

Participatory Communication for Identity Conservation and Revitalization of Lao Khrang's Cloth, Local Wisdoms of Sa Yai Chee, Tambon Nern Por, Amphoe Sam Ngam, Phichit Province

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to study the history of custom, ritual ceremony way of life of the use of Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee, 2) to study the current condition, and production problems, conservation and revitalization of Lao Khrang's woven cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee by community participation. 3) to conserve and revive the community identity from local wisdoms of Lao Khrang's cloth. The findings found that the community of Barn Sa Yai Chee has descended from Luang Phra Bang. They believe in ways of life, custom, and culture. They produce woven cloth: Pha Mudmee, Pha Khit, Pha Jok. The production problem of the community was a small number of skilled weavers who are elderly people exist. The youths who have been trained for the weaving have to study for the basic education in schools, therefore, they cannot spend longer time in the training. The markets of the cloth are still limited. The conservation and revitalization of local wisdom trends in value and pride building in Lao Khrang's woven cloth should be organized in terms of curriculum in schools and the use of Lao Khrang's woven cloth should be publicized widely.

Keywords: Local Wisdom ; Lao Khrang's Woven Cloth ; Participatory Communication ; Conservation and Revitalization

Introduction

Cloth is a cultural product of human beings responding to the nature which is classified for the basic necessity called clothing. It is to respond to both physical and mental basic human needs. It provides warmth and security which differ from food, shelter or fire and covers some parts of the body [1] in an agricultural society, each family weaves the hand material for their own use which is the woman's role. This has been transferred from local wisdoms and cultural heritage. This can be observed is that the capable society in hand material weaving is from Laotian race who migrates into Thailand and now they are blended into Thais; therefore, hand materials woven in cotton and silk are mainly made by these people.

Lao Khrang is one of the Laotian ethnic groups who once were brought into Thailand from Vientian and Luang Phrabang since Krungthonburi; however, the important migration of Lao Krangs occurred in 2371 during the reign of King Rama III of Rattanakosin Dynasty. There was a rebel in Laos and King

Rama III had suppressed the rebel, then he brought back the Laotians with him into Thailand in order to not allow them to build a new nation so he ordered those people to central regions in Uthaithanee, Chainart, Suphan Buri, Nakhonsawan, Phichit, Kamphang Phet, Nakhon pathom. Those people brought customs, culture with them such as weaving their own cloth, exchanging medicine, dried food or silver for their earning. Lao Khrang's cloth is unique and outstanding from other Laotian ethnic groups with different techniques including jok and Mudmee both in cotton and silk. The materials are from nature which is local wisdoms transferred from generation to generation. The Mudmee process called Jae which uses orange from ripen betel nuts and yellow. The patterns are so interesting including geometric patterns, sky and animal patterns. The outstanding Lao Khrang's materials are Phasin Teenjok, Phasin Dokdao (star) and Phasin Meeruat.

Lao Khrang's cloth is important from the past till present. It has been made in the family for their own use and for the ritual purpose such as to worship the ancestor's spirits, and religious ceremony such as making flags, sitting material, cloth to cover the would be monk, the preaching venue. Beside cloth is made for the commercial purpose. Lao Khrang's cloth is long related to their ways of life from the past till present. However, the western trend likeness has replaced the old culture and faded from the local culture including the economic situation which the people try to make their livings for their sustainability so the people have to struggle and earn their livings by doing some other jobs so the hand material weaving declines resulting in the less use of woven materials. The local people will weave when the orders are made and this will result to the disappearance of the hand materials.

Lao Khrang people at Barn Sa Yai Chee, Tambon Nern Por, Amphoe Sam Ngam, Phichit Province are facing the same problem in present day though they have set up the housewife group to produce Lao Khrang's hand material to preserve and inherit the weaving culture for their young generations and this will disappear along with the local wisdoms due to the less interest of new generation in weaving cloth.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the participation to conserve the local wisdoms of Lao Khran's weaving cloth by using the participation from their inside community drive to drive the young people to realize and love their past culture as well as the importance of their ancestors and the value of hand material which is diminishing and may disappear eventually. This will help conserve and reform the Lao Khrang's hand weaving existing in the future ethnic group.

Objectives:

1. to study the history, customs, ritual, ways of life of the use of Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee,
2. to study the current situation and production problems, the conservation and revitalization of Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee,
3. to conserve and revive the community identity from local wisdoms of Lao Khrang's cloth.

