make a particular place memorable (Manzo, 2005, p. 78).

From the interviews and observations made during the fieldwork on the mound, it can be argued that a number of what may be deemed '*ordinary stories*' of Ban Chiang's heritage, as narrated by locals, have not been vividly or validly acknowledged in the main authorized versions of Ban Chiang heritage (L. Smith, 2006). Indeed, they have been largely excluded.

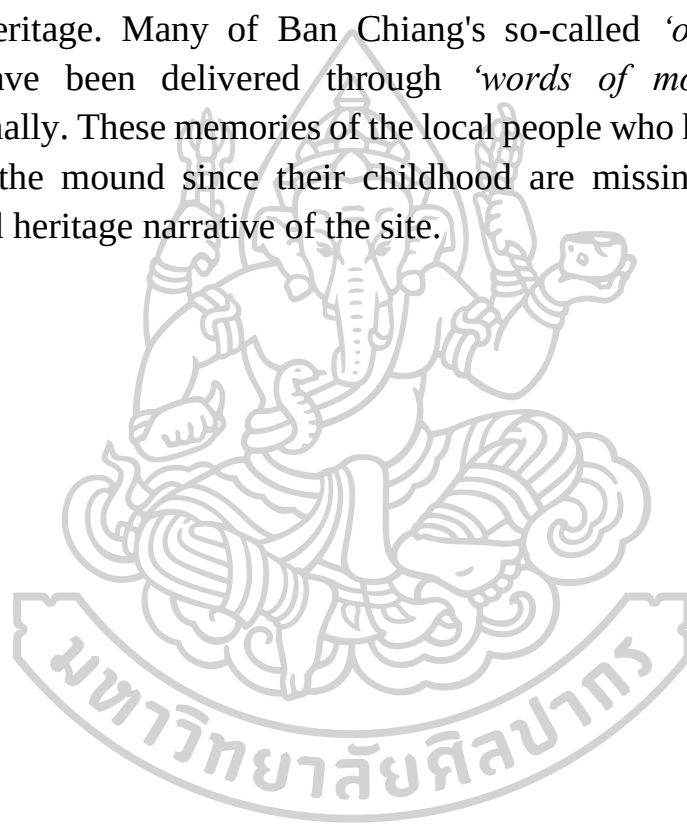
Even though, nowadays, there are widespread calls for people who are involved in the field of heritage conservation and management to include dissenting, subaltern, or alternative discourses and critiques about the nature, meaning, and use of heritage by multi-vocalized stakeholders in their processes (L. Smith, 2006, pp. 30-37), there is little evidence of this in Ban Chiang. The '*grand stories*' of Ban Chiang's heritage are still those officially presented at the Ban Chiang National Museum, exhibitions curated by '*outsiders*' like archaeologists or museum experts. With their authorized heritage point of view, something principally oriented towards and informed by technical, science-based epistemologies of culture, Ban Chiang heritage is defined as '*passively engaged*' and predominantly focused on artifacts from the past, rather than as an active and interactive process as experienced by ordinary people or by contemporary non-expert users of the site (Winter, 2013, p. 541).

For instance, an examination of the two designated archaeological heritage sites on the mound reveals limitations in their narratives. Both historical excavation sites of the Wat Pho Sri Nai and the Tai Puan heritage house primarily present the '*authorized*' heritage sanctioned by the Fine Arts Department. Similarly, the Ban Chiang National Museum's exhibition on the Tai Puan ethnic group focuses on a broader picture, neglecting the



specific story of the Tai Puan community within Ban Chiang. While the Ban Chiang Cultural Council operates the Tai Puan Ban Chiang Museum<sup>37</sup>, offering a valuable alternative perspective on the local community's heritage, its location outside the 'core' mound area (situated in the buffer zone) limits its ability to fully capture the on-site experience of Ban Chiang's heritage.

Consequently, there is little room on the mound for locals to share their associated stories (experiences) to co-create an understanding of Ban Chiang heritage. Many of Ban Chiang's so-called 'ordinary' heritage stories have been delivered through 'words of mouth,' and inter-generationally. These memories of the local people who have continuously occupied the mound since their childhood are missing from the main authorized heritage narrative of the site.



37 The Boon heritage Wat but a This Scho visits its current home next to the Ban Chiang National Museum in 2017 (Boonyakiet, 2020). This involved the resourceful adaptive reuse of the Ban Chiang Sub-District Municipality's former restrooms. At present, supported by the Ban Chiang Cultural Council, a 'semi-authorized' local heritage agency backed by the Thai

1990s under the leadership of Ms. Angkana local community in preserving their cultural s founders found temporary shelter within mound. Here, they not only collected artifacts history, customs, and unique way of life. ledge into the curriculum of Ban Chiang temple grounds limited its accessibility to ore prominent location, eventually securing (Source: Suda Kongsuda (2017))



**Figure 46** A part of the Ban Chiang National Museum exhibition



**Figure 47** Historical excavation sites: Wat Pho Sri Nai (left) and a Tai Puan heritage house (right)

**Figure 49** The Tai Puan section of the Ban Chiang National Museum

**Figure 48** The Tai Puan Ban Chiang Museum

#### 5.4.1 Untold Stories and Local Experiences

From the fieldwork, it becomes evident that there is a significant gap between the way technocrats and experts think about heritage and the

various ways locals do so. Various local narratives of their experiences and their involvement with artifacts during the ‘*Gold Rush*’ period, as described in Chapter 4, are absent from the official narrative. For example:

- The ‘*inconvenient truth*’ of substantial unofficial excavations taking place as locals searched for underground artifacts on the mound, driven by the sudden market value of the artifacts and the possibility of a sale of found objects supporting a better quality of life (INTW01, 2016; INTW13, 2017; Kanchanakom, 2016; Katuthat, 2016a; Nakamura, 2017b).
- The rumors about bad things happening to those who were involved in the (illegal) lootings, which remain a vivid memory for many locals (INTW03, 2017; INTW11, 2017).
- The spiritual connection between the Tai Puan people of today and their prehistoric spirits’ ancestors, which is a highly important ethnographic dimension of place attachment (INTW03, 2017; INTW08, 2017; INTW13, 2017; INTW14, 2017).

The researcher also obtained more narratives from the fieldwork relating to the heritage experiences of the locals on the mound, which could exemplify the ties that bind locals with their place through memories and storytelling. Here are some examples of what the locals recalled:

Firstly, Ms. Sureethip, a 55-year-old secondary school teacher, began by sharing her insights into how locals uncover artifacts beneath the ground and trade them with others:

*[...] The area where underground pots and shards are found is located approximately halfway up the Ban Chiang hill, towards the east, or in the area of the old village near Wat Pho Sri Nai. In the western half of the hill, however, there are none...Villagers will look for traces, seeing which houses have shards appearing on the ground, especially in houses where there is new construction or a hole is being dug. Once they know there is something, they will make an appointment with the homeowner and ask for permission to dig. Villagers will dig in their gardens or under their own houses, while the Fine Arts Department will dig on roads and*

*public areas such as temples. However, there is one area in the center of the Khum Tai community called the old temple garden where villagers dig a lot. For a period, the entire area was full of holes...The objects they dig for, especially pots, must be dug up in as complete and beautiful a condition as possible to get a good price. But if they are just shards, they can still be sold by taking the pieces and assembling them into a nearly complete shape, using glue to hold them together [...]*

*(INTW08, 2017)*

Secondly, Mr. Sombat Manyahong (65), a senior advisor to the Ban Chiang Local Textile Weaving Group, described how he developed his informal expertise in Ban Chiang pots:

*[...] You see, these folks digging up old pots, they learn a thing or two along the way! Let me tell you, there's a few easy ways to spot a fake, based on what I've seen. First, the real deal? Black as charcoal inside, red on the outside. Fakes, though? Same color all over. Probably because whoever made them didn't know the right steps, or how hot to fire them, or just plain forgot the old ways...*

*Second, weight. A real pot, it's heavy in your hands. Now, some folks get all excited when they find something, and just yank it right out. Big mistake! The dirt around it's still wet, and the pot can't handle it all at once. That's why you got to take your time, uncover it bit by bit, let it adjust...*

*Third, listen. Tap a real pot, and it sounds different than a fake. You know how you tap a watermelon to see if it's ripe? Same idea. Or, think of the sound a cracked pot makes, all thunky and dull, compared to a nice, clear ring from a whole one...*

*Last but not least, feel it. Real pots, they aren't perfectly smooth. Back in the day, they used a paddle and anvil to make them, not fancy wheels like today. So, they got a bit of texture. Fakes, though? Smooth as can be, thanks to those wheels and shaping tools. There you have it, a few tricks to tell the real pots from the phonies! [...]*



(INTW11, 2017)

Thirdly, Ms. N (age 62), who used to participate in the excavation process, shared her story about the relationship between locals and the archaeologists (or scholars) who temporarily lived and worked in Ban Chiang:

*[...] I was engaged in the excavation work around the ages of fourteen and fifteen. Mostly, I was in charge of washing the relics with a wage of 30B per day. That wage, at that time, was very good and I was able to help my family with this money...*

*The researchers of the Agency for Cultural Affairs were very kind. When taking a holiday, they took us to another prefecture in their Land Rover and we were treated to a delicious meal. Working with them was a lot of fun and I cried when my excavation work finished after His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej came. I really wanted to work with them again but, when the next excavation work began, I was sorry that I could not participate in it because I was married...*

*When I was working washing the relics, there were very beautiful beads, so I stole three of them in commemoration. My friend also stole two beads. Archaeologists had not counted them, so I thought it was fine. Then, the next morning, an archaeologist said at the meeting, "Beads are missing, I think that someone stole them. Please return them". I was very embarrassed and returned them. I promised not to steal them ever again, and he said that he believed me [...]*

(Nakamura, 2017b, pp. 1081-1082)

Lastly, Mr. Prasit Chanthasi (72), the Vice President of Ban Chiang Cultural Council, and Ms. M. (53), shared his and her vivid memories of the honorable Royal Visit on March 20, 1972:

*[...] When the King and Queen came to visit, it was like a dream come true for us. They touched down in a helicopter right there in the middle of the rice fields, near the Na Kam stream. Can you imagine the dust? They walked towards the village, pass where the car repair shop located today, before heading to Wat Pho Sri Nai to*

*see the dig site. After that, they visited another excavation area, a Tai Puan house (now), and even took a back road to the district office, which is now the market. They finished their visit at the Ban Chiang school by flying to Kam Aor village in the evening...*

*Everyone was so excited! No one had ever seen the King or Queen before, let alone a helicopter. Some people climbed trees or fences for a better view, and there were even a few minor injuries. It was crazy! And can you believe it? Some people didn't even know who the King was because they were all dressed in the same uniform!...*

*Back then, we only had electricity for two weeks. We had to chip in to buy the poles, and only the rich folks could afford to connect their houses. When the royal couple visited, it was so hot in the Tai Puan house that they had to come to and took a rest at the neighbor's place, which had a fan...*

*They were so kind and gentle, you know? The Queen even talked to Kru Raepib (Stephen Young's foster mother), my teacher, and asked her 'Are you a teacher at this school?' The Fine Arts Department was also instructed to communicate with the villagers in a gentle and understanding manner, encouraging them to appreciate their cultural heritage without imposing restrictions. The way they spoke to us, so softly and respectfully, it really made us feel special...*

*It's a shame we haven't been able to mark the royal visit with a proper route. I've tried to get the local government interested, but no luck so far. I hope one day we can put up markers for future generations to learn about this important event [...]*

(INTW15, 2017)

*[...] At that time, my siblings and I were still young and very excited to welcome Their Majesties on that day. We all diligently helped prepare the welcoming arch in front of our homes in advance. When they passed by, I saw both of Their Majesties with my own eyes. I felt*

*extremely delighted and deeply moved... I can still remember the image of the beautiful Queen and her melodious voice greeting the people who came to see them, saying 'How are you all?' I cannot forget it to this day [...]*

(INTW19, 2017)

By recognizing these multitude of stories about Ban Chiang's heritage mound, there is an opportunity for both the local community and the heritage industry to prolong the ties between heritage places and people and from generation to generation. The fieldwork reveals that there should be attempts to unite and connect the untold stories of the locals' heritage experiences with the official narratives, not just for the future but because contemporary heritage praxis demands it (L. Smith, 2006). In addition, such connectivity helps the local community to comprehend and broaden their understanding of Ban Chiang heritage for themselves and, significantly in an era of heritage and cultural tourism, for visitors.

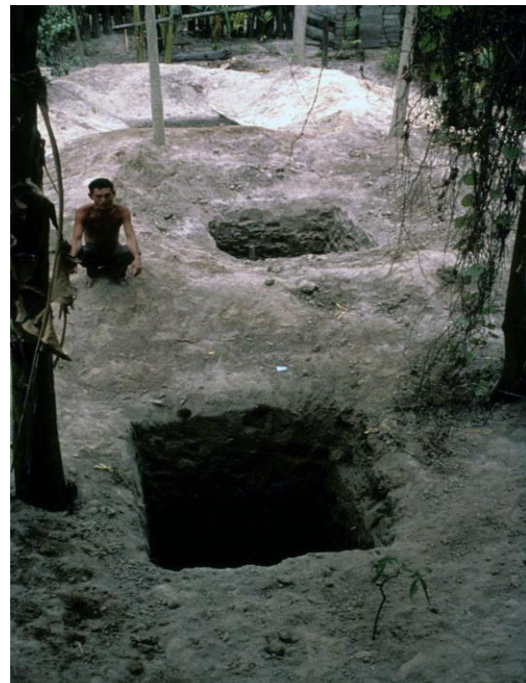
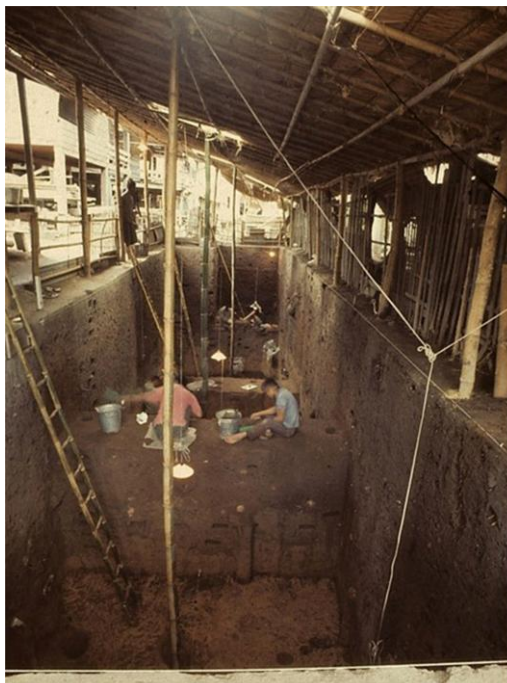
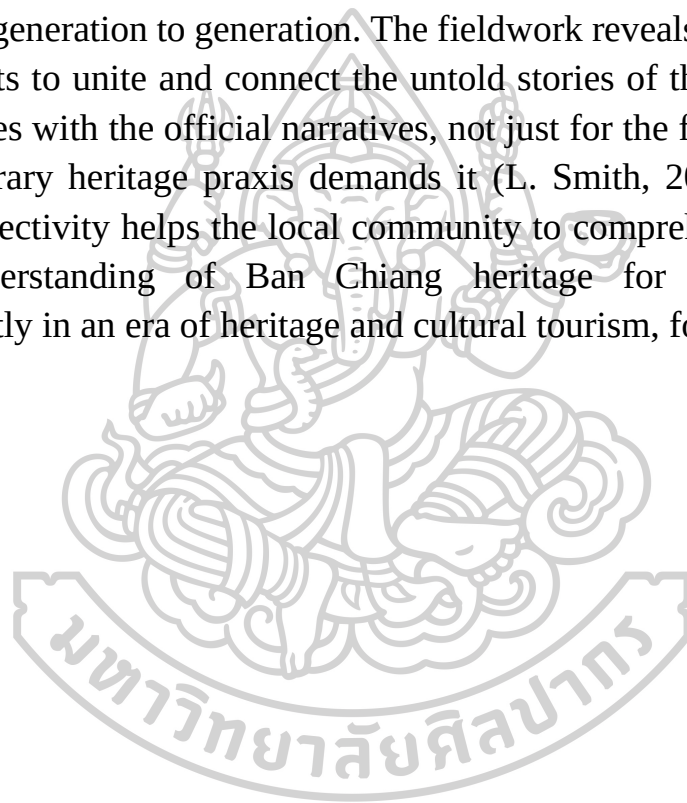




**Figure 51** The Ban Chiang residents gathered in a home, surrounded by the painted pottery they had unearthed from various locations in the village

Source: (Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 7)



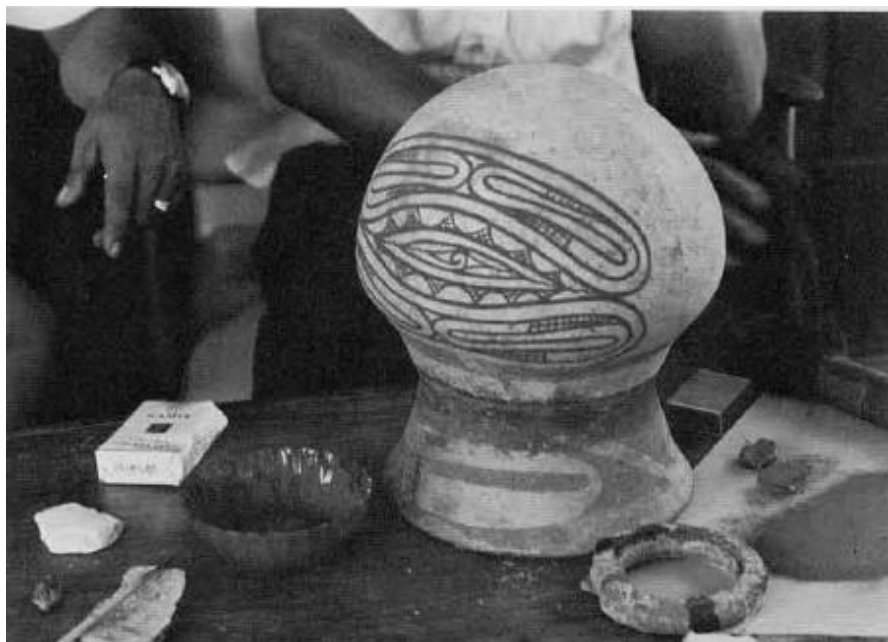


**Figure 52** The imitation pot was incompletely painted with a prehistoric pattern  
Source: (Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 8)



