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ROYAL SARONG OF LAOS LUANG PRABANG: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ROLES AS A WORLD HERITAGE CITY

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ABSTRACT

This article is a part of the research on the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang: social and cultural roles in Luang Prabang as a world heritage city. The objective of this qualitative research was to study social and cultural roles of sarong of the royal court of Luang Prabang as a world heritage city. Data were collected by studying the documents and conducting the field visits for interviewing the groups of experts, practitioners and related persons. The collected data were then analyzed through the relevant theoretical framework using descriptive analysis method.

The findings were as follows:

The social and cultural roles as a world heritage city indicated the social aspects consisting of 1) sarong for trade – it was produced and used as sarong products, artworks, exhibition purpose, and community products, and 2) sarong for social standing – it was used as the dress of Luang Prabang hi-class women, Luang Prabang female civil servants, Lao flight attendants, female bank staff, and

as the costume for Miss Luang Prabang beauty contestants. In terms of the cultural aspects, on the tradition aspect, sarong was used as the costume for Nang Sangkhan (Miss New Year Queen) and participants in the parade of Songkran festival and wedding ceremonies.

INTRODUCTION

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a country of overlapping histories throughout eras. There has been a continuous social and cultural evolution since Laos has the landscape of mountains and the Mekong River as the main route for travel and trade among cities, as well as many dimensions of current social and cultural contexts and well-being of Lao people. The Lao social and cultural changes play an important role in policy making for developing the country. The Lao handicraft skills are considered the outstanding artisanal arts, especially weaving including the famous sarong of Laos royal court, which is regarded as a national identity since the past to the present (Bunditkul, 2012). Sarong is popular among and generally worn by the Laotian ladies.

The "Xin" (sarong), including the sarong of Luang Prabang royal court of Lao culture and society, is not just the costume, but a fundamental part of the way of life of Laos that is transmitted through the arts appearing on sarong fabric. Imagination and customs through beautiful patterns of sarong according to wearer's belief and satisfaction are determined by different aspects of social factors of Lao people's way of life (Naenna, 2010). The Lao PDR is the most prominent country in Southeast Asia for using "Xin" as the main dress of women (Department of Fine Arts, 1999). Laotian women generally wear 'Xin' which consists of three parts. This is the distinctive trait of Laos' Xin and the Xin of the royal court (Pantung, 2019). The culture of wearing the sarong of Lao people and the sarong of Laos Luang Prabang royal court consists of 1) Hua Xin: the top part of sarong; 2) Tua Xin: the widest part of sarong, which is the main part that can be clearly seen while wearing. The sarong of Laos royal court has embroidered patterns using valuable materials based on the beliefs that are tied to the patterns on the sarong fabric; 3) Tin Xin: the bottom part that has special and unique patterns. The royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang has been determined by traditions since ancient times, which affects the roles of social and cultural duties in Lao society (Naennn, 2010) and the Xin of the royal court of Luang Prabang.

After UNESCO had explored Luang Prabang during 1983 and 1994 in response to the proposal of world heritage city registration, the area of Luang Prabang including the museum hall (the former royal court of Luang Prabang), as the old Grand Palace, was consequently registered as a world heritage city at the 19th World Heritage Committee meeting in Berlin, Germany in December 1995. Since Luang Prabang Province was officially recognized as a world heritage city, it was transformed into a "Cultural World Heritage City" resulting in changing way of life of Luang Prabang people aroused by capitalism. This made Luang Prabang became the city of a world-class cultural tourism industry. Many aspects of art and culture were restored for tourism purposes including pieces of art and the sarong of Laos

Luang Prabang royal court, which the owners gave back to society and culture of Laos in Luang Prabang (Boonprasert, 2006).

As a result, the researchers are interested in studying the topic of royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang: social and cultural roles as a world heritage city, to understand how the current social and cultural roles of royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang affects the society and culture of Luang Prabang. The findings can be used as the information for disseminating the cultural heritage of Luang Prabang royal sarong to be widely known and to promote the identity of the culture relating to the Xin of the Lao PDR for the whole world to see the beauty of this culture as a world heritage city as well.

