

**Revival of Tai-ness : An Ethnographic Description on Tai Aiton
Community of Banlung Mantai Village, Karbi Anglong Dist.,
Assam, India and Tai Yai Community of Ban Pangmoo Village,
Maehongson Province, Thailand**

**A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

By

Wanlaya Namtham

Registration No: TZ167100 of 2016



**Department of Cultural Studies
School of Humanities and Social sciences
Tezpur University
Napam, Tezpur-784028
Assam, India**

December, 2021

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter attempts to study on the idea of Tai-ness that has sprung up in Thailand and Assam, India. The researcher has given conceptual framework in the introduction chapter and chapter two discuss about fieldwork description on Tai Aitons and Tai Yais, and chapter five deals with the ethnicity of Tai Aitons and Tai Yai. The ethnicity and ethnic identity are used to investigate the revival of Tai-ness among the Tai Aitons and Tai Yais through the field research as primary data and secondary data has been collected from reviewing literatures, records and reports.

The discussion made on the literature review illustrates that the academic writings have their own authority and construct ideology whereas the ethnographic research is the way to study about the subject. (Tai Aiton and Tai Yai) In the introduction part, the researcher had proposed the statement of problem in the form of four issues, they are; first, there must be a reason why this Tai-ness has sprung up within a main hegemonic culture. Second, what does this revival speak about a margin and a main-stream culture and how the confrontation between small and big culture be measured? Third, how is this revivalism different from the origin culture? And lastly, how does the idea of ethnicity revolve around the issue of identity and nationality among the Tai Aitons and Tai Yais.

To answer all the questions in the statement of problems in the findings of the thesis, the researcher has divided chapter six into two main topics; the first, Tai-ness and Tai: the great race and second, the study of Tai ethnicity through ethnographic description on Tai Aiton community and Tai Yai community.

Why Tai-ness has sprung up within the hegemonic culture and what does this revival speak about a margin and a main-stream culture and how the confrontation between small and big culture be measured are explored the context of revival of Tai-ness in Tai Aiton community, Karbi Anglong District, Assam, India and Tai Yai community, Ban Pangmoo community, Maehongson Province, Thailand through the reviewing Tai historiography and found that by surveying all the literature about Tai race, Tai-ness and revival of Tai-ness comes along with the idea of nationalism.

In the context of Assam, India Tai Aitons re-affirmed their identity through the oral tradition which was mentioned in chapter 3 that there was one Tai Aiton hero his name is

hero 'Pu Cham Deng' who fought against Burmese soldiers during their attack in Ahom rule around 1800-1820 which means that Tai Aitons were the good helper during the Ahom rule. Moreover, reviewing of Tai Aitons historiography helps the researcher to see Tai Aiton's position in Assamese main-stream culture that the history of Tai Aitons goes smoothly with the Tai Ahom kingdom but later on, in colonial period, the British brought mainly 4 groups of people here in Assam; firstly, the Adivasi people who came for being workers in tea business, secondly, the Muslim Bengali people who came for agriculture, thirdly, the Hindu Bengali who worked in any kind of services and lastly, Marwari people who came for business works and industrial works.(Das, 1997:101-102)

After the colonial period, Tai people and tribal people in Assam had to search for their own identity through language and culture through political association for example, Ahom Association (1893), All Assam Tribal League (1933), All Assam Mohan Deodhai Bailing Association (1962) etc. And that time, Tai Aitons in Assam started to connect themselves through *Dhamma Duta* or religious Ambassador from Burma since the 1900. The connection between Tai Aitons and Burmese Theravada monks was close till in a year of 1956 Tai language school started in Banlung Mantai village. The Tai language school in Tai Aiton village went well with the revival environment that already happened among the Tai Ahoms.

In the context of Thailand, after the centralization in the King Rama V, who tried to combine all the fragmentary kingdoms into one state, the centralization made Tai Yai people compromised with the monarchy by giving the freedom for them to settle down in Maehongson province and Tai Yai leader also earned the status under the name of the king. And the story of Tai Yais at Maehonson is the story of compromising between the Tai Yai community with the central state of Thailand as mentioned in chapter two and four that Maehongson is one of the most important buffered towns. The history of Maehongson was produced by the available records of the databases and diaries maintained by the archaeologists, historians and local historians and all records are kept in the Tai Yai Studies Center, Maehongson. The narrative in the history seems to be smoothly synchronized with Thai nation history for example the story of *Chow Keaw Meungma* who encouraged Tai Yai people to settle down at Ban Pangmoo and it has become the first village of Maehongson. And the history of migration and settle down history reflects that Tai Yai people built the province beautiful, prosperity (by their agricultural skill) which is unique in Tai Yai culture.

