



## Research Article

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# The Beliefs and Aesthetics of Isaan Heritage Trees

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## Abstract

This article is a part of a Doctoral Thesis titled "Isaan Heritage Tree: From the Belief and the Aesthetic to the Creation of Visual Arts," with the objectives of studying the belief and the aesthetic that exist in the Isaan Heritage Tree using the qualitative method. The study's target groups can be divided into three following groups: the experts, the practitioners, and the related people. The area of study is in the Isaan region. The region is divided into upper Isaan, mid-Isaan, and lower Isaan. The research tools consist of surveys, non-participatory observation, and structured and non-structured interviews. The data collected from documents and field data was analyzed using Aesthetic Theory and Symbolic Interactionism Theory and presented using descriptive analysis. The study results show that Isaan has a long history and development both in geography, the administration, society, the culture, and the migration of people who came to settle in the area from Luang Phrabang, Vientiane, and Champasak. This had caused the people and nation's coming together and led to social management, which consists of regulations, religion, and belief. The beliefs of the Isaan people are connected to forest spirits, household spirits, or tree spirits. Five following characteristics of the Heritage Trees were also found: 1) The traditional beliefs related to the Heritage Trees of Isaan. 2) The new belief. 3) The beliefs that are connected to the locations. 4) The beliefs in the tree spirits whose identity and gender cannot be identified. 5) Auspicious and inauspicious beliefs. There are three aspects for the aesthetics: Aesthetic elements are the feeling of amazement due to the gigantic size filled with astonishment, mystery, and the fear of power. The interesting aspects of Art elements are the unity and relationship to the seasons, such as the Fall season, Rainy Season, and the blooming of flowers that contribute to the changes in the aesthetics changes. The visual art elements consist of six following components; bodies and shapes, lines, colors, textures, light and shadows, and area. It was found that the gigantic size and height cause amazements to the viewers. The physical lines of the Isaan Heritage trees were the lines along the trunks, the lines on the branches, and the lines that go along the leaves and flowers. There are different colors of the trunk, the leaves, and the flowers. The texture was rough, harsh, and the cracks follow the same directions as the trunk. There are botanical differences in the light and shadows of the heritage trees. As for the area, there are differences between the area of the heritage trees and the surrounding areas, as well as the differences within the Isaan Heritage Trees area.

**Keywords:** Isaan Heritage Trees, beliefs, aesthetic

## 1. Introduction

Isaan has a long history and development in geography, politics, administrations, society, and culture. This can be seen from the cultural traces that was once flourished in pre-historic times, around 3600 pre-Buddhist Era, or around 5,500 years ago. From the historical site of Ban Chiang, Nong Han district, Udonthani province (Thatsanasuwan, 1981) until the creation of the Dvaravati Kingdom, Khot Tra Boon Kingdom, and the occupy of Isaan by the Khmer people who migrated from Mon, or what is also known as Khmer (Srisuworanan, 1996). Apart from this, this area is related to the survival and movement of the people who came to live in Thailand's Isaan region. There are three migration routes for people who migrated to Thailand: 1. migration route from Luang Phrabang 2. migration route from Vientiane, and 3. migration route from Chumpasak (Sriruksa, 2013).