Methodology:

The research team uses the participatory methodology with the following objectives:

1. To study the history, customs, ritual, ways of life of the use of Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee. The data were collected by using focus group discussion, observation, and document synthesizing. The research team went to the area to collect data for community history, customs, rituals, ways of life of Lao Khrang people by in-dept interview of senior artists, scholars in the village, related people in the village, and then 25 senior artists were invited for the focus group interview once again. Then the data were analyzed along with existing historical documents and synthesized into the research findings.

2. To study the current condition and production problems, conservation and revitalization of Lao Khrang's cloth at Sa Yai Chee community, Tambon Nern Por, Amphoe Samngam, Phichit Province by using AIC participatory community; that is, to stage the venue for the exchange of experience by focus group interview of 50 senior artists, local scholars, cultural officer of Phichit, Lord mayor of Local Administration at Tambon Nern Por and young people. The data gained would be analyzed to find the content as follows:

2.1 to analyze the current condition on the Lao Khrang's cloth in the community,

2.2 to self review,

2.3 to plan together,

2.4 to designate the desired image expected by the community and designate the activities together in conservation and reviving of the Lao Khrang's cloth.

3. to conserve and revive the community identity from the local wisdoms of weaving Lao Khrang's cloth by discussion from cultural officer of Phichit, Lord mayor of Local Administration at Tambon Nern Por and young people, artists, cloth weaver by using participatory communication for the occurrence of conservation activities in the community.

The population was 1425 people from Moo 5 villagers of Sa Yai Chee community, Tambon Nern Por, Amphoe Samngam, Phichit Province. The samples were informants chosen by purposive sampling comprised:

1. Twenty five senior artists who are the members of Cloth weaving group at Ban Sa Yai Chee. They are knowledgeable, capable, expertise in cloth weaving and their products are well recognized by the community.

2. Ten village scholars who know about the migration history, settlement, local wisdoms, culture and customs, beliefs.

3. Eight related people in the village who are both official and unofficial leaders such as Lord mayor of Local Administration at Nern Por, cultural officer of Phichit, village headmen and five teachers.

4. Ten youths who are the leaders and vice leaders of the class from Nern Por rungnokchanuthit School.



Figure 1 and 2 the discussion to find the conservation model in Lao Khrang's cloth. (Waraporn Junthasorn, 2014)

The data analysis comprised of:

1. Individual data analysis by concluding the data from the interview and classified into categories, trying to understand and explain the studied issues.
2. Group data analysis from focus group discussion by concluding , categorizing, trying to understand and explain the studied issues.
3. Data from observation, synthesized documents were analyzed and interpret, conclude, explain according to the studied issues.
4. Analysis by categorizing into content according to the issue and studied scope as the research objectives and checking the accuracy by triangulation.
5. Data processed in each category and then try to understand, interpret and explain according to the studied issues.
6. Presentation the findings by content analysis in the related components and conclusions of the studies issues into descriptive presentation.

The findings were as follows:

1. The history and customs of Lao Khrang's cloth use

1.1 General condition of Barn Sa Yan Chee is a community that is related to Laotians who immigrated from Luang Phrabang since once it was the old capital which was prosperous before Vientian. They raised silkworms for the woven cloth used within the Royal palace or royal resident. Those people were brought into Thailand during the early Rattanakosin and they called themselves Lao Khrangs. Originally, they live in the Phookhrang mountain range in Luang Phrabang. They raise the lac insects which give red color for the cloth dyes. They are also farmers. The girls will be raised to weave the cloth since they are young and whenever they are free from the routine work, they weave the cloth for their own use in the family. For their belief, they bring Buddhism and some supernatural belief related to their daily life in the community. Handmade materials are very important in Barn Sa Yai Chee community since the past till today and they are divided into 3 facets as follows:

1.1.1. Ritual ceremony is related to cloth weaving such as wedding, ordination, house warming and Buddhism.

1.1.2. Culture and customs in that in the wedding in the past till today, the bride will take cloth to give to the groom's parents and relatives. During Songkran Festival the cloth is given as presents to the elderly people in the village; however, this cloth is given to only important people because some families do not make their own but buy from their neighbors.

1.1.3. Ways of life aspect, the people will weave cloth for their own use in the family such as for garments or tailoring their own use in different occasions as they wish. Now time and society change, there are only some groups who still weave hand materials in the community. They wear phasins (sarong like) to make merit, to join in religious ceremony, wedding and now to wear pants seems more convenient than wearing phasins.

2. Current condition, production problems, conservation and revitalization in Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee.