OBJECTIVES

To study the social and cultural roles of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang and how it affects the society and culture of Lao PDR in Luang Prabang.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a part of the research titled the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang: social and cultural roles of Luang Prabang as a world heritage city. The qualitative research method was employed through the following steps:

3.1 Target groups of the population were divided into a group of 14 experts including 10 scholars and 4 local intellectuals of knowing the history and background development of Laos royal court sarong; a group of 15 practitioners as sarong producers or people who are involved in the composition of sarong production including 10 business owners and 7 weavers; and a group of 20 related persons (general informant) including 10 local people and 10 world heritage city tourists.

3.2 Related research was studied for implementing research result discussion and citation. These consisted of the body of knowledge on social and cultural aspects of the Lao PDR, knowledge about Laos royal sarong, social and cultural roles of royal sarong, as well as concepts, theories, and related research.

3.3 Data were collected using qualitative research methodology by studying related documents: use of non-participant observation form for observing the weaving of Luang Prabang sarong; use of structured interview form for collecting data on history and social and cultural roles of Luang Prabang sarong.

3.4 Data analysis and interpretation were conducted by analyzing and interpreting the data obtained from the interviews. The triangulation technique was used for verifying the information before presenting them through the descriptive analysis method.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The researchers conducted the study on Laos Luang Prabang royal sarong focusing on the dimension of social and cultural roles as a world heritage city in order to understand the roles of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang regarding its availability and usage. The results revealed the Laos Luang Prabang royal sarong, brought by the owners, which appeared or used for social roles in Luang Prabang, the world heritage city, as follows:

Social Roles of the Royal Sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in the World Heritage City

The Laos Luang Prabang royal sarong plays the social roles in the world heritage city in two aspects: 1) sarong for trade and 2) sarong for social standing of the people of Luang Prabang who have used the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in the world heritage city through materials, production processes, patterns and usage that appears on Hua Xin (top part of sarong), Tua Xin (sarong body), and Tin Xin (sarong bottom) as follows:

Sarong for Trade

Use as sarong products.

The royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang has been applied as the model to produce the sarong for distribution in Luang Prabang. When the Laos regime was changed in 1975 with the abolition of the monarchy, the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang has therefore lost its role in serving the royal court of Laos. When the Lao PDR government had the policies according to the national economic development plan of promoting and encouraging people to have a better life and to bring all kinds of Lao arts to be developed as the national arts, therefore, the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang was used as a model for the production of sarong products so that they could be bought for dressing or using as a souvenir. As a result, the economy of Luang Prabang had improved in terms of trading by adopting the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang. The social roles of the Laos Luang Prabang royal sarong of the King, Queen, and members of the royal family, consisting of patterns, materials, production processes that appeared through Hua Xin, Tua Xin, and Tin Xin, had been adapted for sarong products in Luang Prabang during 2018-2020. These made the people of Luang Prabang getting jobs and income, as well as creating a better economy of Lao PDR through the use of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in the production of sarong products.

Produce as artworks.

The process of making sarong at the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang in the past involved not only the local loom that was mainly used but there was also another type of production process of high-class handicrafts: embroidery hoop. It was popularly used in the production of art and sarong in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang. This process required skilled craftsmen with meticulousness and patience in the production of a piece of work. The ancient embroidery framing

involved stretching the fabric to be embroidered on a square stall with a stand, as same as a rectangle table. The embroiderer preferred to sit on the floor. If it was a small piece of work, the embroidery hoop of a circle or square wooden frame without a stand was made for use as a portable embroidery frame. But if it was a large piece of work, such as embroidering a sarong of wide cloth, the embroidery hoop with the stand was commonly used. This had been used in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang in the past. Silk threads, gold threads, silver threads, and various gems had been commonly used as the raw materials for embroidery.

Use for exhibition purposes.

