



**Baq Jaer Pu:
The Indigenous Way of Life in the
Mountainous Area of Pa Kia Village,
Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province**



This booklet is a result of data collection through the collaboration between students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, and young people of Pa Kia Village, Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province, during the fieldwork on May 3–5, 2022 and the revisited trip for data review in August–September 2022

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The Story of Ban Pa Kia

This Akha village has an official Thai name of “Ban Pa Kia” and is called “Baq Jaer Pu” in the Akha language. Pa Kia village is located in administrative area no.



18, Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province. It was founded in 1975 by four leaders—Ajoo Pianglae, Aboshae, Abomae Povee, and Jator Jala. Before that, three of the leaders had lived in Ban Huay Namkhun, where there were an overpopulation problem and a shortage of land for agriculture. Such problems led to their dispute with the Yunnan-Thai people, the pioneer settlers of the area. More importantly, many of the village members were sent to join the Thai army, so they feared for their safety. Consequently, they decided to move to a new place, which is Ban Pa Kia today. This area is a better landscape, with a main river flowing through the community and a great natural environment.

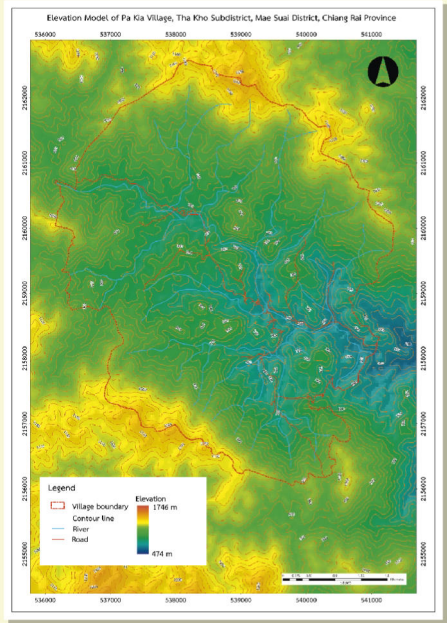
In 1976–1984, the Lahu, another ethnic group from nearby villages, such as Ban Makhampom, Ban Payang, Ban Huay Namrin, and Ban Doi Tung, also immigrated to Ban Pa Kia. The total population during the time was 50 households, which consisted of 30 Akha and 20 Lahu families. The increasing ethnic population brought about aid and support from the government and private agencies in 1984–1986. The authorities of the Hill Tribe Welfare and Development Center conducted a research survey to collect information, the Royal Project helped train the villagers on agricultural technology and occupation improvement, while the Department of Non-Formal Education (NFE) established a non-formal education school to provide ethnic people with access to Thai education.

Ban Pa Kia has also had a history of arguing with government officers from time to time, especially those from the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture, over the past decades. Although the villagers had lived there before the government declared the national conservation forest demarcation policies, in 1997 many of the villagers were arrested under a charge of encroaching on forest land. As a result, people from Ban Pa Kia and nearby communities and other ethnic groups of Northern Thailand marched on the Chiang Mai City Hall to demand a ‘community title deed’ under the supervision of the Northern Peasant Federation. Subsequently, during 2015–2020, Ban Pa Kia villagers, with the assistance of the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT), did a cadastral survey and documentation research to prepare the documentary proof of their agricultural and living land



General Characteristics of Pa Kia Village

Pa Kia village is located in administrative area no. 18, Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province. The village stands 700 meters above sea level. Its geographical coordinates are X 539469 and Y 2158605. The village is adjacent to Ban Mae Pha Læ Moo 11 in the North, adjacent to Baan Lo Jo Moo 23 in the South, close to Ba la village Moo 19 toward the East, and next to Ban Doi Ngam, Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province, in the West.