When people from different nations came together, the social and cultural system was created. The fact that people lived together within a clear area or boundary for a certain period of time created the regulations and patterns of their relationship through connectedness, reliance, and livelihood (Polsri, 2002). The continuous co-existence of people both in their individual groups and different groups helped create the culture and determine the relationship that benefits one another and creates happiness within the livelihood of the people (Dhampanta, 1997). As for Isaan people's beliefs, Isaan people have the beliefs connected to the forest spirits, household spirits, and spirits within the trees, which are all ancient Isaan beliefs. Isaan people were called "Tai Noi." Wherever they tried to find an area to settle their families down, they would choose an appropriate area near the forest. They would do a ceremony to set up a spirit house called "Pu Ta" or "Don Pu Ta" as a guardian spirit who would protect the village, its people, and its animals. There would be an annual ceremony to pay respect to the Pu Ta shrine called "Liang Pu." ceremony. Isaan people also believe in the spirits in big trees such as Padauk Tree or Iron Wood Tree. Those were big trees which no one dared to cut down. People were scared of the spirits within these trees. Even in Buddhism, part of the Kuddhakanikaya scripture also mentioned a story of a monk who went into a forest to cut down trees. As he was cutting down trees with an ax, he accidentally chopped off the head of one of the angels' son. The angel, who was the mother, cried when she came back and saw her son. She went to see the Buddha. The Buddha called the monk in and found out that it was the truth. From then, he forbid any monk to go into the forest to cut down trees for building their houses. Whoever cut any trees is also violating the regulations (Phra Ariyanuwat Khemachari, 1993). The Ministry of Culture saw the important value of these natural resources, which is crucial to the social environment, had collected the information of the trees with important history and meanings in a book called "The Trees of Siam: Treasures of the Land under the Royal Benevolence of his Majesty the King." The books were printed to honor King Rama X. There are 65 trees in the books from every region of Thailand. The criteria for choosing and providing the meaning for the heritage trees were the gigantic size, the age of more than one hundred years old, have historical importance, related to the myths or stories, grow in important cultural areas or important sites, are consistent with the surrounding ecosystem, and trees of rare species of or almost extinct species. From the criteria, twelve trees were identified in Isaan, which consist of Yang Na Pu Ta trees in Khon Kaen province, Ma Kham Lai Sil trees in Surin Province, Ta Kian Thong Phun Pee trees in Nakhon Ratchasima province, Sai Ngam trees in Nakhon Ratchasima province, Pheung Chiang Yai trees in Loei Province, Som Hong Dum Yai trees in Ubonratchathani province, Ma Muang Prasart Muang Tam trees in Buriram province, Kawao Yai trees in Chaiphum, Ngiew Pha trees in Mahasarakham province, Ancient Tabaek trees in Amnart Charoen province, Kham Chanod forest in Udonthani province, and Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees in Ubonratchathani province (Ministry of Culture, 2017).

Apart from the strategies of the Royal Forest Department of 2016-2021 under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment on the topics of the protection, prevention, the restoration of forest area, and the declaration of the preserved areas, other policies related to the importance of the natural resources were also put in place. These policies consist of the preservation of fragile areas that are important as ecosystem areas, create connecting areas to the forest, support the principle of people

living together with the forest, support the community forest management, encourage the planting of trees and forest, especially in family level and community level under the appropriate concept and supporting mechanism such as the treebank or planting trees as a way to pay off debt.

From the above history and importance, the researcher saw that the study of the Isaan Heritage Trees in Thailand would provide the basic information in the historical aspect, the beliefs, the aesthetics, as well as the current status of Isaan Heritage Trees and the interaction between the current society in different aspects. The information will provide the knowledge in the preservation and the development of the heritage in the form of trees that have limited scope due to the botanical characteristics, the beliefs, and the rituals that can be applied and created to fit in with the current social context.

## 2. Objectives

To study the belief and the aesthetic that exists in the Isaan Heritage Trees.

## 3. Methodology

From the study of the belief and aesthetic of Isaan Heritage Trees with the objectives of studying the belief and aesthetic of Isaan with the qualitative research method, the researcher had divided the target group by focusing on the people who are related to the Isaan Heritage trees into three groups. The first group is the experts, which consist of knowledgeable people from the government and the private sector who are directly related to the study of the Isaan Heritage Trees. The second group is the practitioners, consisting of ritual leaders in the community, the local wise men, and people who participated in the rituals. The last group is the general people in the area surrounding the Heritage Trees area, such as the merchants and the tourists. The area of study is the Isaan region, which was divided into upper Isaan, central Isaan, and lower Isaan. The research tools were surveys, non-participant observation, and non-structured interviews. The data collection consists of two parts: the data from documents and the interviews in the area. The Aesthetic Theory and Symbolic Interactionism Theory were used to analyze the data and presented using the Descriptive Analysis method.

