

*Exploring the Cultural and Historical Evolution of Siluo, Yunlin in Taiwan  
Through Feng Shui Theory*

Li-Yueh Chen, Weixin Shengjiao College, Taiwan  
Kuo-Ching Shih, Weixin Shengjiao College, Taiwan  
Chi-Lin Chang, Weixin Shengjiao College, Taiwan  
Kuo-Ying Yang, Weixin Shengjiao College, Taiwan

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**Abstract**

Siluo Township in Yunlin County is located in the mid-western region of Taiwan, with the Jhuoshuei River marking its northern boundary. The area boasts abundant water resources, flat and fertile land, and a mild climate. Since the 17th century, the reclamation efforts by local indigenous people and settlers from Fujian and Guangdong provinces in mainland China have turned Siluo into a culturally rich area, which has developed into one of Taiwan's major rice and vegetable production regions. In Feng Shui theory, the shapes, undulations, meanders, and flows of mountains and rivers are key indicators of the potential for human prosperity. However, in the study of cultural history, these aspects are rarely explored from a Feng Shui perspective. This paper aims to examine why the early settlers congregated in specific areas of Siluo from both historical and Feng Shui viewpoints. It will also investigate how the temples established by these settlers have become centers of regional faith and economic activity. Additionally, the paper will observe the impact of past and present town planning on social and economic development through the lens of Feng Shui.

Keywords: Feng Shui, Historical Evolution, Siluo

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## Introduction

Yunlin County is located in the middle of Taiwan, and Siluo Township is one of the 20 townships in Yunlin County (Figure 1 & 2). It is located in the north-central part of Yunlin County, and is adjacent to Siluo River, the main stream of Jhuoshuei River), to the north. According to the ‘Siluo Township Chronicle’,<sup>1</sup> from the period of Dutch rule to the early Ching Dynasty, the main inhabitants of the Siluo area were mainly Pingpu. The name Siluo is a translation of the name of this place from the name given to it by the Babusas of the Pingpu tribe, the aboriginal people who lived on this piece of land. From the mid-Dutch rule period to the early Ching Dynasty, land traffic on the western plains of Taiwan, from today's Tainan City to Danshui, mainly from Dalivo (Taliwu Community, today's Dounan Township in Yunlin County), through Dovalj (Donghe Siluo Community, today's Beidou Township in Changhua County, and Siluo Township in Yunlin County) to the northern part of Taiwan. Therefore, Siluo was situated at the crossroads between the north and the south, and gradually the population gathered and became a place where immigrant farmers chose to live during the Ching Dynasty (Figure 3). However, although Siluo Township is located on the south bank of Taiwan's mother river, the Jhuoshuei River, and is blessed with the natural resources of the Jhuoshuei River, which makes the land fertile and rich, it is also affected by the flooding of the Jhuoshuei River. Siluo has developed into a major production area for rice, fruit and vegetable in Taiwan. In Feng Shui theory, the image, undulation, meandering, and flow of mountains and rivers are the key symbols of human prosperity and economic development, but in the study of humanities and history, it is seldom explored from the Feng Shui point of view. In this paper, we will use the intersection of humanities, history, and Feng Shui to explore the reasons for the ancestors to gather in Siluo, and to develop the folk beliefs and the economic centre, and we will also observe the impacts of the change of the current state of town on the socio-economic development of the society from the point of view of Feng Shui. The impact of changes in the town's status on its socio-economic development will also be observed from the perspective of Feng Shui.



Figure 1: Location Map of Yunlin County in Taiwan



Figure 2: Location Map of Siluo Township in Yunlin County



Figure 3: Land Traffic on the Western Plains of Taiwan

<sup>1</sup> Zheng Huiling et al. (2015). *Siluo Township Chronicle*. Yunlin County: Siluo Town Office.

