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## PATTERNS AND BELIEFS OF ISAN TATTOO

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### ABSTRACT

This article was a part of research titled Isan Tattoo: Pattern and Beliefs for Fashion design which aimed to study the patterns and beliefs of Isan Tattoo. The study had collected data from literature reviews and field study i.e. survey, observation, interview, included target population such as key informants, casual informants, and general informants. The study results were analyzed by the aesthetic and semiology theory, then presented by descriptive analysis. The study results indicated that the Isan Tattoo was found in four ethnics, namely, Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng ethnic groups which can be divided into three prototypes as were follows: 1) Image tattoo, 2) Pattern tattoo, and 3) Mystic symbol from the four ethnics. These prototypes reveal that the tattoos were applied from natural material and household usage stuffs, namely, Creeper, Flower, Lotus, Pliers cutting, Geometric, Pineapple, Dog tooth, Ikat, Tamarind leaf, Cross, Composition, Circular, Scratch, Leaf, Fish scale, Decorative, Elephant nail, Serration, Star, Zigzag, and applied pattern which different in each ethnic group including, animals such as Mom (mythical animal) and bird for artistry purpose, the mom was embedded with all ethnics based on shared characteristic among the ethnics. Moreover, the Mystic symbol tattoo in arm and body areas was embedded with the belief of incantations and significant tradition.

### INTRODUCTION

In addition, the study results indicated the tattoo had been created out of the rules regarding customs, ceremonies, and beliefs as followed 1) Cultural resources belief, such as the charming symbols of love which were believed that the female would marry as marriage selection criteria, maturity as the symbol of forbearing, and also being the symbols of unity in the community as

the tradition which had been conducted for a long time, 2) Dark magic belief which people believe that it would help to protect the form the supernatural or dark power, however, the people who have the tattoos must behave themselves with the Five-percept in the Buddhism i.e. prevent to have an affair, consume snake, dog, elephant, and monkey. On one hand, the belief of tattoo would help to promote charming, power, immortality, and protection from dangerous things.

The Isan or Northeast regions covers one of the third parts of Thailand territory and the most geographical area is the highland which has river and mountains as the barrier in four directions. The indigenous Isan people survive with animal hunting and crops harvesting around the living areas such as fishery and preserve food in each season. Some ethnics must migrate to the new location for new natural resources with the big community (Wanlipodom, 1990). Furthermore, the Isan area is considered as the most consistently developed area since the past because the people had back and forth along with the areas which surrounded by highland, mountains, seacoast areas were all factors about the immigrations of Isan people.

Mettarikanon et al, (2004) mentions that when considered the historical background of the different groups of Isan, there are many ethnic groups which can be divided as follows: Tai-Kadai as the main people in the region along with the other ethnic groups such as the Austro-Asiatic of Mon Khmer who scattered throughout the region. The continuous combination of cultures and social development resulted in a unique civilization that turn to be the culture of the region in present. Isannitat (2006) noted that among cultural diversity, the similarity was perceived which is the existence of ethnic in terms of reciprocal and dependent on each other. Each ethnic is unique in customs, traditions, rituals, which are descended from combined cultural heritage which transmitted for a long period, especially the Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng ethnic groups who have similar beliefs in tattooing.

Isan tattooing had considered a shared culture of all culture humanity among in the context of the Suvarnabhumi areas such as in Tai Noi in the Mekong river basin and Tai Loei in the eastern Mekong river in Laos and Vietnam since had moved to the Lanna, Lan Xang and Sukhothai or Tai Yai Mekong (Sarawin River) and Mao River (or Shweli river as part of Irrawaddy river). These ethnics have been blended and shared cultures into a variety of cultures without the limitation of state, nation, culture, particularly in tattoos. The popularity of Isan men tattooing in different parts of the body is a result of the inspiration to make oneself special to develop their personality and want society to accept which is considered as a value and artistry things in the public (Klangboon & Suksri, 1985). At present, the beliefs and values of tattooing have disappeared due to the values and beliefs about tattoos that cannot be fulfilled in modern society in terms of lifestyle, occupation, public acceptance, including living in society because these beliefs and values are viewed as primitive beliefs. Saenboon (2010) states that tattoos found within the land of Suvarnabhumi called 'Sak Kha Lai' are a culture that can be used to distinguish the differences between ethnic groups living in the area. Srisawad (1987) also notes that in each tattooing process, there must be a drawing of a pattern using visual element principles to

create beautiful patterns which were structural elements of a form and consisted of the unity of visual elements as the most important because the body was also considered as the artwork. If an artist cannot create a shape to be unified or imperfect, the shape would miss the spirit, content, unable to convey any meaning. Thus, combining patterns had created patterns for tattooing to form patterns. The term of pattern in the dictionary of the Royal Society of Thailand in 1982 (Royal Academy 1982, 1995) refers to the written or carved patterns which showed implicitly in creating different patterns based on design elements applied to the material, method, technique, and the form of work design. For tattooing, these elements are needed to achieve a tattoo pattern that embeds within beliefs and customs.

