

Sustainable Preservation of Lanna Palm Leaf Manuscripts Based on Community Participation

Piyapat Jarusawat
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Abstract

Palm leaf manuscripts (PLMs), with their strong bond to Buddhism, are one invaluable symbol of the Lanna culture of Northern Thailand. This study investigates the views about PLM management among local people in the Pa Tum Don community, Chiang Mai province, Thailand, and explores the potential for them to sustain the preservation of PLMs. A thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with community members found that they engage in activities related to PLMs because of their continued faith in the goodness in them. Although it is mostly older people that have been very active participants in preserving PLMs, they lack systematic preservation knowledge. Aside from digitization, establishing rituals using and reproducing PLMs, transferring linguistic knowledge and reinserting Lanna language into fundamental education are suggested as possible means to enable sustainable preservation.

Keywords: Palm leaf manuscripts, community participation, sustainable preservation, Lanna culture, Thailand

Introduction

Palm Leaf Manuscripts (PLMs) are ancient written documents inscribed with a sharp blade or knife pen on a palm leaf sheet. Palm leaves are very flexible and can survive for as more than a thousand years (Thairat, 2013). One of the oldest PLMs found in the mountain cave at Bamyan, Afghanistan, was around 2,000 years old (Unchein, 2009). Palm leaves are one of the earliest forms of writing material and used across the coastal area of Southeast Asia in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and India (Agrawal, 2006). PLMs were first brought to Thailand with the spread of Buddhism from Sri Lanka. They were used to inscribe the teachings of the Lord Buddha (Khongdeom, 2013, p. 2; Preechapermpasit, 2012, pp. 243–244) and also to make notes about a wide range of topics such as medicine, astrology, and local rules and regulations.

One culture that used PLMs extensively was the Lanna Kingdom, in northern Thailand, founded by King Mungrai more than 700 years ago. Lanna's history is rich in beautiful traditions, culture, and language (Ongsakul, 2005; Penth & Forbes, 2004). Most of the PLMs recording this culture were inscribed in the Lanna Tham script. Among the PLMs inscribed in Lanna Tham script, the oldest one was found in Lampang and was inscribed in 1471 (Phranakorn Punyachiro, 2014).

However, when it became a part of Siam (Thailand) in 1932, Lanna people, were required to learn to use a central Thai dialect as it is the official national language of the country. As a result, the literacy in Lanna writing used in PLMs has declined and it is now known only to the older generation, the monks, and experts in Lanna culture. Only they are sufficiently literate in Lanna to be able to read PLMs. The widespread decrease in Lanna literacy has led to a devaluation of PLMs. As the Lanna communities have not taken an active part in the preservation of their heritage, external agencies have become essential to PLMs' management and preservation (Jarusawat, Cox, & Bates, 2018), and are now instrumental in helping local communities manage them.

To date, more than a million PLMs have been found in the region. Most of them are kept in monastery libraries and temple museums (Jarusawat et al., 2018; Weerabahu, 2019). Some others are kept in university libraries or special libraries. The latter locations could be seen as reflecting assumptions based on western theories of the role of the library. Such theories assume that the best way to manage content is a top-down authority and often material is taken out of the communities that created them in the name of national identity (Jory, 2000). In such contexts community members are not involved in PLM preservation. Most of the information services holding PLMs focus on scientific preservation methods especially digitization and aim to create digital libraries of material, e.g. Kerala University, India; the University of Kelaniya and the University of Peradeniya Library in Sri Lanka (Alanhakoon, 2009; Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2013; Sahoo & Mohanty, 2015; Mohamed Sageer, 2017; Weerabahu, 2019). These information institutions consider digitization as the best practice for preserving the contents of the manuscripts (Udaya, Sreekumar, & Athvankar, 2009; Weerabahu, 2019) and enabling worldwide access (Sahoo & Mohanty, 2015). The north and northeast Thai monasteries similarly consider that digitization is the natural direction for the preservation of the PLMs (Butdisuwan & Babu, 2014; Jarusawat, 2017). But while most of the information institutions emphasize digitization for preservation, this process fails to involve the voice of the community.

In seeking to think how communities can continue to be actively connected to their cultural heritage different ways of thinking are needed. In the realm of indigenous knowledge, there are some information institutions that have developed models of community-based information services as a way to preserve their collections, creating a sense of belonging and making the community members proud of themselves (Becvar & Srinivasan, 2009; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007; Flinn, 2007, 2010; Kreps, 2008, Sung & Hepworth, 2013). Seeking to explore how these ideas, rather than digitization strategies, might be applied to the preservation of Lanna PLMs, in 2019, the author accompanied a group of researchers specializing in the Lanna Tham alphabets and Lanna culture to Pa Tum Don village, Phrao District, Chiang Mai where this study is set. The Pa Tum Don temple, founded in 1837 (Lanna Studies, 2019), was built in a Shan style mixed with Lanna architectural features. The style of the Viharn (assembly hall) where the PLMs are kept is well-known and differs from those of Thai Yuan or Lanna or Thai Yai.