## Humanistic Development and Folk Beliefs of Siluo

### *Siluo During the Ching Dynasty*

In the early days, Siluo was known as ‘Siluo Street’, and the earliest record of the name ‘Siluo Street’ appeared in the ‘Revised Chronicles of Taiwan Prefecture, Fujian’<sup>2</sup> compiled by Liu Liangbi in 1741 (the 6th year of the Chienlung period in the Ching Dynasty), and in the ‘Revised Chronicles of Taiwan Prefecture’<sup>3</sup> written by Fan Xian in 1746 (the 11th year of the Chienlung period in the Ching Dynasty), the three Siluo ferry crossings on the banks of Jhuoshuei River were the KU-LING-CHIAO Ferry, the DAI-LUN-JIAO Ferry, and the SHANG-DU-TOU Ferry, which indicated the significance of Siluo in the water and land transportation of the time. Between the end of the Kangxi period and the beginning of the Yongzheng period in the Ching Dynasty, Han Chinese immigrants formed a cluster in the Siluo River Ferry area called Siluo Harbor Village, and engaged in commercial activities with Siluo Business Village. In 1723 (the first year of the Yongzheng period in the Ching Dynasty), the local shopkeepers and residents pooled their funds to build Fuxing Temple (福興宮), which was dedicated to the Heavenly Mother for blessings of peace and safety, and therefore Fuxing Temple was the centre of local beliefs, and colonies were formed one by one in the vicinity and the area was known as the Old Street (Figure 4 & 5). According to the ‘Chienlung Taiwan Map’,<sup>4</sup> after the Jhuoshuei River was divided into three streams, Dong-Luo, Si-Luo, and Hu-Wei, after it emerged from the CHU-NIU-XIANG-CHU (the southern end of today's Bagua Mountain Terrace in Changhua County and the northern end of the CHU-KOU Terrace in Yunlin County), the river swings erratically, and Siluo Street, which is situated on both sides of the Siluo River, has been affected. The old street used to be in the eastern part of the present-day market, i.e., the centre of the Siluo River. The residents of Siluo gradually moved the market from east to west to avoid flooding.



Figure 4: Old Photo of Fuxing Temple



Figure 5: Current Photo of Fuxing Temple

In 1770 (the 35th year of the Chienlung period in the Ching Dynasty), the Heavenly Mother instructed the relocation of the Fuxing Temple, and the local gentry and shopkeepers jointly resolved to demolish the old temple on the east side of the street and build a new one on the

<sup>2</sup> Liu Liangbi. (1741). *Revised Chronicles of Taiwan Prefecture, Fujian*. Taipei: Bank of Taiwan Economic Research Office.

<sup>3</sup> Fan Xian. (1746). *Revised Chronicles of Taiwan Prefecture*. Taipei: Bank of Taiwan Economic Research Office.

<sup>4</sup> Chienlung Taiwan Map. (n.d.). Painted paper, 46 cm vertical and 675 cm horizontal. It should have been collected by the imperial court of the Ching Dynasty. It was originally collected by the Beijing Library and is managed by the Central Library. It is now in the National Palace Museum Library in Taipei.



south side of the street (today's Yan Ping Road.) In 1786 (the 51st year of the Chienlung period in the Ching Dynasty), there was an incident of anti-Ching Dynasty resistance initiated by Lin Shuang-Wen, a leader of Tien-Di-Gang, in which the residents of the temple prayed to the Heavenly Mother in the Fuxing Temple for her protection and peace. In the end, the incident subsided and the residents believed that it was the blessing of the Sea Goddess at Fuxing Temple that brought peace to the world, and later honoured the Heavenly Mother of Fuxing Temple as 'the Goddess of Peace'. Therefore, the development of Siluo Market Street was centred on Yan Ping Road, with 'New Street' (today's New Street Road) and 'Dark Street' (today's lanes and alleys behind the houses on Yan Ping Road) developing in succession. Population shifted along with land and water transport, and after the cluster of market buildings in the eastern part of Siluo, the population shifted from the north-eastern corner to the south-western side (Figure 6).