The beliefs of each group and ethnics in Thai society are different, the concept and values of Thai tattooing show the identity linked to religion and magic. When considered the traditional customs of Thai society had been tied to the supernatural power for a long time. Thai usually believed in the spirit, past life, rebirth and believed that the tattoo would follow the identity of the tattooed person. These are all beliefs as a person's signature tattoo which would remain on the skin forever, but nowadays these beliefs had been gradually fading, therefore the tattooing culture should be preserved.

As the aforementioned, the Isan tattoo is a culture of local people which should be preserved for education and research as a way to reveal how the culture of tattoo in Isaan changes over time. The analysis of the tattoo patterns and belief behind it would also bring forth a new body of knowledge—promoting and securing the Isaan tattoo to stand the test of time. The gained knowledge can also be used for further application and benefit in the future. Therefore, this study aimed to raise awareness and the importance of the Isan tattoo which are fading away by the changing of times in the globalization era—a time where later generations neglect the importance of the tattoo. This has resulted in the emphasis of the cultural heritage of the Isan tattoo has faded away. To preserve the cultural heritage of Isan which is the ancestor's treasure accumulated since the past and to reflect the thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, and way of life of Isan, the study had conducted to preserve the existing customs, traditions, arts, and culture.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

To study the patterns and beliefs of Isan tattoo

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study of patterns and beliefs of Isan tattoo aimed to investigate the patterns and the beliefs of Isan tattoo designs in northeast areas of Thailand. The researcher has chosen a specific area which is an area of the Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng ethnic in Kalasin, Sakon Nakhon, Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom, Loei, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Chaiyaphum, Mahasarakham, Roi Et, Yasothorn, Amnat Charoen, Ubon Ratchathani, Sisaket, Surin Buriram, and Nakhon Ratchasima provinces. The target group consists of the key informants who have chosen a specific type who are knowledgeable about the pattern and casual informants as the person with an Isan tattoo and general informants were selected randomly from the

community. The research tools to collect data consisted of the survey form, observation form, and interview form and then analyzed based on research aesthetics and semiology theoretical frameworks and presented with descriptive analysis.

## STUDY RESULTS

### *Patterns and Beliefs of Isan tattoo*

In the study of patterns and the beliefs of the Isan tattoo, the researcher identified four ethnics as the target group in this study because they all belong to the Isan tattooing group, which are: 1) The Tai-Lao ethnic in 20 provinces of the Isan region and mostly found in 5 provinces, i.e. Khon Kaen, Chaiyaphum Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Phanom, and Roi Et province, 2) Nyaw ethnic in 7 provinces and found in Sakon Nakhon province only, 3) The Phu Tai ethnic in 10 provinces and mostly found in 2 provinces, i.e. Kalasin and Udon Thani provinces, and 4) The Khalerng ethnic in 4 provinces and mostly found in Sakon Nakhon province. The selection criteria consisted of 3 criteria: a) Have Isan-style tattoo, b) Alive or c) Have photographs and knowledge about the pattern which reflects artistry and beliefs. The study results were as follows:

***The Pattern in Tai-Lao ethnic were divided into 3 patterns: 1) Image tattoo, 2) Pattern tattoo, and 3) Mystic symbol tattoo***

#### ***Image tattoo:***

The image tattoo consisted of a Mom image or a mythical animal in Himmapan forest which is shaped like a lion with a crest on the chin. The positions were either turned left or turned right in a circular frame. Bird or Kuan Bird looks like a peacock and appears in a circular frame with turned left or turned right along with a bird, lion, dragon, and monkey which turned left or turned right but sometimes not in the circular frame. They believe in Mom linked to Buddhism while the bird, lion, dragon, and monkey used to express courage and ability, immortal, and active, respectively.

#### ***Pattern tattoo:***

The pattern tattoo can be divided as follows: Creeper, Flower, Lotus, Pliers cutting, Geometric, Pineapple, Dog tooth, Ikat, Tamarind leaf, Cross, Composition, Circular, Scratch, Leaf, Fish scale, Decorative, Elephant nail, Serration, Star, Zigzag, and applied pattern. The Creeper, Flower, Lotus pattern means the harmony of brothers and sisters and not allow to abandon the sibling or the family members as appears in the Isan ancient belief that wherever you have done a good thing you will never be starved. Next was the meaning of Ikat which refers to the outfit of the elite community. The Dog tooth was a popular pattern in decorations in the merit-making ceremony while the tamarind leaf and the elephant nail pattern were bestowed as the Buddha seat. The Cross, Composition, Scratch, Leaf refer the orderliness, the circular pattern has no meaning, the leaf pattern refers the victory, the fish and applied pattern used for artistry purposes.