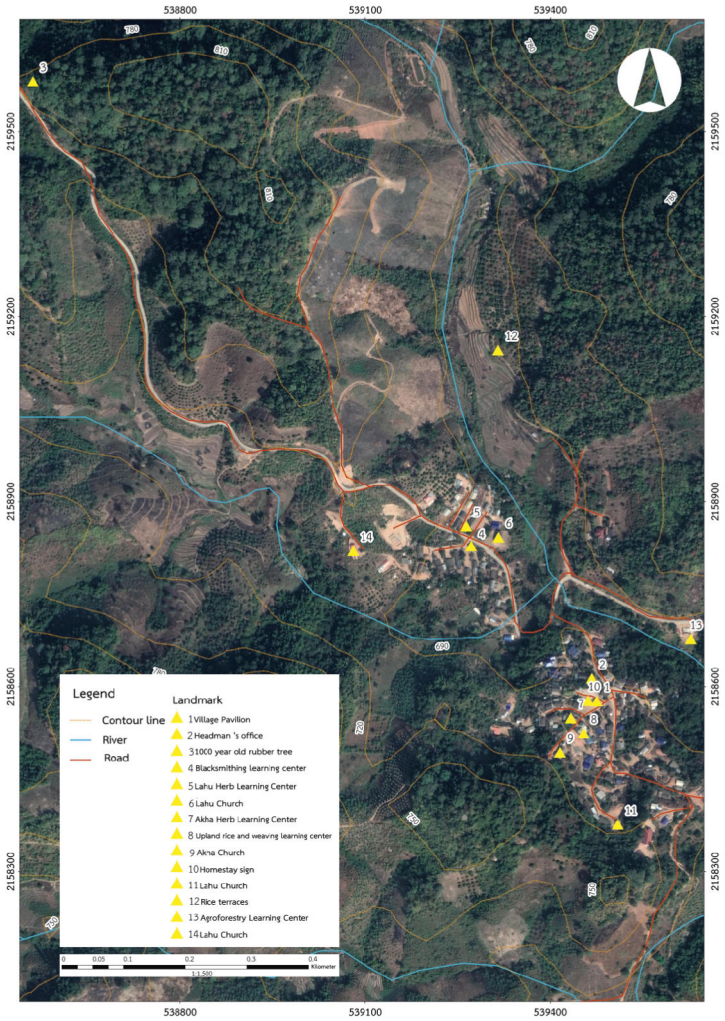


The weather of Ban Pa Kia is not different from the general weather in the Northern Region. The summer season goes from February to April, the rainy season from May to September, and the winter season from October to January.

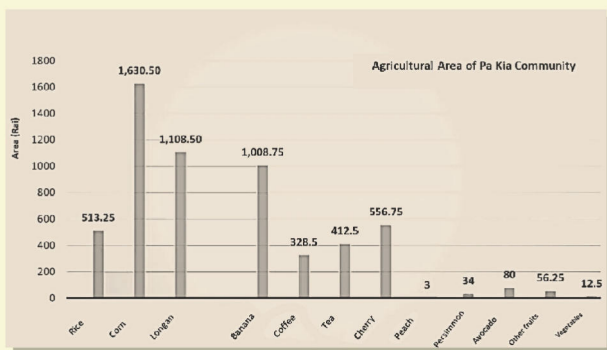
The area is a hilly plain, which is fertile for agriculture. Ban Pa Kia has an approximate area of 13,000 rai in total, 88 rai of which are residential areas, 7,500 rai is an agricultural area, and 2,280 rai is an exploitable forest. There is also a conservation forest, where exploitation is prohibited; it is a 2,500 rai of a watershed forest.

The total population of Pa Kia village is 1,071 (as of 2022), which are 540 men and 531 women from 200 households. Most of them are Catholics and Protestants. The community has one temple, six churches, one preschool, and three hill tribe learning centers.

Landmark Map of Pa Kia Village, Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province



In the agricultural area of Pa Kia village, there are plantations for both consumption and sale. Rice is grown as a staple food for households, while corn, longans, bananas, coffee, tea, mountain cherries (red plums), persimmons, avocados, and winter vegetables are grown to generate income.



Agriculture is their main occupation throughout the year. There is plenty of work during the rainy season, which is from June to September; the community members will plant rice and beans, take care of tea trees, and harvest red plums, persimmons, bananas, tea leaves, and avocados. Winter, which is from October to January, is the season for harvesting corn, coffee, garlic, bananas, and tea leaves. There is usually less work during the dry season, which is from March to May, but the villagers still have some farm work to do.

Ban Pa Kia Agricultural Calendar		
Month	Planting	Harvesting
January	-	Corn, Coffee, Garlic, Banana, Tea
February	-	Garlic, Banana, Tea, Plum
March	Banana	Banana, Tea, Plum
April	Sesame, Banana	Red plum, Banana, Tea
May	Field rice, Peanut, Sesame, Tea	Red plum, Banana, Tea
June	Rice Peanut, Tea	Red plum, Banana, Tea
July	Corn, Peanut, Lowland rice, Tea	Banana, Tea
August	Corn, Tea	Persimmon, Avocado, Banana, Tea, Longan.
September	Soybean, Red bean, Black bean	Persimmon, Corn, Avocado, Banana, Tea, Longan
October	-	Corn, Upland rice, Coffee, Banana, Tea
November	Garlic	Corn, Upland rice, Lowland rice, Coffee, Banana, Tea
December	Garlic	Corn, Coffee, Banana, Tea

The majority of the community members, or 1,063 people, engage in farming, gardening, and growing plants and crops, whereas the other eight people engage in trading and private businesses. Most of their



income comes from selling agricultural products—such as rice, corn, bananas (which have begun to replace corn since 2016), and winter crops like cherries or red plums, persimmons, prunes, tea, and coffee—and raising and selling pigs. Annually by household, 150 buckets of rice are sold making 20,000-baht, 10,000 kg of corn making 70,000 baht, 8,000 kg of bananas making 60,000 baht, and 5,000 kg of red plums making 30,000 baht on average. Only five households raise pigs for sale, with 25 pigs sold in total per year, making 60,000 baht. The people there also have income from selling herbs.