**Figure 53** (Left) Modern copy of a Ban Chiang prehistoric pot.  
(Right) Prehistoric pot mended and restored to make it complete  
Source: (Lyons & Rainey, 1982, p. 8)



**Figure 54** Ban Chiang excavation team from Pennsylvania University from left to right; Bill Schauffler, Don McCauley, Don Bayard, Daisy Bayard, Chester Gorman and Debbie Kramer

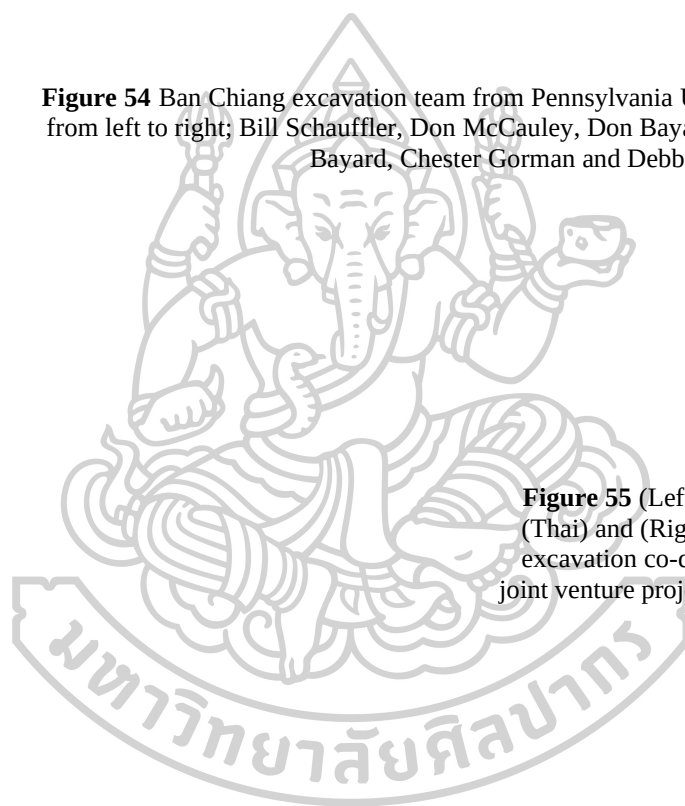


**Figure 55** (Left) Pisit Chareonwongsa (Thai) and (Right) Chet Gorman (US), excavation co-directors of Ban Chiang joint venture project between 1974-1975

**Figure 56** Joyce White was conducting her ethno-botanical research in Ban Chiang and vicinity between 1979-1981



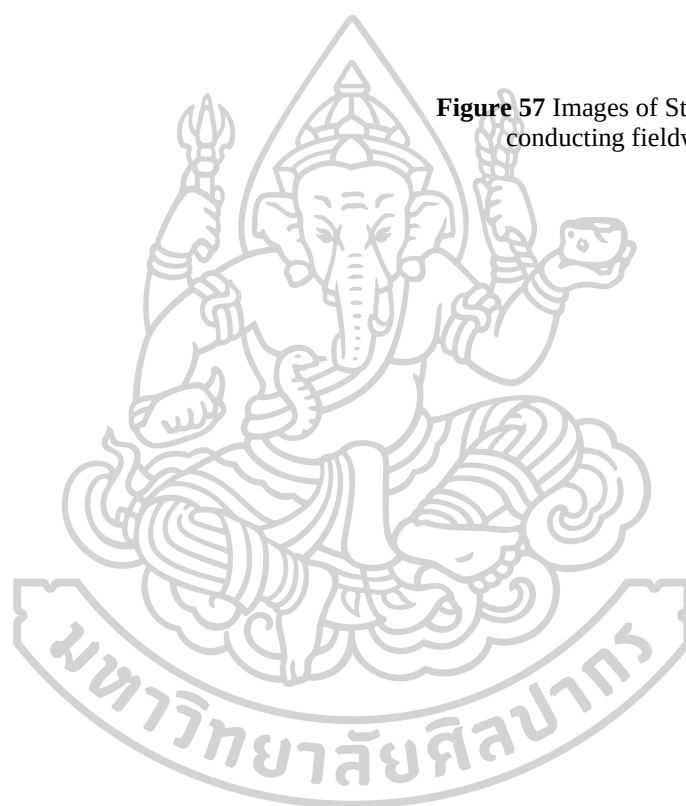


**Figure 57** Images of Stephen Young while conducting fieldwork in Ban Chiang

**Figure 58** A warm welcome ceremony to the '*Ban Chiang alumni scholars*' who used to do fieldworks in Ban Chiang at the Ban Chiang National Gallery on May 27, 2017 after attending the '*5 Decades of Ban Chiang Discovery*' event in Udon Thani.

#### 5.4.2 Voices of the Unheard: Tai Puan Descendants on the Mound

According to the UNESCO initiative project entitled 'World Heritage, Sustainable Development and Community Involvement', it highlights the need for local involvement in decision-making processes related to World Heritage sites, ensuring that the benefits of conservation, particularly, economic benefits, are shared with the community by generating income while preserving cultural heritage (Department of Climate Change Energy the Environment and Water, 2021; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2023). Nevertheless, there are instances where a large number of locals in World Heritage sites disagree that their designation benefits them. Locals were frequently left out of heritage decision-making processes because of top-down procedures, which left them unhappy with their post-inscription quality of life. This emphasizes how important it is to have open lines of communication and involve the community in heritage management in order to help people feel proud of and appreciate their cultural treasures (Nasrolahi, Jahromi, & Khalili, 2019). Then, ensuring that local voices are heard and that their needs are met is essential for sustainable heritage conservation and management.

- **Empowerment and Collective Identity**

For Ban Chiang, Nakamura's ethnographic research highlights how the shared narrative of Ban Chiang's history has empowered local residents to construct a collective identity rooted in their unique heritage. By providing a platform for previously untold stories, the village has fostered a deeper connection to its past. Royal visits and increased tourism have further solidified this sense of place. While challenges such as illegal artifact trade once existed, the community has evolved, transforming these past behaviors into narratives of resilience and adaptation. Today, the villagers are active custodians of their heritage, demonstrating a profound understanding of the site's significance (Nakamura, 2017b, pp. 1086-1087). As demonstrated by a local interview from Nakamura's work:

*[...] Villagers in Ban Chiang are lucky that there are lots of visitors in Ban Chiang who come to see the Archaeological Site. Some time ago, thanks to this site, we could meet our King. Every day we meet*



*tourists and researchers from all over the world and we can work for them and, thus, we get income to support our families [...]*

*(Nakamura, 2017b, p. 1087)*

Mr. Prasit Chanthasi (72), Vice President of the Ban Chiang Cultural Council, also echoes this sentiment. He emphasizes the council's commitment to instilling heritage preservation values in future generations:

*[...] My team and I at the Ban Chiang Cultural Council have dedicated ourselves to preserving Ban Chiang's cultural heritage. Our goal is to inspire the younger generation, students, and youth to recognize and appreciate the value of this place. We want to ensure that Ban Chiang's legacy lives on and doesn't disappear with our generation. The younger generation needs to understand why Ban Chiang is more than just a small village. Without its unique heritage, no one would come here. But today, it's like a constant festival, bringing in a steady income [...]*

*(INTW15, 2017)*

- **Challenges and Complexities for the Tai Puan Community**

While the World Heritage designation is often seen as a boon for local communities, the reality for residents of Ban Chiang's Kum Tai sector is more complex. These long-time inhabitants, descendants of early Tai Puan settlers, possess a deep-rooted sense of place and community identity. Despite acknowledging the broader benefits of the World Heritage status, they feel marginalized compared to residents closer to the museum, who have capitalized on heritage tourism. As Ms. Patcharin Rachahodi (58), a local elementary school teacher, observes, the distribution of benefits from the site's recognition is uneven:

*[...] Our Kum Tai village has been home to the Tai Puan people since time immemorial. While other areas outside the mound were settled by people who expanded from the mound or by recent migrants from other places, our village, along with neighboring ones (like Kum Pho, Kum Dein Ta Seu, and Kum Non Song Slueng), has remained a distinct enclave on the mound. We have a unique way of*

*life, from our clothing and food to our language, which we are proud to have preserved. Everyone in Kum Tai knows each other. It's not an exaggeration; Kum Tai is more comfortable and safer than other villages. We live like family, and we've known each other since birth. Even those who've moved away eventually return. Our elders were very religious and instilled strong values in us. If heaven exists, I think people from Ban Chiang have already booked their places!...*

*Being a World Heritage site is something we're proud of, but our pride goes deeper than that. We're proud to be from Ban Chiang, to have been born in this village. It's a warm and welcoming place. Wherever we go, we always return to our roots. The World Heritage status came later, but our love for our home was already there. Even with this new status, our love remains the same. I always tell the children to love their home, not just because it's a World Heritage site, but because it's the home their ancestors built for them. Without this place, we wouldn't have anywhere to live...*

*I'm concerned about the heavy emphasis on heritage tourism. It's all about bringing in outsiders, who come, spend money, and leave. While the homestays benefit, our village doesn't see much of the profit. If they want to promote tourism, let them. We'll continue living our lives and preserving our heritage as best we can [...]*

(INTW12, 2017)

Mr. Khanchit Khamchontha (34), an officer at the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation section of Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality, also provides insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the community in terms of tourism development and emphasizes the importance of local economic benefits from tourism:

*[...] I've only been living back in Ban Chiang for about six years now. I was away for many years. When I was studying in Khon Kaen, my friends would gather around and ask me to tell them about Ban Chiang. During school breaks, they'd come visit in groups of 10 or 20, filling up my house. When talking to them, they'd ask me to speak only in the Ban Chiang (Tai Puan) dialect, not Thai or Lao. It was*

*fun that they were so interested in my village. Whenever I went anywhere, people would recognize me as someone from Ban Chiang and ask about the museum and what it was like...*

*I once did a research project for my undergraduate degree in community development, back in 1995-1996. I surveyed tourists and homestay guests and found that only students doing field studies or research on Ban Chiang would return multiple times (3-4 visits). General tourists didn't seem to have any strong reason to come back. Once they'd seen it, they were done...*

*I've wanted to find ways to attract more tourists to Ban Chiang. I've looked at the shops along the road in front of the museum, and they all sell similar items, often sourced from elsewhere. I had an idea to sell local snacks, like Ban Chiang-style minced pork sausages that the older generation makes. We could sell them fresh, frozen, or even freshly fried. It would be a great local souvenir for students to snack on during their bus ride home. Unfortunately, with my full-time job at the municipality, I don't have time to run a shop...*

*Up on the hill in Kum Tai, where I live, there are only excavation sites and Tai Puan houses. There are no homestays. Most of them are near the museum, where there are shops, markets, and the museum itself, which attracts tourists. That area has a much more thriving economy. Even though this hill is where the story of Ban Chiang began and led to the World Heritage status, after Stephen Young's accidental discovery on this very hill [...]*

*(INTW20, 2017)*

The two interviews provide valuable insights into the complexities faced by the Tai Puan community in Ban Chiang. While the World Heritage designation has brought increased tourism and recognition, it has also highlighted the uneven distribution of benefits and the challenges of balancing heritage conservation with commercialization. Key takeaways from the interviews include the Tai Puan community's strong sense of place and commitment to preserving their heritage, the uneven distribution of

economic gains from tourism, the potential challenges of tourism development, and the need for community-driven tourism.

The question of balancing heritage conservation and commercialization of Ban Chiang's cultural heritage was also raised by two local Tai Puan descendants: Ms. Tong (60), a retired museum staff member, and Ms. Prapaithong Sithiprom (58), a secondary school English teacher:

*[...] Ms. Prapaithong: 'To me, it seems like most of what's happening now is focused on commercializing our heritage. It's not really about conservation. The people who own the heritage in Ban Chiang don't fully understand its value...*

*Ms. Tong: 'I agree. There's so much emphasis on commercializing our heritage that we're almost forgetting about conservation...*

*Ms. Prapaithong: 'The main beneficiaries are the businesses that have set up shop along the street near the museum. But what are they giving back to our community? We've become famous, and they're profiting from it, but are they doing anything to preserve our heritage?...*

*Ms. Tong: 'They should be thinking about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). What are they giving back to society after a few families have benefited? That's a big question...*

*Ms. Prapaithong: 'Are they doing anything to raise awareness? The groups that are benefiting should be organizing activities to foster a sense of responsibility and motivation for conservation among the community, especially our local children and youth [...]*

*(INTW01 & INTW02, 2016)*

Both Ms. Prapaithong and Ms. Tong expressed concern that the commercialization of Ban Chiang's heritage is taking precedence over its conservation. They questioned the lack of community involvement and the benefits that local businesses are deriving without giving back to the



community. They also emphasized the need for more education and awareness programs, particularly for the younger generation.

In summary, Ban Chiang's World Heritage status has created a complex relationship between its local community, particularly the Tai Puan people, and the benefits and challenges of heritage tourism. While the shared heritage has fostered a strong sense of identity, economic opportunities from tourism are unevenly distributed. The Tai Puan, deeply connected to the site's history, feel marginalized compared to other residents. Research by Gozzoli and Gozzoli (2022) confirms this, revealing that while the mound itself remains largely untouched by tourists, tourism and the related income potential for Ban Chiang residents are limited, but the community is proud of its World Heritage status and supports tourism development. To ensure the well-being of all community members, a more equitable approach to heritage management is needed, one that empowers the Tai Puan to actively participate in decision-making and benefit from the fruits of their heritage.

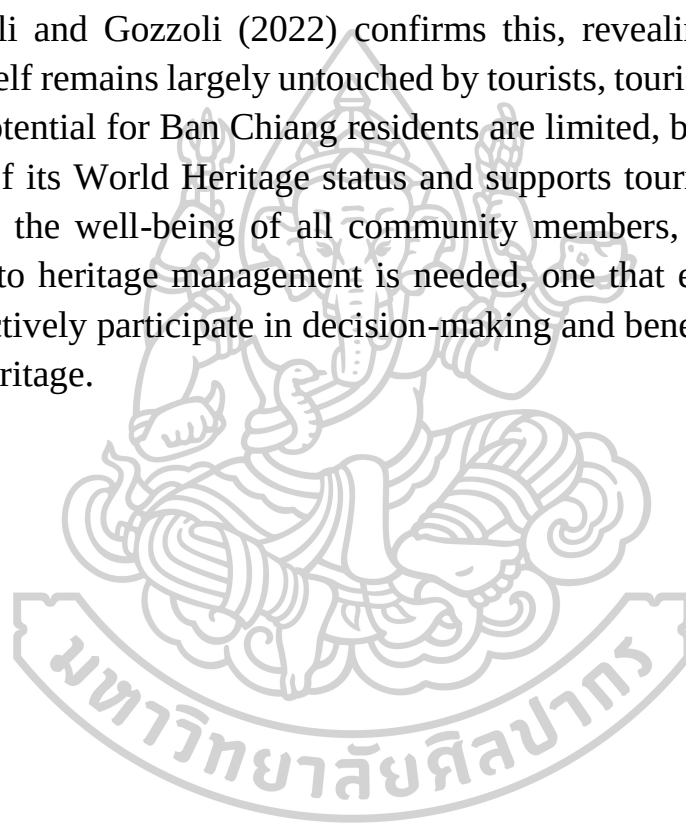




**Figure 59** A walk through memories with Ms.Patcharin Rachahodi , a member of Tai Puan descendant at Khum Tai, an old settlement on the mound of Ban Chiang

### **5.4.3 Heritage Regulations on the Mound: Outdated Tools for Conserving Ban Chiang?**

Internationally, legal regulations are a cornerstone of heritage conservation, employed by states to safeguard cultural treasures. However,

it's increasingly clear that top-down approaches must be complemented by local initiatives to effectively protect heritage sites (Techera, 2011, p. 329). This recognition has led to revisions in international charters like ICOMOS' Burra Charter, placing greater emphasis on the socio-cultural context of heritage stewardship (ICOMOS, 1979 and subsequent revisions).

The Ban Chiang heritage mound has been subject to various regulatory measures since its discovery. The 189th Revolutionary Decree of 1972 prohibited illegal excavation, removal, and trade of artifacts (Ban Chiang National Museum, 2009, p. 45; Metcalfe, 2016). Subsequently, the mound became a core zone of the World Heritage-listed Ban Chiang Archaeological Site on December 18, 1992 (World Heritage Committee, 1992). More recently, the Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality Ordinance of 2015 designated the mound as a conservation zone, restricting development (Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality, 2015).