### *Mystic symbol tattoo:*

The Mystic symbol tattoo had categorized as follows: a) Alphabets that contained an image or text or both. The tattoo on the arm character had contained the Dharma alphabet and Mahaniyom and Kham Kyeo (Poisoned Animal Protection) which aimed to get an affection and Kham Kyeo used for preventing insects as shaped like Bee and Dog images which located at arm and leg as in the beliefs.

### *The Beliefs in Tai-Lao ethnic:*

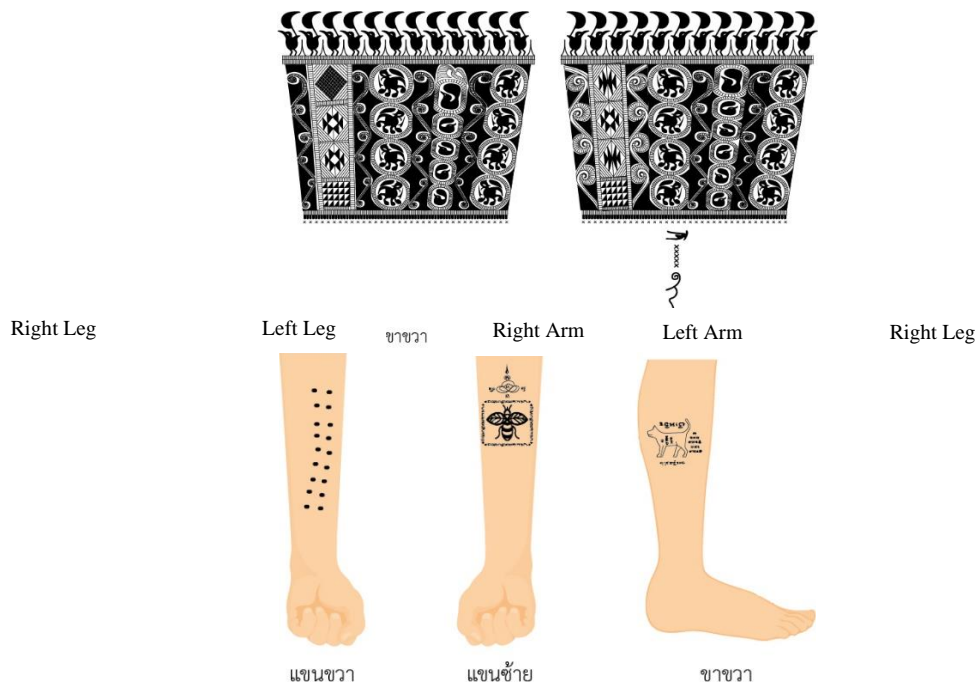
The beliefs typically consisted of customs, taboos, and rituals, but in Tai- Lao ethnic the customs, taboos, and rituals had played less important which can be divided into two groups: 1) The belief as a cultural power—thigh tattoo which believed that women would love and marry as appeared in Local proverb that “No leg scratches, no marriages” which shows the patience of a man and represents unity and attractive to women to be a selective choice for marriage as traditional norms, 2) Superstition power to protect poisoned insect and dog from dangerous Nak Laorit (25 June 2018: Interview)



Image tattoo and Pattern Tattoo in Tai- Lao ethnic



The Mystic symbol tattoo in Tai- Lao ethnics



The model of Tai- Lao ethnics tattoo reproduction

***The Pattern in Nyaw ethnic were divided into 2 patterns: 1) Image tattoo and 2) Pattern tattoo Buasri Phalachan, (2018: Interview)***

***Image tattoo:***

The image tattoo consisted of a Mom image or a mythical animal in the Himmaman forest.

***Pattern tattoo:***

The pattern tattoo had divided as follows: Flower, Geometric, Creeper, and Serration. The flower and geometric refer to goodness and creeper refers to harmony, and the last one is the serration pattern which borrows from the merit-making ceremony.

***Mystic symbol tattoo:***

The Mystic symbol tattoo consists of the traditional and Dharma alphabets used for the artistry objectives.