Pa Kia village was supported by government agencies in late years. Occupational groups have been established to help improve their living. Some groups practice sufficiency economy, backyard agriculture, or agroforestry (sustainable agriculture). There are also a vegetable, herb, and crop farming group (sustainable agriculture), an Akha embroidery group, a homestay group, a blacksmithing group, and a savings groups. Some households can make additional income from their group's activities, such as



selling Akha embroidered clothes, running a homestay, selling medicinal plants and foods, and selling knives. Not only can they generate more income, but these activities also provide an opportunity for the villagers to share their indigenous folk wisdom with visitors and customers.

There are both formal and informal governance structures in the community. The formal governance structure comes in the form of state-appointed administrative positions. For example, there have been seven headmen and headman's assistants in total from 1995 to 2022, and seven members/executives of local government organizations from 1995 until the present.

Informal leadership is still prevailing. The village elders have been chosen by the community to be the leaders. The current leaders include Apha Mayer, Ameu Byokhong, and Ayi muelae. There is also a senior committee to help look after the community. The committee is made up of 12 people, who help manage the village in a variety of aspects. There are 16 important rules for governing the community as follows:

1. Anyone who wants to seek information about the community must notify the village committee first.
2. Every family must participate in a village development activity. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined according to the labor cost at that time.
3. Bringing and distributing any kind of narcotics to the village is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be charged according to the law.
4. Anyone who causes violence at an auspicious event or activity of the community will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht, in addition to paying for the damage compensation as claimed.
5. Anyone who causes violence inside the community or physically harms another person will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht, in addition to paying damage compensation as claimed.
6. Anyone who makes a noise inside the community after 10.00 p.m. can be fined 1,000–5,000 baht.
7. Anyone who fires a gun inside the community after 10.00 p.m. without a necessary cause can be fined up to 500 baht.
8. Committing indecent acts to or infringing on the rights of children and women is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 3,000 baht or greater, in addition to paying for the damage compensation as claimed.
9. Anyone who destroys public property of the community can be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and also subject to paying compensation for the damaged property.

10. Stealing is strictly prohibited in the community. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined up to 2,500 baht and also subject to paying compensation, which can be one or two times the value of the stolen property.
11. Anyone who owns animals shall take good care of them. If their animals enter and cause damage to a neighbor's garden or farm, the owner will be subject to paying compensation in the amount as deemed appropriate by the committee.
12. Throwing garbage in the community's river is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 500 baht and also have to clean the area back to its original state.
13. All fines will be credited to the Village Development Fund or other collective works of the community.
14. These rules and regulations can be adjusted according to situations, but the adjustment must be approved by the community first.
15. Everyone in the community must abide by these rules and regulations. Anyone who violates them more than three times will be kicked out of the village.
16. In a case where there are no rules or regulations to apply, the community will judge the case by using the tradition, culture, and beliefs of each ethnicity.



Cultural Calendar Regarding the Akha Traditional Life

The community members of Ban Pa Kia have changed their religion from traditional beliefs to Catholic and Protestant; thus, their cultural calendar regarding traditional beliefs—such as the ceremony of worshipping spirits—is linked to the belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are at least six important festivals that are related to the daily life of the community nowadays.

In January, the community celebrates the New Year and expresses their gratitude to God for blessing them over the past year. From January to March, the community members will get ready for the planting season by



preparing the seeds, pavilions, plantation sites, and water. Then in April, there is a ceremony called “**Easter**”, or “**Khmqxeevq Khmqmirmr-e**” in the Akha language. This ceremony spans five days, with the purpose of worshipping God as they have finished their planting and are waiting for the agricultural produce. The community members plant corn and rice during the period of May to September.

In August, the community holds an important festival called “Swing Festival”, or “Yaerkuq Aqpoeq” in the Akha language. The festival is important to the Akha people during the rainy season because the rains help grow their crops and plants. The way the Akha people push the swing forward means moving ahead to prosperity.

Spanning four days, the swing festival celebrates the bountiful harvest of agricultural products according to the Akha saying “Khu Jah Marboo Marboo”, which means

the swing festival has varied food. Crops and plants will grow and be available for harvesting not long after the swing festival.

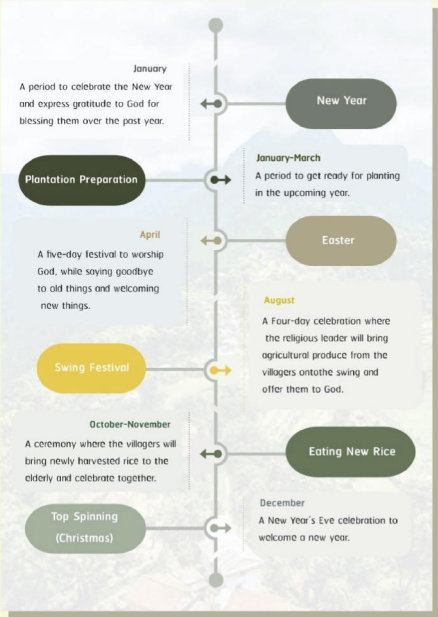


During the ceremony, the community members will start by collecting agricultural products, such as corn, melon, vegetables, and rice, from their plantations to share with people in the community and dedicate to God.