Moreover, the researcher tried to explain about how the revival of Tainess speaks about the margin and main-stream culture by focusing into two topics; 1. Tai Race and the romanticization of the great race 2. The possibility of linguistic linkage.

Tai Aitons live in Assam, India and Tai Yais live in Maehongson, Thailand. Both Tai groups live among the main-stream culture as Tai Aitons live among the Assamese people, Tai Turung, Karbi people and Tai Yais live among the Thais, Karen, Lua etc. Both of the Tais are claimed that they are from the same race with Tai Ahoms who were the ruling group in Assam or Tai Aitons and Tai Yais are also shared the same origin as Thai. Thus, the Tai race and the romanticization of the great race can be started with the famous work of Reverend William C. Dodd, an American missionary who paid his attention to the Tai race. Moreover, there are many relevant studies by Thai scholars that has been influenced by this concept during nineteenth century for example, Luangvijitvatakan (1970), Phraya Anumarnrajton (1971) etc.

And The possibility of linguistic linkage (Tai-Kadai speaking) which makes both of Tai Aitons and Tai Yais link themselves with the majority Tai groups of Assam who are Tai Ahoms, and Tai Yais can also link their root of the language with Thai respectively. According to Max Muller, the original seat of the Tai or Siamese branch of the Indo-Chinese people, called Shan by the Burmese, was in Central Asia and it was from that area that these people were the first to migrate towards the south and settle along the rivers; the *Mekong*, the *Menam*, the *Irrawaddy* and the *Brahmaputra* (Phayre, 1883 cited in Gogoi, 1968:3). When the small group of Tai people migrated southward from the Yangtze River region, they formed cities (*chiang*) and *muangs* under the rules of some sovereign or *chao-muangs* (Schliesinger, 2000:29). There are many Thai scholars who study this concept. Among them, Sarnat (1954), Banjop Panthumetta (1955), Chit Phumisak (1981), Ranu Wichasil (1996), Chattip Naksupa (2009) etc. are noteworthy.

The researcher uses Tai historiography to analyze that how and when the revival of Tai-ness has sprung up;

Tai historiography in the context of Assam during the 19th century and the 20th century, Tais in Assam especially the Ahoms, have become the leaders in terms of revivalist movement since the colonial period until the present days. With the inequality in the caste system and the demand for the right to have some legitimacy in the politics, these leaderships matter a lot. Hence, Tai historiography in Assam uses the ethno-history, Assamese nationalism for representation and re-affirmation of their identity.

Tai Historiography in the context of Thailand during the 19th and the 20th century, unlike the Tai historiography in Assam, Tai historiography in Thailand points out to the compromise with the nation-state and the nation's history. So, the romanticizing of race and the perception of the past are the main tools for writing Tai history in Thailand. And the revival of Tainess in Thailand works together with the compromising with Thais as many history books are written in Thai language and the history of Tai Yais have been told as they are the one who protected the land from Burmese, and they maintained territories. The history of Tai Yais explains a lot of knowledge about Tai Yai culture and tradition that helps in the growth of cultural tourism.

Looking on modernization and state-formation in both countries it can be seen that India started her own modernization process since colonial period, but she started to run this process strongly after the year of independence in 1947. On the other hand, Thailand was never be colonized. Modernization started in the 18th century and state-formation got its pick in the 20th century. (Luangaramsri 2003, Pongpaichit and Baker 2014) Hence the question is, how are metropolitan modes of representation received and appropriated on the periphery? Historically, Tai-ness revivalist movement of Tai Aitons and Tai Yais can be traced back to the history of ethnic heterogeneity in both countries.

In order to understand the revival of Tai-ness, paying attention to the relationship between ethnic groups and the state is important. Laungaramsri (2003) examines ethnicity in Thailand in the context of modernization and nation-building during 1930-1970. Natsupha and Wichasil (1998), Pitipat and Inchan (2003) and Kimura (2004) studied about the revivalist movement and ethnic movement in Assam during 1970-1990. All the research writings pointed out that state-formation was not only constructing the nation but also created the construction of ethnic difference.