***The Beliefs in Nyaw ethnic:***

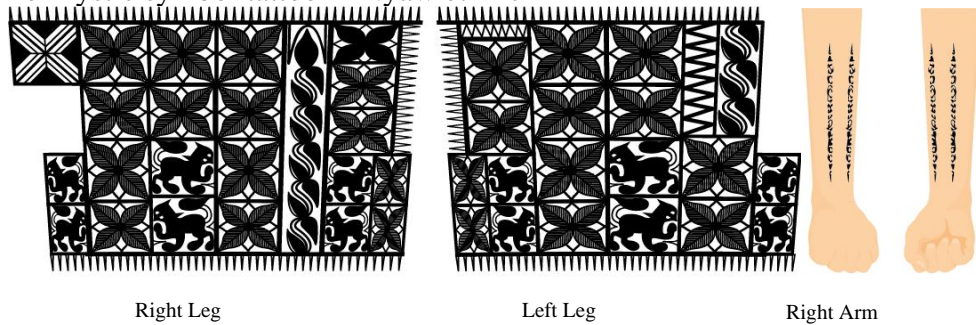
The beliefs in Nyaw ethnic typically consists of customs, taboos, and rituals, but in the Nyaw ethnics the customs, taboos, and rituals had played less important which can be divided into one group: 1) The belief as a cultural power which believed that it beautiful at that moment and was the symbol of harmony in the community and artistry Buasri Phalachan (5 May 2018: Interview)



Image tattoo and Pattern Tattoo on the thigh of Nyaw ethnic



The Mystic symbol tattoo in Nyaw ethnic



The model of Nyaw ethnic tattoo reproduction

*The Pattern in Phu Tai ethnic were divided into 3 patterns: 1) Image tattoo, 2) Pattern tattoo, and 3) Mystic symbol tattoo*

***Image tattoo:***

The image tattoo consisted of Mom and bird images or a mythical animal which can speak like a human and live in a pond of Himmapan forest to protect the Lord Buddha. The tattoo of Mom and bird had linked with Buddhism as an

auspicious animal and a good meaning about peace, abundance, humility, delicacy, beauty, and dispelling evil when pass away, the spirit would get being in a good place.

***Pattern tattoo:***

The pattern tattoo consisted of Lotus, Creeper, Lotus Creeper, Flower, Pliers cutting, Geometric, Pineapple, Dog tooth, Stone, Ikat, Tamarind leaf, Cross, Composition, Leaf, Serration, Star. The creeper, flower, Lotus pattern means harmony. Next was the meaning of Pineapple which refers to the auspicious fruit which believes that it would help to be the conscious and long vision. The flower represented love and faith. The geometric has no meaning and was a popular pattern in decorations in the merit-making ceremony while the Dog tooth and the serration pattern were used in the Khathin ceremony. The leaf, stone, Tamarind leaf refer to the victory, strongness, and discipline while pliers cutting, cross, and scratch pattern refers to the power.

***Mystic symbol tattoo:***

The Mystic symbol tattoo had categorized as follows: a) Alphabets which contained an image or text or both. The tattoo located on the neck would be an auspicious sign while on the shoulder used for protection and the chest and back believed that the person would be immortal. The tattoo on the hip and low part of the body would help the person from being away from the danger and being invisible. For the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things.

***The Beliefs in Phu Tai ethnic:***

The beliefs in Phu Tai ethnic typically consist of customs, taboos, and rituals, but in the Phu Tai ethnics the only one custom and taboo are the people must hold the 5 precepts in Buddhism and be allowed to pass through the house. Before beginning the tattooing, the person must worship the expert by five precepts stuffs with water and flowers. The beliefs in Phu Tai ethnic had divided into two groups: 1) Cultural power which believed that it was a basis of the cultural occurrences and extinction in the society which driven the culture toward the meaning which resulted in the cultural power i.e. Leg tattooing which create the confident, patient, and harmony among the men in the community and help the mem to choose the couple, 2) Mystic beliefs which help them from supernatural power such as holding the five precepts and not pass through the house. The tattoo in each part of the body contained meanings such as in the neck would be auspicious sign while on the shoulder used for protection and the chest and back believed that the person would be immortal. The tattoo on the hip and low part of the body would help the person from being away from the danger and being invisible. For the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things (28 April 2018: Interview).