Then, the religious leader will bring the products from the villagers to the church and offer them to God. Once finished, the community members will have lunch together.

The community members usually finish harvesting in October–November and then hold a ceremony called “Caerxeevq Dzaq-e”. During this ceremony, the community members will bring newly harvested rice from their paddy fields to the elderly people to show their respect and also ask for blessings.

In December, there is an important festival called “Zhong Thi”, which celebrates New Year’s Eve after the villagers harvest their crops and plants. This festival marks the beginning of the resting season. The community members will make a “Zhong” or a spinning top and then all of them—boys, girls, and adults—will play it together. Also, the girls of the community will perform another Akha traditional performance in the community’s playground.



This New Year’s Eve festival continues for four days. They will celebrate New Year’s Eve on the first day, make and play Zhong on the second day, visit neighbors on the third day, and perform a traditional performance on the fourth day.

Ban Pa Kia has specialists or Salas (in Thai), the resource people who know a variety of Akha wisdom, such as herbs, magic spells, blacksmithing, music, basketry, and fortune telling, and a group of women who specialize in the art of ancient embroidery that has been handed down from their ancestors for over four generations. Below is the list of knowledgeable people of Ban Pa Kia in 2022.

No.	Full name	Age	Knowledge/expertise	Inherited from
1	Mr. Ayi Muelae	70	Herbal medicine, magic spells	Ancestors
2	Mr. Somsak Kasemsritara	62	Herbal medicine	Ancestors
3	Mr. Luka Sisue	60	Herbal medicine	Ancestors
4	Mrs. Budoeh Bunyuenkun	49	Embroidery	Ancestors
5	Mrs. Lubya Muelae	62	Embroidery	Ancestors
6	Mr. Maku Kasemsrisaichon	58	Blacksmithing, machete making, music	Ancestors
7	Mr. Vinai Kongkasentara	60	Blacksmithing, machete making	Ancestors
8	Mr. Kamthon panakongamon	55	Basketry	Ancestors
9	Mr. Jasor Jatho	53	Basketry	Ancestors
10	Mrs. Ameer Yaebiang	62	Fortune telling	Ancestors

Machete or knife making

If you pass Ban Pa Kia, you would hear a loud sound of metal hitting metal from time to time and see a machete factory along the way. The knife-making wisdom of Ban Pa Kia has been handed down from generation to generation. According to their traditional beliefs, three elements are required to establish a village: a knifemaker or blacksmith, a leader or ruler, and a religious leader. Moreover, if someone is starting a new family, they will need a knife to use in farming, cutting wood to build a house, and for many other purposes.

Currently, Ban Pa Kia has formed a blacksmith group, which consists of five knowledgeable people from two generations; three of them are senior village members aged over 60 who still make knives as a hobby and the other two are the second generation aged 30–40. However, blacksmithing is considered to be a side job nowadays because there are often outside knife traders in the market. Plus, steels are hard to find these days, so blacksmiths have to forge car springs, which are made of strong, high-quality steel, into the desired shapes and sizes, such as knives, bent knives, planting hoes, and sickles. The selling price starts from 300 baht, depending on the size of the knife, but if you bring steel yourself, the knife-making price starts from 50–200 baht.

The blacksmith group splits their income into two parts: 90% will go to the knifemakers and the remaining 10% will go to the group, which will be used for developing the steel tools and maintaining the knife factory to pass on to the next generation. To preserve the knife-making wisdom, 20 children from the village or other communities are trained every year, starting in 2018, with support from the government's budget.

Weaving and embroidery

Weaving, embroidering, and accessories making were normal things for Akha women in the old days. Akha women would be taught to spin thread at an early age and would spend a long time turning the spun thread into yarn to weave a garment with beautiful embroidery to wear on special occasions. However, Ban Pa Kia no longer does thread spinning, because the villagers do not grow their cotton



anymore but instead buy ready-made yarn from the market. The yarn will be woven into a piece of fabric with ancient patterns, sometimes with new ideas and creativity added to the patterns to keep up with modern fashion.

There are two main techniques to create patterns on fabric. The first technique is embroidery, which is decorating fabric with patterns using a needle and different colored threads. Examples of embroidery patterns are cross embroidery along the fabric lines—similar to cross-stitch—such as Apa (a leaf pattern), straight-line embroidery such as Tong (a drum pattern), and dense embroidery, which may be considered the most difficult to do because the embroiderer must use the right weight of hand to pull the threads to make the perfect pattern.

Nowadays, Akha's embroidery designs include both the traditional patterns inherited from their ancestors and the creative patterns invented by the younger generation, with inspiration from the old and new patterns, to incorporate colors into their clothes. The embroidery pattern is usually chosen based on experience—it can be a pattern of natural creatures, a mixed pattern of utensils or musical instruments, or a pattern that combines traditional beliefs and innovations.