To answer another two questions; how is this revivalism different from the origin culture? And how the idea of ethnicity does revolve around the issue of identity and nationality among the Tai Aitons and Tai Yais are given through the field research in the form of ethnographic descriptions. The study of Tai ethnicity and the idea of Tai-ness through ethnographic description on Tai Aiton community and Tai Yai community are discussed in chapter three chapter four and chapter five is about ethnicity.

According to Sirapon Na Talahng and Sukanya Pattrachai (1998), Tais share the same language, rice-culture and the idea of settlement. Moreover, Girin Phukon (2019) notices that Tais don't share the same root but have similar culture such as the belief system in *Khwan* and *Dam*, using Tai language for speaking, Wet-rice culture, *Na* culture and

Muong Baan organization, textile, food habits, *Pi-nong* bonding (brotherhood/sisterhood), manuscript culture. Going to the field and studying both Tai groups through anthropological method by participant observation and interview could help the researcher to gain more knowledge about the practice of everyday life and the details of their cultural practices.

Ethnographic descriptions are described in three and four chapter with the location of the village, belief system, Tai language, family and clan system, dress and food and Tai festival or Poi.

For the location of the village, Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai community, Karbi Anglong, Assam, India is established in the late of nineteenth century and there is no exact record of the first settlement of the village. As the oral history said, Banlung was very big village during the year of 1920-1940. At that time, Tai Aitons from Banlung had to migrate from Banlung to Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh, Ban Hin Ahomoni, and Ban Sai in Barlipartha. Nowadays, Tai Aitons from Banlung still have many relatives in those places. Banlung is called by its own location. Ban in Tai means village. This word refers to the organization of the village where it has been constructed into autonomous community. Chao Leam Ban means the head of the village. Banlung is surrounded by the Dhansiri river in the Northern, Eastern, and the Southern part. They call the river Dhansiri or *Nam Lung* which means 'big river'. The Western side of the village has rice field. The western side has the *paheiw* or the graveyard. They believe that the West symbolizes the bad, or the evil, or the mysterious. The place is suitable for rice cultivation. And the *Nambor* reserved forest touches the Northern part of the village. Tai Aiton people still have the *Hern-tai* (Tai) or raised-house or sang-ghor (Assamese) practices because they live by the side of the river. Tai Aiton's houses keep *Jong Lik* or prayer rooms separately from the house.

Tai Yais of Ban Pangmoo community in Maehongson province, Thailand is located in the plain area but surrounded by mountain and rivers. The word Ban is also used among them. *Gae Ban* means the head of the village. The village was set in a square shape. They divided the land into 3 kinds of the usages or purposes: rice cultivation area, orchard or farming area and residential purpose

There are two rivers in northern region, Thailand; the Pai and the Sa-gna. Ban Pangmoo is located nearby the river and amidst small mountain ranges surrounding. One of the villagers said that this is a good location for their ancestors. The Tai Yais are attached to the rice cultivation. The Tai Luangs' houses at the present are built with semi-cement

and semi-wood materials. Raisedhouse is hardly to find. In the village only 10 houses are raised house.

The Belief system among the Tai Aitons, they practice Theravada Buddhism. They also believe in *Fi* or spirit. Thus, there are two kinds of beliefs in Banlung; firstly, *Fra* or Buddha and secondly, *Fi* or spirit such as *Nang Khon Khao* or *Rice goddess*, *Fi Nam* or river spirit, *Fi Dam* means ancestor spirit. The Buddha for the Tai Aitons is the greatest one. From the participant observation, it is found that the Tai Aitons would always pray to the Buddha before worshipping a different spirit. Some of them said that the spirit does not exist because the Buddha can be overpowering the evils.