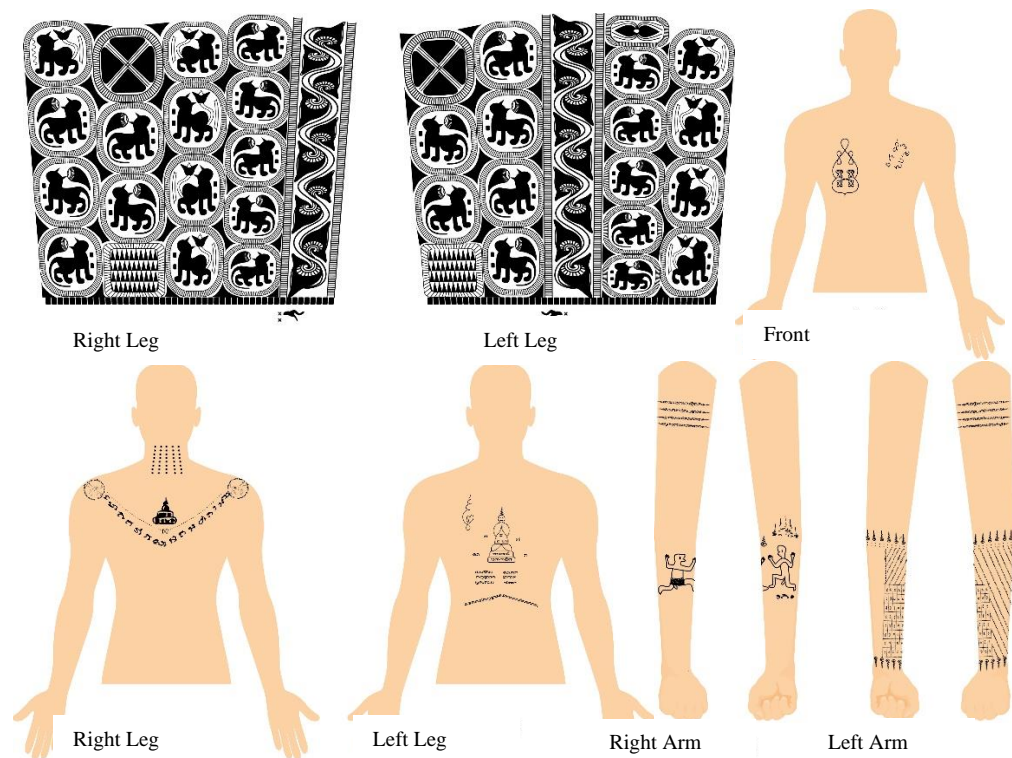




Image tattoo and Pattern Tattoo on the thigh of Phu Tai ethnic



The Mystic symbol tattoo in Phu Tai ethnic



The model of Phu Tai ethnic tattoo reproduction

*The Pattern in Khalerng ethnic were divided into 3 patterns: 1) Image tattoo and 2) Mystic symbol tattoo.*

***Image tattoo:***

The image tattoo consisted of Mom, a bird, Monkey, Tiger, Tiger head, and Hanuman from Himmapan forest. For the Bird, a lizard was a Mahaniyom tattoo while the monkey was believed to be fast and intelligent. The Hanuman and tiger or tiger head refer to the immortal and power.

***Mystic symbol tattoo:***

The Mystic symbol tattoo had categorized as follows: a) Alphabets which contained an image or text or both. The tattoo might help the person maintain in the good percept and the tattoo in each part of the body had contained the meaning such as on the neck would be auspicious sign while on the shoulder used for protection and the chest and back believed that the person would be immortal and away from the dangerous and being invisible. For the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things.

***The beliefs in the Khalerng ethnic:***

The beliefs in the Khalerng ethnic typically consist of customs, taboos, and rituals. The beliefs in Khalerng ethnic had divided into two groups: 1) Cultural power which believed that it was a basis of the cultural occurrences and extinction in the society which driven the culture toward the meaning which resulted in the cultural power which create the confident, patient, and harmony

in the community, 2) Mystic beliefs which help them from supernatural power such as holding the 5 percepts and prevent to have an affair, consume snake, dog, elephant, and monkey. On one hand, they believe in tattoos would help to promote charming, power, immortality, and protection from dangerous things. Furthermore, the tattoo in each part of the body had contained the meaning such as on the neck would be auspicious sign while on the shoulder used for protection and the chest and back believed that the person would be immortal and away from the danger and being invisible. For the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things Chanpichit Phongthongsamran (26, June 2019: Interview).