Another technique is patchwork. Even the same patchwork pattern can give a different look and feel when using a different technique because it can create a different texture and shape. For example, the embroiderer may use shells, silver coins, and beads of various



sizes to embroider a pattern on a piece of fabric. An Akha shirt usually has sleeves, which are sewn to the body of the shirt at the shoulders and decorated with colorful embroidered lines. There are embroidered patterns on both sides of the sleeves. The back of the shirt is also decorated with embroidery, coin garlands, and yarns to highlight the colors. Akha women also wear headdresses and leg bandages, which are made from woven cotton of the same color as their shirts and skirts, embroidered and decorated with the same colorful patterns. Men's clothes are usually made from densely woven cotton dyed dark blue color. In the past, Akha people used to plant cotton trees and spin their yarn to make fabric.

Ban Pa Kia's weaving group is supervised by Mrs. Budoe Bunyuenkun. Established in 2013, the group now consists of 11 households. However, the younger generations of those households mostly go out to work in the city, so they do not have time to carry on the art of embroidery.

All of this started with a non-formal education (NFE) teacher receiving a budget of 5,000 baht. The teacher then asked women in the village what they would want to do with the money. Together, they decided to use the money to develop a weaving group to generate income from their fabric patterns. In the beginning, the group did not have a target market or target customers; they would only present or sell their products at local



events organized by the district or the province. Fortunately, the Arts and Crafts Center came to help them promote and sell their products. The group would get paid after a product was sold.

Subsequently, the Royal Project and research institute started to do research and study their fabric patterns. Later when people began to buy more products from the group, they started to have a management system. Their products include shirts, necklaces, belts, bracelets, and earrings. Akha's fabric then became increasingly popular and in demand in the market. It would be sold at tourist attractions, such as night bazaars or district fairs and provincial fairs where they would also be an exhibition of Akha fabric and patterns and ethnic performances, which also helped the group make more income. As a result, the group has come up with a mechanism for income allocation: 5% of the income will be spent on the delivery fees of products and materials and the remainder will be shared among the group members based on the number of clothes and accessories sold.

At present, there are five basic patterns of Ban Pa Kia's Akha fabric, which are

- 1) Curtersae (a spider web pattern),
- 2) Korjor (a spider pattern),
- 3) Aye (a flower pattern),
- 4) Curtersae A-da (a spider web pattern),
- 5) freestyles, which include any new ideas for weaving patterns.

However, the weaving group mentioned that the currently used patterns and colors of fabric still lacked profound meanings and that they wanted to create new patterns that can tell stories about their community, ways of living, environment, and religious beliefs.



Herbalists and folk healers

Despite today's modern medical innovations and medicines, herbal medicine healers and herbal medicines are still very important in the indigenous community of Ban Pa Kia. Ban Pa Kia villagers still use herbs as medicines to alleviate illnesses in everyday life and as elixirs, as the result of their long-inherited local wisdom.

Mr. Ayi Muelae is a herbal medicine specialist at Ban Pa Kia, who has inherited the knowledge from his ancestors. Since he was 15 years old, he would go into the woods with his father to help find herbs and at the same time learn about various medicinal plants that could be used to treat illnesses. Mr. Ayi has expertise in using herbs to treat broken bones, abdominal pain, flatulence, and purulent wounds.

Here are examples of important herbal medicine formulas that are still used these days:

1. Treatment of broken bones – This formula requires 12 types of herbs:

- 1) Yakanong's leaves and stems,
- 2) Gujae's leaves,
- 3) Guju's leaves and bark,
- 4) Gudi or stretchy grass,
- 5) Sadie's head or leaves,
- 6) Lagulani's leaves,
- 7) Teror or parasite's leaves,
- 8) Mor Ja or Ya Thip Plong's stems,
- 9) Yae Song Sue or orchid's leaves,
- 10) Makia or pine's leaves,
- 11) Gu Yu wormwood's leaves,
- 12) finely pounded Ho Yo Na or Khao Kam.

This combination of herbs can treat injured tendons and muscles because it contains fibers that have the properties to heal wounds and bruises.

How to use – Wash all the herbs thoroughly and chop them. If it is a stem or root, slice it horizontally. If they are leaves, cut them into small pieces of approximately 1x1 cm. or 2x2 cm. For a mild case, take a handful of the prepared herbs and crush them together, wrap them in banana leaves, and heat until warm. Then, apply the herbal paste to the injured area and bandage it tightly. Repeat the process daily for 7–10 days. If the symptom is serious, however, it may be necessary to apply the compress continuously for 20–30 days. Regarding the treatment fee, if the injury is not very serious, it is usually free of charge. But if it is a fracture that takes time to heal, it can cost 2,000–3,000 baht.

2. Herbal remedy for flatulence – This formula uses seven types of herbs:

- 1) Bule or Plai,
- 2) Yellow turmeric,
- 3) White galingale,
- 4) Black galingale,
- 5) White turmeric,
- 6) Wan Mahamek,
- 7) Makalo.

How to use – Wash all the herbs thoroughly, cut them into small pieces, dry them under the sun, and crush them into powder. Put 0.5 g of the herb powder in hot water to drink.

3. Herbal medicine for gastritis, stomach pain, flatulence, stiff stomach, and diarrhea – This formula contains only two ingredients: unripe bananas and honey.