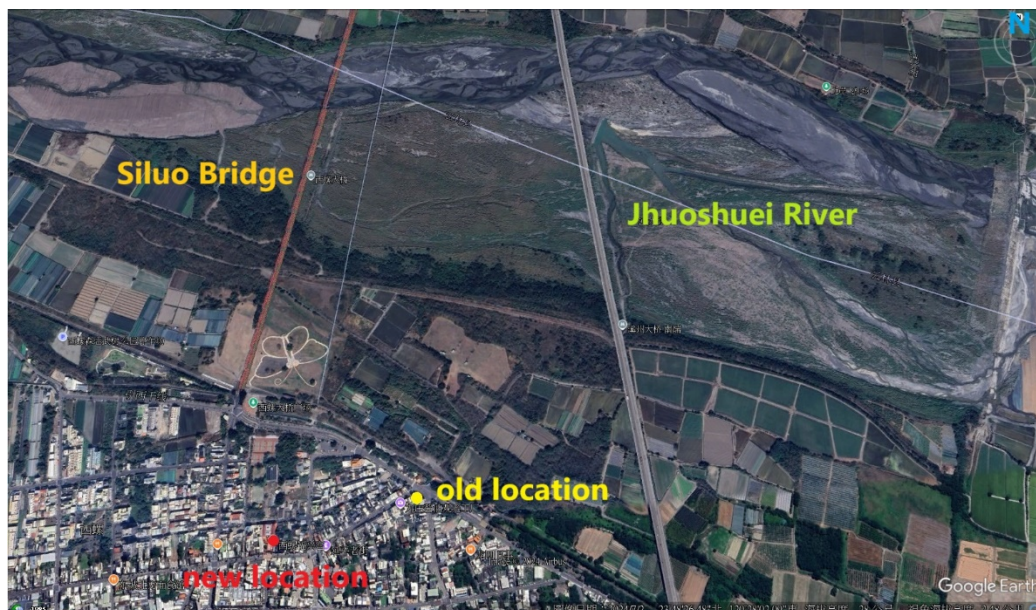


Figure 6 : Schematic Diagram of the Old and New Site of Fuxing Temple

### ***Siluo During the Japanese Colonial Period***

During the Japanese rule period, geographer Yoshiro Tomita (1895-1982) pointed out that Siluo was the centre of a triangular area bounded by the Siluo River, which diverges from the Jhuoshuei River, and the New Huwei River, and that it began to develop because it was situated at the crossing point of the river, and that the development of agriculture led to the formation of a rural city with commercial functions. During the Japanese colonial period, the streets in the Siluo district were widened and the shops in the district were rebuilt in the Showa period architectural style from 1937 onwards. According to the 'Siluo Visitor's Journal', as the development of traffic, transport and agriculture became more mature, Siluo formed a commercial street with the east-west liaison road as the main axis, and the street was divided into three districts from the bank of Siluo River, namely, the street head, the street belly, and the street tail. Street and the end of the street are respectively the river crossing, public transport and the day sugar club light bus track traffic station, the two ends of the street also provide agricultural tools, iron smelting and other agricultural-related shops, as well as groceries and catering and other services. At the centre of the street was the East Market, which by the end of the Japanese colonial period had developed into the West Market, which was located near the intersection of the Longitudinal Highway (Figure 7).