For Tai Yai's belief system, Tai Yais have the faith in goodness. Regarding Buddhist philosophy, if one is doing a good thing, one can get a good thing in return. And the Buddha is the highest belief for the Tai Yais. But in everyday life, the Tai Yais have so many beliefs in *Phi* (spirit) or the supernatural. Many key informants explained about the belief in *Phi* that there are two kinds of *Phi*; First, *Phi Arak* or good spirits who have the power in protecting the Tais and the village from a bad spirit itself such as, *Phi Chow Meuang* or the ancestor spirit. *Phi Hoong* is spirit of paddy field, *Phi Nam* is spirit of the water, *Phi Dam* means ancestor spirit, *Phi Sumong* means spirit of the village. And secondly, other spirits are living everywhere such as *Phi Nam* (Water spirit), *Phi Din* (Earth spirit), *Phi Pa* (Jungle spirit), *Phi Doi* (Mountain spirit), *Phi Toong* (Rice field spirit), *Phi Yuggaso* (Tree spirit) etc

Even though the people are Buddhists they follow the lunar calendar. That makes them share same kinds of beliefs in auspicious time and the same festival and ritual. The word *Phi* is similar in meaning relating to the supernatural power. Interestingly, the rice culture is found as a similar practice between both the groups. *Nang Khon Khao* for the Aitons and *Phi Toong* for the Tai Yais are functional as the practices of the protection of the paddy field. And both groups would worship *Nang Khon Khao* or *Phi Toong* before inaugurating rice plantation.

In Tai Aiton community, Tai language is preserved as their own language through proper practice. Every house has *Jong Fra* and in the temple Tai aitons have *Jong Lik* to keep all the Tai books which are related to Buddhism. (If it is related to the history, Tai Aitons use the word '*Lik Keau Mung*' to call the history) Monks play an important role to preserve all the material relating to the Tai language. Along with monks, *Chao Jereh* is the knowledgeable person who knows about *Tom Lik* or prayer and all the process of rituals and festivals. Interestingly, as mentioned that during the span of 1890-1960, many

Dhamma Duta or religious ambassador from Tai groups of Assam visited Burma for learning Tai language and Buddhist philosophy. And the Tai School of Banlung Mantai temple had been found by the Burmese monk in 1950-1990, Nowadays, this kind of mission is rarely found but some people at the village still remember the mission, but the Tai school is closed because the Burmese monk has return to Myanmar, Tai teachers are not found.

On the other hand, the Tai Yais have preserved their language in the form of *Pubsa* or manuscripts. Most of the *Pubsa* would be written about Buddhist myth, some important events, *Poi* or festival etc. It is in the form of history and Tai Yais use the word '*Peun*' refers to Tai scripts. Tai Yai language has been propagated by the Tai Yai Studies Institute in 2007. Many *Pubsa* and Tai Yai culture have been thus preserved as a living culture and some tangible culture was kept it in the institute.

Tai language school In Banlung Mantai, there is one Tai language school. It was established in 1956 but now it is closed because the monks who can teach Tai language, left the village. And in Tai Yais, Tai language usually is taught in the family because some of them still have the relatives in Shan state and they still use the language with the encouragement from Tai Yai Studies Institute. Nowadays, Tai Yai Studies Institute opens Tai Language course for everyone who is interested in. As both of the groups are in the South-Western Tai Speaking category, the researcher collected some kinship terms that both of the Tai groups share similarity for example; Por means Father in Tai Aitons and Tai Yais, Mae refers to mother in both of the Tai groups, Pichay/Nongchay means brother in both of the Tai groups and Pisao/Nongsao means sister in both of the Tais.

Family and Clan System, in Tai Aiton community still have the clan system. The Tai Aiton boys or girls have to know their own status since they were young to know their hierarchy and their own duty in the future. The researcher surveyed 39 households in the village.

There are 5 clans, 1. Phalung 2. Thoumung 3. Bannu 4. Chaohai 5. Jiring Clan exogamy is strictly followed. Marriage with the boy/girl in the same clan is not allowed. Nowadays, Tai Aiton young generations said that they prefer to get married with the Tai Aitons because Tai Aiton population is decreasing day by day. Some incest taboo has been practiced strictly such as no marriage between the sister and brother. Cross cousin marriage was preferred in the Tai Aiton community. Nowadays, this tradition is not acceptable, and no one follows this tradition anymore. Tai Aiton family system is of an extended kind.

They live in patriarchal society. Thus, inheritance of property belongs to the sons. And after the girl is married, she has to shift to her husband's house.