How to use – Wash raw bananas thoroughly, cut them into small pieces, and dry them under the sun. Once completely dried, crush and mix them with a small amount of honey to make tablets. Take 3–5 tablets every day, in the morning and evening after meals, for one month.

4. Herbal remedy for cough – This formula uses two types of herbs:

- 1) emblica and
- 2) old ginger, mixed with salt and honey.

How to use – Prepare 1 kg of fresh emblica and 100 g of old ginger and wash them thoroughly. Smash emblica, remove its seeds, and dry it under the sun. Cut ginger into thin slices. Put both herbs together and crush them into powder. Add a small amount of honey to the herb powder to make tablets and dry them

under the sun. Take a tablet at bedtime or during the day when there are symptoms of cough and throat irritation. Or put 0.5 g or a teaspoon of the herb powder in hot water to drink to alleviate coughing.



5. Herbs to nourish the body and blood, relieve pain, reduce blood pressure, and aid with diabetes – This formula requires six types of herbs:

- 1) Chiwa,
- 2) Lochema,
- 3) Nuka,
- 4) Sorsue,
- 5) Nishwa's root,
- 6) Sibi. These vines can be found in

the forest.

How to use – Wash the vines thoroughly, cut them into thin slices, and dry them under the sun. Put the dried herbs in hot water to make tea or put them in fermented wine to drink.

Herbal medicine specialists do not only use the long-inherited knowledge about natural medicinal plants to make medicines to cure illnesses, but they also use spells to dispel diseases. To cure abdominal pain, for example, besides herbal medicines, the specialist will heat a piece of iron until it becomes red-hot. Once it cools down a bit, they will put their foot on the hot iron and use it to apply the compress to the patient's stomach. However, before stepping on the piece of hot iron, the specialist will recite a spell, from the belief that it will help protect their foot from getting burned.

To hand down their local herbal medication knowledge to the younger generation, Akha people normally pass on the knowledge to their children. Nevertheless, only the sons of the families will get to learn magic spells, while the daughters will only be taught about medicinal plants and herbal medicines. Still, the situation has become more open today, with medicinal textbooks being written to help the young generations understand the benefits of herbs and how to use them in daily life for curing illness and other purposes.

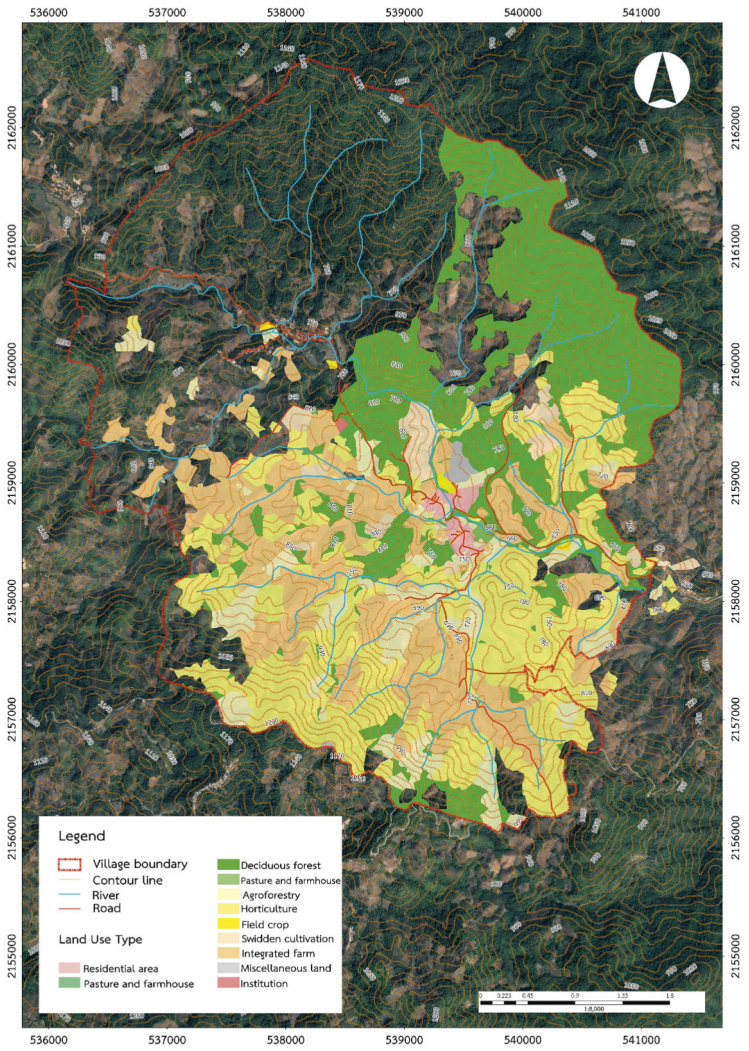


Natural resources are the main source of life for the Pa Kia community, which are land, water, and forests. Pa Kia community has its natural resource management system, which is a collaboration between the state, the Royal Forest Department, and the community. Back in 1997, Ban Pa Kia had conflicts over natural resource management like other ethnic forest areas in Northern Thailand, but the situation has improved in the present while there is also increasing cooperation in conflict management.