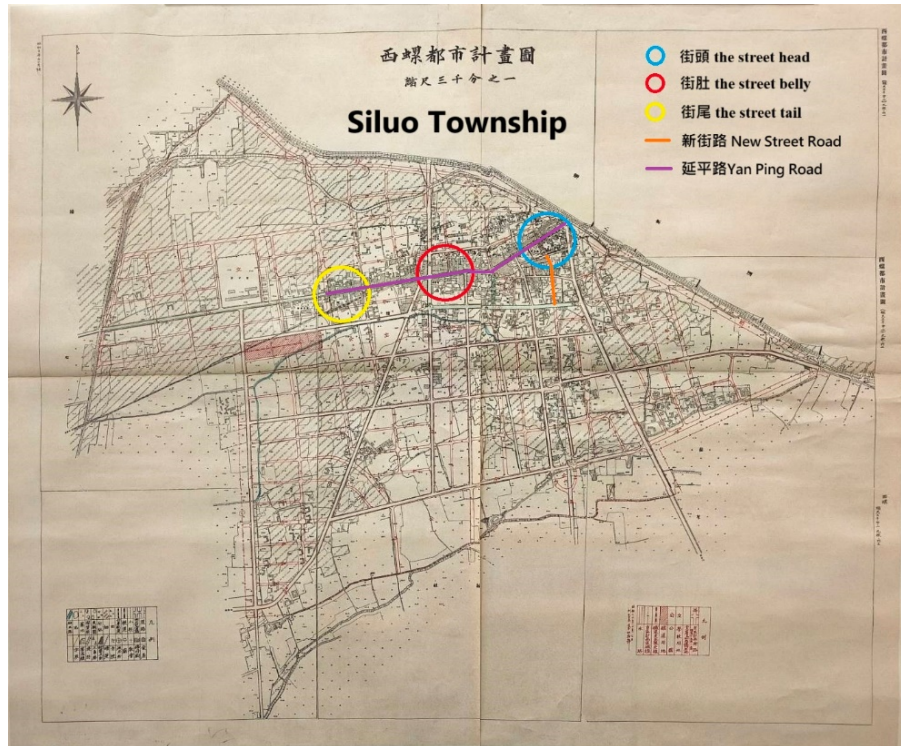


Figure 7: Siluo Township

The 176-kilometre-long Zhuoshuei River is the longest river in Taiwan, and its lower reaches form the natural boundary between Changhua County and Yunlin County, as well as separating the north-south traffic in Taiwan, thus forming Siluo as a key point for north-south traffic liaison since ancient times. During the Japanese rule, a bamboo raft station was set up to connect the north-south traffic. After the restoration of Taiwan, the government actively raised funds to continue the construction of the bridge project that was not completed during the Japanese rule, and Siluo Bridge was officially opened to traffic in 1953. However, the opening of the Zhongshan Expressway in 1978 reduced the number of vehicles travelling over Siluo Bridge. After that, the bridge was converted into a tourist attraction and a footpath was constructed to prohibit the passage of large vehicles (Figure 8, 9, 10).



Figure 8: Old Photo of Siluo Bridge



Figure 9: Current Photo of Siluo Bridge





Figure 10: Location of Siluo Bridge

### **Siluo, Where Humanity-Bound History and Geography-Bound Feng Shui Intersect**

From the development of Siluo's history mentioned above, it can be seen that Siluo was located at the lower reaches of Siluo River, the main stream of the Jhuoshuei River, and although it was affected by flooding in the early days, it was blessed with abundant water resources and fertile soil, which resulted in the production of abundant crops such as rice, vegetables, and fruits. In addition, it is located in the key north-south traffic area, and has the advantage of being in a favourable location, since ancient times, the ancestors came here to settle down, and there were many merchants and traders, which led to the formation of settlements and a number of centres of folk beliefs. From the perspective of geography and feng shui, the dragon of Yunlin County has three main dragons in the north, centre and south, which combine in various parts of Yunlin. The ancestral source of the dragon starts from the Yu Mountain, and rises from the Mei Mountain to the top of the Dajian Mountain (1,305m high), and the boundary site of the Zhushan Township, 'Ching Shui River,' follows the dragon's water, which stretches from the south to the north, to the CHU-KOU Terrace with the Bagua Mountain Hills, and the two streams of Ching Shui River and Jhuoshuei River converge here. This large prism and respectively to the west and east and then extended; the east for the Nantou County Jhushan Township, the west is Yunlin County. Yunlin County, the northern section of the dragon in the new Huwei River north bank to the south of the Jhuoshuei River, that is, Siluo Township, because the north side of the Jhuoshuei River from the central mountain range in Nantou County to the northern boundary site of Yunlin County, in order to collect the dragon's energy; the south side of the new Huwei River as a boundary to pocket the dragon's energy. This northern branch of the Dragon Vein because of its two streams of the boundary protection, the real dragon in the Bureau meandering to all parts of the knot work (Figure 11, 12).



Figure 11: The Jhuoshuei River and the Ancestral Source of the Dragon



Figure 12: Aerial Photo of Jhuoshuei River Basin

In the early days of urban development, waterways were preferred to landways. In terms of Taiwan's north-south geographical location, firstly, there was a ferry crossing to the east of Siluo, which was an important hub for north-south traffic across the Jhuoshuei River. Secondly, it is close to the centre of the triangle of Siluo River and New Huwei River, which are tributaries of Jhuoshuei River. From a broad perspective, the Yunlin-Changhua Plain is surrounded by mountains on the east side, just like our hands are holding it up, and Siluo is in the centre of this hinterland, so it was a very important production and distribution area for agricultural development during the Ching and Japanese rule periods. After the restoration of Taiwan, it is still the same today.