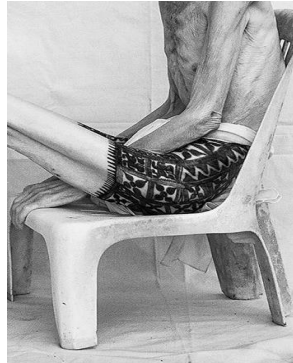
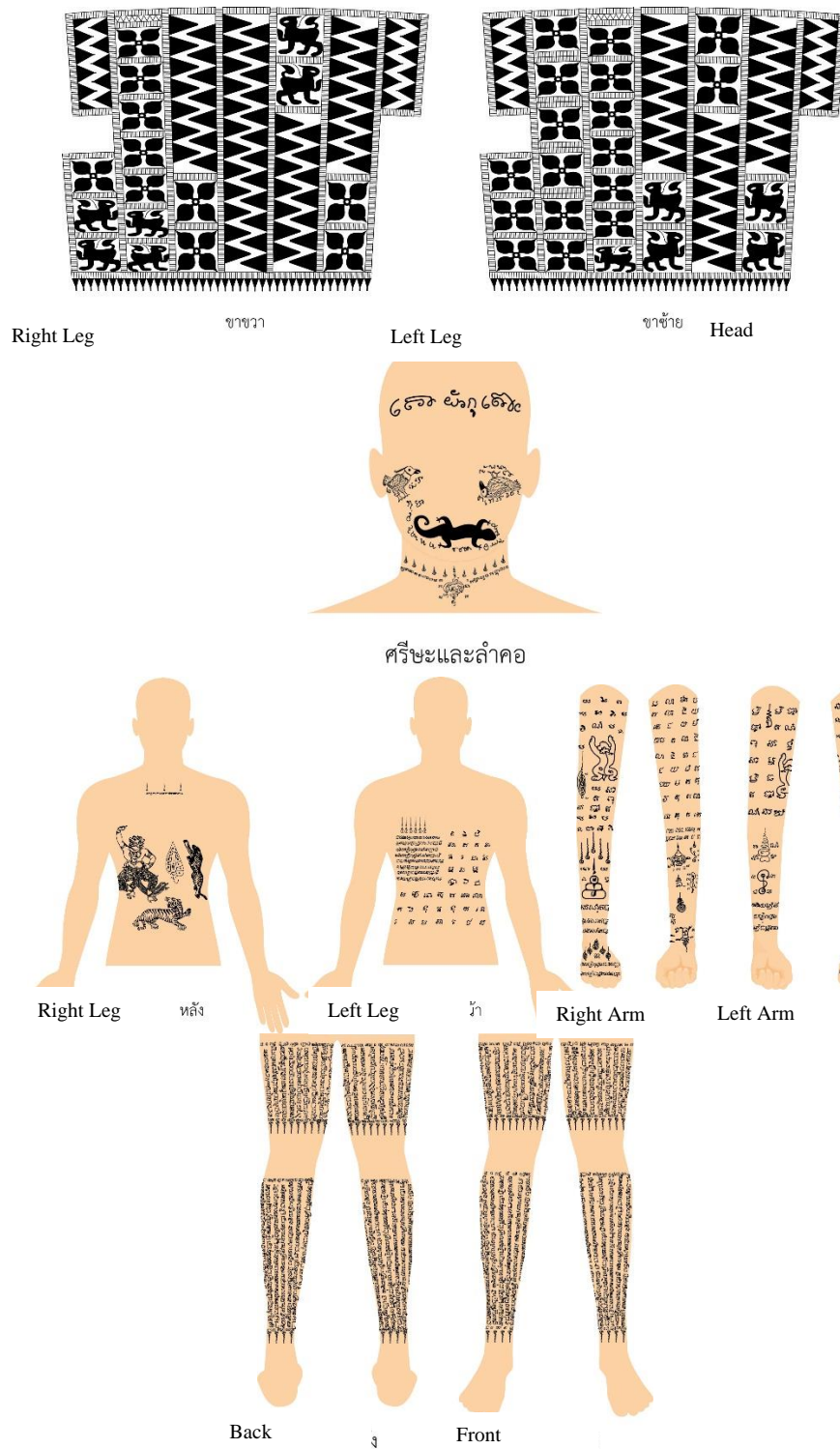


Image tattoo and Pattern Tattoo on the thigh of the Khalerng ethnic  
Source: Chanpichit Phongthongsamran (2017)



The Mystic symbol tattoo in Khalerng ethnic



The model of Khalerng ethnic tattoo reproduction

as mentioned, the patterns and beliefs of the Isan tattoo had consisted of the patterns from Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng ethnics and can divide into two types: a) Images, Patterns, and Mystic tattoos and b) Images and Patterns. From the patterns in these ethnic groups, the study results indicated that the patterns aspired from natural material and household usage stuffs, namely,

Creeper, Flower, Lotus, Pliers cutting, Geometric, Pineapple, Dog tooth, Ikat, Tamarind leaf, Cross, Composition, Circular, Scratch, Leaf, Fish scale, Decorative, Elephant nail, Serration, Star, Zigzag, and applied pattern which different in each ethnic group including, an animal such as Mom (mythical animal) and bird for artistry purpose, the mom was embedded with all ethics based on shared characteristic among the ethnics. Moreover, the Mystic symbol tattoo in arm and body areas embedded with the belief in customs, taboos, and rituals which had divided into two groups: 1) Cultural power which believed that the female would love and choose as the couple and the culture was a basis of the cultural occurrences and extinction in the society which driven the culture toward the meaning which resulted in the cultural power which create the confident, patient, and harmony in the community. In addition, the tattoo beliefs would save them from supernatural power, If the person is holding the five percepts and prevent having an affair, consume snake, dog, elephant, and monkey. On one hand, the tattoo would also help to promote the charming, power, immortality, and protection from the dangerous things Monk Kwuang Attanurak (15 July 2018: Interview)