While these regulations were initially crucial for combating rampant looting and preserving the mound's physical integrity, their effectiveness has waned. Since the 189th Revolutionary Decree in 1972, the main device for prohibiting illegal looting that flourished on the mound of Ban Chiang and nearby in the early 1970s, there is, today, no evidence of looting activities on the mound (although, to be precise, there is no longer anything to dig from the ground (C. Higham, 2016; INTW03, 2017)). This regulation has become an inactive deterrent method for protecting the area from looting.

In addition, the Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality Ordinance 2015, which was accordingly enacted to the Building Control Act, B.E. 2522 and the World Heritage Declaration in 1992, are other legal tools to control the conservation and use of the physical fabric of the heritage mound. But these authorized heritage tools have also produced some ambiguity and provocation because they tend to '*freeze*' any development on the mound by limiting land uses to residential zones and only allowing the building of detached houses that do not exceed 200 square meters per building. This regulation aims only to control the building size '*above the ground,*' but there is no obligation for any construction agency to consider potential

disturbances to underground historical remains due to the FAD's lack of absolute authority over all private land on the mound.

- **Challenges in Managing a Living Heritage Site**

Ms. Sirin Yuanyaidi, the Director of Ban Chiang National Museum, shared her perspectives concerning the controls on the mound:

*[...] Our work in preserving and developing our cultural heritage requires a solid foundation. It takes time and understanding of the community, as they aspire to develop into a major tourist destination. However, I believe Ban Chiang should be something unique, something you can't find anywhere else. It's a site unlike any other archaeological site. In most archaeological sites, you can walk around and see ruins, knowing exactly where the important areas are. But in Ban Chiang, the significance lies beneath the surface. We don't know everything that's down there, but we're fairly certain there's more. Thankfully, the villagers no longer dig, and they've become more aware of the value of the site. They understand that if it's damaged, we'll lose a treasure. If anyone tries to dig illegally, others will notice and warn them. It's a form of social control. If you break the rules, your neighbors will discipline you...*

*Currently, the Department of Fine Arts and the Museum face challenges from local authorities who want to develop the area and build new structures to attract tourists. But construction requires digging foundations, especially on the mound, and we don't know what impact this might have on the archaeological site. We can't determine how deep we can dig before hitting something important. Therefore, we need to consult with experts and higher authorities. As a general rule, any construction in an archaeological site requires permission from the Department of Fine Arts, and test pits must be dug to assess the soil layers before construction can begin. It's a necessary step to set a standard and potentially uncover new stories about the site...*

*Although we have strict regulations in place on the mound, we don't have full authority to enforce them. Much of the mound is privately*



*owned, and the Department of Fine Arts is only the caretaker, not the owner. This makes management difficult. Local regulations also exist to control land use and building on the mound, but they primarily focus on above-ground structures and aesthetics. They don't address the underground archaeological remains as we do. Therefore, we need to work together. Since this is a World Heritage site, we should not only conduct excavations but also control the types of structures that are built. The attraction of this place isn't just the ancient artifacts; people also come to see the Tai Puan way of life. Even though the ancient people and the modern Tai Puan aren't directly related, future development should demonstrate how the Tai Puan people have preserved their culture without damaging the ancient archaeological site, showing that the two can coexist [...]*

*(INTW07, 2017)*

Ms. Sirin's insights underscore the challenges inherent in managing a site like Ban Chiang. The underground nature of the archaeological remains and the complexities of land ownership significantly complicate preservation efforts. Traditional regulatory approaches, often focused on preserving physical structures, have fallen short in addressing the site's unique characteristics. The disconnect between top-down regulations and the site's specific needs has hindered effective management. Furthermore, the absence of robust community engagement strategies has limited the potential for sustainable heritage conservation. While local awareness of the site's importance has grown, opportunities for active community participation remain underdeveloped.

To address these challenges, a balance must be struck between preservation and community development. A comprehensive and integrated approach is necessary. This should combine top-down and bottom-up approaches, recognizing the site's unique characteristics with multifaceted nature of the mound and the importance of local livelihoods. By harmonizing the official heritage values associated with prehistoric artifacts with the living heritage of the Tai Puan people, a sustainable future for Ban Chiang can be secured.

## 5.5 Chapter Analysis: Ban Chiang Heritage Mound

This chapter utilizes Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA) to interpret interview findings while integrating theoretical concepts regarding human-place relations at the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. The analysis describes space transformation into meaningful place experiences based on personal and communal involvement using Cresswell (2015) and Morgan (2010). The research provides fundamental concepts to understand the approaches used to discuss heritage and place. Research results validate that true place interpretation needs active involvement together with accepting individual perspectives. The chapter findings present as follows:

### 5.5.1 Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical lens of '*place attachment*' from Scannell and Gifford provides a structured approach to understanding connections to the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. The 3P dimensions (Person, Process, Place) guide the analysis, helping to dissect the layers of attachment that are evident in the empirical data.

By drawing from other scholars (e.g. Giuliani and Feldman, 1993; Hay, 1998, cited in (Morgan, 2010, p. 1)) and acknowledging potential negative feelings associated with place attachment (Relph, 1976; Chawla, 1992. Cited in (Manzo, 2005, p. 70); (Tuan, 1979)), the study provides a nuanced view of place attachment that is critical in understanding the local dynamics at Ban Chiang.

This section presents both past and present importance of the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. The Ban Chiang Heritage Mound receives formal World Heritage site status but continues to carry immense cultural value for local residents according to Gozzoli & Gozzoli (2021).

The place attachment framework developed by Scannell and Gifford (2010) offers researchers a systematic method to analyze bond strengths toward the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. Through the 3P dimensions (Person, Process, Place) researchers conduct an analysis that identifies different attachment layers present in empirical data.

Building on the work of Giuliani and Feldman (1993) and Hay (1998) (cited in Morgan, 2010) and considering negative place attachment emotions discussed by Relph (1976) and Chawla (1992) (cited in Manzo, 2005) and Tuan (1979), the research offers important insights into local place attachment that matter for understanding Ban Chiang.

The section presents historical context and current significance of Ban Chiang Heritage Mound. Official designation as a World Heritage site contrasts against the deep-rooted connection that local people have for the site (Gozzoli & Gozzoli, 2021). This reveals that the meaning and value of the site is not limited to its archaeological aspects.

### **5.5.2 Commercialization vs. Conservation:**

The interviews with Ms. Tong and Ms. Prapaithong (INTW01 & INTW02, 2016) demonstrated their apprehensions regarding Ban Chiang's future safeguarding due to excessive commercialization. The feedback shows a fundamental conflict between society's economic needs and interests and its cultural values as Edward Relph (1976) describes in his concept of '*place-protective behaviors*.' Their personal experiences reveal how the local community wants heritage management to become more responsible and bring benefits to the community.

### **5.5.3 Local Practices and Artifacts:**

The interview with Ms. Sureethip (INTW08, 2017) provided experiential knowledge about artifacts and local trading practices which reveals bottom-up approaches toward heritage sites. The personal and social ways to connect with places explained by Scannell and Gifford (2010) demonstrate that individual and collective activities create meaningful site engagement which surpasses official storytelling.

### **5.5.4 The Royal Visit and Emotional Connections:**

The study shows how powerful such the event still effect community identity in addition to memory preservation by means of Ms. M.'s (INTW19, 2017) recall of the Royal Visit. The experience of this important shared event according to Manzo (2005) manifests as '*experience-in-*

*place*’ which creates an intensified bond to Ban Chiang as both cultural and historical site.

#### **5.5.5 Tai Puan Community Identity:**

Ms. Patcharin Rachahodi (INTW12, 2017) presents identity narratives which showcase the strong historical identity of Tai Puan as well as their complex bond with the mound. The narrative demonstrates that regulatory activities should understand these cultural components in order to effectively implement managerial practices according to Scannell and Gifford’s (2010) socio-cultural framework.

#### **5.5.6 Regulatory Challenges and Community Involvement:**

Ms. Sirin Yuanyaidi (INTW07, 2017) speaks about the inefficiency of heritage management practices in her discussion about the mismatch between regulatory frameworks and local realities. The information gathered helps critique the Ban Chiang regulatory practices by showing the necessity for policies which follow UNESCO’s heritage management recommendations about local contexts and community involvement.

#### **5.5.7 Economic Empowerment through Heritage:**

Mr. Khanchit Khamchontha (INTW20, 2017) offers his expertise on the complexities of tourism development within the community. He underscores the significance of ensuring that tourism generates tangible economic advantages for local populations. His insights provide empirical support for arguments favoring greater local empowerment and decision-making in heritage tourism and site management.

Based on the examined analysis, this chapter demonstrates the highly complex bond that exists between local residents and their famous cultural site which is the Ban Chiang Heritage Mound via Heritage Discourse Analysis. Empirical data and Scannell and Gifford's (2010) place attachment model allow the study to demonstrate the influence of historical elements and socio-economic factors and cultural context on individual and neighborhood connections to Ban Chiang.

The results of the study highlight the need of balancing economic growth with preservation of heritage. It exposes a continuous struggle between commercial development and preservation of cultural monuments. The experiences described by Ms. Sureethip (INTW08, 2017) and Ms. M. (INTW19, 2017) show how such local stories enrich both cultural identity and historical memory of the community.

The assessment presents insights from Ms. Sirin Yuanyaidi (INTW07, 2017) about regulatory alignment practices with local conditions and supports community-focused heritage management through the opinions expressed by Mr. Khanchit Khamchontha (INTW20, 2017).

Thus, the appropriate management approaches for Ban Chiang heritage site require flexibility and local participation. The planned strategies need to maintain the cultural connections between local people and the region while implementing sustainable preservation practices to maintain the World Heritage status.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The Ban Chiang Heritage Mound is a complex intersection of archaeology, history, and community. While officially recognized as a World Heritage site for its prehistoric significance (World Heritage Committee, 1992), its true value lies in the intricate relationship between the site and its inhabitants, particularly the Tai Puan people.

The official narrative of Ban Chiang often overshadows the rich tapestry of local experiences and perspectives. The mound is more than just an archaeological site; it is a living space with its own unique history and cultural practices. To truly understand and preserve Ban Chiang, it is essential to incorporate these local voices into heritage management, as advocated by (L. Smith, 2006).

Current regulations and approaches to heritage conservation are inadequate. The site's underground nature and complex land ownership pose significant challenges (C. Higham, 2016; INTW03, 2017). A more holistic approach is required, one that balances preservation with community development and economic sustainability, as suggested by (Techera, 2011).



Empowering the local community, especially the Tai Puan people, is crucial for the long-term preservation of Ban Chiang. By involving them in decision-making processes and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits from heritage tourism, a sustainable future for the site can be secured. This aligns with the UNESCO initiative emphasizing community involvement in World Heritage site management (Department of Climate Change Energy the Environment and Water, 2021; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2023).

Ultimately, Ban Chiang's heritage is a shared responsibility, requiring collaboration between government agencies, archaeologists, historians, and most importantly, the local community. By recognizing the site's multifaceted nature and the diverse perspectives it encompasses, it is possible to create a future where both the archaeological legacy and the living heritage of Ban Chiang thrive.

Next, Chapter 6 will examine how the '*Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival*' enables community expression as well as participation through heritage practices. This exploration of heritage in practice completes the three-dimensional analysis of heritage experience at Ban Chiang.



## Chapter 6

### Ban Chiang Heritage Practices

#### 6.1 Introduction

How do locals experience the heritage practices of Ban Chiang? By focusing on the '*Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival*' as a case study, it is possible to explore this question and investigate further the relationships

between heritage practices and those who live intimately with those practices. As Rustom Bharucha aptly states:

*[...] When people 'invent' tradition ('authentic' or 'spurious', through acts of 'cultural preservation' or 'subversion'), they unavoidably imply that they are no longer in touch with its immediacies. Yet an illusion is often maintained whereby the 'invention' is placed within the mainstream of tradition itself [...]*

*(Bharucha, 1989, p. 1907)*

This chapter dives into how heritage practices, specifically the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival, act as sites where culture is actively made and negotiated. Employing Heritage Discourse Analysis, the examination of how different groups – from the organizers to the attendees and observers – talk about and frame these events helps us understand how heritage practices become ways for people to express their identity, negotiate their influence, and reshape their understanding of tradition. The analysis reveals that these lived experiences become dynamic spaces where official and personal narratives of heritage intersect and evolve.

## **6.2 Theoretical Framework**

Adopting a critical heritage approach to the question foregrounds the investigation with several caveats: heritage conservation is perceived here as a constellation of unique creative, dialogical, and ‘*more-than-human*’ encounters between people, things, places, and practices (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 5). This conception not only concentrates on the ‘*end products*’ (and their associated values), in other words, ‘*heritage-as-thing*’ which primarily focuses on the maintenance of material fabric, but also emphasizes ‘*heritage-as-performance*.’ This is overtly social, and the attendant strategies underline public engagement, people experiences, differing values, and community-based actions (Haldrup & Børenholdt, 2015, p. 52; Labrador & Silberman, 2018, p. 1).

### **6.2.1 The Significance of Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The significance of ‘*immaterial*’ or ‘*intangible heritage*’ has a parallel history to material heritage protection within ‘authorized heritage’

discourse and practice. This has been, largely, a response to non-Western notions of heritage. For example, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, in a 2022 statement, made this clear:

*[...] Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts....The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State and is as important for developing States as for developed ones [...]*

(UNESCO, 2022)

Consequently, intangible cultural heritage is simultaneously traditional, contemporary, and living. It is inclusive, representative, and community-based in nature (UNESCO, 2022). Such conceptions can also powerfully feed into the ways heritage values are interpreted and communicated. For example, cultural festivals/events can play a significant role in communicating practices of heritage conservation processes such as the use, interpretation, exhibition, dissemination, and expression of the values of heritage in situ (on-site or in-place) (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 7).

### **6.2.2 The Role of Cultural Festivals**

A cultural festival, in broad terms, can be defined as the organization of a specific event within the cultural domain that makes a significant contribution, in terms of originality or innovation in its field, by requiring a certain level of organization, coupled with a minimum duration, and certain stability and frequency in the organization thereof, over time (Frey, 1994; Getz, 2008, cited in Barrio, Devesa, & Herrero, 2012, p. 236).

Festivals and related events such as fairs, street parties, carnivals, and parades are widely recognized as important communal activities that provide '*temporary escapes from the mundane nature of everyday routines*' (Finkel and Platt, 2020: e12498, cited in Duffy & Mair, 2021, p. 18).

Festivals have always been about people coming together for various reasons, such as celebrations, devotions, commemorations, and, as a community, the effects of this togetherness are almost immeasurable, both literally and metaphorically (Duffy & Mair, 2021, p. 18). Festivals also play a significant role in building certain social and political identities as well as expressing historical traditions and allegiances. They are a type of cultural commodity that contributes to a community's social and economic capital in which purposefully created representations of local communities, in specific locations and specific contexts, by local groups, governments, organizations, and audiences, celebrate local communal identity. The festival in recent times has become increasingly recognized as a well-liked tool for sparking communal innovation, economic revitalization, and participation in local affairs (Duffy, 2020, pp. 73-81).

Therefore, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of cultural events organized in both urban and rural settings, leading to what has been called the '*festivalization of cities*' phenomena (Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Quinn, 2006, cited in Barrio et al., 2012, p. 237), a process that involves the development of cultural events aimed at both potential tourists who are attracted by culture and at locals who, through these festivals, have an alternative urban leisure facility and a chance to identify with the city they inhabit (Richards, 2007, cited in Barrio et al., 2012, p. 237).

### **6.3 The Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival: An Overview**

Ban Chiang site was declared the 359th UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992 (the fourth of Thailand's World Heritage Sites). Since then, with great support from '*outsiders*' such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Fine Art Department, the Ban Chiang National Museum, and other partners, the first Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival was '*invented*' in early February 1996 and, annually, organized on the second week of February as a three-day festival.



Normally, the first day is considered the '*soft opening*' of the festival, a time when the locals host the Ban Chiang Ancestor Spirit worship ritual for the community members, at Wat Pho Sri Nai's excavation site. The morning of the second day, at the Ban Chiang National Museum, begins with the Worshipping Ceremony and Ban Chiang Female Folk Dancing tribute to the Spirit of Khun Chiangsawat, the great leader of the community. The parade is held in the afternoon. It heralds the '*grand opening*' of the festival. On the third day, the light and sound stage show is the highlight of the evening. The festival has, over time, become a major cultural tourist event of the region (Ban Chiang's vicinity and other related communities in Udon Thani Province). Between 1996 and the present, a mutual collaboration is revealed between several local and non-local stakeholders who have organized the event for over two decades.



The Ban Chiang Ancestor Spirit worship ritual at Wat Pho Sri Nai's excavation site

**Figure 60** Cultural events on the first day of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival



The Worshipping Ceremony and Ban Chiang Female Folk Dancing tribute to the Spirit of Khun Chiang Sawat at the Ban Chiang National Museum

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)







The light and sound stage show is the highlight of the evening at Ban Chiang Cultural Plaza

Source: <https://www.naewna.com/likesara/471634>

**Figure 62** Cultural events on the third day of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival

After conducting the open-ended, structured questionnaires with 16 key local informants in 2017, the researcher became a participant-observer of the Ban Chiang Heritage Festival in 2015, 2016, and 2017. This field research was supplemented by the information available on digital media (YouTube and Facebook) about the opening ceremonies and events relating to the Ban Chiang Heritage Festival. There were two major issues, related to this festival as a heritage practice of Ban Chiang, that arose from the research:

#### 6.4 Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival: Reviving Ban Chiang's heritage on the Front Stage

Organizing festivals at/in World Heritage Sites (WHS) frequently produces a particular effect: the often-dissonant juxtaposition of three elements - the global status and the symbolic value of the site (for example, having WHS status); the site and its associated events often being an international (and national) tourism attraction; and the local cultural provision the site offers (M. Smith, Carnegie, & Robertson, 2006, p. 111). Since WHSs are now obliged to set themselves the ambitious task of being '*all things to all people*,' the management of these frequently conflicting elements is far from simple (M. Smith et al., 2006, p. 112).