According to Ban Pa Kia's resource management system, the community's land is mainly divided into usable areas and conservation areas: 88 rai for residential purposes such as houses, schools, churches, pavilions, and public areas and 5,625 rai of arable land for farming, gardening, and rice terraces. There is a community forest with a total area of 2,250 rai on the left bank of the Mae Lao National Reservation Forest, which was classified as a conservation forest zone C by the Royal Forest Department. The area contains two types of forests, which are a dry dipterocarp forest and a dry evergreen forest. The elevation ranges from 500–800 meters above sea level. This area has plenty of local medicinal plants and is well-preserved with a vast variety of plants.



Land Use Map of Pa Kia Village, Tha Kho Subdistrict, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province



The community has divided this forest area into two parts. The first 215 rai is for everyday use, such as building houses and foraging for forest products, foods, and herbs. The remaining 1,800 rai is a conserved watershed forest, which shall not be used for any benefits. The resource management committee of Ban Pa Kia consists of 19 members, whose responsibility is to manage the forest use in compliance with the following rules and regulations:

Regulations on the management of arable land, natural resources, and environment

- The community must clearly define the forest areas and put up the community forest boundary signs.
- The villagers can collect different types of wild plants but must use them to the maximum benefit.
- Outsiders are prohibited from cutting or taking wood from the community forest area.
- Using any substances that can affect the aquatic ecosystem is strictly prohibited. Any violation will be subject to a fine of 1,000–5,000 baht.
- Anyone who deliberately causes a fire in the forest, or a plantation of others will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht, in addition to paying for the damage compensation as claimed (in the case of agricultural burning, there must be a sufficient line of fire protection between the burning area and the adjacent places).
- Everyone in the community must abide by the established rules and regulations governing the use of the village's arable land.
- Taking wood out of the forest area is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and the wood will be confiscated (if the case cannot be settled by the village, it will be taken to court for legal proceedings).

Regulations on the use of arable land

- Every family is required to publicly disclose the amount of land they use.
- Expanding land for arable purposes is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and the land will be confiscated (if the case cannot be settled by the village, it will be taken to court for legal proceedings).
- Selling arable land to outsiders is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 500 baht and the land will be confiscated to use as a usable forest area.

Regulations for the usable forest area

- Agricultural activities are strictly prohibited in the usable forest area. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and the land will be confiscated.
- Outsiders are prohibited from cutting or taking wood from the community forest area. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and the wood will be confiscated to use for public benefit (if the case cannot be settled by the village, it will be taken to court for legal proceedings).
- If a community member needs to use wood to build a house, they have to notify the village committee first, so that the committee can investigate the request and decide whether such use should be allowed or not. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and the wood will be confiscated to use for public benefit (if the case cannot be settled by the village, it will be taken to court for legal proceedings).

Regulations for the protected forest area

- Cutting and burning forests and doing agricultural activities in the protected forest area are strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht and the area will be confiscated
- Villagers are allowed to forage for wild plants, foods, and herbs to use.
- Fishing in the protected forest area is strictly prohibited. Anyone who violates the rule will be fined 1,000–5,000 baht

Ban Pa Kia’s determination to conserve the community forests was also reflected in their activity in August 2017, where the community filed a petition to declare its forest area as a “medicinal herb and habitat conservation area” according to the Protection and Promotion of Traditional Thai Medicine Wisdom Act B.E. 1999. Later, the Minister of Public Health approved the management plan for the protection of herbs according to that Act in September 2021. After that, Ban Pa Kia community received a 2022 budget from the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine in the amount of 435,120 baht to carry out activities, which consisted of three plans and eight measures.



First, a medicinal herb and habitat conservation committee was appointed. The roles and responsibilities of the committee included establishing regulations on the use of herbs in the conservation areas, organizing community meetings to ask for the village's consensuses, making signs to indicate the community boundaries, organizing activities to raise awareness about herbs, creating a trail to explore conservation herbs and printing placards of information about medicinal plants, cultivating and promoting the herbs, establishing a herbal learning center, producing media to spread knowledge about herbs to the public, and supporting workshop activities to create added value for medicinal plants.

The community forest area of Ban Pa Kia is classified as a conservation forest, zone C, preserved primarily as open areas and as watersheds and wildlife reserves. There are two types of forests in the area, which are a dry dipterocarp forest and a dry evergreen forest, standing at an altitude of 500–800 meters above sea level. The species diversity index in the area is relatively high when compared with other dry dipterocarp forests, and the diversity index in the dry evergreen forest is slightly higher than in the dry dipterocarp forest. More than 162 types of local herbs are found there, including Wanhomdeang, Chakhan Pum, Krua Ngoo Hao, Plai Dam, Jikook, and Kambit. Villagers in the Pa Kia community still rely mainly on plants and herbs to treat primary illnesses such as headaches, fever, pains, and fractures, and also still have faith in folk healers' treatment¹

Agroforestry, or integrated farming system, is a form of agroecological approach that shifts land use patterns from traditional farming systems to sustainable farming systems. It is a harmonious combination of perennial and agricultural activities that balance the economic, social, and environmental aspects of a piece of land. This can happen at the plot, farm, watershed, regional, or national level. Agroforestry is the efficient use of the resources available in an area, including those above the ground such as light, air, and water, and those under the ground such as water and nutrients. It helps to restore soil fertility by recirculating nutrients from trees and conserving soil and water. As a result, the area provides a diverse and sustainable production of lumber, firewood, supplementary sources, animal feeds, fibers, and herbs, which can help reduce the production cost at the farms.