For Tai Yais family system in Pangmoo community is the nuclear family. Some family has 8- 10 generations. Tai Yais follow monogamy. But extra-marriage can be found nowadays. For Tai Yais, marriage is attached to the both family (groom's family and bride's family). After marriage, woman would shift from her house and stay with her husband's family. Later on, they may decide to separate or build a new house. After getting marriage and staying separately they would come back and perform the ritual with the family. In Tai Yai society, Tai Yai boys or girls have to learn the kinship terms. Learning how to call their relative is an indirectly way to learn the hierarchy in the family. Clan system is not found in Tai Yais's society because the Thai government forced everyone in Thailand to give up their own surname in 1913. So, the clan system was disappeared.

Dress and food in Tai Aiton community, Tai Aiton women wear '*sinh*' or wrap skirt and simple '*sue*' or blouse. There is a specific pattern of *sinh* named '*Lai Bok Ja*' (flower motif). '*Fa Bhai*' is a long scarf to wrap the upper part of the body. If any women got married, she has to wear the green Lang Wat which is wrapped upon *sinh* or wrap skirt. Tai aitons men wear '*Toong*' and simple shirt. Men wear '*Fa Pok Hu*'. And *Thoong* or bag are generally used. Tai Aiton staple food is steamed rice. And also seasonal vegetable is taken.

The traditional dresses of Tai Yai women folk are '*sinh*' or Wrap skirt, '*Sue Tais*' or blouse and hair pins which are made of silver and gold. Some of them would put the flower instead of hair pin. Tai Yai women love to wrap their hairs and clip with the beautiful hair pin. Colour used in *sinh* or wrap skirt is colorful and it should be matching with the color of blouse. For Tai Yai men generally wear '*Konh Tai*' (lower garment) of various colors, also Tai Yai men wear '*Sue Tak Poog*' (Tai Yai men's shirts) and '*Toong*' (bag). It is interesting to note that knife is also the main element of Tai Yai traditional dress for men. Knife signifies that the Tai Yai men are warriors. Both men and women wear '*Pha-pok-hua*' (head turban).

The researcher observed that in Banlung Mantai village, Assam, India and Ban Pangmoo village, Maehongson, Thailand and found that in Tai Aiton village, around 1890-1900, there was a Burma Buddhist Mission or *Dhamma Duta* (religious Ambassador) that sent to India. The religious ambassador preached Theravada Buddhism among the Tais and Nagas. After that all the route from Assam to Myanmar seems to be opened to the Burmese traders and monks to come to the Tai villages in India. In Banlung Mantai

village, sometimes the Burmese textile traders might come for selling the cloths that made in Myanmar. Some of Tai Aiton people said that the material of the cloth is thinner that suits for wearing in summer and the designs and motifs are different, so they bought cloths from Burmese traders. Even in price, it is cheaper.

In Tai Yai at Ban Pangmoo village, many of Tai Yai women went to Myanmar several times to buy cloths and to visit Tai temples. Even Maehongson market, the researcher found many Tai Luang cloths especially Tai dress and wrap skirt from Myanmar which are available to buy, and they are cheaper than the handmade cloths. But the designs and motifs are different from Tai Yais traditional dress. Nowadays, the cloths from Tai people in Myanmar are popular among Tai Aitons and Tai Yais as it is cheaper and the cloths are not thick for summer wearing.

Food of Tai Yai is made up of soybean and rice which are the main crop of Tai people there. '*Tua Nao*' is the main product of Pangmoo Village. '*Nam Prik*' or chili dip is always in every meal which adds '*Tua Nao*' and other ingredients. Boiled food is also in their main course. Moreover, they cook so many salads which depend on seasonal vegetable for example; bamboo shoots, star fruit, vegetable fern etc.

Tai Aitons and Tai Yais have *Pla Som* (Pickled Fish) and they use the same word. Moreover, both Tais wrap steamed rice with specific leaves for example Tai Aitons use *Ji Tong* refers to the particular local green leaves that Tai Aitons use it for wrapping the steamed rice, Tai Yai use *Tong Teungor* the local green leaves Tai Yais use to wrap the steamed rice.