In one sense, visiting a World Heritage Site should be regarded as a major intellectual experience, and one on a very different scale to visiting, say, a theme park (Shackley, 1998, p. 1). However, it should be remembered that tourists are usually non-expert audiences and not all of them are knowledgeable about the authorized meanings of WHS status. Visitors often cannot recognize or understand the technicalities of the designation by UNESCO of a site having Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) (M. Smith et al., 2006, p. 114). And very often it is not only the educational experience provided that is appreciated. '*Non-authorized*' responses are common, and visitors make meanings and stories outside of those sanctioned by the heritage professionals (Staiff, 2014a).

Festivals may be deemed inappropriate for a WHS setting because they tend to be purely experiential and jubilant performances rather than educational events with pedagogic intention. However, since festivals are full of animation, vibrancy, and spontaneity (in contrast to material heritage that can be deemed inanimate and impersonal) they might help to animate the spaces and create greater local and visitor engagement (M. Smith et al., 2006, pp. 112, 114).

In addition, WHSs that are inscribed within urban centers or within historic centers need to be viewed differently from sites that stand as individual monuments. World Heritage Sites like Ban Chiang are also living places, they are communities operating in the present. Consequently, pragmatic management is required in such places, an approach that serves the

complexities of history, cultural differences, local and national identity, and the overall pulse of coexistence (M. Smith et al., 2006, p. 112).

Local populations may feel more affinity with contemporary cultural developments than an affinity with a history or authorized heritage constructed quite abstractly on a distant past that is not particularly relevant to the present. Indeed, to insist only on the technical version of heritage significance may engender feelings of alienation. For local communities living in a World Heritage Site, daily life is the focus. The everyday experience of the heritage of the place may be quite incidental. As a result, the experience of a festival designed to celebrate the heritage of their home may not only be an important vehicle for heritage attachment by local residents but equally attract visitors. The staging of a culturally diverse festival in the same location as the heritage objects themselves is intended to encourage local participation and a connection to Ban Chiang as a significant place imbued with a very particular identity. The argument proposed is that the animation of space in a WHS transforms it into a place where locals feel culturally connected, albeit for a limited time. Longer-term involvement is more difficult, but it is possible through both formal and informal educational channels, outreach programs, and interpretation (M. Smith et al., 2006, p. 113).

#### **6.4.1 Local Perceptions and Experiences of the Festival**

Based on an examination of the responses by the key informants who completed the questionnaires (*See Appendix 2*), it can be inferred that, overall, this group holds a positive attitude towards the Ban Chiang Heritage Festival. But not uncritically: the survey participants also offered suggestions about how the event could be improved. Interestingly, there was a nostalgic note to their memories of the early ‘good old’ days of the festival, and the stand-out activities/events from previous festivals. The collective memories singled out the light and sound show ‘*Dtaam roi bàp gaan · dtam-naan aa-rá-yá-tam bâan-chiiang*’ (*Following the footsteps of ancients: the legend of Ban Chiang's civilization*), particularly, the show in the first Ban Chiang Heritage Festival in 1996. The premiere event was produced by the team of a quite famous Thai producer at the time, a ‘Mr.

*Supatsorn*’ (INTW01, 2016; Q01, 2017; Q02, 2017; Q03, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q07, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q13, 2017).

Also recalled was the vibrancy of Ban Chiang Festival parades (Q01, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q12, 2017); the presentations of Ban Chiang's (Tai Puan) ways of life (Q01, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q14, 2017); the unity in the actions and spirit of the locals who were remembered as giving a warm welcome to visitors (Q01, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q13, 2017). Other features of past festivals recollected by the informants were the sacrality of the Ban Chiang Ancestor Spirits Worshipping Ceremony (Q01, 2017; Q12, 2017); the prestige and reputation of Ban Chiang World Heritage recognition (Q09, 2017; Q12, 2017). The collective memory paid tribute to the Royal Visit on March 1972, and noted this as the beginning of Ban Chiang's recognition (Q02, 2017; Q12, 2017).

The key informants also acknowledged the main objectives of the festival. This is significant and indicates a sophisticated understanding of the role of the festival in their community. Three objectives were articulated:

*[...] Creating an awareness that valued Ban Chiang Heritage; that recognized the designation of Ban Chiang as a cultural World Heritage site by both present-day locals and visitors; that, today, encouraged people to conserve the site's cultural, social and heritage significance as a mode of passing that significance forward to future generations [...]*

(Q01, 2017; Q02, 2017; Q03, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q08, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q13, 2017; Q14, 2017; Q15, 2017; Q16, 2017)

*[...] Broadly publicizing the reputation of the Ban Chiang World Heritage site to the world, attracting more visitors, and thereby creating prosperity and generating economic income [...]*

(Q01, 2017; Q03, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q15, 2017)

*[...] To show a sense of pride and togetherness (or collaboration) among stakeholders (e.g., the locals, visitors, governmental*



*authorities (both at national and local levels) and the private sectors) [...]*

*(Q01, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q10, 2017)*

Interestingly, the first and the second mentioned objectives were extremely congruent with the earlier official opening speeches on the stages of the Ban Chiang Heritage Festival (BACKbone MCOT, 2017; MCOT Northeastern, 2017). It indicates the success of the festival in inculcating local perceptions and understandings of the heritage significance of Ban Chiang.

In a similar way, the meanings of the festival, given by the local informants, included the following observations:

*[...] (It is) the pride of Ban Chiang that ties everyone together. They are looking forward each year to welcoming and presenting their way of life to guests [...]*

*(Q01, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q08, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q13, 2017; Q14, 2017)*

*[...] The international reputation and representation of Thai ancient heritage to the world, marked on the annual tourism calendar [...]*

*(Q04, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q07, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q15, 2017; Q16, 2017)*

*[...] Stimulating the neighborhood to build up a sense of conserving their own heritage [...]*

*(Q01, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q12, 2017)*

*[...] Becoming a tourist attraction will strengthen the local economic development [...]*

*(Q02, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q14, 2017)*

In addition, the questionnaire respondents, by implication, agreed with the prominent characteristics of the festival as it was originally designed. They were communicating, during the festival period, a deliberate expression of

their identities to themselves and the wider world via several cultural (folklore) practices, places, and artifacts. For instance, Tai Puan's dialect, traditional costumes, folk dances and music, local food, and 3 days of free access to the outdoor/indoor exhibitions (ancient objects) of the Ban Chiang National Museum (Q01, 2017; Q02, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q14, 2017; Q15, 2017). These responses illustrate the degree to which the festival, although artificially created, has been a success. Heritage discourse has been embedded into community consciousness and in the way local people think and speak about Ban Chiang's past in the present.

Despite this positive perspective, the questionnaire respondents also mentioned the festival's weaknesses and threats. These included:

*[...] Limited budgets, the lack of funding or support from outsiders, no consistent direction in budgeting [...]*

(Q01, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q07, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q14, 2017)

*[...] Most activities are conducted in the same manner (year in year out), with less innovation and more challenging activities. There is a greater emphasis on entertainment and less on educational activities. It is more like a community fair rather than a World Heritage Festival [...]*

(Q01, 2017; Q03, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q14, 2017; Q15, 2017; Q16, 2017)

Respondents noted that there was less publicity, particularly by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Udon Thani Province (Q02, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q07, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q13, 2017). It was also noted that the site is difficult to access, since it is too far from Udon Thani city with no transportation linking nodes of activities during the festival (Q04, 2017; Q06, 2017; Q12, 2017).

Lastly, the informants indicated what should be reserved (and given emphasis) in the future. This seemed to be a response to memories of the 'Good old days' when Ban Chiang's way of life was presented through

festival activities (Q02, 2017; Q03, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q13, 2017; Q16, 2017). The light and sound show (Q03, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q11, 2017), the festival parade (Q05, 2017; Q07, 2017; Q09, 2017; Q11, 2017; Q15, 2017), and the Ban Chiang Ancestor Spirits Worshipping Ceremony, including the worship dancing (Q02, 2017; Q03, 2017; Q07, 2017), were highlighted.

Regarding what should be improved or newly introduced, the questionnaire respondents remarked on a variety of things indicating various strains of thought. Some of the suggestions corresponded to the weaknesses they had identified. For instance, improvements to the existing landscape (e.g., houses and gardens, The Na Kham Great Pond) and specific heritage locations (for example, the Ban Chiang Mound) drew on the nostalgic impulse for the '*good old days*.' But at the heart of the matter was the idea of facilitating and drawing visitors' attention (Q04, 2017; Q05, 2017; Q11, 2017).

It was thought that there should be more support from outside parties to help with budgets, staffing, activities, and promotional media (Q09, 2017; Q10, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q15, 2017). Using more social media to promote the festival in advance was identified as a much-needed improvement (Q16, 2017). Some respondents thought the duration of the event should be reduced (Q09, 2017), while others suggested increasing the interval between the festivals (Q05, 2017).

Some respondents thought there was a need for a professional organizer to run and upgrade the whole festival into a '*real*' World Heritage Festival (Q10, 2017), while others argued for a better balance between the entertainment and educational objectives of the festival (Q01, 2017; Q12, 2017; Q16, 2017). It was suggested that other communities should be encouraged to take part as co-hosts as a way of sharing fresh ideas about the festival (Q02, 2017).

One respondent thought there should be a re-think and a re-interpretation of technical (academic) information to better support and communicate with a general audience during the festival (Q14, 2017). Another respondent suggested a re-excavation of the World Heritage property,

particularly underneath residences on the mound, and in so doing create a new outdoor exhibition that linked to the festival (Q04, 2017).

In summary, the findings of the survey, the participant-observation of the author, and the viewing of online material pertaining to the festival indicate that local key informants who have been actively involved in organizing or participating in the festivals recognize the significance of these events as a shared cultural practice. Upon the withdrawal of the '*outsider*' organizers, festivals provide a communal platform and temporal space for locals to showcase selected heritage objects, places, and practices to the world. They offer opportunities for local residents to revive or reinterpret their own heritage and integrate it into contemporary life by presenting it annually in the festival space.

The festival has become a matter of '*cultural politics*' (Jeong & Santos, 2004), for example, by increasing the role of traditional customs as tools for preserving national and ethnic identities, or as tools for creating a sense of citizenship in the nation-state, or as tools for promoting ideological nationalism and localism, as well as for promoting tourism and transforming these cultural customs into commodities (Hongsuwan, 2015; Lentz, 2001).

However, there exist paradoxical practices within the festival environment, such as the interplay between the educational and entertaining aspects, the involvement of local and non-local participants and their respective benefits, and the simultaneous preservation of traditional activities and the creation of new ones. As such, it is crucial for the festival organizers to strike a balance between the objectives, methods, and impacts of heritage conservation and its usage to ensure the long-term sustainability of Ban Chiang's cultural heritage and management regime.

#### **6.4.2 Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival: Local Adaptation of Post-Colonial Heritage**

In the context of the tourism industry, local identities and ethnic practices, such as performances, traditions, and rituals, have become '*marketable*,' resulting in locals losing complete control over their own culture (Nathalang, 2016, p. 110). In Thailand, many communal rituals are now



included in official tourism festivals, with the main event organizers often being outsiders, such as central or local government officials, rather than insiders or villagers.

The control of these festivals by government agencies has impacted the fate of several communal rituals and practices across the country, with funding and supervision determining the official theme of the festivals based on the situation and current policies and at the expense of the very local customs and rituals that originally drew tourism. Consequently, some local rituals and practices that aim to impress and create the '*tourist experience*' may lose their original reason for existence, including the objectives for such practices and the spiritual essence of local rituals for the community.

The danger is that, eventually, local customs and rituals are appropriated for entirely different reasons and become performative, empty of original symbolism and meaning and, instead, merely performances in a festival. Although support from outside organizations may indicate that local ritual traditions are acknowledged or praised by broader audiences, the autonomous stewardship of local inhabitants over their own cultural practices, or heritage, may be absent (Hongsuwan, 2015, p. 258; Nathalang, 2016, pp. 111-113).

As previously stated in Chapter 4, Ban Chiang heritage was initially '*colonized*' or '*predetermined*' by outsiders who established and emphasized the archaeological value of Ban Chiang. This was particularly the case between 1977-1987 when Ban Chiang archaeological heritage was recognized and its significance widely presented by government agencies in history textbooks, guidebooks, and exhibitions in National Museums. Such a process located the prehistory of Ban Chiang Culture within the same Thai chronology of national '*authorized*' heritage as the other two well-known historic sites in Thailand (the Historic Parks of Sukhothai-Si Satchanalai-Kamphaeng Phet and Ayutthaya), both of which have been listed as World Heritage Sites in a similar timeframe (Hoontrakul, 2016, p. 62).

The study of Ban Chiang archaeological site (and related places) between 1977-1987 revealed the important role of prehistoric archeology in the

construction of a Thai nationalist history and the creation of an assumed continuity in the Thai historical timeline, a narrative that conveniently covers over the '*discontinuity*' between the pre-historic and historic periods (Hoontrakul, 2016, p. 63). After including Ban Chiang in the '*prestige community*' of World Heritage Sites in 1992, the organizing of the annual Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival, beginning in 1996, unquestionably secured Ban Chiang's position on the frontline of the Thai contemporary heritage landscape.

The festival, therefore, has from its inception, been another example of Thai heritage practices adopting the 'authorized heritage' model for the promotion of tourism. However, since that time, post-inscription, it has been the locals who have built the festival. At first, the festival was mainly co-created by central governmental agencies (for example, the Ministry of Culture - the Fine Art Department, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, and TAT) and the regional (or provincial) governmental agencies (for example, Udon Thani Province, Udon Thani Provincial Administrative Organization, and the Ban Chiang National Museum). More '*academic-typed activities*' (such as seminars, talks, quiz competitions, and others) were frequently held in the past but less so nowadays (Q03, 2017; Q04, 2017; Q09, 2017).

Later, it was local governmental agencies (like the Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality, the Ban Chiang and other related Subdistrict Administrative Organizations, and the Nong Han District) that have contributed far more to the festival by funding it, promoting it, and organizing activities. On-site observations indicate that the Ban Chiang Heritage Festival primarily emphasizes entertainment-focused programs, rather than academic-oriented ones. This bias towards entertainment is evident in the festival's activities and offerings, as illustrated by Marie Nakamura's 2016 experience:

*[...] There was a main central stage and a sub stage in the center of the village, where numerous performances were showcased. A villager explained that the main stage was reserved for formal performances, such as the historical play about Ban Chiang presented by students. Conversely, the sub stage was used for local*

*performances like Luk Thung and Molam traditional music from Northeastern Thailand. This traditional music was highly popular, attracting many villagers who enjoyed the performances until morning [...]*

*(Nakamura, 2017b, pp. 1084-1085)*

However, academic-oriented events at the festival are limited to those offered by the Fine Arts Department. Notably, the department provides free access to the Ban Chiang National Museum throughout the three-day event.

Furthermore, the findings from observations also suggest that the primary attendees of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival consist of individuals residing in the Ban Chiang vicinity and its neighboring areas. It should be noted that a restricted number of attendees do come from more distant locations, but they are notable invitees or guests of the organizers and make up an almost insignificant number of the attending public. This local orientation of participation corresponds with the feedback from some of the key informants who raised questions about the seeming contradictory juxtaposition of the festival being advertised as a *'World Heritage Festival'* while simultaneously resembling a *'local fair'* (Q09, 2017; Q14, 2017; Q15, 2017; Q16, 2017). For these informants, it is merely a local celebration.

#### **6.4.3 Notable Festival Activities**

Because of the entertainment dimension of the festival, the current analysis needs to examine two noteworthy activities: namely, the festival parade and the light and sound stage show.

The festival parade is the primary event for the official opening day and is usually held in the afternoon of the second day. The parade is organized into distinct sections characterized by the group responsible for a particular parade segment. The parade itself follows a predetermined route. At present, the street in front of the museum serves as the main runway for the festival parade.

The parade focuses on a consistent annual theme and follows a procession arrangement that begins with the Royal honoring section organized by Udon Thani Provincial Administrative Organization, followed by the Ban Chiang history and ways of life sections that cover historical time from the prehistoric through to the Tai Puan settlement period. Additionally, the contemporary Tai Puan heritage, particularly Ban Chiang fabric and products sections, are usually presented in the parade by the Ban Chiang Subdistrict Municipality. Other allied parties from Udon Thani Province are also invited to join the parade and share their identities and selections from their heritage. Field observations (particularly in 2016) reveal that the festival moderators describe the proceedings in three languages - Puan, Thai, and English - during the television (online) broadcasts. This may indicate that the organizers seek to promote the identity of the Ban Chiang community to local, central Thai, and international audiences.