The cloth weaving at Barn Sa Yai Chee is minimizing because the villagers believe that this job is complicated in processing the cloth weaving; therefore, they change their jobs into agriculture which is much easier, more convenient and the price of the crops is much higher. The young ladies seem to use less phasins due to the complicate grooming comparing to the ready- made dresses which are much cheaper from western culture. Currently, the cloth weaving is reviving from the government units such as local administration at Nern Por who is providing budget for the Lao Khrang's housewives and also provides the

resource persons to train those women in order to conserve the local wisdoms in cloth weaving. Now they are buying ready-made yarns and then dye whatever color they need. Sometime they order silk yarns from other provinces or cotton yarns to reduce the cost of yarn production. The advantage is that they save time by not raising silkworms, growing cotton but the disadvantage is that the local wisdoms of Lao Khrang's cloth weaving from the beginning till the end of the process may die down.

There are three types of Barn Sa Yai Chee's woven materials which are unique as follows:

2.1 Pha Teen Jok is a piece of cloth that is attached to bottom of the Phasin. How to weave Pha Teen Jok is very precise and the pattern of Barn Sa Yai Chee is modified from the original pattern.

2.2 Pha Mudmee is tied to make the pattern as the weaver expected. The yarns will be tied very tightly before dyeing them, then the dyes will not go into the tied areas and when the yarns are cut they will get light colors and the untied parts will get the expected colors. The yarns will be woven into pieces. Mudmee at Barn Sa Yai Chee is the integration between Mudmee and Khit called Meeta which can be made with Teen Jok or without Teen Jok.

2.3 Pha Khit is a swell pattern on a woven cloth and the patterns are the same. Pha Khit at Barn Sa Yai Chee community is made by three methods: first by using Khit stick without keeping the heddles, second making Khit by collecting the heddles by putting them behind and third collecting the heddles vertically. Pha Khit making is depending on the skill of the weaver.



Figure 3 and 4. Characteristic of Lao Khrang's cloth (Yanyongvorakorn Thongyaem, 2014)

Lao Khrang's cloth production problems ordering from the most to the least as follows:

1) Workforce: the skilled weavers are elderly people and the numbers are not so many; therefore, the customers' needs do not meet as well as the ones who likely to inherit are not enough.

2) Transfer to young generation: the young people have to study basic education according to the law so they do not have time to weave. This results in the lessen of weaving so this can lead to the opportunity in transferring local wisdoms in weaving to the young generation.

3) Marketing problems: it is limited due to the local production and the market has not been expanded widely.

Lao Khrang's cloth weaving conservation models are as follows:

1) Instilling the value and making awareness, pride in cultural value by arranging the cloth weaving activities in the community.

2) Arranging the local cloth curriculum to transfer the know how to weave local cloth to young people in Tambon Nern Por schools, Amphoe Samngam, Phichit Province.

3) Public relations for the use of Lao Khrang's cloth widely.

From the aforementioned models, it leads to the conservation activities to revive the identity of the local wisdoms in Lao Khrang's cloth weaving such as the group ordination enabling the local people to wear Phasins in order to conserve the cloth weaving and be the role models for the next generations to wear Phasins again. Moreover, during the last day of Songkran Festival called the flag raising, the people wear Phasins to revive the people to learn the culture in using Lao Khrang's cloth in different rituals. They also exhibit the Lao Khrang's cloth in order to publicize it for the people to know more about the cloth. Local curriculum is organized only for the interested group without continuity so this can result in the lack of cloth weaving expertise.



Figure 5 and 6 pictures of group ordination and the ladies are wearing Lao Khrang's cloth (Yanyongvorakorn Thongyaem, 2014)

From the recession and disappearance of Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chi community phenomenon, it is feasible from the following observing concepts as follows:

The existence of some culture and value in the community partly is depending upon the mobility benefit in globalization; that is, now the world is small, media technology makes the existing value unnecessary in the community such as the no response of the expected physical needs such as it is difficult to use, inconvenient to look after and to wear and the devalue that cannot be existed. Besides, they cannot meet the mental needs such as the beauty that the society may change their views from the globalized effects which accorded with the dialect disappearance of Prof. Dr. Suwilai Premsirat [2] the President of Study and Language and Culture Revival in Crisis, the Institute of Language and Culture Research Center for the Rural Area Development of Mahidol University saying that the disappearance of any language may have some cause especially the change in globalization which accelerates the disappearance of the language. Now media are easily accessible, people access to radio, television, and the media use the main language which results in the disappearance of the dialects in daily use. The dialects and local cultures are the local wisdoms as well.