As Luang Prabang has been promoted as a World Cultural Heritage City and the Lao government has encouraged people to bring all kinds of Lao arts and crafts to be publicized and developed as a national identity, this is the opportunity for the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang for coming back to Lao society. However, most of them are in the possession of ancient cloth collectors, which are collected as personal property and considered as rare items to see. At present, Laos Luang Prabang royal sarong in the past is considered one of the most expensive antiques and valuable artworks in Laos. The art that appears on such a piece of clothing has its aesthetic beauty in both the society and culture of Laos. As Laos' society and culture have changed its regime since 1975 and Luang Prabang has been announced a world cultural heritage city by UNESCO in 1995, people from all over the world want to visit it in order to appreciate the art and architecture. Some came to immerse in the arts appear on Laos' ancient Xin. Therefore, the persons who currently possess the royal sarongs of Laos Luang Prabang have brought them out for exhibition purposes and gained benefits from tourist fees.

Use as community products.

Laotian society has currently employed a free trade system resulting in the production of various types of products for sale in the Lao community, especially the people of Luang Prabang that has been regarded as a cultural world heritage city. Therefore, various products are produced for sale. Cultural products such as the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang have been adapted through various materials, patterns, and production processes. These can be seen with the use of French gold thread, the pattern of Thepanom - the figure of deva, and the production process of embroidering using the royal court style of Laos Luang Prabang for producing face masks as a community product, which can be used to prevent the respiratory infections. In addition, the Chinese silk: which was a rare item in Laotian society in the past; had to be imported from abroad; and was popularly used in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang to produce sarongs, has been used to produce as the community products as well, such as face masks and a lady's clothes since the Laos government opened the country for trading with foreign countries.

Sarong for Social Standing

Use as a dress for high-class women in Luang Prabang.

After the change of regime to a socialist system, every Lao people are considered equal without social hierarchy. In terms of the pattern of sarong nowadays, it focuses mainly on the beauty according to the preferences of the wearer resulting in many patterns such as Naga pattern, lion pattern, swan pattern, leaf pattern, dragon pattern, butterfly pattern, and Thepphanom pattern. For the materials, Chinese silk and French gold thread were applied to use in the production of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang. In terms of the production process, embroidering the fabric with a frame in the past was the high artistic skill of the Lao royal court. After the monarchy was abolished and Luang Prabang was designated as a world heritage city, the Lao government issued the policy for supporting the promotion of all types of arts and handicrafts to be considered the national art of Laos. Thus, making the royal embroidery became widespread in Luang Prabang again.

Use as a dress for Luang Prabang female civil servants.

In the past, civil servants in Laos were considered to be of the ruling class comprising the military, police, and general civil servants. The dress was different from the noble class that consists of the king, queen, and royal family. Using rare materials such as gold threads and French gold threads for decorating or weaving the sarong for ruling class people was difficult to do as they were available only for people in the royal court. Nowadays, Laos has opened for trade with various countries and people in Lao society are equal in living lives. The materials used for only the royal court of Laos have been applied for producing the sarong of female civil servants in Luang Prabang. The French gold threads are woven together with silk threads to produce sarongs. Female civil servants usually wear this type of sarong during official duties initiating a good image for government organizations.

Use as a dress for Lao flight attendants.

Dressing in a sarong in Lao society in the past, from the evidence that appeared in many eras of Lao society, Lao women wore Xin or Pha-xin with unique patterns of Mee Kan to cover the lower part of the body. This has appeared in the historical pieces of evidence since the prehistoric period. Wearing a sarong is considered a national identity of the Lao people. At present, Lao women still prefer to wear a sarong in everyday life. Materials of popular use in the production of the sarong in the past were Lao silk and cotton. The royal court of Laos Luang Prabang also commonly used Lao silk and cotton as raw materials for the production of sarong. In the past, Lao people were experts in agriculture and in producing quality threads from plants and animals for use in weaving cloth for household use, as well as for making sarong. But in the royal court, rare materials such as gold threads and French gold threads were used to produce royal sarong in order to be different from general people's sarong.

Use as a dress for female bank staff.

Nowadays Laos has opened the country for foreign investors. So the investors and financial institutions from abroad came to settle in Luang Prabang as it has been regarded as a world cultural heritage city. As a foreign tourist of different currencies in Luang Prabang, financial transactions are necessary for them, as well as the need for currency exchange for shopping while traveling in Luang Prabang. The financial institutions in Laos must plan for initiating a good image for the organization. Therefore, the sarong is used as the dress of the female staff. The royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang is used as a model for it in terms of materials and patterns applying in women's uniforms pattern, which is the traditional pattern, Mee Kan, of the Lao people that have existed since prehistoric times. It was popularly used in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang as one of the materials, French gold threads, was a rare item in the past and used for only the production of Laos royal sarong. But at present, Laos has opened the country and traded with foreign countries. The material is therefore readily available and can be used by the general or wealthy to use it as a material for making sarongs.