## 4. Result of the Study

### 4.1 *The Belief in Isaan Heritage Trees*

The meaning of the word belief could be explained as the respect towards the Isaan Heritage Trees or the surrounding the Isaan Heritage Trees of each individual, which was expressed through the physical and spoken manners, as well as the rituals such as offerings that reflect the acceptance of nature and the supernaturals. From the study, it was found that the beliefs that are related to the Heritage Trees consist of both traditional beliefs and the creation of new beliefs under the current social context using the framework of Patrapanupat (1985), Poonnotok (1993), and Kitsuwat (1992). These helped categorized the beliefs into five categories: 1) traditional beliefs, 2) the creation of new beliefs, 3) the beliefs related to places, 4) the beliefs in the spirits with identified personalities and gender, and those unidentifiable, and 5) auspicious and inauspicious.

Traditional beliefs are the passing down of myths and stories of things among the Heritage Trees. These beliefs can be seen from the history of Chao Mae Sai Ngam in Sai Ngam Park, Nakhon Ratchasima province. According to the story, Chao Mae Sai Ngam was a beautiful lady who lived in Siriburi city, currently Surin and Buriram province. She was the youngest of the three sisters. She died due to a shipwrecked while accompanying her father on trade along the Mun River. The area where the ship went down was an area with a strong current and many Sai trees (Banyan trees) along the banks. It was believed that her spirit had been inhabiting the Sai trees for centuries (Pholsawek, 2002). As for the

belief towards Takhian Thong Phun Pee Tree in Nakhon Ratchasima, it was believed that there is a spirit who resides inside the tree while protecting its forest, the villagers, the people of Serng Sang, as well as giving the lottery numbers for those who have faith. The traces of the prayers from the spirit can be seen in the remains of the powder and scrubs around the tree trunk by those who seek luck (Arthan, T, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The belief in Yang Na Pu Ta tree in Khon Kaen came from the respect people have for the trees believing that this is where their ancestors' spirits reside. Additionally, there are also beliefs that are related to Buddhism, which can be seen in the carvings of the Semas since the Thavaravadee era, which is the belief in the mango tree that was carved into the Sema telling the story about the twin miracle from a Chinese temple in Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya province. It was the carving of the mango tree that the Buddha used when performing the twin miracle. The tree was decorated with necklaces and other kinds of decorations and cloths tied around the tree, which shows the respect that people had during the Thavaravadee era (Thamrungraeng, 2003). This belief can be linked to the belief in Mamuang Prasart Muang Tam in Buriram province.

The creation of new beliefs is the creation of beliefs based on traditional beliefs—for example, the ritual where people pray to the Som Hong Dum Yai tree in Ubonratchathani. Following that many people came to pray for the blessings and many prayers were granted, a sign with the inscription of a specific prayer was installed, thus creating a new kind of practice. Another example would be the tradition of couples putting padlocks on the railings around the Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees tree in Ubonratchathani as symbols of love. This had given a new meaning to the Heritage Tree and the surrounding area. It was assumed that the new tradition was influenced by the N Seoul Tower in South Korea and the Love Key Ceremony there. People can leave a note or their lover's name on the padlocks and then put the padlock on the metal fence. The keys were thrown away. It was believed that if the lovers come to visit this place and put their padlocks there, their love will last forever, and they will never be apart.



**Figure 1.** The creation of a new belief in the Heritage Tree

The beliefs connected to the place are the combination of the Heritage Trees overlapping with the area's existing beliefs. This can be seen in the Ancient Tabaek trees in Amnart Charoen province. This area has a line of Tabaek trees within the community forest as well as the Don Pu Ta area, where many Semas from the Thavaravadee era were found. This fact had caused this area to become a sacred ground for villagers to come and pay respect since they also believe there are spirits residing in the ancient Tabaek trees. Another area is the Khum Chanod forest in Udonthani, according to the Ministry of Culture declaration in 2017, which had combined all Chanod trees on the island. According to the belief, it is believed that this sacred forest is related to two Nagas, Srisutthonakharaj Naga and Phayasuwannakharaj, who were friends but, later on, started fighting with each other. God Indra learned about the fight and decided to come down to stop it by creating a river for each naga to fight. Srisutthonakharaj Naga won the fight and asked for three pathways between the underwater world and the human world. One of the pathways is here at Kham Chanod forest, where God Indra allowed the naga to build a city along with his servants. The Chanod trees were planted there as a symbol of the Phrom Prakai Lok. Additionally, the bark of the Chanod trees is similar to the scale on the nagas. This

had caused the trees to represent the Nagas and create fear for those who have faith.