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the patterns and beliefs of the Isan tattoo can be summarized that the Isan tattoo patterns were found in four ethnics, namely, Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng ethnics which divided into three patterns: a) Images, Patterns, and Mystic tattoos and b) Images and Patterns. From the patterns in these ethnic groups, the study results indicated that the patterns aspired from natural material and household usage stuff and animal i.e. Mom which different in each ethnic group including, animals such as Mom (mythical animal) and bird for artistry purposes. The mom was embedded with all ethics based on shared characteristics among the ethnics, the mom usually stands in the circle statue. The people believed that if the mon had a tail, it would be a female mom. The mom in the Phu Tai beliefs also has a crest and has the bird beside in each leg. Yet, the tattoos which shared among the four ethnics, namely, Creeper, Flower, Lotus, Pliers cutting, Geometric, Pineapple, Dog tooth, Ikat, Tamarind leaf, Cross, Composition, Circular, Scratch, Leaf, Fish scale, Decorative, Elephant nail, Serration, Star, Zigzag, and applied patterns. The tattoos found only in three ethnics: Tai-Lao, Nyaw, and Phu Tai consisted of Lotus, Creeper, and Lotus creeper. The serration was also found in Nyaw, Khalerng, and Phu Tai while Nyaw and Phu Tai found a similar pattern of geometric. The Phu Tai ethnic have outstanding pineapple pattern and dog tooth in the center of the men's back above the mom, they also added the tamarind, pliers cutting, and cross. The Nyaw and Khalerng have the serration before the knees which is difficult to see nowadays. The mystic tattoo which is found in Dharma and Khmer script together with Mahaniyom, Kong Krapan, and Kham Kyoe used differently based on the purpose of protection in each specific context.

It can be seen that the similarity that the four ethnic groups share is the 'Mom' creature—a mythical creature that looks like a tiger or a cat. It is said that the 'Mom' creature with its tail pointing upwards is male, while the tail of a female will point downwards. Mom is a Lanna work of arts. It always appears to be decorated on the gables, door trim, door façade, and stair railing, especially the handrail of a temple's stairwell. The feature of 'Mom' was originated from the

creativity and imagination of ‘Sala’ or local craftsman of Lanna. ‘Sala’s imagination was inspired by stories found in the Buddhist beliefs since ‘Mom’ is said to be one of the animals living in Himmapan Forest based on the belief of Buddhism. ‘Mom’ in a square frame will turn its head towards either to the left or right. Within the frame, patterns of leaves and rocks are decorated in the background. Nevertheless, ‘Moms’ of the Tai-Lao ethnic group are slightly different. Their ‘Mom’ creatures usually have crest or comb. Appear in the frame are a ‘Mom’ and the patterns of leaves in the background. The distinguishing characteristic of Tai-Lao’s tattoo is weaver birds which are tattooed on the uppermost part of a thigh along with the Ikat pattern. This distinguishing characteristic cannot be found in the tattoo of other ethnic groups. Regarding the similarity of the tattoo between Tai-Lao and Phu Tai are the birds appear in a frame with or without patterns in the background. The similarities shared by the four ethnic groups—Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng is the pattern of the flower, though their features are slightly different depending on the one who made the tattoos. The similarities shared by three ethnic groups—Tai-Lao, Nyaw, and Phu Tai—are the patterns of lotus creepers or creeper plants and lotus flowers. A similar pattern shared between Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng is the serrated pattern. Nyaw and Phu Tai shared similar geometric patterns, while Phu Tai has a distinguished pineapple pattern. For Tai-Lao and Phu Tai, the pattern called ‘Kaew Ma Tdai’ or Dog Tooth is usually tattooed in the lower middle part near the popliteal space. The ending tattoo pattern for Tai-Lao and Phu Tai is the pattern of tamarind leaves around the knees followed by the pattern of plier cutter and a cross or dash pattern. For Nyaw and Khalerng, the serration and tamarind patterns are used. For Khalerng, there is a bird pattern tattooed on both cheeks. The tattoos of alphabets or magic letters in all four ethnic groups are different from each other. It can be said the patterns of the tattoos of the four ethnic groups share some similarities, though the layout of how the patterns are placed is different depending on the tattoo artists.

The beliefs in the four ethnicities had divided into two groups: 1) Cultural power, 2) Mystic beliefs. The cultural power believed that the female would love and choose as the couple and the culture was a basis of the cultural occurrences and extinction in the society which driven the culture toward the meaning which resulted in the cultural power which creates the confidence, patient, and harmony in the community. Before beginning the tattooing, the person must worship the expert by five percepts stuffs with water and flowers, while the Mystic beliefs which help them from supernatural power such as holding the 5 percepts and prevent to have an affair consume snake, dog, elephant, and monkey. On one hand, they believe in tattoos would help to promote charming, power, immortality, and protection from dangerous things. Furthermore, the tattoo in each part of the body had contained the meaning such as on the neck would be auspicious sign while on the shoulder used for protection and the chest and back believed that the person would be immortal and away from the danger and being invisible. For the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things. Though all four ethnic groups have different beliefs, they still share some similarities since their tribes are located near each other, there is communication between tribes, and they were influenced by the same religion.