Use as a costume for Miss Luang Prabang beauty contestants.

In the past, the Laos Luang Prabang royal sarong is popularly known as the set of Sarabab dress, consists of Loeng Keng or a flower crown, a deflecting cloth, a brushed shirt or a Pao shirt, and a royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang. It is the main costume of the Sarabab dress. The Sarabab dress is the costume of the Queen and the royal family in important royal ceremonies of the royal court of Luang Prabang in the past, such as the royal wedding ceremony. But at present Laos has abolished the monarchy. The Sarabab dress becomes just a beautiful memory of noble ladies' dress such as queens or royal families in the past. However, after Laos has opened the country and has been regarded as a cultural heritage city of Luang Prabang, the Sarabab dresses and sarongs of the royal court style of Luang Prabang have appeared again. They are used as a costume for the beauty contestants in Luang Prabang in order to create an image of the tourism of Luang Prabang the world heritage city. These can be seen through the use of materials of Chinese silk and French gold threads, as well as various patterns such as the Naga pattern, Singha pattern, Thep Phanom pattern. That is the way of using the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang through the costumes of the beauty pageants that creates a good image for the world cultural heritage city of Luang Prabang.

Cultural Role of the Royal Sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in the World Heritage City.

According to the study, there are 2 aspects of the application for cultural roles: tradition and rituals. Luang Prabang people adapt and use the sarong of the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang in the world heritage city as follows:

Tradition

Use as the costume for Nang Sangkhan (Miss New Year Queen) of Songkran Festival.

The royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang is an ingredient in the dress of Nang Sangkhan, as shown in the Songkran festival. It is the new year of the Lao people, which has been found the patterns of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang to be applied in Nang Sangkhan's costume, namely, the leaf pattern on the sarong of Nang Sangkhan and Thep Phanom pattern on the Tin Xin cloth of Nang Sangkhan's attire. In the Songkran festival, the materials used in the sarong as the costumes of Nang Sangkhan include the Chinese silk and French gold threads, which in the past was the material used in the production of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang. The production process of Nang Sangkhan's sarong involves applying the method of embroidering hoops of the royal court of Luang Prabang in the past. The Sarabab dress that comprises the royal court sarong of Laos Luang Prabang is the dress of the queen or royal family in the royal court using in important royal ceremonies such as the royal wedding ceremony in the past. As the city has changed its regime from the monarchy to the socialist system, the Sarabab sets have been deprecated and when Luang Prabang was elevated to a cultural world heritage city, the traditions that represent the cultural beauty of Luang Prabang people have begun to be brought back. In the past, on Songkran Festival or Lao New Year's Day, there was a traditional parade that Lao people of Luang Prabang had carried out from the past. When it was announced as a cultural world heritage city, therefore, the parade led by Nang Sangkhan could bring back a set of costumes that have been deployed to become the costume of Nang Sangkhan in the Songkran festival in order to promote tourism in Luang Prabang where people from all over the world who come to visit its culture and tradition as a city of world heritage.



Figure 1. The use of royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang as Nang Sangkhan costume in the Songkran festival

Use as the costume for participants of Songkran Festival.

In terms of the sarong production process, when the royal court of Laos was abolished with the regime change, the craftsmen who specialize in embroidery in the royal court have returned to live in various places in Luang Prabang. But the expertise in embroidery craftsmanship that used to serve the court of Laos still exists. When the Lao government has encouraged the arts and crafts of Laos to be developed as national art, the work of royal embroidery in Laos Luang Prabang has returned and spread among the Lao people of Luang Prabang at present. These can be seen with the royal court embroidery that has been applied in the costumes of the participants in the Nang Sangkhan parade in the Songkran festival. This is to promote the arts and crafts of embroidery in Laos to create a good image for the

country and promote tourism in Luang Prabang as a cultural world heritage city of Laos.