The belief on the Heritage Tree with spirits with identifiable personality and gender or those unidentifiable. The belief in the tree spirits with identifiable personality and gender can be found at Sau Ngam forest with Chao Mae Sai Ngam. A shrine was built for people to come to pray for their blessings. In 2009, Phra Suphunkanlaya shrine was also built in the area. According to the villagers, Phra Suphunkanlaya, King Naresuan's older sister, came to the area to visit the people and possessed a merchant. People were all anxious, knowing that it was Phra SPhunkanlaya that they built her a shrine. In 2013, three Chanod trees from Kham Chanod forest were planted there. Pu Ta shrine was also built for Srisutthonakharaj and Chao Ya Sripathummanaki. The same kind of spirit can also be found in Takhian Song Phun Pee in Nakhon Ratchasima province. It is believed that a spirit of Chao Mae Takhian Thong, a female spirit, resides within the trees, protecting the people of Soeng Sang District and bless the people who came to pay respects while granting their wish. Yang Na Pu Ta Trees in Khon Kaen also consists of the belief that Ta Pha Khao, or the ancestral ghosts, in the form of a giant snake, resides within the tree. As for the spirit whose personalities and genders cannot be identified, mainly revolving around the belief that tree spirits or household spirits residing in the trees, which can be found in Kawao Yai Tree in Chaiyaphum province, Pheung Chiang Yai Tree in Loei province, Som Hong Dum Tree in Ubonratchathani, and Ma Muang Muang Prasart Tam in Buriram province.

Auspicious and Inauspicious are the Heritage trees that either bring good things or the opposite to the place and the people. This type of belief can be found at Makham Lai Sil Tree in Surin province. According to the ancient belief, if Makham trees (tamarind trees) are planted within the house, they will give wealth to the owner of the house, as well as granting the owner with long life and good health, just like the trees themselves. Additionally, people will fear and respect the owners just like they do with the trees. There are also some taboos surrounding the use of tamarind trees, according to the Lanna belief. If tamarind woods are used for incinerating the dead bodies, the bodies will rise up. Throwing tamarind wood into coffins is another taboo since they believe that the corpse will sit up and scared the people (Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture, Chiang Mai University, 2017). Additionally, planting tamarind trees within the area of the house can make others respect and fear the owners, and the trees should be planted towards the west (Poonnotok, 1985). This belief can also be found at Ngiew Pha tree in Maha Sarakham province. This tree is another kind of tree that has inauspicious meaning and should not be planted inside a house. When someone passed away in the old days, the trees will be cut down to make coffins for the dead. Therefore, people believe that if anyone plants the Ngiew tree inside the house, they are condemning themselves, or having the trees inside the house is like preparing their own coffins.

#### 4.2 *Aesthetics in Isaan Heritage Trees*

Aesthetics mean the feeling of beauty, beautiful Figures in the thoughts or in the brains, the perception of beauty that can be touched or perceived differently in each individual; the beauty that might be from the sounds, the imagination, the letters, or other senses. The source of aesthetics can be natural objects or artistic objects. The researcher had used the aesthetics framework by John Dewey (1987) cited in Palaratana (2008) and Soonpongsri (2012), which categorized the words that related to aesthetic elements and led to the explanation of the cause of aesthetics in three categories: Aesthetic elements, Art elements, and Visual Art elements.

Aesthetic elements mean the results that are the basis or the detail of the aesthetics from all branches of arts and nature that are shown to create feelings. Elements mean the primary cause or the subunits that help create aesthetics. From the study of the aesthetics in Isaan Heritage Trees, it was found that there are aesthetics from the amazement of the gigantic size of the Heritage Trees such as the Takhian Thong Phun Pee in Nakhon Ratchasima province and Pheung Tree in Loei province, with the circumference of 22 meters or the counting of the Chanod trees in Kham Chanod forest in Udonthani that create the feelings of astonishment, the mystery, and reverence to all visitors who came to this forest. Additionally, the barks of the trees are also similar to the scales of the nagas, which are

the mythical beings of the Isaan people, which cause the visitors an inevitable feeling of fear and formidable from some type of power. Also, there is also a miracle of another Heritage Tree, which is the Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees in Ubonratchathani province. The two trees submerge under the Mekong river during the rainy season for eight months every year. The more amazing thing is that the trees are over three hundred years old.