**Figure 63** The VIP seating spot during the parade on the street in front of the museum

Source: Sitta Kongsasana (2016)



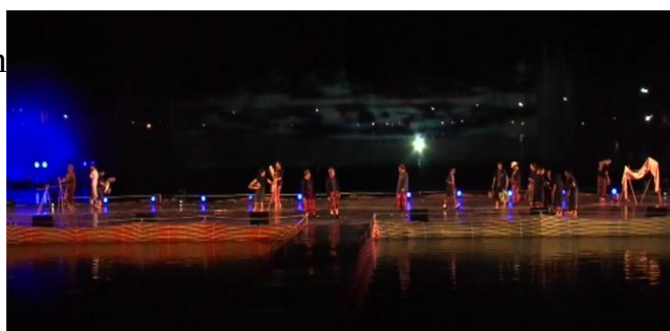
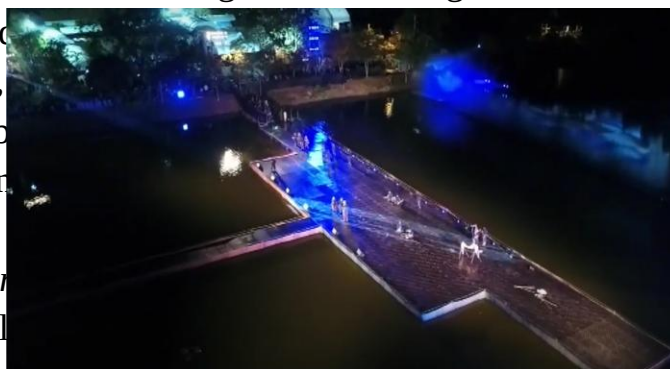


**Figure 64** Three festival moderators described the proceedings in three languages - Puan, Thai, and English

The other noteworthy activity is the light and sound stage show, titled '*Dtaam roi bàp gaan · dtam-naan aa-rá-yá-tam bâan-chiiang*' (*Following the footsteps of ancients: the legend of Ban Chiang's civilization*), which is the main highlight of the festival's last (third) evening. The show, which was first introduced by a famous Thai producer, Mr. Supatsorn, in 1996, follows a central theme that illustrates how Ban Chiang has become what it is today because of the actions and participation of locals. The '*Palang*' (E-San dinner sets) are provided by local agencies, during the show, for reserved audiences. The light and sound show has traditionally been staged on land in Ban Chiang Cultural Plaza, but between 2017-2019, the stage has been placed over water in the Nong Na Kham Great Pond and has featured an outdoor water curtain presentation. According to promotional materials and broadcasting media, this innovative technique has imbued a sense of grandiosity and novelty to the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival (MCOT Northeastern, 2017).

In summary, the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival exemplifies a post-colonial paradigm of heritage management. Once marginalized, the site's significance within the broader context of World Heritage listing has led locals to recognize the value of the site and actively 'recycle, renew, and repurpose' it for contemporary purposes, including tourism (Giblin, 2015, p. 317).

As an evolving festival reflects the influence of changing perspectives



from popular culture and capital. This has led to a focus on celebrations that align with current trends in tourist attraction, such as processions and performances emphasizing spectacle (light, color, and sound). This uniformity can be observed in many Thai festivals, while the content often derives from local folktales and stories, creating a unique festival symbol rooted in the specific province (Nathalang, 2016, pp. 106-107).

The festival's highlight show, '*Dtaam roi bàp gaan · dtam-naan aa-rá-yá-tam bâan-chiiang*' (*Following the footsteps of ancients: the legend of Ban Chiang's civilization*), is a prime example of this trend, combining standardized techniques with locally derived content and significance.

Unlike other World Heritage Sites in Thailand, which have ancient architectural assets as their background and hold national historic significance, the Ban Chiang site has only '*the past academic knowledge from displaced (looted) artifacts*' in the museum and outdoor exhibitions and 'the tales of fading memories' on the heritage mound for welcoming its visitors. Therefore, an interesting phenomenon is evident: the community has, and is, making a concerted effort to showcase their '*living*' Thai Puan heritage by integrating '*selected*' traditional ways of life into festival activities as a way of communicating a lasting impression to their audiences.

The festival, especially the parade and performances, brings to life the '*dead*' heritage (of prehistory) and technical heritage (of scientific archaeology), and connects these authorized and academic abstractions with present-day life through interpretation, creativity, adaptation, and restoration. These practices, carried out by locals with the help of involved experts and authorities, reinvigorate Ban Chiang's heritage, something which is often inaccessible to the public outside of museums and excavations.

The festival's emphasis on entertainment (and education) attracts not only locals but also tourists, who can witness the community's efforts to showcase their identity and cultural values. The Ban Chiang stories are repeatedly told, celebrated, and even transformed into performance, and in so doing, become the community's showcase for itself and the world. In museums, heritage of the past is preserved, while in festivals, heritage of

the present is celebrated as a living entity. The question that arises is this: what will be the heritage of Ban Chiang's future (beyond post-colonial time)?

## **6.5 Chapter 6 Analysis: Ban Chiang Heritage Practices**

Chapter 6 offers an in-depth analysis of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival through the lens of Heritage Discourse Analysis (HDA). Research methods integration of theoretical bases and interview alongside questionnaire data collection achieved beneficial outcomes. The study demonstrates that local community members assign diverse interpretations to their heritage practices. It also shows how global prestige and local culture expressions interact in a complicated way. This chapter's findings are outlined in the following sections:

### **6.5.1 Theoretical Framework**

The chapter demonstrates how heritage becomes an active experience for the community by adopting heritage-as-performance (Haldrup & Børenholdt, 2015) along with more-than-human encounters (Harrison et al., 2020). The process of transmitting culture through active performance (Q01, 2017; Q05, 2017) delivers essential cultural values to the youth because locals consider these activities essential according to UNESCO's intangible heritage guidelines (2022).

### **6.5.2 The Role of Cultural Festivals**

The Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival functions as an example demonstrating how cultural festivals drive heritage participation in the chapter. According to Frey (1994) and Getz (2008) (cited in Barrio et al., 2012, p. 236), the study describes festivals function as cultural vehicles that rebuild community ties and boost local economies (Richards, 2007, cited in Barrio et al., 2012, p. 237). Staff members (Q02, 2017; Q06, 2017) identify the festival as an essential attraction for tourists with substantial economic value to the local community making it a *'festivalization of cities'* manifestation (Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Quinn, 2006, cited in Barrio et al., 2012, p. 237).

### **6.5.3 Local Perceptions and Experiences of the Festival**

The chapter gathers in-depth local opinions through combination of qualitative survey methodologies which include interviews and questionnaires. People who live there understand the festival serves three main goals which include heritage education and financial tourism benefits alongside inter-community solidarity. Multiple participants (Q03, 2017; Q07, 2017) voiced worries about cultural authenticity besides pointing out growing commercialism in the festival which links to concepts related to community empowerment and authentic representation (L. Smith & Akagawa, 2009).

### **6.5.4 Challenges and Paradoxes**

The study examines conflicting aspects which occur during the festival regarding entertainment versus educational values. The survey data from response (Q04, 2017) shows local residents express mixed opinions about the festival as they find it enjoyable but some believe it gives more weight to spectacular shows instead of cultural training. According to Hongsuwan (2015) and Nathalang (2016), the ideas behind cultural commodification provide essential understanding to support festival management which should honor genuine cultural elements with contemporary adaptations.

### **6.5.5 Notable Festival Activities**

The traditional narratives together with local identity find their full expression through major festival activities including parades and light shows with sounds. Through these performances both participants and spectators experience emotional transformations which bring heritage from its static state to living dynamic events (Q08, 2017; Q09, 2017). The two practices showcase how temporal and spatial factors activate heritage activities which unite past and present values (Giblin, 2015; Nakamura, 2017b).

### **6.5.6 Post-Colonial Heritage Adaptation**

The festival promotes an essential transformation in heritage management between imposed external initiatives and practices that originate from local sources. The chapter examines how the festival transformed from external



control to local management after its inscription date because it demonstrates cultural identity formation along with local control within global heritage management systems (Giblin, 2015; Nathalang, 2016). The respondents underlined (Q10, 2017) how essential it is for local community members and leaders to lead festival planning for ongoing events.

To summarize the analysis, Chapter 6 applies Heritage Discourse to show that Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival functions as an active platform for cultural heritage presentation. The analysis evaluates the positive and negative aspects of the festival with special attention to its ability to manage economic benefits against social cohesion and traditional heritage protection.

Main research findings show that this event creates transformation through its impact on cultural identity and economic growth of the community. This festival offers energetic opportunities for residents to redefine traditional communal culture practices that gain modern popularity. The chapter obtains detailed insights into local perspectives of the festival based on questionnaire responses that demonstrate appreciation toward cultural roots and their skepticism about authenticity alongside commercial activities.

This section of the paper examines the conflicting nature of the festival which operates between educational activities and entertainment programs. The educational mission of the festival faces criticism from survey participants who perceive entertainment activities to dominate the event compared to its original scholarly endeavors. The present data reveals a pressing need for maintaining appropriate steps between financial development and cultural heritage protection during the festival.

The festival depends on local agency through community initiatives which ensure both its continuity and achievement of success. Survey participants stress the transition toward local stewardship of cultural heritage which depends on community members to actively take charge in their festival organization and management. The current heritage management system facilitates communities to engage in post-colonial trends through negotiations about their local values as they interact with global networks.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival operates as a key cultural platform which promotes community-oriented development. Sustainable heritage management strategies at the festival should protect Ban Chiang culture and create accessible opportunities for future progress while safeguarding this valuable heritage from coming challenges.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival provides an essential examination of how local population adapts and manages heritage traditions when dealing with evolving international perspectives combined with governmental regulations and regional transformations. The study uses UNESCO's (2022) intangible cultural heritage concept and critical heritage theory (Harrison et al., 2020) to outline the various actions carried out at the World Heritage Site.

The partnership between Ban Chiang community members and outside groups created this festival that now functions as an important opportunity for local stakeholders to defend their heritage position within international dialogues about cultural heritage. By showcasing their living heritage, including Tai Puan traditions, crafts, and performances, the community has found ways to '*recycle, renew, and re-appropriate*' (Giblin, 2015, p. 317) their heritage for contemporary purposes, including tourism and economic development (Barrio et al., 2012; Duffy, 2020). The study outlines limitations together with improvements that need to be made specifically regarding creative educational programming and enhanced financial backing and promotional actions to the festival.

The results gained from the questionnaires (Q01 – Q16) along with participant observation show that local participants hold mainly positive sentiments about the festival which boosts visitors and cultural awareness while uniting the community. However, they also highlight challenges and areas for improvement, such as the need for more innovative and educational activities, better funding and support, and more effective promotion.

The important festival components including the parade and light and sound show (BACKbone MCOT, 2017; MCOT Northeastern, 2017) demonstrates how the community transforms their archaeological and cultural heritage into lively modern expressions of group identity. The creative practices revive prehistoric '*dead*' heritage while establishing a connection between ancient artifacts and modern aspirations (Nakamura, 2017b).

At the same time, this chapter locates Ban Chiang case study within multiple scholarly discussions about World Heritage Site management as living environments (M. Smith et al., 2006), the heritage effects of tourism and economic pursuits (Shackley, 1998; Staiff, 2014b) and the struggle for power between international actors and their counterparts at the national and local levels (Hoontrakul, 2016; M. Smith et al., 2006). It points out the challenges in balancing authenticity and innovation, education and entertainment, and conservation and development in the staging of heritage festival.

The Ban Chiang Heritage Festival represents a post-colonial transformation of heritage management practices through which traditional local heritage gained prominence in global discussions. Complex paradoxes and tensions emerge in community life because of growing tourism activities together with commodity transformations (Hongsuwan, 2015; Nathalang, 2016) and external agenda influences.

In conclusion, the Ban Chiang case demonstrates essential lessons about the multiple negotiations and adaptations which make it possible to sustain a living heritage site. Community involvement and collaborative management together with critical thinking and heritage conservation reflect the historical and political forces shaping the construction and valuation of heritage (Harrison et al., 2020; L. Smith, 2006). Furthermore, the Ban Chiang community must be heard by researchers, practitioners and policymakers throughout their process of cultural heritage negotiation in the international arena. The development of sustainable heritage conservation requires focusing on local community agency to establish approaches that serve both equity and meaningful outcomes in the years to come.

Earlier chapters discussed the dialogue-based results of Ban Chiang heritage experiences. Next, Chapter 7 will explore possible ways to improve heritage experiences while keeping the delicate balance between preserving and living culture.



## Chapter 7

### Ban Chiang Heritage: What Shall Be Next?

#### 7.1 Introduction

*[...] It's better to know some of the questions than all of the answers [...]*

*James Thurber (1894-1961) (The Associated Press, 2022)*

After delving into the dialogical interplay between objects, places, and practices in preceding chapters, with the aim of comprehending how individuals, particularly those from the local community, perceive and interact with the Ban Chiang heritage, the findings reveal stark disparities in the experiences and viewpoints of local inhabitants (including residents, local heritage organizations, and local government officials) and non-local individuals (such as government officials from other regions and tourists) regarding the Ban Chiang heritage. The research demonstrates non-local authorities and experts largely determine and develop Ban Chiang heritage's expression through its heritage artifacts (Ban Chiang pottery), heritage sites (Ban Chiang mound) and heritage practices (Ban Chiang



World Heritage Festival). This phenomenon represents a manifestation of colonized heritage or acts of colonial-style authorized heritage practices in the postcolonial era (Giblin, 2015, pp. 313, 317), stemming from the initial objectification of archaeological relics and subsequently evolving into a global heritage and tourism attraction.

Typically, local residents encounter impediments when endeavoring to actively partake in the preservation and governance of Ban Chiang's heritage. Their opportunities for reaping benefits or accessing the advantages associated with this heritage seem restricted due to the stringent regulations enforced by the Department of Fine Arts, the revered stature of the UNESCO designation, and the intricate technical facets of archaeological knowledge that remain largely inaccessible to the general populace, especially those occupying peripheral social roles with limited economic means.

Interestingly, local individuals engage with these artifacts in various personalized ways, shaped by their individual emotions and understanding. They express their spiritual and emotional bonds to skeletal remains, pottery, and other archaeological discoveries through religious rituals, communal celebrations, or acts of remembrance, regardless of whether these objects relate to their direct ancestors or simply represent their cultural heritage. It also includes the development of jewelry-making and pottery-making techniques influenced by ancient artifacts, the use of Ban Chiang pottery designs in weaving and tourist mementos, and the enthusiastic participation of locals in planning the World Heritage Festival, which honors the value of the world's cultural heritage according to their own unique interpretations while balancing local traditions and personalities. This represents a response to the post-colonial condition, one that does not outright reject the colonial condition but instead seeks fresh perspectives grounded in their own comprehension, thereby forging novel significances for Ban Chiang's cultural heritage in their unique manner.

What comes next? It is interesting to consider how tangible and creative ideas may be produced for collaboratively maintaining Ban Chiang's cultural heritage between local and non-local people, so guaranteeing the continued cohabitation of living and dead heritage. How might future

shared experiences or bridging of the divide help? How might the Ban Chiang cultural heritage—formerly considered as archeological legacy or tourism resource—be reinterpreted to include more subjective aspects? It is imperative to acknowledge the social existence of objects, recognizing the individuals involved, particularly those currently voiceless, such as the recollections of ordinary individuals, spiritual connections, and ancestral bonds.

Subsequently, this study proposes the following strategies for rethinking Ban Chiang's heritage experiences:

## **7.2 Reconceptualizing the Ban Chiang heritage:**

The research recommends that the Ban Chiang heritage be reevaluated as a living heritage that is continuously influenced by the local residents. This requires a transition from the past to the present and future, as well as a greater emphasis on people over artifacts.

### **7.2.1 Increasing local participation in the management of heritage:**

An effective sustainable future for Ban Chiang depends on heritage management entities working together with the local community. The Ban Chiang heritage will continue to maintain its significance through meaningful benefits for local residents by establishing partnerships between heritage management entities and the local community to conduct accessible heritage education and community-based tourism and research initiatives.

### **7.2.2 Recognizing the social life of things:**

The research defines social life recognition as an essential requirement for understanding objects. The Ban Chiang heritage requires active attention toward the stories and historical perspectives expressed by local community members.

### 7.3 Developing dialogical experiences with Ban Chiang Heritage:

In addition, the following are some additional aspects that should be taken into consideration with relation to the enhancement of experiences related with the Ban Chiang heritage:

#### 7.3.1 Ban Chiang Artifacts:

- **Developing Artifact Narratives:**

Recontextualizing artifacts that have lost their original context is recommended, similar to the process of crafting character personas. This approach empowers contemporary individuals to actively participate in shaping narratives, effectively enabling viewers to become authors themselves. This method can establish a more profound relationship between individuals and these artifacts, as demonstrated by the work of '*Khun Thong Boran*'<sup>38</sup> in developing character personas today. '*Ban Chiang Buffalo*'<sup>39</sup> and '*Mr. Vulcan*'<sup>40</sup> are two artifacts that could serve as notable illustrations of this practice.

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<sup>38</sup> '*Khun Thong Boran*,' the ancient dog skeleton which is exhibited at the National Museum of Ban Chiang was unearthed in 2003 near human graves dating back to the metal age of Ban Chiang. This exceptional ancient dog skeleton, estimated to be around 3,000 years old, was named '*Khun Thong Boran*' by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Matichon Online, 2016). Afterward, Udon Thani Province recognizes the significance of the ancient '*Khun Thong Boran*' dog skeleton and has therefore adapted it to become the mascot of Udon Thani Province, representing tourism and the province's identity in 2017 (Thairath Online, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> '*Ban Chiang Buffalo*,' the cattle-buffalo skeletons discovered in Ban Chiang Sub-district, dated back around 2,300 - 1800 years old. The skeletal remains of buffalo and cattle were buried with the deceased, indicating a connection to agriculture in ancient Ban Chiang. These buffalo skeletons lacked heads and appeared to be domesticated, suggesting they were likely used in sacrificial rituals (Matichon Online, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> '*Mr. Vulcan*,' the skilled village craftsman of Ban Chiang, was one of the most prominent skeletons found in the grave of a 45–50-year-old male who lived during the Early Period of the Ban Chiang archaeological site in Thailand. He was given the nickname '*Vulcan*' by the excavators after the Roman god of fire and metalworking, due to the rare occurrence of two classes of metal objects in his grave. The grave goods suggest that Vulcan was a wood or metal-working craftsman as well as a capable hunter. The osteological features of his skeleton indicate that he was a robust man with a relatively tall stature. Isotopic analysis suggests that Vulcan was an immigrant, perhaps marrying into the village, and analysis of his diet suggests that he ate a diverse range of foods. Vulcan also suffered from periodontal disease and dental caries. The extreme wear on some of his teeth suggests that he may have used his teeth as tools. He possibly died from a pulmonary infection, after a relatively long life (Pietrusewsky, 2016).