Figure 1: PaTumDon Temple with the Tai style rooftop

The PLMs kept in the monastery are not only valuable for their religious meaning, but are also very important in economic, social, cultural, and academic terms. It was apparent that the locals were very engaged as they cooperated with the visiting experts and provided lots of valuable contextual information about the PLMs.

Literature Review

Buddhism and Lanna Beliefs

The Lanna Tham texts in the monastery represent both the civilization of the Lanna Kingdom and Buddhism and they were initially used and inscribed in palm leaf manuscripts (PLMs) located in Pa Tum Don village. Although there are a limited number of people literate in the Lanna Tham alphabets today, PLMs have long been a source of learning for local Lanna people, providing information on religion, beliefs, and rituals. According to Ganjanapan and Ramitanont (1998, p. 10), the religious beliefs of Lanna people relate to the powers of morality. This abstract belief is based on the concept of karma, in which the power of good deeds conducted through rituals will bring good things to people's lives. It is believed in Buddhism that Nirvana can be reached through good deeds performed via religious rituals. The power of goodness not only affects the earthly life of the practitioners but also brings them to heaven in

the afterlife. One Buddhist ceremony related to PLMs that Lanna people commonly performed in the past is called Tan Tham¹. This ancient ritual, which at present occurs rarely, offers a new PLM owned by the local people to a temple through a ceremony in which it is given to a monk. This sacred ceremony is believed to bring great merit to the givers and to those who inscribed the PLMs. In the past, the cloths used to cover the PLMs were woven in traditional patterns, and this also earned merit for the weaver. Therefore, this ceremony not only preserved the Lanna Tham language but also maintained traditional local skills, especially weaving.



Figure 2: Palm Leaf Manuscripts inscribed with Lanna Tham scripts in Pa Tum Don Temple

The study found that most Thai Yai documents are written on mulberry paper². However, some documents were also inscribed on PLMs using a Lanna Tham script, which tends to be older material. While most of the scripts are written on *pub sa*, mulberry paper, more than two thousand PLMs in the Pa Tum Don community are inscribed on palm leaves using Lanna Tham script and a Thai Yai script. Moreover, using Lanna Tham script instead of the Bali-Sanskrit script generally used in Buddhism should be seen as significant, in both cultural and linguistic terms.

Community Participation

Community participation plays a vital role in natural and cultural management within society. Ganjanapan (2000, p. 11) pointed out that raising the consciousness of people within a community is an excellent means to the efficient management of natural resources and local culture. For those living in the same society, ritual is another means of developing community engagement through actions and thoughts (Rothenbuhler, 1998).

¹ Valuable Lanna tradition that aims to encourage gratefulness by inviting people to make donation of PLMs to the temple

² Mulberry paper, known in Thai as “Saa” paper, is Thailand’s traditional handmade paper from the bark of the mulberry tree. This type of paper is entirely handmade using mulberry bark from the northern region of Thailand.

Moe (2009, pp. 2-4) from the National Trust for Historic Preservation has suggested five factors leading to sustainable preservation, including:

1. promoting a culture of reuse;
2. reinvesting at a community scale;
3. valuing the lessons of heritage buildings and communities;
4. exploiting the economic advantages of reuse, reinvestment and retrofit; and,
5. re-imagining historic preservation policies and practices as they relate to sustainability.

As such, there needs to be outside investment in the communities in order for them to learn about PLMs and to understand how PLMs can be preserved through reuse of cultural materials, thereby leading to a sustainable preservation scheme.

According to the International Association for Public Participation - IAP2 (2007), community participation is defined as the relationship between local people in a community and external public agencies that enable them to share the same goals, responsibilities, and techniques. There are five levels of action within community participation: 1) inform; 2) consult; 3) involve; 4) collaborate; and 5) empower.