¹ Absorn Wittayapraparat. 2022. Protection of Medicinal Herb and Habitat Conservation Area of Pa Kia Community in the Huay Nam Khun Royal Project Development, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province. Highland Research and Development Institute (Public Organization). Available at <https://www.hrdi.or.th/Articles/Detail/1511>. Accessed on 12 September 2022.

Examples of agroforestry are planting multipurpose trees in agricultural areas, planting trees together with horticulture, planting perennials on a canal, growing crops in a tree plantation, planting trees against the wind, planting shrubs in a meadow, planting trees along a fish pond, multi-layered canopy planting, raising farm animals, making versatile wooden fence in an integrated farming area, and managing land, plants and animals together.



The original corn planting area of Mr. Manop Bunyuenkun 20 years ago (left), which is now a revived forest (right), where Mr. Manop has planted a variety of crops, fruits, and perennial plants according to the agroforestry approach.

In the Pa Kia community, the agroforestry group (sustainable agriculture) was established in 2005. At present, it has 18 family members with a group management structure. The group has organized activities to educate the community members and those who are interested continuously. An example of a successful area of the Pa Kia community is the farm of Mr. Manop Bunyuenkun, the village headman of Ban Pa Kia, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province. Mr. Manop experimented by quitting corn farming and turning to agroforestry instead. At first, the villagers were misunderstood as being lazy and not wanting to do agriculture, but after 20 years of effort, the former corn farming area of 20 rai has revived from a bald mountain to a forest with vegetables, fruits, and trees that can be used in the household. As a result, the family could reduce their household expenses, because they did not have to buy food ingredients from the market and could even sell fruits, vegetables, and plants from their farm. This is one of the concrete examples of an alternative lifestyle on the highland agricultural route.

The Alternative Tourism and Ban Pa Kia Homestay

Pa Kia village has welcomed tourists who have come to experience the local lifestyles and culture of the community. ‘Ban Pa Kia Homestay’ was established in 2013 by 12 family members who understood the concept of alternative tourism. They share their indigenous local knowledge with particular groups of tourists, while also providing food and accommodation services for them.

“Alternative tourism” means hosting a visit for a particular group of tourists rather than a big tourist group or frequent group. Since Ban Pa Kia is an agricultural community, farming is still the main source of income for the people there, while



homestay is just an alternative source of income. And with their agricultural lifestyles and farming routines, sometimes the community members may not be able to accept visitors. The important objective of this tourist management is to allow the guests to learn about the indigenous local culture and lifestyles of the high mountain communities, which agrees with the requirement of the guests and the limitation of the hosts. We found that most of the guests who had visited Ban Pa Kia were academic groups, community development organizations from other regions, networks of indigenous groups in Thailand and other countries, and those who want to learn about the history and culture of Thailand’s indigenous northern communities.

The main activities of Ban Pa Ka Homestay include experiencing the ways of life of Akha and Lahu people, trekking across the community forest, waterfall, and rice terraces, learning about the philosophy of sufficiency economy, learning about Akha and Lahu’s herbal medication, and learning how the community manages their natural resources in the indigenous ways.

As of 2022, the rates of the homestay services at Ban Pa Kia are 150 baht/night/person for the accommodation, 150 baht/meal/person for the food, 200 baht for a guided tour within the community, 800 baht/day for a guided tour in the forest, 300–800 baht for the transportation to the waterfall and other trekking destinations, 1,000–1,500 baht for the indigenous cultural performance, and 200 baht for the maintenance fee of the learning center.

There are 14 family members in Ban Pa Kia Homestay in 2022. The homestay has a management system and consists of various organizational units, including the president and vice president of the group and the committees responsible for house allocation, finance, public relations, and learning program management. Regarding the house allocation, each household will be used as the accommodation for guests in rotation. Their income after deducting all expenses will be split into three parts: 1) 90% will go to the host family, 2) 5% will go to the homestay group for management purposes, and the remaining 5% will go to the community for public benefits.

Ban Pa Kia Homestay has been certified according to Thailand Homestay Standard by the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports since 2013. There is a quality and standard inspection by government agencies every three years and Ban Pa Kia has managed to renew its standard certificate every three years until now.





As already mentioned above Ban Pa Kia uses a concept of alternative tourism, to visit the community, you will have to contact the homestay in advance to tell them about your interests and the activities you want to experience from the community.

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Visit Facebook page at <https://cmu.to/kUkv1>



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