- **Reimagining the Museum Experience:**

Museum exhibits need to target both academic users and diverse community members in their audience base. The objective requires museums to enhance the appeal of their exhibitions, reaching individuals from various age groups and cultural backgrounds. The content needs ongoing updates with fresh perspectives and most recent discoveries before being made available to the public. The four-volume Ban Chiang metals monographs published by Dr. Joyce White and Elizabeth Hamilton between 2018-2022 bring new findings which should be incorporated into the museum collection. Researchers studying Ban Chiang and three other archaeological sites (Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology, 2022) can use the monographs to better understand the metal evidence they have found. Also, the research on genome-wide ancient DNA sequences analyzed across five locations in Vietnam and the adjacent nations shows that Southeast Asian genetic history developed through various migration waves from 4100 to 1700 years ago. The investigation demonstrates that ancient DNA studies enable researchers to gain knowledge about the historical and prehistorical development of this geographic area (Lipson et al., 2018, pp. 92-95).

- **Increasing Public Access to Repatriated Artifacts:**

The forthcoming archaeological research center (Thaipost Online, 2021) should be established with open accessibility to the general public. The platform would provide proper acknowledgment to these artifacts by publicly displaying repatriated artifacts. To ensure the dignified treatment of artifacts, ethical protocols for handling repatriated remains should be guided by ethical and academic standards and include exhibition approaches that balance knowledge distribution with exceptional respect for human remains. Furthermore, the museum should conduct bone ancestor worship ceremonies regularly within its premises according to laws and regulations for handling human remains including those of the Repatriation Act.

- **Supporting Community-Based Artisan Activities:**

The community should strengthen its existing pottery and painting and jewelry craft initiatives based in the Ban Chiang Pottery Learning Center. The programs should be strengthened to earn their place by authentically representing the community's unique character and creating meaningful visitor experiences through innovative and creative activities. Community spaces should be recognized for educating youth as '*extracurricular classrooms*' due to their established function. The younger generation should be encouraged to expand and organize artistic and craft activities, such as '*The Ban Chiang Art and Craft Festival*,' which is organized by the new generation of Ban Chiang. This support will empower them to further investigate their cultural heritage and preserve and enhance local knowledge for future generations.

### 7.3.2 Ban Chiang Heritage Mound:

- **Preparing a comprehensive action plan for heritage mound conservation.**

Propose a conservation and development plan for the mound that aims to integrate dead heritage with living heritage through a balanced approach of authorized and non-authorized methods. This endeavor should strive for sustainability, involving both the local community and outsiders, with the possibility of utilizing Khum Tai sector (Moo 1) as a pilot area.

- **Introducing New Scientific Excavations and Expansion:**

Undertake additional scientific excavations in undisturbed areas, such as other sections of Wat Pho Sri Nai (INTW03, 2016), as well as the highest point of the mound, as suggested by some scholars (Daeng-iad, 2016).

- **Reinterpreting Heritage in Residential Plots:**

A space for interpreting excavated pits should be created within former residential areas to show an artificial representation of the excavation in its ancient historical context. Through this method researchers would achieve enhanced clarity about residential burial findings (White, 2011) than what is possible through museum displays.



- **Preserving Oral History and Memories:**

Document oral history and memories through interviews, the utilization of old photographs, or the collection of relevant artifacts to prevent the *'heritage of ordinary people's memories'* from fading away over time.

- **Creating Enlightened Historic Routes and Places:**

Develop historic routes that offer enhanced interpretation at significant local heritage sites. These routes should enable independent exploration while providing guidelines to minimize disturbance to local residents, such as the Royal Visit Route from 1972.

- **Developing Guidelines for the Heritage Mound Landscape Conservation:**

Provide guidelines and incentives for the preservation of the landscape on the mound, which includes local routes, traditional houses, old culinary gardens, old water wells, local plant varieties, and activities that are consistent with the residential area. This should be achieved without sacrificing the unique character of the original dwellings.

### **7.3.3 Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival:**

- **Emphasizing Educational Knowledge on Ban Chiang Archaeology and Tai Puan Culture**

Encourage the promotion of Ban Chiang archaeological discoveries and educational activities, both on the heritage site and within the museum, with a particular emphasis on the World Heritage event. Educational projects must receive higher priority than activities which only provide entertainment value. Protection of Thai Puan living heritage together with its emphasis on understanding should become an urgent priority.

- **Encouraging Inclusive Event Participation:**

Open up the space for a wide range of people to participate in presenting and/or organizing new activities in the festival each year, in addition to the regular main activities. This helps create a fresh atmosphere for the festival

each time and encourages greater participation from various groups of people.

To end with, the above suggestions are drawn from the researchers' experiences during a specific period of study, aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the various aspects related to Ban Chiang's cultural heritage. These insights reflect the diverse perspectives of the community members, both in their roles and direct involvement in shaping Ban Chiang's cultural heritage in the present. This also encompasses the broader community's contribution in highlighting the values and significance of Ban Chiang's cultural heritage in this study.

Although many questions remain unasked, and answers are still elusive, the researcher believe that placing importance on creating a collective cultural heritage experience through collaboration among diverse groups, both within and outside the community, can lead to the generation of innovative proposals. These proposals should be well-suited to the context and capable of preserving and advancing this crucial cultural heritage into the future, ensuring its enduring significance.

#### **7.4 Next Steps: Advancing Research on Ban Chiang's Cultural Heritage**

The research presented fundamental knowledge for various research prospects that aim to establish improved comprehension of Ban Chiang's heritage values. Further research ideas below will support creating sustainable methods of site management together with interpretation strategies:

##### **7.4.1 Authority, Narrative Construction, and Collaborative Partnerships:**

The historical narrative establishment at Ban Chiang requires researchers to study how local dwellers and government entities and international stakeholders and audience members collaborate and interact to shape Ban Chiang's historical identity. How do powerful groups control resources, influence the presentation of heritage sites, and shape educational content? Building equitable partnerships between stakeholders is crucial to ensure everyone has a fair voice and role.

#### **7.4.2 Sustainability in Heritage Management:**

What additional factors beyond financial aspects are necessary for sustainable future care of Ban Chiang's heritage management? Successful long-term heritage management depends on careful integration of intelligent management techniques with developing local talent and planning for leadership transitions.

#### **7.4.3 Balancing Tradition and Innovation:**

This study seeks to discover ways cultural heritage can be protected from core preservation challenges through new interpretive methods and presentation techniques and innovative visitor relationship programs. Digital technologies together with local artistic traditions can function as potential management applications.

#### **7.4.4 Ethical Considerations in Heritage Management:**

The ethical duties in heritage management require Ban Chiang staff to handle human remains respectfully and to determine artifact return policies and promote the inclusion of underrepresented perspectives. Ethical frameworks from around the world need to be used for existing management practices to detect necessary changes.

#### **7.4.5 Comparative Analysis with Similar World Heritage Sites:**

Understanding Ban Chiang heritage requires evaluating it against other World Heritage Sites that share comparable management challenges to gain insightful results. The evaluation process of existing ways at comparable heritage sites will establish better solutions for Ban Chiang management.

#### **7.4.6 Theoretical Contributions to Heritage Studies:**

What specific value does the Ban Chiang site add to theoretical research of heritage? This research will explore applications of heritage as an evolving discourse, with potential implications for heritage sites globally.

#### **7.4.7 Longitudinal Impact Assessment:**

Monitoring implementation results needs to happen throughout the execution of recommended actions. The proposed study will monitor the transformation of community involvement with visitors and safeguards to validate proposed interventions through time.

#### **7.4.8 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Heritage:**

Researchers from different academic fields must work together through interdisciplinary approaches to develop fresh understanding about interpreting heritage sites. The interdisciplinary research methods uncover complex associations which exist between people, items, locations and history as experienced at Ban Chiang.

By addressing these further research topics, future studies can deepen our understanding of heritage experiences at Ban Chiang and contribute to the development of more inclusive, equitable, and meaningful approaches to heritage management. This research can also inform policy and practice in other heritage contexts, particularly in communities living within or alongside archaeological World Heritage Sites.

### **7.5 Conclusion**

This study has provided valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of heritage experiences at Ban Chiang, highlighting the disparities between local and non-local perspectives, the challenges faced by local communities in actively participating in heritage management, and the innovative ways in which they establish connections with their cultural heritage. By proposing strategies for reframing, enhancing, and acknowledging the diverse dimensions of Ban Chiang's heritage, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on inclusive, sustainable, and meaningful heritage management practices.

Next, the final chapter will synthesize key findings and implications of this research. Chapter 8 will examine how this study contributes to broader discussions in heritage studies and offers insights for other communities managing archaeological heritage sites.

## Chapter 8

### Heritage as Legacy and Process: Synthesis and Implications

#### 8.1 Introduction

In the early 21st century, a new transformed conceptualization of Western heritage conservation was evolving from the notion of heritage as something to be preserved – a noun – to active process of protection of cultural elements that a community undertakes – a verb. Though this dynamic view is about community engaging in nature, it raises questions about historical authenticity and professional expertise. However, the question is not one of choosing between these perspectives, rather, it is how to combine these perspectives. In order to achieve such synthesis, local communities, heritage professionals, and policymakers must collaborate to create conservation efforts which are respectful of diverse narratives about the past.

Based on the transformed paradigm of heritage, this dissertation: *‘Living with Archaeological Heritage: Dialogical Experiences and Community Negotiations at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site, Thailand’* focuses on human agency in the construction of heritage including also physical artefacts and their conceptual meaning. It preserves the historical value of cultural objects but takes into account its dynamic character, thread throughout community interactions and in the processes and interpretations of heritage.

However, in the presentation of cultural heritage as a fluid process—not one that exists in the past and is frozen, but lives on to keep it moving between past, present and future—appears the concept of *‘living heritage.’* It is an approach that complements traditional conservation strategies within a framework which seeks this balance between historical continuity and contemporary relevance. It pushes heritage to continue its part in community life and cultural identity, but in ways that both engage heritage today, and work in congruence with contemporary societal values.



This view engenders consensual development among various stakeholder groups whilst encouraging ownership and involvement to enhance an enabling heritage experience. Communities are enabled to sit as co-creators of their legacies and their narratives by inclusive dialogue towards the meaningful preservation of cultural heritage.

Critical heritage theory hence has emerged as a leading response to the changing perception of cultural heritage that interprets heritage practices and discourses from a political, social, and cultural perspective. As a theoretical framework, the hope is to tease out the tangle of forces that produce (and preclude) the construction of heritage, especially in relation to Ban Chiang.

By using the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site as a case study, the focus of this dissertation is an exploration of the changing paradigm in heritage conservation and management of the early 21st century with regards to the intersection of archaeological preservation and the living culture of the Tai Puan people. Through the research, we can track the evolution of heritage as something static until viewed as an active process by the community, and how this change permeates into both theory and the practice of heritage.

Using Critical Heritage Studies as its foundation, this research argues against conventional understandings of heritage by applying different theoretical frameworks to scaffold the plurality of meanings inherent in it. The study is a distinct contribution to critical heritage theory, as it considers how communities other than Western ones—the case of Ban Chiang is important—use and reinvent predominantly Western heritage frameworks in their own cultural contexts. The research demonstrates, through this analysis, how local communities are able to maintain agency in interpreting and managing heritage while also working with international conservation standards.

## **8.2 Dialogical Heritage Conservation: Integrating Critical Theory with Local Perspectives at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site**

This dissertation examines the complex interplay between critical heritage theory and local knowledge systems at the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site in Thailand. By investigating how professional conservation approaches can effectively coexist with community-based heritage practices, this research challenges traditional top-down management paradigms while offering a balanced methodology for heritage conservation. Through extensive fieldwork and analysis of stakeholder interactions, this study demonstrates how dialogical approaches to heritage can enhance both preservation outcomes and community engagement, creating a model applicable to other World Heritage sites in Thailand and beyond.

This research's theoretical framework integrates several key concepts as analytical lenses to examine the processes through which heritage is constructed and interpreted:

- **Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD)**
  - Critique of authorized narratives that privilege archaeological expertise, promoted by heritage institutions
  - Investigating power dynamics in Ban Chiang heritage management
- **Dialogical Heritage**
  - Focusing on dialogue for stakeholders and Ban Chiang heritage
  - Analyzing relationships between official and unofficial heritage practices
- **Heritage from Below**
  - Focusing on Ban Chiang grassroots heritage's perspectives and experiences
  - Documenting local interpretations and adaptations
- **Use of heritage and commodification**

- Investigating how people use Ban Chiang heritage for economic development and tourism promotion
- Examining individual and collective identity construction through heritage
- **Intangible Cultural Heritage**
  - Examining living traditions and practices of the Ban Chiang Tai Puan community
  - Analyzing festival practices and cultural expressions at the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival
- **Postcolonial Heritage**
  - Investigating colonial legacies in Ban Chiang heritage management at present
  - Exploring local resistance and adaptation
- **Spiritual Materiality**
  - Exploring spiritual connections to physical artifacts
  - Documenting religious practices and beliefs on artifacts
- **Critical Heritage Memory**
  - Analyzing how individual heritage memories aggregate into collective memories
  - Examining local transmission of heritage knowledge

Drawing from this re-theorization, the dissertation critically examines Ban Chiang heritage during the process from the time the region was declared 'heritage,' through an investigation of the wide range of social, political, economic, religious and cultural factors. Instead, it examines how these dynamics continually write the legibility, meaning, significance, and use of Ban Chiang heritage in contemporary society. Grounded in contemporary critical heritage theory, this research enhances our comprehension of the dialogic relationship between heritage—in its material forms, spatial contexts, and practiced expressions—and the communities that actively engage with it. It reveals that heritage is not merely a collection of tangible artifacts but also encompasses intangible cultural expressions that resonate deeply within the community.

However, the theoretical grounding of critical heritage theory is based on Western thought while it is shown how heritage of Ban Chiang can be adapted and used in the non-Western culture. While this is true, it is also significant that critical heritage theory, while formulated in western discourse, was a '*response*' to the many non-Western critics of western heritage and practice. Non-Western theory and practice animated critical heritage theory. For example, it was Laura Jane Smith's work with Australian Indigenous women that inspired her re-thinking of heritage theory. At the same time, the adaptability represented here also shows the capacity of critical heritage theory to enrich and strengthen, rather than replace, local practices of heritage. This constitutes a rare venture in research that gives more than it takes, openly blending the professional expertise and nuanced understanding of local knowledge into one coherent '*perspective*' of heritage, expressed in both academic and local narratives. That is something it takes as a position of a more inclusive heritage practice that recognizes and values the contributions of the various voices and experiences to the continuing dialogue of cultural history. This framework is also inclusive, which goes on to enhance community participation, as well as retain cultural identities that might have been lost in a sea of primary narratives.

The focus of this dissertation is on how local communities at the Ban Chiang World Heritage Properties perceive and interact with their heritage. The research focuses on residents who live in, work at and encounter these sites, examining their dynamic relationships to material objects, geographical settings and cultural procedures that define their everyday routines and festive life. Acknowledging that heritage experiences arise from the contingent character of the interrelationship between tangible and intangible cultural constituents is the outcome of this research.

For all of UNESCO's emphasis on community ownership and support for democratic heritage management outside '*authorized heritage discourse*,' local voices remain silenced in both academic and policy discourse in favor of the voices of visitors, and ruling authorities. This initial gap ultimately hints at the continuation of the challenge to create passively participatory heritage dialogues.

This dissertation further magnifies marginal voices by weaving local narratives into the larger story of Ban Chiang heritage. This is in concordance with the 2012 Manifesto of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies in its call for the participation of traditionally excluded communities in heritage policy development. This research shows how professional heritage management consorts with local points of view as well as scientific and historical rigor. Community involvement can be interpreted in many ways that enhance rather than undermine our appreciation of heritage significance. The inclusive practices of the study push forward a vision of heritage as a living process, always in an evolving narrative, subject to the experiences and interpretations of different stakeholders.

Taken as a whole, Ban Chiang exemplifies how Thai heritage sites more generally come to be in contested spaces where different stakeholder interpretations and political narratives meet. Paradoxically, though, scientific discoveries are combined with political agendas, ancient artifacts influence modern identities, and historical elements become a point of resource for national and community development here. The research does not perceive complexity in this sense as something negative but rather, as something intrinsic in the very multifaceted nature of heritage. The results portray how official and unofficial dogmas can be productive in coexistence. These sites represent vivid examples of the importance of local voices in how cultural heritage sites in Thailand are stewarded, and how both official and unofficial views contribute to understanding of cultural significance.

The central argument of this dissertation is that the position of professional conservation and management (of the built environment) can be maintained in concert with inclusive and participatory *'bottom-up'* approaches in heritage conservation and management. This balanced methodology is particularly relevant for Thai living heritage sites currently on the World Heritage Tentative List, including:

- Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan in Nakhon Si Thammarat (nominated 2012)



- The Monuments, Sites, and Cultural Landscape of Chiang Mai, historical capital of Lanna (nominated 2015)
- Phra That Phanom, with its historic buildings and surrounding landscape (nominated 2017)
- Songkhla and its Associated Lagoon Settlements (nominated 2024)

### **8.3 Contributions to Critical Heritage Studies and Heritage Management Practice**

This research offers substantial contributions to critical heritage studies while improving heritage management practice for sites containing archaeological discoveries with living communities. The findings from the Ban Chiang case study in Thailand advance theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and practical applications for heritage management, as detailed below.