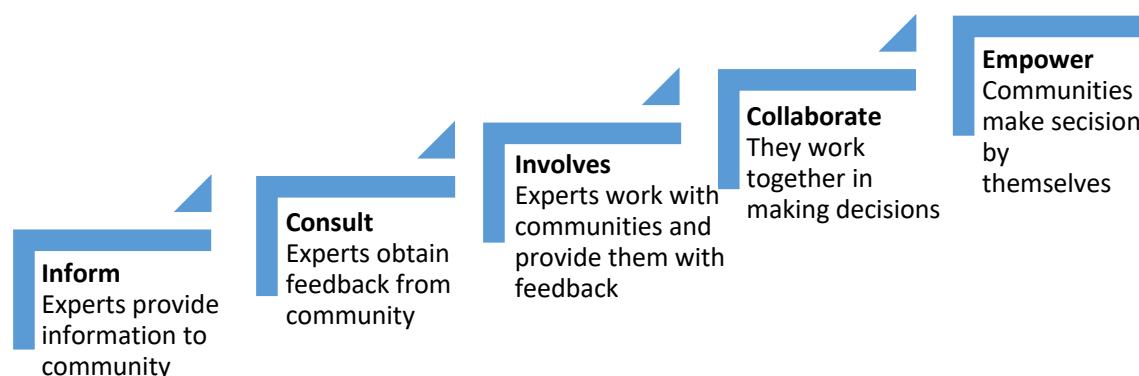


Figure 3: IAP2 Spectrum of public participation (IAP2, 2007)

Methodology

The data for this study was collected in February 2019 in the Pa Tum Don community, Phrao District, Chiang Mai province. This area was chosen for several reasons. First, PLMs are kept and preserved there. Second, Pa Tum Don's PLMs are unique because they have been inscribed on palm leaves by the Pa Tum Don community using Lanna Tham script. Lastly, community members have been active regarding PLM preservation.

This qualitative research explored the social phenomenon of PLMs in the Pa Tum Don community. Therefore, the experiences, views, and feelings that the participants hold towards their PLMs were the main focus of the study. Reflecting this interest, semi-structured interviews were conducted to: 1) study the views of community members towards PLMs management; and 2) explore the potential community-based participation in continuing PLMs preservation efforts. Eight key informants were interviewed and their personal information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal information of the key informants

No.	Age	Gender	Occupation
Respondent 1	59	Female	Agriculturist (Retired)
Respondent 2	54	Male	Agriculturist
Respondent 3	68	Male	General worker (Retired)
Respondent 4	46	Female	General worker
Respondent 5	65	Male	Government officer (Retired)
Respondent 6	60	Male	Unemployed
Respondent 7	17	Male	Vice Abbot
Respondent 8	40	Female	University professor

Also, observations were conducted of social settings which included non-focal research participants. These participants were recruited using both purposive and snowball sampling of residents who have lived in the Pa Tum Don community. The sample selection is not limited to age, occupation, educational background or economic status. All respondents selected had direct involvement with the PLMs such as: providing space to keep the PLMs, cleaning the PLMs, giving information related to PLMs based on their knowledge, and understanding and facilitating the visitors who sought access to the PLMs³.

The key informants were interviewed for a duration of 30 and 60 minutes using open-ended questions. The questions were divided into four (4) main parts, including:

1. Personal data such as age, occupational background, family background, views toward PLMs both at the individual level and community level and ways to protect PLMs.
2. Community views of the management of PLMs such as authorship, ownership, classification and cataloguing, storage, presentation and dissemination
3. Views towards community participation in the Pa Tum Don community; and,
4. Roles and potential roles of people in the Pa Tum Don community that work to preserve PLMs such as: the process of community management, type of participation and ways to engage community members.

The interview questions used were based on the understandings gained from the literature review. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed after the data collection. The NVivo 11 program was used as an analyzing tool.

First of all, to protect the confidentiality of the respondents, informed consent was obtained and participants were anonymized by using coded identifiers in place of their names. These identifiers reflected: role, sex, and community, according to the professional codes of ethics. Next, the primary analysis was formulated using the six steps of a thematic analysis: familiarization with the data: generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clark, 2006). This analysis was conducted in light of theories related to PLMs management, discussed in the literature review. The data was coded and interpreted to find the connections and arrive at a conclusion.

³ Readers should contact the corresponding author if details are desired.

Findings

Views from People in the Community about the Value of PLMs

As Buddhism is deeply rooted in the beliefs and perceptions of Thai people, PLMs are primarily sacred items containing the teachings of Lord Buddha. Moreover, many PLMs contain not only a sense of holiness but also local wisdom such as medicinal recipes or aspects of magical beliefs and items such as amulets and spells. In this study, it was found that PLMs were sometimes used as birth certificates specifying information such as nationality, date of birth, place of birth, and parents' names. The key informants also believed that the PLMs are holy artifacts, particularly when they were delivered to the temples. Because of their religious significance, a religious ceremony asking for permission is needed before making physical contact with the PLMs. This satisfies the spiritual concerns held by villagers. Only monks or men are permitted physical contact with the PLMs. One subject said that, "women were not allowed to touch or read them." This statement revealed the high level of respect towards the PLMs.