Ritual

Use as the costume for women in wedding ceremonies.

In nowadays society, a woman of getting married want to be the most beautiful on the important day of life, like a queen, she, therefore, prefers to find beautiful sarongs. The patterns of the sarong that used to appear in the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang has been adapted to be the sarong patterns of their costume in the wedding ceremony, as seen through the leaf pattern, the Naga pattern, Thep Phanom pattern, in order to be embroidered into the pattern of Tua Xin (sarong body) and the Tin Xin (sarong bottom) in the wedding ceremony, because the Naga pattern is considered an auspicious pattern of the Lao people that has been used in the past. Thepphanom pattern is a courtyard that tells about the deity and the queen of the wearer. Therefore, it appears that the patterns of the royal court sarong of Laos have been applied in the wedding of Luang Prabang people. In the past, the person who could use it must be an elite in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang because the materials and equipment used in the production is highly expensive. It is also a material imported from abroad. At present, Laos has abolished its monarchy and has opened for free trade with foreign countries to bring the material which is difficult to afford in the past, became easily accessible in Laos and Luang Prabang nowadays. Therefore, it appears that the application of materials used in the production of royal sarongs in Laos Luang Prabang in the past has been adapted to the costumes of Lao women in the present accordingly.



(1)

(2)

(3)

Figure 11 The use of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in nowadays wedding dress (Figure 1-2 shows the marriage of the Lao royal family in the past; Figure 3 represents the adaptation of the royal sarong dressing in a wedding ceremony)

In conclusion, the social and cultural roles of the sarong of Laos in Luang Prabang of the King, the Queen, the royal family consisting of patterns, materials, production processes appear through the Hua Xin (top part of sarong), the Tua Xin (sarong body) and the Tin Xin (sarong bottom), which are adapted. In respect to its social roles, it was found that Xin has affected the country's trade. Xin was treated as commodities or as a work of art exhibits in the gallery. It is also treated as communities' products, the costume of ladies in the upper class in the society, the

costume of civil servants, flight attendants, bank clerks, and the costumes of beauty pageant contestants. In light of its cultural role, it was found that Xin was used in the Songkran Festival and wedding ceremonies of people in Luang Prabang. It was used as the women's costume for the brides. This is to promote the culture of Laos and create an image for the country as well as attract income to the people of Luang Prabang. This is in line with the policy of the Lao PDR with a plan to develop and promote all arts in Laos. It is a national identity and consistent with the fact that Luang Prabang has been regarded as a world cultural heritage city. In addition, it is to promote the art of the Lao fabric that is beautiful to remain as a national identity through women's costumes that can be seen in the social settings and the culture of the people in Luang Prabang in Lao PDR.

Summary and Discussion

According to the study of social and cultural roles of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang, there are important issues that can be discussed as follows:

The social roles of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang

In today's Laotian society after Laos has changed the regime and opened the country, the social culture of Laos such as Lao wedding ceremonies is commonly significantly held as it can indicate the standing of social position. The dressing of Lao women commonly involves adapting the costume of the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang to use as a wedding dress. This is consistent with the research of Na Ubon (2020) on the roles and development of woven cloth of Lo people. It is found that the cloth can be assigned the duties according to the condition of the person or the position held by that person, which consists of that position and object role as a position indicator of power, interpersonal or inter-city relationships. Objects also play a role as decorations, ranks, or garments that are insignificant in classifying ranks. It is responsible for controlling the social and cultural roles of people living in the same society. The role is therefore considered as one of the mechanisms for controlling the society and culture in which that group of belief and acceptance in the same society allows people who live together to create a system of relationships with each other in an orderly tradition. In the ancient era, Lao people did not know weaving. They made a living on the hill in the area of Phuwana Kradaeng in the Lao PDR by bringing agricultural products for the exchange of clothes from Lao people and Phu Thai people. These can be seen by the use of materials as same as the past in the production of the sarong of Lao royal court to apply for making a costume in their wedding ceremony nowadays.