#### **8.3.1 Theoretical Contributions**

- **Dialogical Heritage Framework**

This study provides empirical validation of Harrison's (2013) dialogical heritage framework in a Southeast Asian context. It presents tangible evidence about how heritage develops from active human connections instead of traditional passive inheritance. The research reveals through documentation how heritage values emerge as a dynamic social process rather than a fixed assigning of value through the examination of stakeholders, temporal layers and cultural practices. Empirical findings confirm that heritage materializes into *'a constellation of unique creative dialogical 'more-than-human' encounters between people, things, places and practices'* (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 5).

- **Social Biographies of Archaeological Artifacts**

Following Ban Chiang artifacts through several contexts shows how they acquire multiple meanings across time and in different social contexts, so

offering an extraordinarily complete case study of Appadurai's (1988) and Kopytoff's (1986) theoretical frameworks on the biography of things. A major intellectual success of the research is this tracking of meaning transformation.

#### ○ **Postcolonial Heritage Adaptation**

The research makes an essential addition by recording how postcolonial heritage changes through adaptation processes. Rich data about how local communities adapt and change authorized heritage frameworks by means of '*reappropriation, recycling, and renewal*' is provided by the Ban Chiang case study. The study shows how the Tai Puan community has not only embraced imposed heritage designations but also actively '*re-cycled, re-newed and re-appropriated*' their heritage (Giblin, 2015, p. 317), so demonstrating how locals have found ways to recycle, renew, and re-appropriate their heritage for contemporary purposes.

#### ○ **Integration of Spiritual Dimensions**

A notable contribution of this research to heritage theory consists of combining spiritual aspects with archaeological heritage management practices. By documenting local spiritual practices connected to archaeological remains, including how the current Ban Chiang locals associate themselves with the ancient people who inhabited the same space as their '*spiritual ancestors*,' the study challenges Western material-focused conservation approaches that Byrne (2014) has criticized. These ritual documentation activities align with Karlström's (2005) research on Buddhist principles for heritage conservation.

#### ○ **Enhancement of Place Attachment Theory**

The study adds to heritage place attachment theory through its discoveries. The research strengthens the theoretical models proposed by Scannell and Gifford (2010) by examining how communities establish a sense of belonging through their spiritual practices.

### **8.3.2 Methodological Innovations**

#### ○ **Qualitative Mixed Methods Approach**

The research demonstrates methodological progress through its effective application of qualitative mixed methods. The combination of approaches fulfills the requirements of interdisciplinary heritage research methods which Sorensen and Carman (2009) advocate, providing a model for future heritage studies that bridge archaeological and anthropological methodologies.

#### ○ **Festival Analysis as Heritage Method**

The examination of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival presents critical perspectives about heritage transmission and negotiation during festivals, thus providing support to Duffy and Mair's (2021) description of festival effects on social development and community identity creation. This approach offers a methodological framework for analyzing short-lived heritage events.

### **8.3.3 Practical Applications**

#### ○ **Bottom-Up Heritage Management**

This research demonstrates functioning grassroots heritage methods which operate at World Heritage sites. Ban Chiang stands out from many World Heritage sites by showing how its locals have been gradually involved and cultivated a sense of pride and appreciation for their underground heritage according to Smith (2006). The findings allow managers to develop innovative World Heritage preservation methods through the integration of local cultural values with international standards.

#### ● **Integration Model for Archaeological Conservation and Cultural Activities**

The study introduces essential practical model which merges archaeological sites with contemporary cultural events based on collected research data. The primary finding demonstrates how professional heritage management professionals can preserve built heritage along with inclusive

bottom-up approaches in preservation and management. According to Chitty (2017), these findings can be effectively applied for sustainability management at sites which contain current archaeological remains.

- **Sustainable Tourism Development**

This investigation produces a refined analysis which avoids simplistic objections when scrutinizing tourism development at Ban Chiang. By documenting how locals have found their own voice in pottery reproduction, the research demonstrates how tourism engagement can empower local communities while maintaining cultural authenticity, supporting Nathalang's (2016) concept of *'creative folklore.'*

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

This dissertation, *'Living with Archaeological Heritage: Dialogical Experiences and Community Negotiations at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site, Thailand,'* demonstrates that effective heritage management involves balancing professional conservation practices with the meaningful participation of local communities. Through extensive examination of dialogical experiences and community negotiations at Ban Chiang, this research shows how archaeological heritage can be preserved while simultaneously becoming a living aspect of and supportive process for local cultural practices.

The study advocates for an understanding of heritage as being both legacy and process, by demonstrating how the daily lives of communities interrelate and connect with archaeological preservation. This research moves beyond the traditional view of heritage as standing archaeological remains to a view that places it in the lived context of community experiences and negotiations. The documented dialogical experiences throughout this dissertation demonstrate how these communities actively negotiate their relationship to archaeological heritage and create dynamic spaces with past and present in dialogue.

The finding from Ban Chiang provides operational advice for comprehensive heritage management tactics that merge community cooperation with recognition of localized knowledge and methods and

sustainable tourism development and community development programs. The combined strategy enables cultural heritage sites worldwide to protect professional conservation while supporting diverse community traditional practices.

These contributions move forward both the research and application of critical heritage studies and heritage management practices in cases when archaeological sites align with present-day community activities. The framework developed in this research integrates community-based knowledge with professional competence to create opportunities for joint discussions about heritage management and community co-stewardship practices. This framework protects archaeological importance while respecting present-day traditional practices and stands as a conservation method that suits Ban Chiang and numerous heritage sites around Thailand, Southeast Asia along, and beyond.





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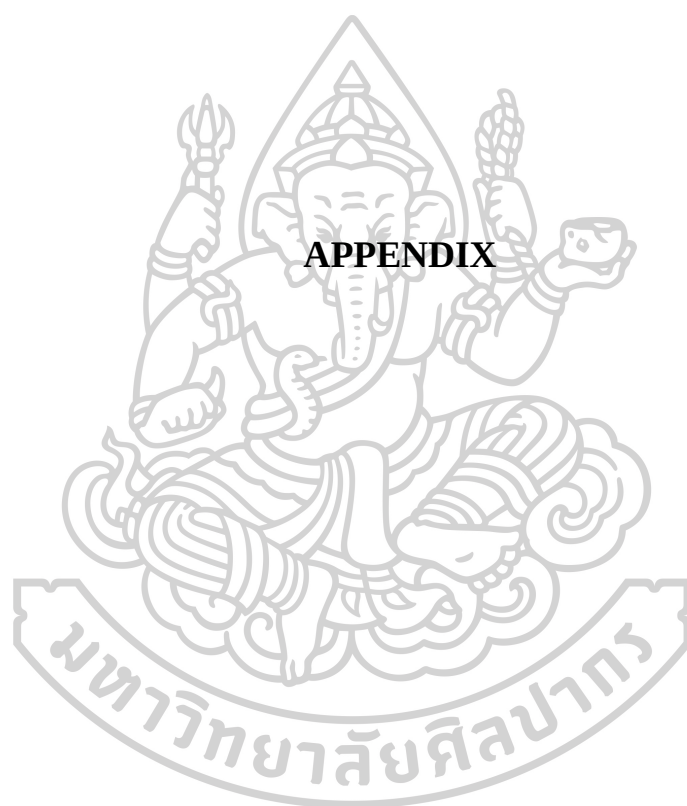
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## APPENDIX



## Appendix I (Thai-to-English translated questionnaire)



# Questionnaire

## Instructions

This questionnaire has been created to collect information from key informants for the doctoral dissertation research project entitled "Living with Archaeological Heritage: Dialogical Experiences and Community Negotiations at Ban Chiang World Heritage Site, Thailand" by Mr. Sitta Kongsasana, PhD student in Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism (International Program), Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University.

This questionnaire contains 8 questions in total and features open-ended questions. Respondents can write their answers in the space provided after each question (or add additional pages if needed).

The researcher confirms that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing names, personal information, or data related to the informants (especially those who wish to remain anonymous) to others. The data will be kept in a secure location, preventing unauthorized access, and will be destroyed after the completion of the research.

The creator of this questionnaire would like to express sincere gratitude to all informants who have kindly contributed their valuable time to answer this questionnaire, which will be beneficial for the dissertation on the aforementioned topic.

(Mr.Sitta Kongsasana)

Questionnaire Creator

(Mobile: 082-7095541 / E-mail: [Ksitta@kku.ac.th](mailto:Ksitta@kku.ac.th))

**Respondent Information (name is optional)**

Name:..... Surname:.....

## Questions

1. Please specify and explain your **relationship** with the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival

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2. Are you aware of and do you understand the **objectives of organizing** the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival? If you are aware (according to your understanding), please specify and explain.

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3. Since you have participated in the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival activities, what **changes** have you observed in the World Heritage Festival? Please specify and explain.

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4. What **memories** do you have about the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival? Please specify and explain.



5. What **meaning** does the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival have for you or your community? Please explain.

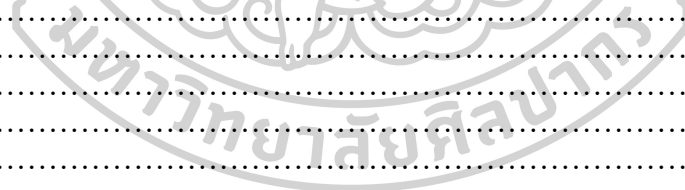


6. What do you think are the **distinctive features** or **unique characteristics** of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival? Why is it so?

[illegible]

7. What do you think are the **major obstacles** to organizing the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival? Please specify and explain.

8. What do you think should be **preserved, improved/changed**, or **newly created** for the Ban Chiang World Heritage Festival in the future? Please specify and explain.

A large, light gray watermark of the University of the Pacific seal is centered at the top of the page. The seal is circular, featuring a central emblem with a cross and a sun, surrounded by the text "มหาวิทยาลัยเซนต์ปีเตอร์" (Mahavithayalai Saint Peter) in Thai script. Below the seal, the page is filled with horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Thank you for your cooperation and for taking the time to answer this questionnaire

| <b>Table 1</b> The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage<br><b>Table 1</b> The significant moments of Ban Chiang heritage |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year                                                                                                                           | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Before 1957                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local people of Ban Chiang usually discovered the painted potteries or potsherds by chance on the surface along the narrow cart-path in the village, particularly in the rainy season which the rain water eroded top soil of the path revealing those innumerable sherds under the surface. But no one seemed to pay any special interest in what has been found.<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1957                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three complete painted pots found by Mr.Banlu Montripitak, a Ban Chiang community medical doctor and presented them to, Mr.Prommee Srisunakruea, the headmaster of Ban Chiang elementary school.<sup>ii</sup></li> <li>The school headmaster and teachers set up the school museum hall (also opened as public museum) for collecting and displaying all found ancient potteries both in proper and broken conditions.<sup>iii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1960                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some potteries in the school museum were occasionally presented to the school's visitors from 1960-1965.<sup>iv</sup></li> <li>Mr.Prommee Srisunakruea handed over some painted pottery from his collection for analysis to Mr. Charoen Polteja, a Chief of the Fine Arts Department (FAD) Unit 7, Khon Kaen, who conducted an archaeological survey, found painted pottery at Ban Panna in Sakon Nakhon province and, then, visited Ban Chiang and made inquiries about the similar pottery found there.<sup>v</sup> But there was no an official report on the studying of those items.<sup>vi</sup></li> </ul> |
| 1961                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thai government passed the Act of 1961 on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, in which stating that “buried, concealed, or abandoned” objects are “state property” and cannot legally be removed from Thailand without an official license.<sup>vii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Appendix II (The significant moments of Ban Chiang heritage)



**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1966 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Stephen Young, a political science student at Harvard University and a son of, Mr. Kenneth Young, a former American Ambassador from U.S.A. to Thailand, arrived at Ban Chiang to spend two years researching the life of the people of the northeast for his thesis. After he tripped over an exposed tree root on the mound, and found many unique painted potsherds partly buried in the ground, Mr. Young, then, collected samples and presented them to Processor Chin Youdee, the Curator of the FAD, on August 11, 1966, for further study in which Professor Chin believed that the items were prehistoric artifacts of the Metal Age that had never been found in Thailand. He proposed excavating the site, while the samples were sent to the University of Pennsylvania for dating.<sup>viii</sup></li> <li>• At the same time, Mr. Young also individually took samples to Princess Chumpot of Nakhon Sawan, a closed-friend of his parent, a wealth woman and well-known Thai archaeologist, and the famous collector of Thai antique in which her exhibition at Suan Pukgard Palace, Bangkok.<sup>ix</sup></li> </ul> |
| 1967 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first scientific excavation in Ban Chiang was conducted on April, 1967 by the FAD, under the supervision of Mr. Vithaya Inthakosai in the property of Mr. Sitta Rajhodee who gave the permission for the excavation. Samples of potsherds and others artifacts were sent to the University of Pennsylvania for dating by the Thermoluminescence method in which dated the samples to 7,000 to 5,000 years ago or 4420 BCE to 3400 BCE<sup>x</sup>, which would have made the site the earliest Bronze Age culture in the world.<sup>xi xii</sup></li> <li>• Princess Chumpot of Nakhon Sawan sent her scouts to Ban Chiang acquiring several of Ban Chiang pots for her collection at Suan Pukgard Palace. It was not until April 5th, 1967 that the Princess herself and crews shortly visited Ban Chiang during her trip to the Northeast. From this expenditure, she was given one more ancient pot from the local elementary school's headmaster and became intrigued with 'Pasin' (local weavings sarong for women) and bought some of them back to her palace.<sup>xiii</sup></li> </ul>                                      |

| <b>Table 1</b> The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Year</b>                                                           | <b>Events</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1967-1972                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The news of Ban Chiang discovery spread out and surprised the public drawing numerous attentions of people around the world. Thailand became a new site of ‘Ancient Civilization’ (the new Cradle Civilization) in which the Ban Chiang pot was not only just ordinary earthen pot with artistic value but also an ancient artifact of prehistoric period in which led to the demand of collecting Ban Chiang pots.<sup>xiv</sup> Local people began to realize the ‘high price’ of Ban Chiang artifacts in the (illegal) antique market due to the high purchase price offered by the buyers. Then, they often reserved their own properties for their own digging or rented their lands to others for searching the ‘underground treasures’.<sup>xv</sup></li> <li>• Ban Chiang painted pottery became highly fashionable among foreigners (especially Americans stationed at Udon Thani-U.S. Air Base, during the Vietnam War) and Thais in which most of them were wealthy people in Bangkok and university professors, who interested in Ban Chiang pots.<sup>xvi</sup> Thousands of pieces of Ban Chiang pottery began to be smuggled out of Thailand. Many found their ways into museum and art gallery collections overseas, and many fake Ban Chiang items were also fabricated and sold<sup>xvii</sup></li> <li>• Since 1967 (up until no sooner than 1980), the potteries (and later including other ancient objects which were in high demand for the dark markets) had been widely hunted by collectors. Several sites in Ban Chiang community, its adjacent vicinity and other archaeological sites of Ban Chiang Culture had been widespread looted for ancient artifacts underground which greatly destroyed the in-stu study of archeological evidence.<sup>xviii</sup><br/>xix xx</li> </ul> |
| 1970                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property banned the export of cultural heritage goods without official permission.<sup>xxi</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1972 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second excavation was conducted by the FAD under the supervision of Mr.Nikom Suthiraksa, Mr.Pote Kuakul and Mr.Vipak Soratatt, along with Professor Chin Youdee, Professor Doctor Sood Sangvichien and Professor Preecha Kanchanagama.<sup>xxii</sup></li> <li>• Several bronze tools were found in this excavation, which extended the fame of Ban Chiang as important Bronze Age site.<sup>xxiii</sup></li> <li>• On March 20<sup>th</sup>,1972, His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama 9<sup>th</sup>) and Her majesty Queen Sirikit paid a royal visit to Ban Chiang sites and a nearby pottery making village, Ban Kum-Or.<sup>xxiv</sup></li> <li>• During 5<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> May 1972, a collaboration project on communities' survey and archaeological research, called 'Research and Study of Ban Chiang Prehistoric Culture', between the Department (now is the faculty) of Sociology and Anthropology, Thammasat University (under the supervision of Assoc.Prof. Sumitr Pitiphat) and the Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University (under the supervision of Prof. Emeritus Preecha Kanchanakom) was conducted in the nearby areas of Ban That and Ban Om-kaew. The found evidence had confirmed the continuous development of Ban Chiang culture since the Late Neolithic period.<sup>xxv xxvi</sup></li> <li>• On July 23<sup>rd</sup>,1972, the Thai government passed the 189<sup>th</sup> Revolutionary Decree to stop illegal digging, moving, and trading of artifacts in Ban Chiang and nearby locations.<sup>xxvii</sup> Also those who possessed the Ban Chiang artefacts must registered and reported to the government within 30 days. Some of them which the government considered as "national treasure" must be transferred to the state's custody in the specific place and time.<sup>xxviii</sup></li> <li>• On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1972, the director of Thailand National Security Division (under the Thailand Revolutionary Committee at that time) had appoint the Planning Workgroup for Conserving Antiquities working in Udon Thani and Sakhon Nakhon provinces (later broaden its responsibilities throughout the Northeastern region of Thailand).</li> </ul> |