Moreover, in terms of ownership, local people believe that PLMs belong to everyone in the community. However, the PLMs should be kept in the temple due to their sacredness. Because of their location, the PLMs are the responsibility of the temple, although funds for the preservation of the PLMs are donated by people in the community. On the other hand, it is also found that a few research subjects believed that the rights to PLMs belong to the people that own the scripts since they are a legacy from their ancestors (men to men only).

In terms of usage, people accessed the PLMs because of a Buddhist chant. This is the reason why the PLMs continue to be used into the present day. In addition, it was found that the contents of the PLMs are sometimes transferred to other forms. Even the decayed PLMs do not lose their holy power. When they are no longer useful, they are ground up and transformed into holy artifacts such as talismans. In terms of preservation, the subjects suggested that the PLMs, especially those related to medicine recipe and religious stories, should be translated from Lanna Tham scripts to Thai and English so that they could be disseminated to people in many different forms such as word of mouth, online channels, networking, music and plays, art and photos, animation and academic books.

Management of the PLMs

In 1987, PLMs in the Pa Tum Don community were cataloged and classified by experts from the Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture, Chiang Mai University. Each PLM was given a registration code and tag label (Lanna Studies, 2019). In addition, color-coded classification stickers were given to each PLM. The white color was given to the registered PLMs while the red color was given to the microfilmed PLMs. These efforts at preservation, and documentation have been carried out in order to preserve these holy artifacts. In this regard, it was suggested that this kind of support from the experts in PLMs should be continued since it could help revitalize the folk stories and traditions of the Thai Yai people such as the *Poy Sang Long*⁴ ceremony and the *Poy Lern Sib Ed*⁵ festival contained in the PLMs.

Moreover, only traditional access (namely visiting a community temple where most PLMs are

⁴ One very important traditional practice of the Tai Yai is that the boys over the age of 12 are ordained into the Buddhist novicehood (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2016).

⁵ The ceremony of Tai Yai celebrates the return of Lord Buddha after he visited heaven. This ceremony is conducted in the eleventh month of the lunar year (Ministry of Culture, 2016).

safely stored in a cupboard or trunk) is provided at a Pa Tum Don community. Digital means for access was raised by the key informants since it is easy and fast. However, the technology is not yet available in the Pa Tum Don community because of insufficient tools and experts for digitization.

According to the five levels of community participation described by the IAP2, it is clear that cooperation and support can take many management forms. For example, people who are unable to read Lanna Tham scripts, or who lack the experience needed to clean PLMs, may offer to provide food and drink to the workers, or to clean the area after the work is finished. Individuals have a strong interest in volunteering in the community's activities. From the researcher's perspective, these actions represent the strong sense of community participation shown by people in Pa Tum Don.

Role and Potential of the Community Headman

Because the abbot of the Pa Tum Don temple is aging and the vice abbot is a novice who lacks knowledge and experience, the organization requires advice from their religious liaison and/or religious conductor (the person leading laypersons in prayer or chants at the temple) on many issues involving activities. Due to his leadership and communication skills, the village headman was able to gather together other senior villagers living in the community to become involved in the PLMs preservation activities. Moreover, as an activist, he initiated many projects advancing PLMs management and preservation. The broad vision of the headman has been vital in guiding the Pa Tum Don community. Through his connections, he invited experts from Chiang Mai Rajabhat University to share their knowledge and experience with the villagers, showing them the appropriate way to preserve the PLMs. Based on observations during the data collection, it became apparent that people participate in the community's activities very actively. Moreover, it was interesting to observe that the headman gained high respect from his villagers so that his words and actions were so powerful.

Community Participation

The study found that community participation in the management of PLMs such as cleaning PLMs, translating Lanna Tham scripts to Thai language and classifying the PLMs, was motivated by a belief that good deeds would return merit to the volunteers and their families. The power of making merit has inspired the local people to be involved in different kinds of community work, not just that related to the PLMs. Though the role of community participation by women has been limited in the past, both male and female villagers are actively associated with community work and PLMs according to their belief in the power of earning merit.

In the Pa Tum Don community, PLMs are valued as one of the most important sources of cultural identity. What inspires and bonds the local people to the PLMs is their pride in their ethnicity (Tai). Although literacy in Lanna Tham script is limited to only a few elder villagers in the Pa Tum Don community, the rest of the residents participate in PLMs activities as much as possible. Therefore, not only monks but also the local people in the community have a sense of responsibility. Findings also indicated that people were concerned about the value of the PLMs, so they had a significant level of social engagement with the objects. Some villagers devote themselves to cleaning and preserving the PLMs. Therefore, community participation not only helps preserve these invaluable religious artifacts but also leads to other types of community engagement.