The conservation model is using the participatory research [3] proposes that the operational research is the important process in studying the problems and access the participation drive the activity building power to create the value in many things in the community. Thus the researcher must learn from the villagers both physical and social problems to find the resolutions from the community participation

which will enable the community to see the unseen value and stimulate the community to see the importance of the disappearing things.

Conclusion and discussion

Lao Khrang people are the ethnic group from Laos originally from Phurang mountain range in Luang Phrabang. They grow the lac insects which produce red color for the cloth dye presenting to the royal resident called Lao Khrang's cloth. During the war between Thailand and Laos, Thais won the war so the Laotians had been forced to move to many areas in Thailand. The Lao Khrang people led their lives according to the culture and the love of their culture and customs as well as rituals and belief which they used to practice when they were in Laos.

The settlement of Lao Khrang people at Tambon Nern Por, Phichit Province has the family system such as family and relatives. They are self-governed society with the leader who can make decision, they have culture, customs, beliefs, they transfer the know how to make a living such as farming, cloth weaving. Cloth uniqueness is Phasin Mudmee and Phasin Teen Jok of which techniques are from jok (embroidery) and mudmee (tie the yarn). These two types of cloth are made from either silk or cotton. The Lao Khrang people believe in religion. The longer it is the stronger of the society will be.

Lao Khrang people still continually keep their culture, customs, rituals and beliefs and transfer those to the younger generation enabling them to realize the importance of traditions such as Songkran Festival, wedding ceremony, house warming, ordination, Rice welcoming ceremony. They also believe in spirit, birth and death rituals and other rituals, Lao Khrang people will use cloth related to the rituals because cloth is part of their ways of life. They use cloth in many occasions such as making it into garments for their family use and in other rituals such as cloth to cover the would be monk, bible wrapper, cloth for the seat for summon during the wedding ceremony, ritual when worshiping the holy place by placing all the offering things. Overtime, socio-geographic change, there are no place to raise silkworms and to grow cotton and those have been replaced by other cash crops, the cloth weaving once used to be made for the family use but it is now for the commercial purpose. The weaving cloth is developed to make Mudmee attached by Teen Jok in silk and the price is higher than cotton or artificial silk. Now the people use the ready-made artificial silk yarn for their products. Though Lao Khrang's cloth is high, it lacks the people to inherit how to weave cloth because they send their children to study and get higher education for a better job and they can make a living by their own.

Lao Khrang's cloth conservation model discovered and applicable is to accept the participatory community research by exchanging their ideas with each other and realizing the importance of Lao Khrang's cloth culture which was handed down from their ancestors. They should cooperate in terms of seeking problems and finding solutions for the reason why the young generation has no interest on Lao Khrang's cloth. The community is trying to designate the activity in conserving and reviving the Lao Khrang's cloth which Barn Sa Yai Chee community still has problems in producing the cloth in 3 ways: 1) workforce: the skilled weavers are elderly people and the number is less, 2) the inheritance of the younger generation: the children have to study basic education by law so they have less time to learn how to weave, 3) marketing problems: it is still limited only for local use. The Lao Khrang's cloth at Barn Sa Yai Chee conservation models are as follows: 1) instill the value and pride of the cloth in the community, 2) create the local curriculum in Lao Khrang's cloth for the community school in order to transfer the know how to weave to the young generation, 3) disseminate the public relations in using the cloth widely.

From the research, it was found that the result from the social change by globalization paradigm, the change in technology, value in the community, and communication affect the rituals, customs into a modern society. For the being, Lao Khrang's community has transferred knowledge towards the family and now it

changes due to the fact that the children need to go for compulsory study, the technology is more available for young generation, the children tend to enjoy for new style of dresses, media present more western which lead to the change in terms value, beliefs. When they graduate, they tend to have a job which differs from the past.

The process that indicates the community need to conserve and revive is that they need to analyze the community condition by seeking the know how to weave Lao Khrang's cloth towards the community participation. They have to self-study on how to mobilize by the co-planning to designate the expected image desired by the community to be.

Therefore, the way to mobilize the Lao Khrang's cloth conservation is the problem seeking which is the must in a current condition by the community participation in order to find the desirable model in mobilizing the revitalization. The Lao Khrang's cloth should be conserved by their own group because in the community, they have to govern by themselves and the leaders have to make the decision but they still lack the academic support which accorded with Radcliffe Brown and Bonislow Malinowgki [4] stating that society comprises many systems such family, economy, religion, politics, education; each system has specific structure and role which make the peaceful society or keep the balance in the society, tradition, rituals.