## RESEARCH DISCUSSION

The Isan tattoo patterns were found in the four ethnicities, namely, Tai-Lao, Nyaw, Phu Tai, and Khalerng ethnics which divided into three patterns: a) Images, Patterns, and Mystic tattoos and b) Images and Patterns. From the patterns in these ethnic groups, the study results indicated that the patterns aspired from natural material and household usage stuff and animal i.e. Mom which different in each ethnic group including, animals such as Mom (mythical animal) and bird for artistry purposes. The mom had embedded with all ethnics based on shared characteristics among the ethnics, the mom usually stands in the circle statue. The people believed that if the mom had a tail, it would be a female mom. The mom in the Phu Tai beliefs also has a crest and has the bird beside in each leg. Yet, the tattoos which shared among the four ethnics, namely, Creeper, Flower, Lotus, Pliers cutting, Geometric, Pineapple, Dog tooth, Ikat, Tamarind leaf, Cross, Composition, Circular, Scratch, Leaf, Fish scale, Decorative, Elephant nail, Serration, Star, Zigzag, and applied patterns. The Mystic symbol tattoo is categorized as follows: a) Alphabets which contained an image or text or both. The tattoo on the arm character had contained the Dharma alphabet and Mahaniyom and Kham Kyeo (Poisoned Animal Protection) which aimed to get an affection and Kham Kyo used for preventing insects as shaped like Bee and Dog images which located at arm and leg as in the beliefs.

Tattoos were one of the branches of art which consisted of color, shape, proportion, harmony, neat balance, properties that reflect artistry, cultural beliefs, and represent the personal identity through the body communication in each culture. Tattooing is considered as the aesthetic value and true value as the result of the composition of object, pattern, and mind as the beauty. This is the main aesthetic value which should be considered aesthetic emotion similar to the traditional tattoo which corresponded with the aesthetic theory which able to be categorized into two concepts: a) Aesthetic Experience or the emotional process and b) Logical Experience or logical process such as in the Mom which similar to the cat or black tiger, the person chooses to call the “Mom” as the perception in each perspective such as the creeper similar to rope and dog tooth similar to triangle pattern, etc. The pattern of tattoos in Isan is the aesthetic experience that analyzed the value in arts, livelihood, society, and related the contexts and the skills in tattoo master. To comprehensive data, the study had employed the Visual element concept—emerged from the artistry of the tattoo in each perception of humans, to illustrate the background and character of the tattoos in the Isan region. The concept aimed to illustrate and convey the meaning of cultural and historical artistry in the past.

The beliefs in the four ethnicities had divided into two groups: 1) Cultural power, 2) Mystic beliefs. The cultural power believed that the female would love and choose as the couple and the culture was a basis of the cultural occurrences and extinction in the society which driven the culture toward the meaning which resulted in the cultural power which creates the confidence, patient, and harmony in the community. Before beginning the tattooing, the person must worship the expert by five percepts stuffs with water and flowers, while the Mystic beliefs which help them from supernatural power such as holding the 5 percepts and prevent to have an affair consume snake, dog,

elephant, and monkey. On one hand, they believe in tattoos would help to promote charming, power, immortality, and protection from dangerous things. Furthermore, the tattoo in each part of the body had contained the meaning such as on the neck would be auspicious sign while on the shoulder used for protection and the chest and back believed that the person would be immortal and away from the danger and being invisible. For the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things. The study results corresponded with the semiology theory of Ferdinand de Saussure who categorized the type and meaning of symbols into two groups: a) aesthetic meaning refers to the understanding of the alphabet based on the agreements, b) significant meaning refers to the indirect meaning which emerged among the specific group in the community or from experiences in each individuality, as appeared in the beliefs about the Mon statue in Isan. The mom is considered as the powerful statue in Isan beliefs which understand only in the shared culture community, for example, the Pliers cutting refers to the better world when passed away or the leg tattooing which creates confidence, patient, and harmony among the men in the community and help the mem to choose the couple, or the Mahaniyom on arms and hands aimed to get affection and protection from the bad things. All of these tattoos had contained a significant meaning linked to the religion and were able to understand only in a specific community.

## RESEARCH SUGGESTION

### *Suggestion for the study results*

The study of the patterns and the beliefs in Isan tattoo which aimed to investigate the patterns and beliefs in Isan can apply and utilize as follows:

- To promote and study the patterns and beliefs of Isan tattoo to preserve and pass on the Isan tattoo culture to later generations and for the students and the public sectors to use knowledge for further research.
- To be the knowledge for the government or community to be able to use data as a database on guidelines for designing or creating the cultural products in different ideas for tourism.

## SUGGESTION FOR THE NEXT RESEARCH

- Further research should study the history and beliefs in other arts which considered as important data but have not been studied, especially in the Isan region which several areas should have been interested and investigated.

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