Figure 4: The senior male community members translate Lanna Tham script

Gender Roles

Gender roles, though they were not the main focus in this study, emerged as a significant connection to the community participation in Pa Tum Don community. From observations it emerged that the roles of male and females were bounded deeply in traditional Buddhism beliefs. For example, men are allowed to participate in many aspects of Buddhism, such as entering the monkhood or entering sacred places like the city pillar shrine (*San Lak Muang*⁶), whereas women are forbidden to engage in such practices. This is one of the many examples reflecting the unequal status of women in Buddhism that is held within Lanna traditional beliefs. As stated by one subject, *even though women wanted to read or touch because of the holiness of PLMs they were afraid to do so. That was because they were taught to think like that.*

However, the concept of gender equality has been more and more accepted these days. Women are allowed to participate in religious activities in the Pa Tum Don community. As seen in Figure 5, both female and male community members help to clean the PLMs at the Pa Tum Don temple.



Figure 5: A female (left) and male (right) community members clean the PLMs

⁶ The sacred place where the city pillar or the city foundation is found. In Thai tradition, it is believed that it is a place where the city guardians live (Office of Royal Society, 2014).

Discussion

This study has shed light upon the potential that the Pa Tum Don community has to preserve their PLMs, as invaluable cultural artifacts. A few of the villagers are able to read the Lanna Tham scripts used in the PLMs so they could understand the content. Therefore, it is possible for them to translate the information and/or disseminate it to the other residents. The leadership provided by the community headman was also important to these efforts. Drawing upon his vision and communication skills, he gathered the elder villagers in the community to work as a team helping the community's activities around PLMs, including those related to PLMs. In addition, the community receives support from outsiders, including experts from Chiang Mai Rajabhat University sharing their knowledge and experience about PLMs preservation. For example, scholars taught them how to clean the PLMs, reported the amount and condition of PLMs, and shared the significant content found from PLMs. The collaborative contributions available from both the community members and outside agencies are a promising resource that well-organized PLMs preservation efforts will endure in the Pa Tum Don community.

As stated by Becvar & Srinivasan (2009), it is important to respect the traditional restrictions (taboos) but it seems that beliefs have shifted. As found in the Pa Tum Don community, women's participation is more open in these efforts these days despite the Thai traditional patriarchal and Buddhism concepts that are deeply rooted in Thai society that code for segregated gender roles. Moreover, the concept of holiness was threatened by many factors including an insufficient number of custodians and the lack of interest among the younger generation. While these limitations do exist, on the other hand, a shift in traditional restrictions was also observed. Such behavior is much like the old ethnographic adage that there is a difference between what people say (there is a taboo on women handling PLMs), what they say they do, and what they actually do (Figure 5). However, this traditional restriction was compromised to the extent that a ritual called *Khor Su Ma Kam*⁷ was performed every time the PLMs' were accessed. Community participation increased the opportunity of women to access the PLMs and creating a latent function where gender equality has newly emerged in this community. In this connection, this phenomenon occurred in the Pa Tum Don community could be the possible way out for the PLMs to survive in the present day.

In this investigation, it was also found that a high level of community participation is key to helping preserve the PLMs. People in the Pa Tum Don community are proud of how their ethnic identity mixes perfectly with the Lanna culture, and are therefore concerned about the cultural artifacts and want to preserve them. As suggested by Ganjanapan (2001), the most important key to community participation is the consciousness of the people in a community. When people are aware of their own identity and their culture, they will value their cultural assets, leading to sustainable preservation. Within the context of information management, many theoretical works suggest how the preservation of cultural artifacts can be accomplished by local communities as has been noted in library and information studies, archives and museums. Such theoretical work has been addressed by Becvar and Srinivasan (2009) with community-focused information service; Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) with participatory archiving; Flinn (2007, 2010) with community archives; and Kreps (2006, 2008) with indigenous curation. The concept of community management generally has been focused in many local information institutes. For example, two Australian public libraries, Alice Springs and Australian Capital

⁷ The apologizing ritual is performed when one has acted or behaved inappropriately towards the respected people or sacred place/thing.

Territory (ACT), involved Australian indigenous peoples; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the collection management displayed at the public libraries (Blackburn, 2017).