However, the subsequent development of Siluo has slowed down. For one thing, because the Jhuoshuei River flows westward from Nantou ShuiLi through Jiji, through the Bagua Mountain Range and Dajian Mountain to Huashan in Linnei Township, Yunlin County, and because there is a water outlet lock in the area mentioned above, the water flows into the plains of Yunlin and Changhua and leaks out to the sea directly after it flows through the area. As a result, the Siluo area lost the meandering water flow to lock up the water and air, so it could not develop and flourish as it did in the early days. Secondly, the soil along the Jhuoshuei River is fertile and suitable for farming, but because the Jhuoshuei River is prone to flooding, Siluo is the only town along the Jhuoshuei River where the population gathers. Geography and Feng Shui focuses on mountains and water, and the mountain and water



dragons emphasised the sinuousness, like the shape of a dragon or a snake, and a living dragon must have nine twists and turns, which means that the mountain dragon is very vital, and so is the water dragon, but the Jhuoshuei River here is like a pen leaking straight out of the river, and it lacks the vitality and vigour that is stressed in Feng Shui (Figure 13).

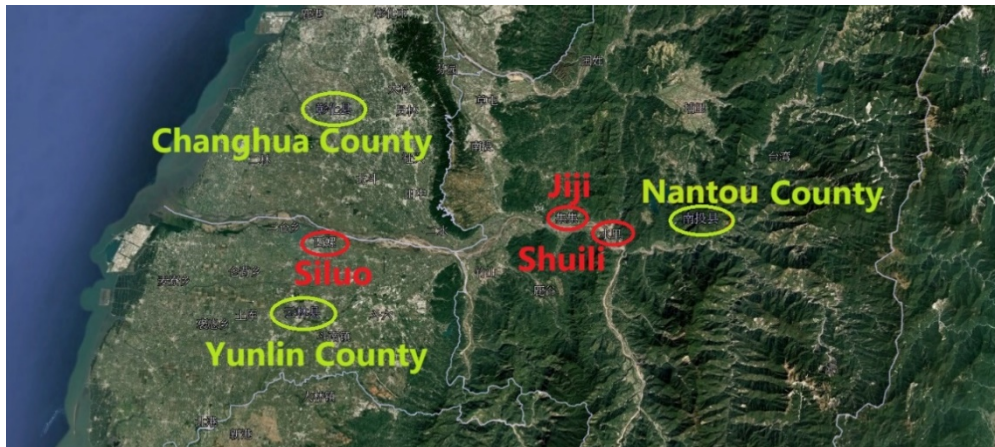


Figure 13: Aerial Photo of the Geographical Location of Jhuoshuei River

When it comes to the folk belief on cluster centre, this paper takes the Fuxing Temple as an example to explore. From the perspective of geography and feng shui, Fuxing Temple is situated in the north-south direction, with the Jhuoshuei River at the back; Yanping Street in front of it, and Fuxing Road in front of the temple. The temple is situated in a relatively low lying place, where the water from the east, west, and south direction is concentrated towards the temple, and in order to prevent the gas from leaking out at any time, it is specially designed as a pagoda, and the main building is located at the back and is higher than the other one, thus creating the perfect feng shui location. As a result, Fuxing Temple has become a centre of local faith and has become the centre of local economic prosperity, forming many important markets, such as the Yanping Old Street, the East Market, and the West Market, among others (Figure 14).



Figure 14: The Archway of Fuxing Temple



## **Contemporary Sustainable Siluo**

### ***Taiwan's Largest Fruit and Vegetable Market: Siluo Fruit and Vegetable Market***

As Taiwan's economy booms, industry is gradually replacing agriculture, and Taiwan's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in particular has had a significant impact on traditional agriculture, resulting in an urgent need for restructuring. Yunlin County is located at the edge of the core cities, and it is difficult to attract manufacturing companies to invest in the county, but the area of vegetable cultivation in Yunlin County has gradually increased, and the county has set up a professional zone for vegetable production, which promotes the joint production and marketing of vegetables in the professional zone, as well as protects the interests of vegetable farmers and stabilises the supply of vegetables. 1978 saw the opening of the Zhongshan Expressway, and the setting up of the Siluo Interchange and the service area, which has brought the county closer to the core cities of Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung. With the opening of the Zhongshan Expressway in 1978, the Siluo Interchange and Service Area was set up, which brought Siluo closer to the core cities of Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung, and expanded the market scope, which enabled Siluo to continue its past glory in terms of history, geographic location, and socio-economy.

According to Verse Magazine,<sup>5</sup> Siluo Fruit and Vegetable Market is Yunlin's 'Taiwan Vegetable Basket', which not only provides local people with job opportunities, but is also an important economic pillar for the town. Continuing the foundation of the former agricultural products trading and distribution centre and the advantages of the transport hub, the big vegetable market is booming, which proves the irreplaceable vitality of Siluo.