The Tai festival (*Poi*), in chapter five, the research tried to explain how Tai Aitons and Tai Yais celebrate their ethnicity through the festival or *Poi*. The researcher selected two cases study on *Poi Sanglong* of Tai Yai community, Ban Pangmoo village, Maehongson, Thailand and *Poi Sangken* of Tai Aiton community, Banlung Mantai village, Karbi Anglong, Assam, India. Both *Pois* are practiced in both of Tai groups. The researcher found that *Poi* or festival is the celebration of Tai ethnicity. And all the objectives of Tai festivals have benefit to Buddhism and Tai culture. Moreover, Tai festival or *Poi* in both of Tai groups nowadays is more like a recreation activity among the Tais and the other groups as well.

It can be said that the lives of Tai Aitons and Tai Yais are attached to Buddhism and Buddhist ways of living. This promoted a sense of togetherness. The similarity in Tai language is the main element to bring a kind of 'togetherness' among the Tais. The sense of 'revival of Tai-ness', after the participant observation and interviewing have been found

in Banlung Mantai of Assam, where Tai Aiton people live simple life, and practice their own traditions and norms in everyday life. And Tai Yai people utilized their culture with the tourism. For Tai Aitons and Tai Yai both groups still have preservation tradition in term of Tai book for example in Tai Aiton, *Jong Lik* or the place that keeps Tai books, still plays important role in the Tai society as it is the place for Tai monks to study and the elder people can read it out loud for the other members when they have religious occasion. For, Tai Yais at Ban Pangmoo, they preserve the Pubsa or manuscripts that are written about mythology in Buddhism and all the detail in Pois and the other historical records at Tai Studies Centers and at the temple. Therefore, even the invented festival happened the details of festival never been changes because Choa Jareh (or the knowledgeable person in Tai Aiton and Tai Yai) along with elder people will conduct all the instruction of the ritual and festival.

Festivals or cultural events are related to ethnic identity. The study founded that tourism arrived in both of the countries in the 1960s (the Ministry of Tourism of India was founded in 1967 and Tourism Authority of Thailand was founded in 1960). Moreover, in the official tourism authority websites have promoted Tai festivals along with another ethnic group’s festivals in the calendar of festivals to invite the tourists to visit the places in each month of the year. In the introduction part talked about the definition of sustainable tourism that refers to the tourism policy that allow national and local governments to incorporate sustainability in three dimensions such as environment, economic and socio-cultural.

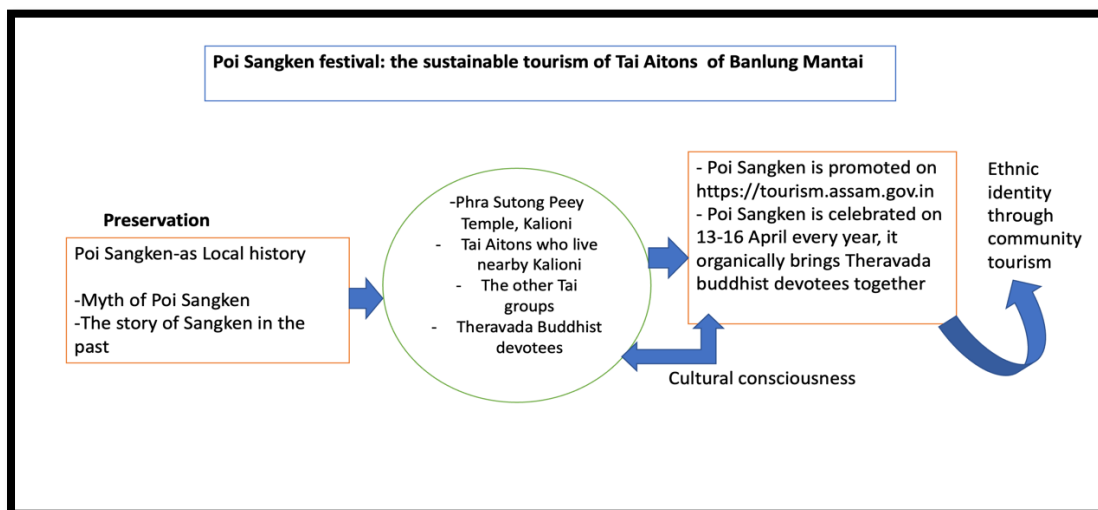


Figure 54: How sustainable tourism works in Tai Aiton Community of Assam, India: the case study of Poi Sangken festival