Furthermore, the changing of the society enabling the desirable mobility needs to cling to the community centered. When the community has less weaving because of the unworthy time and money investment so buying is the preferable alternative especially the communication among the main media which present new values from the western so this results in the lessen young generation's role in weaving cloth and become less interest weaving which accorded with Suwadee Thanaprasitpatana [5] who stated that the villagers' value in copying the city people's value in using cloth produced by machine with cheaper price and easy to take care and the villagers are influenced by new clothes from Asia and western countries.

Thus the problem of production and the Lao Khrang's cloth conservation at Barn Sa Yai Chee faces is that the workforce is only among the elderly people and the number of them is so small and the time of transferring the know how to weave to younger generation is also limited. Every unit is trying to solve these problems by focusing on the community participation mainly for the benefit of the community. The community is cooperating with the school by focusing on the community's and young children's cooperation which accorded with the research of Bamrung Sukhaphan [6] who studied the appropriate cultural model administration towards the dissemination of Thai culture mentioned that the Office of National Cultural Commissioner and Cultural Promotion Center should be the core in disseminating the news, coordinating and motivating every unit to cooperate the cultural expansion to the country seriously.

Both community and school must cooperate seriously in inheriting local wisdoms in cloth weaving existence in the community which accorded with Jenjira Latbuakao [7] who stated that teachers should make community relations and create academic atmosphere in school by inviting scholars who own local wisdoms to teach children by coordinating between community and school and finding the method to stimulate the villagers to participate in planning and instructing in school more.

Everyone in the community must do the marketing and publicity for Lao Khrang's cloth and make it well known widely and this accorded with the research paper of Kamonat Sijoy [8] who found that the factors helping the knowledge transfer in cloth weaving existence is the marketing support.

Therefore, mobilizing the revitalization of wisdom society, there should be support from policy both community and leader support as well as strengthen the community towards the participatory process plus marketing promotion by the discussion which can be concluded as the model below.

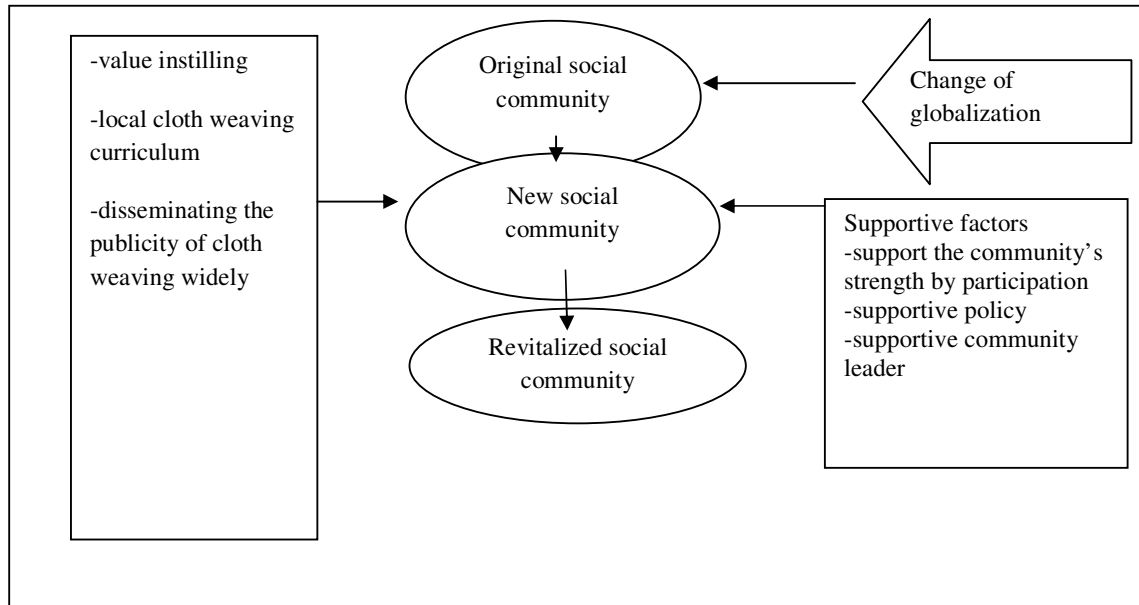


Figure. 7 Mobility Model of Conservation and Revitalization of Lao Khrang's Cloth

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