**Figure 2.** The physical size of the Isaan Heritage Trees

Art elements are the different parts that are the primary cause of the aesthetics that every branch of arts need to consider and be aware of. These elements are used as a direction or principle to achieve the objectives which can be evaluated. In the study of the Isaan Heritage Trees, it was found that there are some interesting art elements in the aspect of harmony, which can clearly be found at Sai Ngam Park in Nakhon Ratchasima province. The curling together of the big, medium, and small branches of the Banyan trees according to the natural rhythm the way they should be, the big and small aerial roots hanging down to the ground, reflect the aesthetics of perfect harmony and a beautiful rhythm when the ray of the sun touches the branches and form magnificent moving lines. These elements also include the characteristics of the branches on the Ancient Tabaek trees in Amnart Charoen province. When the trees shed leaves, and the leaves fall to the ground according to the time of nature, leaving only empty big and small empty branches in the air with the bright sky as a background, causing the visitors to be impressed. The trees' positions are also following the ancient Khmer architectures' surrounding area, similar to the Ma Muang Prasart Muang Tam trees, which bring out their uniqueness.



**Figure 3.** The Art Elements in the Isaan Heritage Trees

Visual art elements are different components of beauty that can be seen as the primary cause of all things and the factors that helped create the aesthetics that are used and create the aesthetics in the art creations. The beauty analysis consists of six components: the shapes, lines, textures, light and shadows, and area. The study of the Isaan Heritage Trees found that the interesting visual arts elements in terms of harmony can clearly be found in Sau Ngam Park in Nakhon Ratchasima province. The

curling together of the big, medium, and small branches of the Banyan trees according to the natural rhythm the way they should be, the big and small aerial roots hanging down to the ground, reflect the aesthetics of perfect harmony and a beautiful rhythm when the ray of the sun touches the branches and form magnificent moving lines. These elements also include the characteristics of the branches on the Ancient Tabaek trees in Amnart Charoen province. When the trees shed leaves, and the leaves fall to the ground according to the time of nature, leaving only empty big and small empty branches in the air with the bright sky as a background, causing the visitors to be impressed. The trees' positions are also in accordance with the surrounding area of the ancient Khmer architectures, similar to the Ma Muang Prasart Muang Tam trees, which bring out their majestic nature.

- 1) Shapes of the Isaan Heritage Trees. The Isaan Heritage trees are at least one hundred years old, which gives them their gigantic sizes and heights and caught the visitors' eyes. The botanical data shows that the biggest Banyan tree has a circumference of nine meters, thirty-five meters tall, and more than 500 years old. The trees cover the Thung Samrit Water Transmission and Maintenance Project area in Phimai district, Nakhon Ratchasima province, of more than thirty-five thousand square feet. They are also considered the biggest *Ficus Benjamina* L. Banyan trees in South East Asia (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2009). The Takhian Thong tree, which is more than one thousand years old that requires thirteen people to put their arms around the whole trunk with a circumference of 12 meters and fifty meters tall. The Royal Forestry Department had registered the Takhian Thong tree as the biggest tree in Thailand (Ministry of Culture, 2017). The Som Hong Dum Yai tree, with a circumference of seven meters and forty meters tall, majestically stands at Dum Yai temple. Also, Yang Na Pu Ta tree with a circumference of seven meters, thirty meters tall, and over three hundred years old.
- 2) The lines on the Isaan Heritage Trees' analysis show that the outer lines, the main lines on the trunk, the lines on the braches, leaves, and flowers form complicated but unified patterns that cannot be separated.