Another example is the Field Museum and the Philippine Heritage collection in Chicago, USA where co-curating had community-driven events such as collaborative decision-making to produce documentation and exhibition with the local Filipino American community (Quaintance, Jamilla, & Almeda, 2017).

The above-mentioned points: the desire to preserve the PLMs from the villagers, basic management in PLMs, the role and potential of the headman, the community participation, the support from the outsiders/experts, address the potential of the Pa Tum Don community to preserve the PLMs. However, it is unclear and should be debated on how to sustain preservation efforts. One main challenge is that there is a limited group of people who understand Lanna Tham scripts, and those who assist in public preservation efforts are elderly. Therefore, there is a high probability that efforts to preserve PLMs will end if key people leave or lose interest. In addition, the association among the village elders is informal and does not have systematic job responsibilities or a management structure. The elders all volunteered to help regardless of their availability and knowledge. As people in the community lack the knowledge and experience needed to properly preserve the PLMs, support from outsiders in terms of both finance and techniques is needed to sustain preservation efforts.

Pathways to Sustainable Preservation

Several actions are needed to sustain PLMs preservation efforts. First of all, the community members suggested creating rituals or ceremonial events to keep the community in the PLM context in order to develop community awareness. The ritual and events are seen as an opportunity to repurpose PLMs. As such, there needs to be outside investment in the communities in order for them to learn about PLMs and to understand how PLMs can be preserved through reuse of cultural materials, thereby leading to a sustainable preservation scheme (Rothenbuhler, 1998).

Next, the elders must pass their linguistic knowledge along to younger members of the community. The literacy in Lanna Tham will encourage young people to study the PLMs, learning about local wisdom and their community identity. Once they have learned about the importance of those cultural artifacts, they will have the motivation to preserve these natural and cultural resources (Ganjanaphan, 2001). Similarly, the young residents of the community could be motivated because these efforts will not only preserve invaluable PLMs but will also promote Buddhism. Their strong faith in the power of making merit will also empower young learners to engage in rituals and other religious activities. However, it is also a proposal that the elders' knowledge and experience be transformed into more accessible teaching tools for younger people, such as storybooks, music, art, and literature. These would be more attractive and effective in engaging their attention and encouraging creativity. For this step, tools, knowledge, and experience from experts are required.

The community should expand its collaborations with other potential sources of assistance, from both government and private organizations. To support outsiders, a diverse official association with clear job responsibilities should be created, including members from all interested groups – males, females, monks, young people, and adults. With support from all involved parties, the PLMs could be systematically and sustainably preserved. Also, to gain more knowledge, site visits to other places with best practices in PLMs preservation is

recommended. Pa Tum Don community members could learn these techniques and bring them back to their community. This is a great way to expand collaborations with other PLMs partners. At the policy level, it is suggested that the Lanna language be added to the primary or secondary level school curriculum as an elective subject. Interested young students could then learn the language, which would also provide a better understanding of their culture and religion. This is one way the Lanna identity could be sustainably preserved for the following generations. In this context, the concept of Kreps (2005, 2006, 2008, 2014) about indigenous curation would fit the Pa Tum Don community, and a carefully researched exhibition should be aligned with the uniqueness of the community.

Regarding PLMs preservation, the notion of digital preservation of PLMs has been increasingly focused these days. In this research, this issue was raised from some of the subjects. However, though the community members desire to digitize the PLMs, they have the difficulty to do so due to a lack of digitization expertise (Agrawal, 2006) similar to other information service organizations around Southeast Asia such as Kerela University, India; the University of Kelaniya and University of Peradeniya Library in Sri Lanka such as University Library in India and Sri Lanka (Alanhakoon, 2009; Ranasinghe & Ranasinghe, 2013; Sahoo & Mohanty, 2015; Mohamed Sageer, 2017; Udaya et al., 2009; Weerabahu, 2019). With digitization, the accessibility of PLMs is limitless according to time and places.

However, this way of preservation requires support from experts to lead and act, so community participation could not be originated and formed among the locals. In the researcher's point of view, it is very important that sustainable preservation is initiated according to the awareness of members within the community. In order to value the PLMs, community members will be able to: call for participation, learn and practice to preserve the PLMs, seek support when required, as well as maintain the contextual environment of the PLMs. With this added focus community-based preservation can be truly sustained.

