

## Silk-Cloth Weaving Development of the Mon -Khmer Ethnic Group in Lower-Isan

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**Abstract: Problem statement:** Silk cloth weaving culture of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan has a specific identity which should be handed down to future generation. The purposes of this research were to examine: (1) the body knowledge concerning silk clothes of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region, (2) the process of production or silk-cloth weaving of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region and (3) development of silk-cloth weaving of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region. **Approach:** The research data was gathered from documents concerned and research fields. A sample was 156 people living at 7 villages and those involving silk-cloth production or weaving. The data was analyzed according to the research purposes and presented by means of a descriptive analysis. **Results:** Silk-cloth weaving has been a cultural heritage transferred from ancestors. In 1215 Chow Tang Kwan stated that the Siamese people came there, grew mulberries, raised silkworms and wove silk clothes from that time through learning from generation to generation. The cloth-identity and patterns have been partly influenced by their ethnic group together with the way of life in each period. In the past, the main purpose of silk-cloth weaving was for household use. Some of the silk clothes were kept for being supplement to various rituals and Buddhist ceremonies. Thus, it was not necessary for them to have commercial production. Household-labor was still an important-productive factor of sufficient economy and reliant society. For the production process, it has been found that at present the economic and social structures have changed from household-use production to commercial production. There are complete production processes in the type of forming groups and the management system by increasing production competency to obtain both quantity and quality as well as standard prices. There are transmutations into a variety of other products and promotion of domestic and foreign marketing. However, what is firmly retained to the community is the traditional silk-cloth weaving. For silk-cloth weaving development, it shows that the appropriate model of silk-cloth weaving development of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region consists of economic and social changes which can affect silk-cloth weaving culture of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region. **Conclusion/Recommendations:** Silk-cloth weaving is a very important cultural heritage of Mon-Khmer ethnic group. It accumulated and adhered from ancestors and transacting through social recognition in each period. All of production processes of each period are scrupulous such as growing mulberries, raising silkworms, producing fibers and dyeing fibers. The development of identity, patterns, weaving technique, production equipment, transmutation equipment and marketing cause a sequence of changes and development of the process of silk-cloth production or weaving from weaving for household use to commercial production. At present, there are many forming groups which produce for a commercial purpose. However, what is firmly retained to the community is the traditional of silk-cloth weaving by hand-loom.

**Key words:** Silk-cloth weaving, development, Mon-Khmer ethnic group, lower-Isan

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### INTRODUCTION

The country development of Thailand in the past was the development according to the concept of mainstream development as worldwide countries that

emphasized economic development. There were several productive factors and one important of all was humans, the mainstream development defined humans as human resources that was a kind of resource as other resources and was useful for enhancing economic and

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social growth. Silk-cloth weaving was the culture and a very important base of basic living of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group. It was an important occupation that was put order into the second next to agriculture. Formerly, silk-cloth weaving was not a distinguished occupation because it just a supplement activity for enhancing more income for family. Afterwards, the people appreciated and developed it from household-use production to commercial production thus silk-cloth weaving that was the Local handicraft and indigenous knowledge became a recognizable occupation. At present, there are the changes both economic and social changes. Silk-cloth weaving changes its social role and social value from producing for cultural value or local identity to producing for occupation or income both supplement and main occupations. Moreover, folk-silk cloth products are outstanding products which have a chance to distribute to worldwide markets both domestic and foreign markets. Both government and non-government organizations encourage the people to weave silk clothes for enhancing income but their encouragements lack the continuous operation and lack a clearly direction so silk-cloth weaving cannot develop to a sustainable occupation with economic potential of community. They just persuade the people to maintain continuously traditional silk-cloth weaving as a cultural heritage of Lower-Isan.

**Purposes and objectives:** The purposes of this research were to examine: (1) the body of knowledge concerning silk clothes of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region and (3) development of silk-cloth weaving of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan region.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research areas:** The research area were selected by a purposive sampling in the area of 4 provinces in Lower-Isan region: Ubon Ratchathani, Si Sa Ket, Surin and Buri Ram.

**Research method:** A qualitative research was applied to this research and the data was gathered by means of a document analysis and field study. A sample was 156 people living at 7 villages and those involving silk-cloth weaving. Research data was called by an in-depth interview, an observation, a group discussion and workshop. The data was analyzed according to the research purposes and presented by means of a descriptive analysis.

## **RESULTS**

The research findings revealed the following:

- The body of knowledge of silk-cloth weaving of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan has been a cultural heritage transferred from ancestors. The cloth identity and patterns have been partly influenced by their ethnic group together with the way of life in each Periodthe production process has changed from household use production to commercial production. There is the management system by increasing production competency to obtain both quantity and quality as well as standard prices. There are transmutations into a variety of other products and promotion of domestic and fore in marketing
- The appropriate model of silk-cloth weaving development of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan consists of factors of economic and social changes which can affect silk-cloth weaving culture of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan

## **DISCUSSION**

The researchers would like to discuss research results as follows:

- The body of knowledge of silk-cloth weaving of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group in Lower-Isan has been a cultural heritage transferred from ancestors. The cloth identity and patterns have been party influenced by their ethnic group with the way of life of each period. In the past, the major purpose of silk-cloth weaving was for being supplement to various rituals and Buddhist ceremonies. Thus it was not necessary for them to have commercial production. This is consistent with a research result of Praphaisi Soykham (1993) who entitled the research “Ubon Silk Clothes: Belief in Silk-cloth Weaving and Uses” revealed that the purpose of silk-cloth weaving was for household use. Some of the silk-clothes were kept for being supplement to various rituals and giving the monks for making a skirt like lower garment of a Buddhist priest, a Buddhist priest’s bag. The people believed that giving silk clothes for the monks, they and their families would be happy and peaceful
- The production process has changed from household use production to commercial production. There is the management system by increasing production competency to obtain both

quantity and quality as well as standard prices. There are transmutations into a variety of other products and promotion of domestic and fore in marketing. This is consistent with a research result of Saranya Paethong (2001) who entitled the research "The Strategy of Silk Clothes Marketing: A Case Study of Handicraft Centre of Ban Sam Kho, Tambon Prasatthong, King Amphoe Khwao Sinarin, Changwat Surin" revealed that marketing mix, in terms of product, it aimed at developing products to modern products according to requirements of markets and a research result of Kritika Saenphoch (2003) who entitled the research "Developing Operative Potential of Community Business: A Case Study of Handicraft Products of Udon Thani Province" revealed that community business could produce products according to customers' requirements, improved products before distributed them to markets and wrote concretely a marketing plan

### **CONCLUSION**

Silk-cloth weaving is a very important cultural heritage of Mon-Khmer ethnic group. It accumulated and adhered from ancestors and transacting through social recognition in each period. All of production processes of each period are scrupulous such as growing mulberries, raising silkworms, producing fibers and dyeing fibers. The development of identity, patterns, weaving technique, production equipment, transmutation equipment and marketing cause a sequence of changes and development of the process of silk-cloth production or weaving from weaving for household use to commercial production. At present, there are many forming groups which produce for a commercial purpose. However, what is firmly retained to the community is the traditional of silk-cloth weaving by hand-loom.

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