**Figure 4.** The lines formed in the Isaan Heritage Trees

- 3) Lines. Isaan Heritage Trees contains varieties of colors. The trucks contain different colors. Dark brown color can be found on Yang Na Pu Ta trees, Makhm Lai Sil trees, Takhian Thong Phun Pee tree, Som Hong Dum Yai tree, Ma Muang Prasart Muang Tam trees, Ngiew Pha trees, Chanod trees, and Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees. The white, gray, and cream colors

can be found in Ancient Tabaek trees, Pheung Chiang Yai trees, and Kawao Yai trees. The leaves are all green with different shades and intensities, from light green to dark green. As for the colors of flowers, the flowers of Ngiew Pha are orange, Yang Na Pu Ta flowers are green and red. Makhham Lai Sil and Kawao Yai flowers are yellow, pink, red, and green. Som Hong Dum flowers are orange and yellow. Wha Nam flowers, Mamaung Prasart Muang Tam flowers, and Tabaek flowers are white, pink, and cream. Pheung Yai Chiang Yai flowers are pink.

- 4) Texture. The textures of the Isaan Heritage Trees are clearly different, especially the texture of the trunks. Ancient Tabaek trees have smooth texture with clear circle patterns along the trunks. Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees, Pheung Chiang Yai trees, Yang Na Pu Ta trees, Mamuang Prasart Muang Tam trees, Ngiew Pha trees, Kawao Yai trees, have a low rough texture. Makhham Lai Sil trees have cracks that go in the same direction of the trunk, hence the name Lai Sil (artistic pattern). Chanod trees have patterns similar to the mythical beings, the nagas.
- 5) Light, shades, and shadows. The light, shades, and shadows of the Isaan Heritage Trees are different due to the botanical, physical, and shape differences. The light, shades, and shadows, therefore, produce different types of beauty.
- 6) Space. The study shows that the Isaan Heritage Trees locations are in temples, schools, Don Pu Ta, Thab Lan National Park, Muang Tam ancient ruins, natural sites along the Mekong river, and Kham Chanod forest. The low density of the Heritage Trees to the surrounding areas create a sense of relaxation, comfort, and shadiness, such as Ngiew Pha trees, Makhham Lai Sil trees, Kawai Yai trees, Mamuang Prasart Muang Tam trees, Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees, and Ancient Tabaek trees. The sense of supernatural power can be felt from Takhian Thong Phun Pee tree at Thab Lan National Park. The density of the surrounding trees also creates a feeling of solitude and fear of unseen beings. The Pheung Chiang Yai that grows in the community graveyard also creates the same feeling. The area of Chanod trees creates a sense of sacred and mystery, abstract beings that bring fear and respect. The shapes of the Isaan Heritage Trees depend on the branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, and the period when the trees shed leaves. These botanical characteristics of the Isaan Heritage Trees affect the aesthetic perceptions of the visitors.

## 5. Discussion

The results from the study of the belief and aesthetics of the Isaan Heritage Trees show varieties of beliefs from the traditional beliefs, the creation of new beliefs, the beliefs connected to specific areas, the belief in the spirit with identifiable personalities and genders, and the unidentifiable ones, and the belief in the auspicious and the inauspicious. These go in line with the study on the beliefs by Patrapanupat (1985), Punnotok (1993), and Kitsuwat (1992) who had categorized beliefs into the following categories: the belief in nature, the inseparable combination of different beliefs, the belief in ghosts and spirits, the belief in the natural surrounding that humans had received from their ancestors, and the belief in the auspicious and the inauspicious. It was found that the frameworks on the beliefs of the researchers above are connected. New beliefs had been created for the Isaan Heritage Trees. This can be found in Som Hong Dum Yai tree and the Eternal Love of Wha Nam trees in Ubonratchathani province, which led to the creation of sacred beliefs and the benefit to the tourism aspect. Additionally, the beliefs surrounding the Isaan Heritage Trees also go in line with the Symbolic Interactionism theory by George Herbert Mead (cited in Sanyavivat, 1991) that mentioned that human beings are symbols with different meanings and develop themselves from other's feelings or personalities. Symbols are the things that people collectively defined and caused human interactions with the ability to communicate and carry out the livelihood in the society. The belief in the Isaan Heritage Trees is another symbol that Isaan people collectively understand and can carry on their livelihood peacefully in society. The aesthetic aspect shows that natural forms can also be the source of aesthetics, which follows the Isaan