Focus on Poi Sangken of the Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai, Karbi Anglong Dist, Assam, India, the festival is promoted by Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC), Government of Assam as one of the religious festivals of Assam¹⁸ to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. ¹⁹ The tourism of Assam started to promote Assam tourism with the slogan 'Awesome Assam' in 2016, the Awesome Assam is explained by the ATDC that this slogan is created portraying the states uniqueness and exotic beauty.²⁰ And the sustainable tourism has launched since 2017. Thus, Poi Sangken is intangible cultural heritage of Assam and it shows the diversity of people of Assam. The word uniqueness and exotic refer to the idea of authenticity in tourism. The authenticity in the campaign 'Awesome Assam' can be analyse by the words that use for explanation itself as the hosts or the Tais are the cultural preserver who identify themselves through Poi Sangken with the myth of the poi and the story of Poi Sangken. Moreover, during the festival as the host community, the Tai Aitons and the other Tai groups would wear Tai dresses and perform a ritual such as splash the water on the buddha statues and clean the temple. So, the identity building as a uniqueness is created through the festival. With the tourist gaze concept, the tourists who are not Tais would seek for the Tai Authenticity through the cultural tourism and that would be shown in the Pois.

On the other hand, tourism is the 'backbone' of the economy of Thailand. Thai tourism took off drastically in the late 1960s after the end of the Vietnam War. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) established in 1960 used the slogan "Amazing Thailand" to promote the rich cultural heritage of Thailand to tourists from around the world. After 26 years since the inception of TAT, in 2015 the slogan was changed to "Discover Thainess", to focus on the ethnicity of the region. The term "Thainess" has become the cultural commodity of the tourism industry. Thainess is a broad or an umbrella term that includes various ethnic groups with unique socio-cultural identities who are citizens of the nation of Thailand. The uniqueness of the ethnic groups of Thailand is the "cultural experience" the tourism industry strives to promote to tourists.

¹⁸ <https://tourism.assam.gov.in/portlets/calendar-of-festivals>

¹⁹ https://tourism.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/5/menu/right_menu/right_menu/sustainablegoals.pdf

²⁰ <https://tourism.assam.gov.in/portlets/promotion-branding-1>

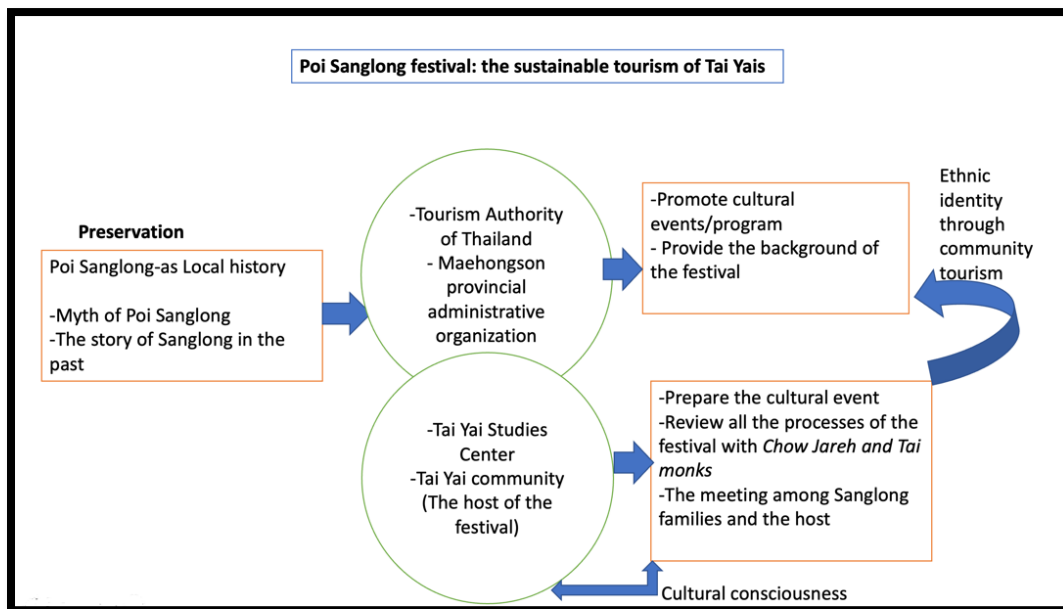


Figure 55: How sustainable tourism works in Tai Yai Community of Maehongsong, Thailand: the case study of Poi Sanglong festival