### ***Local Speciality: Soy Sauce Brewing***

Siluo is located near the Tropic of Cancer, where the temperature is moderate, the sunshine is abundant, and the water quality and nutrients of the Jhuoshuei River produce Siluo rice, which is of excellent quality and has made Siluo Soy Sauce famous since the Ching Dynasty to the present day. Siluo Soy Sauce was first brewed privately by families and then distributed and sold in markets for home use. During the Japanese rule period, Japanese soy sauce brewing technology entered Taiwan, and the establishment of the Huwei Soy Sauce Industrial Centre led to the gradual development of a large-scale brewing industry. As a result, many brands of soy sauce were developed, and the period from 1950 to 1970 was the heyday of Siluo Soy Sauce. However, the rise of chemical quick-brewed sauces in response to the demands of today's catering and food processing industries has led to the decline of traditional brewed sauces, which are cumbersome and more expensive. Since 2000, soy sauce factories such as Maruchuang, Ruichun, and Daidong have set up tourist factories in order to revitalise the local speciality industry. For example, Maruzhuang Soy Sauce is located in Yanping Old Street, and under the revitalisation of the old street, it has become one of the Siluo cultural tours, allowing the public to learn about the characteristics of black bean soy sauce and the story of soy sauce over the centuries.

### ***Placemaking: Revitalising Yanping Old Street***

According to the 'Siluo Township Chronicle', after the opening of the Siluo Bridge in 1953, the East Market (now the east section of Yanping Road) located on Yanping Old Street near

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<sup>5</sup> Wen Baixue. (2022). Yunlin Siluo: Under the red bridge, a new branch of a century-old town. *Verse*, 23.

the bank of Jhuoshuei River benefited from the fact that trucks had to be weighed on the scales before crossing the bridge, and overloaded goods were transported by electric tricycles across the bridge, and then rested and dined in the East Market on the way back, which turned the East Market into the busiest market in Siluo at that time. In 1978, when the entire Zhongshan Expressway was opened, the function of the main transport channel shrank, and the centre of gravity of the township shifted to the west and south. With the opening of the Zhongshan Expressway in 1978, the function of the Siluo Bridge as a major traffic and transport artery dwindled, and the centre of gravity of Siluo Town shifted to the west and south, not only did the East Market disappear, but also the Yanping Road Street area fell into silence.

In recent years, under the joint efforts of the Township Office and the Luoyang Cultural and Educational Foundation, Yanping Old Street has demonstrated its transformation and vitality by preserving its appearance from nearly a century ago, and has allowed visitors and strangers to learn about Siluo's humanistic and historical lineage through Yanping Old Street. The Siluo East Market was registered as a Yunlin County Historical Building in 2010, and the restoration of the original space was completed in 2011, with many shops now located there, forming an independent cultural and creative marketplace (Figure 15, 16).



Figure 15: The Siluo East Market



Figure 16: Specialty Products of Siluo

The Yunlin County Government also organised the 'LONG Siluo - Rice Sauce Life Festival', dedicated to promoting Siluo rice and Siluo soy sauce, and letting villagers all over the country taste the good taste of Siluo rice sauce. In addition, the 'Siluo Bridge Arts Festival' was organised to let the public understand that Siluo not only has delicious local food and culture, but also local attractions that are even more fascinating.

## Conclusion

To sum up, the development of Siluo area should be closely related to the Jhuoshuei River. Although the water phenomenon of the Jhuoshuei River has been unpredictable since ancient times, it has nurtured the humanities of this area and provided nutrients to the land. In this paper, from the geography and feng shui point of view, the humanities, history and economic development of this area, it is found that the vitality and vigour emphasised in feng shui does affect the clustering effect and development of the area. Siluo Township, under the efforts of the Yunlin County Government, is moving towards the direction of a sustainable city. As mentioned in this article, Siluo is following its historical trajectory, geographic location, and local economic characteristics, such as the Siluo Fruit and Vegetable Market, the soybean sauce industry, and rice production and marketing, etc., which have continued to flourish even up till the present day.



*The Members of Research Group Are As Follows (Figure 17).*



Figure 17: The Members of Research Group

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Chienlung Taiwan Map. (n.d.).

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**Contact email:** liyueh0926@gmail.com