Conclusion

To summarize, this study has found that there is a strong possibility that community participation could help preserve the invaluable PLMs for the Pa Tum Don people. To enable the access of PLMs, the community members agree that digitization provided by experts is essential. Also, the issues of human resources and management are both needed to be further developed. An urgent issue is the transfer of knowledge from the older people to younger people. With ritual and education, children will learn to reuse and reproduce the PLMs so that they could see the advantages of PLMs and value them. This creates awareness and a sense of belonging in PLMs, leading towards sustainable preservation. Also, collaboration with outside organizations should be expanded. The role and level of participation between community members and non-local parties should be identified to allocate responsibility. As such, this could lead to long-term systematic management of the PLMs in the Pa Tum Don community. Lastly, this community-based concept should not be limited to only the Pa Tum Don case but could be applied to other contexts both in and outside of Thailand. Even though the circumstances and factors differ in each community, this community-based practice could be a pathway to preserve all forms of recorded knowledge, such as: cultural artifacts, documentation, and ancient manuscripts.

Suggestions for Future Study

Further research may disclose more about the potential role of the younger generation in the community. Surprisingly, interviews with Pa Tum Don community members proved that

youngsters are interested in religious activities. In addition, studies of the connections between gender roles and the PLMs should be expanded.

Acknowledgment

This research is financially supported by the Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University.

References

- Agrawal, O. P. (2006). Conservation of Asian documents on paper and palm-leaf. In Pre-conference of WLIC 2006 Preservation and Conservation in Asia, 1–7.
- Alahakoon, C. N. K. (2009). Development of policies for access, management and preservation of the Palm-leaf manuscript collection of the University of Peradeniya library. *Sri Lankan Journal of Librarianship and Information Management* 1(1), 42–42. <https://doi.org/10.4038/sllim.v1i1.431>
- Becvar, K., & Srinivasan, R. (2009). Indigenous knowledge and culturally responsive methods in information research. *Library Quarterly*, 79(4), 421–441. <https://doi.org/10.1086/605382>
- Braun, V., & Clark, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Butdisuwan, S., & Babu, B. R. (2014). Preservation and conservation of palm leaf manuscript libraries in Mahasarakham Province, Thailand: A survey. *Asian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 4(1), 44–53. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from <https://www.trp.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AJIST-Vol.4-No.1-Jan-June-2014-pp.44-53.pdf>
- Flinn, A. (2007). Community histories, community archives: Some opportunities and challenges. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 28(2), 151–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810701611936>
- Flinn, A. (2010). Independent community archives and community-generated content: “Writing, saving and sharing our histories.” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 16(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856509347707>
- Ganjanapan, A. (2001). *Mitichumchon: Withee khid thongthin wa dwoi siththi aumnaj kan chatkan sapphayakon* [Community dimension: Local thinking of rights and authorities in resource management]. Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund.
- Ganjanapan, A. (Ed.). (2000). *Phonlawat khong chumchon nai kan chadkan sapphayakorn: Krabuntas lae nayobai* [Community dynamics in resource management: Paradigms and policies]. Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund.
- Ganjanapan, A., & Ramitnon, S. (1998). *Phithikam lae kwamcheu Lanna: Kan palitmai khong amnat thang silatham* [Lanna rituals and beliefs: A new production of moral power]. Phayao: Phayao Provincial Culture Office, Phayao Provincial Education Office.
- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). (2007). *IAP2 Spectrum of public participation*. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf
- Jarusawat, P., Cox, A. M., & Bates, J. (2018). Community Participation in the Management of Palm Leaf Manuscripts as Lanna Cultural Material in Thailand. *Journal of Documentation*, 74(5), 951–965. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-02-2018-0025>
- Jarusawat, P. (2017). An exploration of the potential for collaborative management of palm leaf manuscripts as Lanna cultural material in northern Thailand (Publication No. 737858) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Sheffield]. White Rose eTheses.