From the picture, Poi Sanglong is one of the famous festival among the Tais. Tai Yais of Maehongsong practice Poi Sanglong in every year. The colorful and joyful festival becomes one of the must visit festival in Thailand since 1990 when Tourism Authority of Thailand promoted ‘Amazing Thailand’. Tai Yais preserve the myth of the festival and the story life of Sanglong in the past through oral history. With the help of national organization like TAT and the provincial administrative organization, Tai Yai Studies Center and Tai Yais can arrange the festival with the support fund (is provided by TAT) by promoting cultural tourism. Moreover, Tai Yai Studeis Center arranges the festival based on the research ‘Maehongsong : Living Heritage City’²¹ that provides the tourists with cultural information and the historical background of the Tai Yais. And with the historical research reflects the authenticity of Poi Sanglong festival.

Although the festival is arranged every year but Tai Yais still can preserve the history and the process of the ritual because of Choa Jareh or Tai Yai knowledgeable person and Tai Yai monks who always give the information and suggestion in the meeting.

²¹ Boonchaleay, Y., Kamnuanta, J. and Teudchoosaunpria, W. (2008), *The Report on Short Term Piot Project on Database Development for Living Heritage City*.Maehongsong Province, Thai Research Foundation, Bangkok.

Tai Yai Studies Center is the heart of the communication between the local organization and the national organization. Moreover, Tai Yai Studies Center is also the knowledge manager who collects the data and records all the events. During the festival, Tai Yais present their culture through all the element of the festival such as Tai music, Tai dance, Tai dress , Tai food etc. Thus, Poi Sanglong unifies group identity through social organization and the relationship among the Tais.

Ban Pangmoo Village is well-known as the first village of Maehongson province, Tai Yais in Ban Pangmoo village especially the elders of the village are the key source of informantions of Tai Yais in Maehongson. With the help of Tai Yai Studies Center, Tai Yais of Ban Pangmoo and the other Tai Yai villages in Maehongson unite to form the economic groups or cultural groups (in chapter 3). Moreover, Tai Yai Studies Center has made an impact on Tai Yais of Ban Pangmoo by encouraging participation in cultural activities for example offering Tai Yais classical-dance classes, Tai Yai language course, organising cultural festivals each month. Tai Yai Studies Center is the co-ordinator and the Institute of Community Colleges communicates with every Tai Yais in the province, and continuously work on issues relating economic and social development, production of local knowledge, and provide adequate support to cultural activities.

For reasons mentioned in the previous section cultural programs are promoted as the richness of culture and history in Maehongson province. This can bring an immediate necessity to make or create a history, which Tai Yai Studies Center in Maehongson is the main host to decide on the contents of tourism. A history of Tai Yais can be propagated for interested tourists. This effort likely will accelerate the process of a kind of history making along with a distinct identity formation of the Tai Yais, but an unfavourable and unwanted consequence of this effort may lead to construct of a possibility of linearity damaging other dimensions of histories which is yet to be researched.

In Tai Aiton community of Assam, the celebration of Poi Sangken held in April of every year presents an opportunity for the Tai Aitons to not only showcase their cultural heritage but also highlight the uniqueness of their communal identity. Tai Aitons invite all Mantai communities to attend, promote and celebrate their unique identity; where as in Tai Yais, Maehongson is developing through tourism resulting in an increase in attendance of the festivals. The tourists include Thais as well as people from other nationalities. But the study have not founded that the local organization works with the regional or national organization in term of promoting the cultural tourism and Tai Aitons still have no institute of community college to work on the preservation of culture and tradition.

Works Cited

- Dodd, W., C. (1923). *The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese*. The torch Press, Cedar Rapids.
- Luangvijitvatakarn (1970). *GnanKonKwahReaug Chon Chat Thai* (The study about Thai race). Kong Tub Bok, Bangkok.
- Na Talahng, S. and Patrachai, S. (1998). *Katichon KonThai-Tai*, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
- Phukon, G (2019). *Tais of Northeast India and Southeast Asia: A Study of Ethno-Cultural Linkage*. DVS Publishers, India.
- Pongpaichit, P. and Baker, C. (2014) *A History of Thailand*. Cambridge University Press, Bangkok. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139194877>

Website

<https://tourism.assam.gov.in>