people's livelihood that still relies on nature. This goes in line with the aesthetic theory of John Dewey that mentioned experience as a source of knowledge. The interaction between living things and the ongoing natural surrounding. Every person has their own rhythm in life that determine the patterns and the possibility. Experience create artistic pieces, and artistic piece interacts with lives. Art in Dewey's meaning came from the experience that interacts with real-life through arts. This is the result of the connectedness and the interaction between humans and the environment (Palaratana, 2008). There are also aesthetic elements, art elements, and visual art elements in the Isaan Heritage Trees, which goes in line with the concept of Kamchorn Soonphongsri, who says that there are two sources of aesthetics: nature and work of arts. Aesthetics can also be explained through the following words: aesthetic elements, art elements, and visual art elements. The study also shows the new existence of aesthetic elements and art elements within the minds. Additionally, it is also a new discovery of visual art elements in the Isaan Heritage Trees that can be developed to create the researchers' visual arts. Therefore, Isaan Heritage Trees are important and valuable and should collaborate to preserve and protect them in order for them to exist within the Isaan society.

## 6. Conclusion

In the study of the belief and aesthetics of Isaan Heritage Trees with the objectives of studying the two aspects in the Isaan Heritage Trees, the conclusion of the study is as follows:

Isaan has a long history and development in geography, politics, administrations, society, and culture. This land had the connection to the livelihood and movement of people who came to the Northeastern region, or Isaan, of Thailand. The migration of the people who came to settle here consisted of three routes: 1. Migration from Luang Phrabang 2. Migration from Vientiane and 3. Migration from Champasak. When there were people from a different nation living together, a new society and culture were formed. When people lived together within a clear area or boundary for a certain period, it created the regulations and patterns of their relationship through the connectedness, reliance, and livelihood, which led to the social management in the regulations, religions, and beliefs. Isaan people's beliefs are connected to the forest spirits, household spirits, and tree spirits, which were all ancient beliefs. When finding the settlements for the villages and their livelihood, appropriate areas near forests were mostly chosen. Villagers will set up a shrine called Pu Ta, or Don Pu Ta, to be a place for the spirit to protect the village, the people, and the livestock. Pu Ta shrine required annual offerings through a ritual called "Liang Pu Ta." Isaan people also believe that there are ghosts or spirits living in the trees.

From the study of the Isaan Heritage Trees, the respect towards the Isaan Heritage trees can be expressed through different forms, such as through the bodies, words, and offerings. These reflect their respect for nature and the supernatural. The belief can be categorized into five categories of beliefs: 1) traditional belief, 2) new belief, 3) the belief connected to the locations, 4) the belief in the spirit with identifiable personalities and genders, and those unidentifiable, and auspicious and inauspicious beliefs.

The study on the aesthetics can be concluded as follows: 1) Aesthetic elements consist of the amazement from the gigantic size, the astonishments, the mystery, and formidable power for the visitors. 2) Art elements consist of harmony and aesthetics connected to the natural season that affects the changes in the perception of aesthetics by the visitors. 3) Visual art elements show the shapes and gigantic sizes that catch the eye of the visitors. The lines in the Isaan Heritage Trees are physical lines along the trunks, the lines formed by the branches, the leaves, and the flowers. For the colors, there are many shades of colors, starting from the colors of the trunks, the leaves, and the flowers. The texture of each tree is also different. Some have circular patterns throughout the trunk, some have rough textures, and some have cracks that run along with the trunks. The light, shade, and shadow are also different due to the differences in the botanical aspects. The space of the Isaan Heritage Trees can be categorized into two categories: The differences between the Isaan Heritage Tree area and the surrounding areas and the differences within the Isaan Heritage Trees area.

## 7. Suggestion

1. There should be a collection and compilation of the data on the important Isaan Heritage Trees in the communities and support the community in taking care and preserving the Isaan Heritage Tree to continue being within the Isaan society.
2. Future research should expand the scope of the research area to learn about the Heritage Trees in other parts of Thailand.

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