In the production process, the adaptation of the dress of bride in the wedding ceremony involves embroidery as the high art skills of the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang. It is the work of a craftsman at the Wang Na (area for the royal family) section. It is responsible for producing sarongs for the nobility in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang. When Laos changed the regime, the art of embroidery of the Lao royal court has spread to the general public in Luang

Prabang. In the present Luang Prabang society, this appears in the production of sarong as the wedding dress of a woman. This is consistent with the research of Thomas (2020) on the titled the garments: observations on the role of hand-woven fabrics in Thailand and neighboring countries. It revealed that the garments are an important attire of people in Thailand and neighboring countries, which attach great importance to women's weaving abilities. A young woman who is skilled in weaving will be honored in society. This is also the desire of the young men in those societies. In addition to the importance of weaving that increases the status of women in society, it is also found that weaving techniques are similar in these countries. Such techniques include tossing and making Mudmee that is an important technique widespread throughout not only the region but also found in other regions of the world.

In today's society, women getting married want to be the most beautiful on the important day of life, like a queen, therefore prefers to find a dress with beautiful sarong patterns. Therefore, the patterns of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang are adapted to their costume in the wedding ceremony, such as the leaf pattern, Naga pattern, Thepphanom pattern. This is in line with Baumgarten's aesthetic theory of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (Baumgarten, 255-2305, cited in Indarit, 2008), which stated that the perception of beauty is based on feelings that are similar to the perceived omission pretty sarong wearers feel that the wearing of the beauty of the Queen or felt a sense a pattern that has been introduced, which is embroidering into a pattern of sarong and sarong fabric of the bride's dress in the wedding ceremony. Therefore, it appears that the pattern of the royal court sarong of Laos has been applied in the royal wedding dress of the Luang Prabang people. This is also consistent with the aesthetic theory of Baumgarten and is in accordance with the research of Na Ubon (2020). The research on the role and development of Lo people woven cloth of Na Ubon found that various fabric patterns of bringing the fabric for production, the Lo people have the imagination to create works of art in weaving, with the factors affecting the fabric pattern such as the patterns derived from nature. The Patterns derived from religious influences stripes obtained from geometric patterns and patterns resulting from the combination, which can be seen of the importance of fabric patterns. On the other hand, the Loa people also attach importance to fabric patterns, such as Naga patterns that are woven into a sarong pattern because it is believed that the Naga is the origin of one's own family, as well as the protector of Buddhism. It shows that the Lao fabric patterns play significant social and cultural roles, which is the same as of the people from other societies and cultures (Na Ubon, 1993).

The royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in the past was mainly used by the elite persons in the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang because the materials and equipment used in the production is a rare item and highly expensive, which must be imported from abroad. At present, Laos has abolished the monarchy and opened free trade with foreign countries in order to bring the materials which were difficult to find and afford in the past. However, they become easily accessible in Laos and Luang Prabang nowadays. Therefore, it appears that the application of materials

used in the production of royal sarongs in Laos Luang Prabang in the past has been adapted to the costumes of Lao women nowadays accordingly.

Therefore, the social roles of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang of the King, the Queen, the royal family consists of patterns, materials, production processes that appear through Hua Xin, Tua Xin, and Tin Xin, which are adapted to the production of community products. This is in line with the policy of the government of the Lao PDR (cited in Siphachai, 2018) that require to develop a career for the people of Laos to have a better life with more income based on the fact that Luang Prabang is regarded as a world cultural heritage city in order to promote the art of the beautiful fabric of Laos to remain as a national identity, as well as to promote tourism in Laos for better Laos economy through the application of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in the production of community products. The theory of cultural diffusion of the American School by Clark Wissler and Alfred Kroeber (cited in Siphachai, 2561) stated that whenever no geographical barriers but in the same era, the cultures from other regions can easily come to other places, which in the past had a mountainous terrain with only the Mekong River as the main route for trading. But at present, when Laos has opened the country for free trade, there is convenient transportation by land and air making it easy for arts and culture from other regions to enter Laos, as well as the materials used in the production of royal sarongs, which in the past were valuable and difficult to find and afford. But nowadays geographical barriers factors as obstacles have disappeared because of the free trade system and convenience in transportation. This is consistent with the cultural diffusion theory of American Society that is it elevates the economy and well-being of Lao people in Luang Prabang.