**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year                  | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1978                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Museum Bangkok held a special exhibition on “Archaeology in Ban Chiang” when Thailand hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> Asian Game in Bangkok to promote the story of Ban Chiang to both Thai and foreigners.<sup>xxxiii</sup></li> <li>• As a part of the Isan Performing Arts Conservation Project by the Srinakharinwirot University (Mahasarakarm), Ban Chiang Archaeological Dance was invented and performed in several occasions during the project’s touring. Unlike those creating by the Fine Arts Department in which principally emphasis on the prosperity of the Thai’s ancient capitals or ‘grand culture’, this dance was inspired by the Ban Chiang Culture’s local wisdoms and ways of life in the far past. The ancient funeral rituals were interpreted and transformed into the choreography.<sup>xxxiv</sup></li> </ul> |
| 1980’s – early 1990’s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The circle of Ban Chiang artifacts’ trafficking was continuously carried on by the running of dark business, particularly between customers and art dealers in the U.S, the in-country agents or middle men in Thailand and the local diggers.<sup>xxxv</sup> During this period, there was also a flourishing in the production and sale of copied Ban Chiang’s ancient artefacts in Thailand.<sup>xxxvi</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1980                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Northeast Thailand Archaeological project, the Fine Art Department (under the supervision of Dr. Amphan Kijiangam) and the University of Otago, New Zealand (under the supervision of Dr. Charles Higham) had conducted a survey and excavation at the archaeological site of the upper Songkhram river basin to study the extension of Ban Chiang culture.<sup>xxxvii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1982                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The traveling exhibition on “Ban Chiang Discovery of a Lost Bronze Age” in which curated by Dr.Joyce White and prepared by The University of Pennsylvania and the Smithsonian Institute had been toured to many places in the United States for four years (1982-1986) and traveled to Singapore for one year. Finally, it had been on permanent display at the Ban Chiang National Museum since 1987.<sup>xxxviii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 1983 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between February-June 1983, a team from the Anthropology Department of Silpakorn University, led by Prof. Srisakra Vallibhotama, conducted a survey in the Sakon Nakhon Basin along the Songkarm river and particularly the areas along the Udonthani-Sakon Nakhon highway in order to find the archaeological sites associated with Ban Chiang Culture. The survey discovered 83 sites of Ban Chiang culture which 27 of them were reported as comparatively large sites with remarkable evidence of the culture. However, the report also added that almost every found sites (98%) had been disturbed and destroyed by the looters leaving only a few of evidence intact for proper excavation.<sup>xxxix</sup></li> <li>The exhibition at the Ban Chiang National Museum had been renovated by the Fine Arts Department. Also, with the funds from the John F. Kennedy Foundation, the new additional exhibition's building was constructed which was granted permission to name after Her Royal Highness Princess Sri Nagarindra - His Majesty the Late King (Rama 9<sup>th</sup>)'s mother.<sup>xl</sup></li> </ul> |
| 1987 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana, His Majesty the Late King (Rama 9<sup>th</sup>)'s sister, presided over the official opening of the Ban Chiang National Museum on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1987.<sup>xli</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1991 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rachanie Bunnanuragp and her team had conducted a site survey between March-September 1991 in 40 Tambons (districts) of Udon Thani, Sakon Nakhon, Khon Kaen and Nakhon Phanom provinces which are not allow looting of the prehistoric sites after the promulgation of National Council decree number 189 (1972) and the notifications of Ministry of Education in December 1972 and May 1973. Around 127 archaeological sites related to Ban Chiang culture were recorded. Alike the survey of Prof. Srisakra Vallibhotama and his team in 1983 suggested, most of the archaeological sites were severely damaged by looters who looking for ancient "treasure" underground. Only few sites had small disturbance or untouched since they were in the governmental properties (temples or schools) or the looters were afraid of the guardian spirits.<sup>xlii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 1992 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first outdoor archaeological exhibition site in Thailand, Wat Pho Sri Nai was further excavated to connect two previous pits (from 1972) to refurbish and strengthen the sites.<sup>xliii</sup></li> <li>• The Ban Chiang site was declared as the 359<sup>th</sup> UNESCO World Heritage site in 1992<sup>xliv</sup> under criteria iii<sup>xlv</sup>, which describes a site that "bear[s] a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or has disappeared".<sup>xlvi</sup></li> </ul> |
| 1996 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first Ban Chiang World Heritage Annual Celebration Festival was held on June 1996 with the great support from Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and other outside partners. Afterwards, it had been changed to more appropriate time on early February annually (since 1998) due to the more suitable period for the weather condition and a year-round festival's schedule.<sup>xlvii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           |
| 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The excavation pits at Wat Pho Sri Nai had been severely damaged by floods and humidity since their opening, then the Fine Arts Department collected all the artifacts for preservation and construction and replaced them with the replicas.<sup>xlviii</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ban Chiang homestay's group has been established for providing services and activities to welcome tourists who come to experience Ban Chiang heritage, particularly, the reproducing of Thai-Puan lifestyle. For years until now, this group has been publicly well- recognized and won several national tourism awards.<sup>xlix</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ban Chiang National Museum was renovated under the development project "Historic and Cultural Sites", in conjunction with Indochina Tourism.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| <b>Table 1</b> The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Year</b>                                                           | <b>Events</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2008                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After the five years of “Operation Antiquity” – an ongoing antiquity trafficking undercover investigation (2003-2008), on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008, five hundred of U.S. Federal agents (FBI, IRS and Customs) together with some antiquities’ experts simultaneously raided thirteen targeted places (from museums, galleries, warehouses to private collector’s residences) in California and Chicago. At the end, they seized more than over 10,000 smuggled antiquities of Ban Chiang Culture’s and other ancient artifacts from Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, and China. From the investigation’s result, those raided places apparently functioned as a crime ring and involved smuggling the items out of Thailand into the U.S. (especially after the a 1961 Thai law, the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, stating that “buried, concealed, or abandoned” objects are “state property” and cannot legally be removed from Thailand without an official license.) and then donating them at inflated values to museums in order to claim large tax write-offs. There were said to be approximately 175 times more material than what archaeologists excavated during scientific digs in the 1970s.<sup>li lii liii</sup></li> </ul> |
| 2012                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 3<sup>rd</sup> period of Ban Chiang local weaving group has been re-established (after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> establishments in 1971 and 2004, respectively) for prolonging its inherited skills and improving the quality of its local textile-related products. Moreover, this group has frequently facilitated several visitors who come as parties to experience the weaving group’s activities throughout the years.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 2014                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The United States Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California (the USAO) ordered the return to Thailand of 554 Thai artifacts (including Ban Chiang culture’s artifacts), which were formerly kept at Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California. In order to mark the formal return, a joint ceremony was held by the Ministry of Culture (in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the Embassy of the United States of America at the National Museum, Bangkok on the November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014.<sup>liv</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| <b>Table 1</b> The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Year</b>                                                           | <b>Events</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| 2012                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 3<sup>rd</sup> period of Ban Chiang local weaving group has been re-established (after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> establishments in 1971 and 2004, respectively) for prolonging its inherited skills and improving the quality of its local textile-related products. Moreover, this group has frequently facilitated several visitors who come as parties to experience the weaving group’s activities throughout the years.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <b>Table 1</b> The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>Year</b>                                                           | <b>Events</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2015                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the return of 557 ancient items from the US. in 2014, the Office of National Museum (the Fine Arts Department, the Ministry of Culture) had selected more than 200 outstanding prehistoric artifacts (including several pieces of Ban Chiang Culture) to organize the exhibition entitled “Artifacts Receives from the United States of America” which was opened to the public from February 4<sup>th</sup> – March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 at the Issara Winitchai Throne Hall, National Museum Bangkok.<sup>lix</sup></li> <li>• The Office of Performing Arts, the Fine Art Department had created a set of traditional dancing which was inspired by Ban Chiang Culture. It was officially delivered to the representatives of Ban Chiang Community on December 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Since then, this dancing performance has been extensively accepted as an ‘official’ dancing routine of the Ban Chiang community and, today, various groups of locals have widely practiced and performed this routine in several occasions.<sup>lx</sup> Also, the Ban Chiang dancing routine has also been integrated into the local curriculums and thought by all of dancing classes in Udon Thani province.<sup>lxi</sup></li> <li>• The Facebook’s page “Guidebook Ban Chiang” has been created and published by the Ban Chiang heritage tourism’s entrepreneurs for promoting their cultural activities and products to the public.<sup>lxii</sup></li> </ul> |
| 2016                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The associated events of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Ban Chiang’s discovery had been organized between 2015-2016 in Thailand including,<sup>lxiii</sup> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The academic seminar on “Values of the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site”, organized by Faculty of Architecture, Silapakorn University, at Silapakorn University (Na Pra Lan), Bangkok, on September 5, 2015.</li> <li>2) The academic seminar on “Ban Chiang: The First Chapter of Thai Archaeology”, organized by Thammasat Museum of Antropology, at Thammasat University (Tha Pra Chan), Bangkok, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.</li> <li>3) The 20<sup>th</sup> Ban Chiang World Heritage Celebration Festival, at Ban Chiang, Udon Thani, on February 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, 2016.</li> <li>4) The International Conference on the 5 Decades of Ban Chiang’s Discovery, at Centara Hotel and Convention Center, Udon Thani, on May 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, 2016.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| <b>Table 1</b> The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>Year</b>                                                           | <b>Events</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A special lecture on ‘Hot Pots, Museum Raids, and the Race to Uncover Asia’s Archaeological Past,’ by Adjunct Professor Dr Joyce White, an American archaeologist and Ban Chiang Culture’s expert who is an adjunct professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and executive director of the new Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology, at National Museum, Bangkok, on June 3rd, 2016.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2018                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Fine Arts had officially received 12 prehistoric items of Ban Chiang’s Culture dating back as far as 4,300 years from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs which it was given those items by an American lady named Ms. Katherine Ayers-Mannix on October 4, 2018.<sup>lxiv</sup></li> <li>• On the occasion of two Centuries of Thai-US Friendship and 185 years of diplomatic relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Fine Arts by Ban Chiang National Museum and the Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, organized the special lecture by Adjunct Professor Dr. Joyce White, on “The Lessons from Ban Chiang to Solve the World’s Problems”, on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at Bangkok National Museum, Bangkok. This lecture was intended to present new knowledge and innovations of Ban Chiang archaeological researches, particularly, the use of multiple multidisciplinary approaches by several experts and specialists (e.g., ancient metallurgy, botanical archaeology, etc.) for broadening learning dimensions and wider understanding of life, society and culture of people living in Ban Chiang and nearby in prehistoric times.<sup>lxv</sup></li> <li>• The Community Enterprise of Ban Chiang Pottery Making has set up ‘the Ban Chiang Pottery Making Learning Center’ to prolong the local wisdom of Ban Chiang pottery making and painting by welcoming general public to visit and experience hands on activities in the process of making Ban Chiang pottery. This center also aims to strengthen the potential of cultural tourism management of Ban Chiang community in the future.<sup>lxvi</sup></li> </ul> |



**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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|      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between October 2018 – November 2019, 3 of 4 volumes of the 2nd Thai Archaeology Monograph Series - the Ban Chiang Monograph by University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, reporting on the metal remains from excavations and decades of laboratory examinations from ‘The Ban Chiang project’ had been published. The 4th volume of this monograph will be available to the public in September 2020. This 2nd monograph was launched after the 1st Ban Chiang monograph on the human skeleton remains from Ban Chiang (with 2 volumes) for almost 20 years (2001-2002). These monographs are widely recognized as two of the most comprehensive archaeological research results from many years of Ban Chiang’s exploration.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On January 17, 2019, the Department of Fine Arts had formally received 46 prehistoric items (including Ban Chiang’s artifacts) from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs which it was given 19 of them (dating back as far as 4,300 years) from an anonymous American man who his father collected the items (when he was U.S. diplomat in Jakarta, Indonesia) and 27 of them dating back as far as 2,500 years) from the descendants of a Thai collector living in the U.S.<sup>lxvii</sup></li> <li>For 4 years period from 2014-2018, the Thai government had received eight times of returning ancient objects from other countries (seven times from the US. and once from the Australia) which were total of 751 items.<sup>lxviii</sup></li> <li>A Thai private collector, Mr.Thammarit Jira had donated 104 historical artifacts (including Ban Chiang items) dating back as far as 4,300 years to the Thai government for safekeeping as national treasures on February 22th, 2019. Mr Thammarit said his father and him had begun collecting archaeological treasures because he did not want foreign collectors to have them.<sup>lxix</sup></li> </ul> |

**Table 1** The Significant moments of Ban Chiang Heritage (cont.)

| Year | Events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The COVID-19 pandemic had negative impacts on the tourism industry worldwide, including the cultural heritage tourism at Ban Chiang.<sup>lxx</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ban Chiang World Heritage Celebration Festival in 2021 had been indefinitely postponed for the first time in several years due to the COVID-19 situation.<sup>lxxi</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ban Chiang World Heritage Celebration Festival was reorganized in 2022, but on a smaller scale than before the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During September 27-28, 2024, a new generation of locals has returned to Ban Chiang under the name ‘Jûm bâan-chiiang’ (Ban Chiang Come Together). They have collaborated with local authorities and partners to launch the 1st Ban Chiang Art and Craft Festival along Na Kham Great Pond. The festival provides opportunities for young people who want to return and develop their hometown. They can set up booths to showcase products that demonstrate the skills of Ban Chiang's new generation, along with other young returnees from various places. The festival features diverse activities including art exhibitions, crafts, handmade products, and musical performances. This reflects their vision of renovating their hometown with fresh perspectives and creative innovations, driven by the initiative of the young generation who have returned home.<sup>lxxii</sup></li> </ul> |

## Endnotes/references

<sup>i</sup> Bhamorabutr, A. 1988. Ban Chiang: The unexpected prehistoric civilization in Thailand, Bangkok: Somsak Rangsiyopas. p.7.

<sup>ii</sup> Ban Chiang National Museum. 2009. Guide to Ban Chiang National Museum. Bangkok: Amarin Printing&Publishing. p.41-42

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>vi</sup> Sangvichien, S. 1979. Kôr sǎng-gàyt baang bprà-gaan gíeow gáp gaan kút kón tēe bāan-chiang. (Further remarks on the excavations at Ban Chiang). *Muang Boran Journal*, 6 (1), p. 76
- <sup>vii</sup> Charnes, L. (2017, March 30). Operation Antiquity: From Thailand with Love. *Criminal Element*. Retrieved from <http://www.criminalelement.com/operation-antiquity-from-thailand-with-love/>
- <sup>viii</sup> Yooder, C. 1972. Wát-tá-ná-tam bāan-chiang nai sà-mǎi gòn bprà-wát sàat (Ban Chiang's culture in Pre-historic time). Bangkok: Department of Fine Arts. p.2.
- <sup>ix</sup> Bhamorabutr, A. 1988. Ban Chiang: The unexpected prehistoric civilization in Thailand, Bangkok: Somsak Rangsiyopas. p.23.
- <sup>x</sup> Afterwards, with the 1974-1975 excavation's results and more sufficient material evidences became available for Radiocarbon method, the dating result was changed to more recent dates which generally accepted and simply categorized into 3 periods as 1) Early Period (ca. 3600-1000 B.C. or 5,600-3,000 years) 2) Middle Period (ca. 1000-300 B.C. or 3,000-2,300 years) 3) Late Period (ca. 300 - A.D.200 or 2,300-1,800 years). (Ban Chiang National Museum. 2009. Guide to Ban Chiang National Museum. Bangkok: Amarin Printing & Publishing. p.111-123). However, the debates on Ban Chiang research are continuing, particularly, on the dates of occupation and their implications about the beginning and cause of the Bronze Age in Southeast Asia. (Hirst, K. Kris. (2019, July 3). Ban Chiang - Bronze Age Village and Cemetery in Thailand. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/ban-chiang-bronze-age-village-thailand-167075/>.)
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- <sup>xii</sup> White, J. C. (2008). Dating early bronze at Ban Chiang, Thailand. From Homo erectus to the living traditions, p.91-110. Retrieved from [http://seasiabib.museum.upenn.edu:8001/pdf\\_articles/bookchapters/2008\\_White.pdf](http://seasiabib.museum.upenn.edu:8001/pdf_articles/bookchapters/2008_White.pdf)
- <sup>xiii</sup> Chumpon, P., M.R. 1969. Rēuang tēe kǎa-pá-jǎo sǎn jai (My life and my interests). Bangkok: Krung Siam Publishing. Pp.99-103, 204-205.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Bhamorabutr, A. 1988. Ban Chiang: The unexpected prehistoric civilization in Thailand. Bangkok: Somsak Rangsiyopas. p.24.
- <sup>xv</sup> Charoenwongsa, P. 1973. Bāan-chiang (Ban Chiang). Bangkok: Phinkanes. p.10.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.
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## VITA

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NAME                     | Sitta KONGSASANA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| INSTITUTIONS<br>ATTENDED | 2025 Doctor of Philosophy Program in<br>Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism,<br>Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand<br><br>2003 Master of Architecture (Urban Design),<br>Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand<br><br>1999 Bachelor of Architecture (Architecture),<br>Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand                                                                                                 |
| PUBLICATION              | 2026 Kongsasana, S. (2026). Reframing Living<br>Heritage Through Dialogical Engagement: A<br>Critical Case Study of Ban Chiang, Thailand. The<br>Built Environment Inquiry Journal (BEI), 25<br>(69/1) (JAN-APR 2026).<br><br>2026 Kongsasana, S. (2026). Living with the<br>Ancestors: Spiritual Materiality and Everyday<br>Heritage Practices in Ban Chiang. The Journal of<br>Language and Culture (JLC), Vol. 45, No. 1<br>(2026). |