- Jory, P. (2000). Books and the nation: The making of Thailand's national library. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31(2), 351–373.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463400017598>
- Khongdeom, W. (2013). Bilan lanna: Phumpanya jak yaowachon [Lanna palm leaf: Wisdom from the youth]. *Kasalong*, 13(25), 2–5.
- Kreps, C. (2005). Indigenous curation as intangible cultural heritage: Thoughts on the relevance of the 2003 UNESCO convention. *Theorizing Cultural Heritage*, 1(2), 1–8.
- Kreps, C. (2006). *Non-Western models of museums and curation in cross-cultural perspective*. In S. Macdonald (Ed.), *A companion to museum studies* (pp. 457–472). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kreps, C. (2014). Thai monastery museums: Contemporary expressions of ancient traditions. In *Museums and Exhibitions as Materialisations of Knowledge Orders/Museen und Ausstellungen als Konkretisierungen von Wissensordnungen* (pp. 230–256). Cologne: Center for Advanced Studies, International Research Institute.
- Kreps, C. F. (2008). Appropriate museology in theory and practice. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 23(1), 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647770701865345>
- Lanna Studies (2019). *Kamphi Bailan lae Pubsu Wat PaTumDon Muang Phrao* [Palm leaf manuscripts and mulberry paper in PaTumDon Temple, Phrao city] [PowerPoint presentation]. The Office of Arts and Culture, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University: Chiang Mai.
- Mohamed Sageer, T. K., & Francis, A. T. (2014). Palm leaves manuscripts in Kerala and their preservation: factors necessitating digital archiving. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 4(2), 1–5.
- Ministry of Culture (2016). *Poy Lern SibEd festival*. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from https://www.m-culture.go.th/young/ewt_news.php?nid=388&filename=index
- Moe, R. (2009). Sustainable Stewardship of the built environment. 13th International Conference of National Trusts Dublin, Ireland 13 September 2009. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from <https://intoorg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Richard-Moe-INTO-Speech.pdf>
- Office of Royal Society (2014). *Wadoilakmuang* [Pillar Shire]. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from <http://www.royin.go.th/?knowledges>
- Ongsakul, S. (2005). *History of Lan Na*. In S. Barron & D. W. Miller (Eds.). (Chitraporn Tanratanakul, Trans.). Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Penth, H., & Forbes, A. (2004). *A brief history of Lan Na: Northern Thailand from past to present and the peoples of Chiang Mai*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Phranakorn Punyachiro. (2014). *Withe thes nai lan na [How to preach in Lanna]*. Chiang Mai: CM media.
- Preechapermpasit, D. (2012). *Prawattisat phraputtasassana nai prathes srilangka* [History of Buddhism in Sri Lanka]. Bangkok: Thammasat University.
- Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre. (2016). *Poy Sang Long*. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from <https://www.sac.or.th/databases/rituals/en/detail.php?id=12>
- Quaintance, H., Jamilla, S., & Almeda, F. (2017). Connecting communities and collections: co-curating the Philippine Collection at the field museum. *ABD Journal*, 4, 13–25.

- Ranasinghe, P. & Ranasinghe, W.M.T.D. (2013). Preserving Sri Lanka's traditional manuscript culture: Role of the palm leaf digitization project of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya. In: 79th IFLA General Conference and Assembly, Singapore, 17-23 August 2013, pp. 1–2. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/rare-books-and-manuscripts/ProgramSessions/abstract_ranasinghe.pdf
- Rothenbuhler, E. W. (1998). *Ritual communication: from everyday conservation to mediated ceremony*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sahoo, J., & Mohanty, B. (2015). Digitization of Indian manuscripts heritage: Role of the national mission for manuscripts Indian manuscript heritage and the role of national mission for manuscripts. *IFLA Journal*, 41(3), 237–250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035215601447>
- Shilton, K., & Srinivasan, R. (2007). Participatory appraisal and arrangement for multicultural archival collections. *Archivaria*, 63, 87–101.
- Sriratanaban, T., & Keanmamung, S. (n.d.). *Phra panpong: Phuttharup thi srang chak dokmai haeng srattha wat patumdon Tombol patum ampheu Phrao changwat Chiangmai* [Panpong Buddha amulet: a Buddha statue made of flowers of faith Pa Tum Don Temple, Pa Tum Subdistrict, Phrao District, Chiang Mai Province]. [Brochure]. Chiang Mai: Local Units for Conservation of Natural and Cultural Environment: LUCNCE, CMRU Art Culture, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University.
- Thairat, S. (2013). *Kampheebilan nai prathestai* [Palm leaf manuscripts in Thailand]. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from http://dhamma-media.blogspot.com/2017/10/blog-post_76.html
- Unchein ma thai khamphi boran [Brought to Thailand ancient scriptures]. (2009, November 1). Thairath. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from https://www.thairath.co.th/content/43674?fbclid=IwAR24UPPYAdr-1XFph9wfKarbkkqGQHiau04iurulNoyd Fn4JtRY_OXRpCV4
- Udaya Kumar, D., Sreekumar G.V., & Athvankar, U.A. (2009). Traditional writing system in Southern India-palm leaf manuscripts. *Design Thoughts*, July, 2-7. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from <http://www.idc.iitb.ac.in/resources/dt-july-2009/Palm.pdf>
- Weerabahu, W.M.HM. (2019). The contribution provided by University of Kelaniya for the preservation of palm leaf manuscripts in Sri Lanka. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 3(5), 127–129. Retrieved July 01, 2020 from <https://www.ajhssr.com/volume-3-issue-5>

Corresponding author: Piyapat Jarusawat

Contact email: p.jarusawat@gmail.com and piyapat.j@cmu.ac.th