Cultural Roles of the Royal Sarong of Laos Luang Prabang

The cultural roles of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang that have been applied in a sarong dress and the application of the royal sarong in the costume of Nang Sangkhan and participants in the Songkran festival in Luang Prabang have signified the cultural roles very seriously and promoted arts and culture. The good traditions of Luang Prabang and the promotion of cultural tourism in Luang Prabang today in building the image of the Lao PDR and improving the economy of Luang Prabang by the adoption of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang in terms of culture and tradition. This is consistent with the research of Thomas (1993) on a research study of garments: observations on hand-woven fabrics in Thailand and neighboring countries. It was found that the garments are an important attire of people in Thailand and neighboring countries by attaching great importance to women's weaving abilities. A young woman who is skilled in weaving will be honored in society. This is also the desire of the young men in those societies. In addition to the importance of weaving that increases the status of women in society, the role of the sarong cloth weaving and the pattern of the cloth determine the role of the weaver in that society and governance. The economy at different times is one of the indicators of its pattern. The pattern of woven cloth at that time is based on the economy, such as the production of textiles

is just for weaving, not so much focusing on beauty. Or at some point, there is a change in the regime or the opening of free trade of that country where social change can be identified in different respects.

As for the cultural role of the royal sarong of Laos Luang Prabang, it appears in traditional ceremonies, Songkran Festival, and the wedding ceremony through the costume of women. This is consistent with the research of Anuphan (2020) on hand-woven fabrics: the role and the relationship between rituals and beliefs in the traditions of Isan people, which found that: 1) Weaving of Isan people prefer to weave cotton and silk by using materials produced in the household such as silk, cotton, materials and weaving equipment; 2) Weaving plays a role in various ceremonies such as wedding ceremonies, ordination ceremonies, funerals, and religious ceremonies; 3) Cloth is something that is used in everyday life of human beings, therefore it is transmitted in learning, and weaving is a woman's duty; 4) The color of the fabric also plays a role in belief in the dress according to the birthday; 5) The types of cloth used in rituals, in which some traditions are somewhat different. White cloth made of cotton and silk is especially used in ceremonies.

When applying the royal sarong of the royal court of Laos Luang Prabang to use, it promotes the persistence of Lao arts and culture as a trade promotion tourism. This is to create an image for the Lao PDR. As a result, the economy of Luang Prabang and Laos becomes better by the adoption of the royal sarong, which corresponds to the 9th Economic Development Plan and Government Policy of the Lao PDR, which has a plan to develop and promote the Lao people's well-being and to develop all kinds of arts and culture of Laos to be a national identity and also in accordance with receiving the praise from UNESCO in 1995 announcing Luang Prabang as a world cultural heritage. This is consistent with the research of Kulsu (2007) on the changes in the pattern of Tai Daeng woven cloth in Ban Nong Bua Thong, Vientiane Province of Lao PDR. The findings found that the woven fabric characteristics and patterns of Ban Nong Bua Thong today are different from the Tai Daeng woven fabrics in the past. The change in the patterns of Ban Nong Bua Thong Tai Daeng woven fabrics was due to economic, social, and cultural factors, resulting in a change in the identity of the people, including eliminating the use of woven fabrics in dress and household, the change in the production of woven cloth as a product for people outside the culture. There is also a change and develop new product styles including modifying patterns according to market demand. There is also a change in the name of the patterns, as well as the beliefs related to patterns due to the influence of Buddhism and for commercial benefits. This allows Laos' arts and culture to be preserved by the sarong cloth that is dressed by women of Luang Prabang. Lao PDR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the use of research

- The research findings can be a piece of basic information and an extension of plans and policies of the public and private sectors in Lao PDR, in order to

formulate the plans for developing the handicrafts and cultural works of public and private sectors.

- Both public and private sectors can apply the research findings of different dimensions to create new products of innovative textiles.

Recommendation for further studies

- The findings of this research can be used as a piece of basic information for conducting research on the roles of cloth and sarong of the royal court in other dimensions in Thailand, Lao PDR, and other countries.
- The findings of this research can be used as a piece of basic information for studying the development of cloth and sarong of the royal court from the past to the present in Thailand and other countries.

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