Spirit of the Loom: the Conservation and Commodification of Surin's Textile Cultural Heritage

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ABSTRACT

Surin textiles have a long history, and because of the geographical location of Surin, the designs were inspired by contact with Khmer culture. The patterns and techniques are therefore unique. The textiles were chosen to make shirts and shawls for the leaders and their wives at APEC 2003. Since then, the textiles have become increasingly well-known. Tourism to the area has created jobs, particularly in textile production – feeding the silkworms, tie-dying, weaving and making up garments. Local knowledge about the process has been transmitted orally. The textiles have thus become cultural commodities, and their production is a form of intangible heritage which is now being safeguarded.

Keywords

Surin textiles, Baan Natang, cultural commodification, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, The Queen Sirikit Department of Sericulture, Khmer culture, silk, silkworms, natural dyes, *Mai Noi, Bai Sri, Mo Ra Dok*, Thailand.

Introduction

Weaving and textiles have played a major role in Surinese life for centuries (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center: 2013). The diverse cultural influences have created unique patterns and the textiles were used at various important functions and ceremonies. This tradition was revived at APEC 2003 (Tourism Authority of Thailand: n.d. p.18) when Surin silk was chosen as the material for the leaders' shirts and their wives' shawls. The glorious Surin silks are an important aspect of the everyday life and economy of the region, and will play a part in the forthcoming ASEAN Community.[1] One of the main elements on which this will focus is traditional culture, and this has had an impact on products, as globalisation and the influence of the media speed up commercial production. Inevitably, this has affected Surin textiles, but this process of cultural commodification is proving an effective way of safeguarding and transmitting ICH in Surin.

Baan Natang is a local village in Khwao Sinarin district, located about 20kms north of Muang Surin district. Approximately 200 families live there and their main source of income comes from the paddy fields with some additional revenue from silver-smithing and weaving, especially after the harvest. The close relationship and geographical border with Cambodia has had a great influence on Baan Natang handicrafts which incorporate Khmer patterns. This cultural assimilation makes Surin textiles unique and remarkable.

Surin

There are a wide variety of ethnic groups in this region of South East Asia which lies at the crossing point of many overland routes and is near the Cambodian border. The Vietnamese, who are a mixture of Thai and Malay, originated from the Red River area in the north, while the Mon, the product of Tibeto-Burmans and the Thai are found in Myanmar and Thailand. The Khmer people are the descendants of the earlier Pareoean people on the mainland. Karens, Chins and Nagas, descendants of the Proto-Malay and Pareoean are also found in Myanmar (Frederick: 2013). There are now 62 remaining ethnic groups in Thailand whose presence has significantly influenced Thai culture. (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center: 2006).

Surin is in the northeastern province of Thailand on I-San plateau which is 470 kilometres from Bangkok. [Figure 1] This area of 8,124 square kilometres is divided into seventeen districts: Mueng, Chomphon Buri, Tha Tum, Chom Phra, Prasat, Kap Choeng, Rattanaburi, Sanom, Sikhoraphum, Sangkha, Samrong Thap, Buachet, Lamduan, Si Narong, Phanom Dong Rak, Khwao Sinarin and Non Narai (Tourism Authority of Thailand: 2010, p.56). The Kuay, an ethnic group, settled along the Mekong River near Dongrek Mountain. They specialised in capturing elephants to use as domestic animals.

Surin was settled at roughly the same time as the Khmer Empire was established. The subsequent fall of the Khmer Empire affected Surin which was abandoned for three centuries. The accumulation of ethnic groups - the Lao, the Khmer and the Kui by Luang Surin Pakdi encouraged the development of Surin in 1763 (Tourism Authority of Thailand: n.d., p.8).

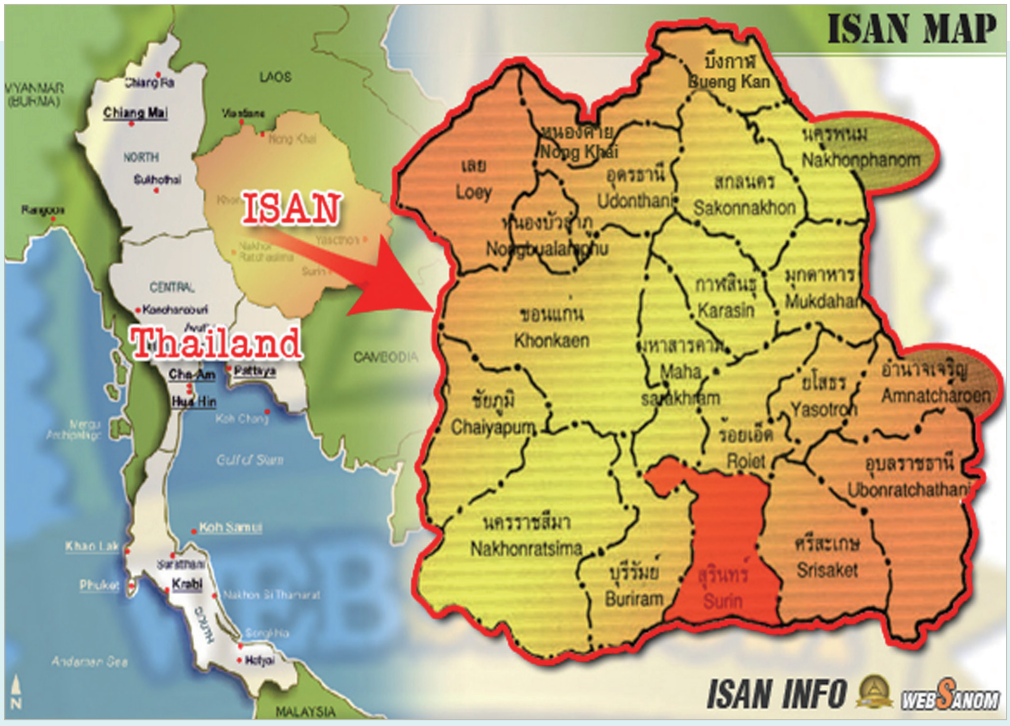


Figure 1
Map showing the location of Surin. Source : http://www.websanom.com/accommodation_surin. php. Accessed on March 23, 2015.

Surin borders northern Cambodia, a historical and cultural context which means the Surinese have had contact with Khmer culture for many centuries. Consequently, Surin has been inspired by Khmer cultural traditions and this is seen in the region's cultural heritage– silver-smithing, *Kantreum* folk music, traditional medicine and textiles (Princess Maha Chakri Anthropology Center: 2013, pp.9-12).

This paper however, will focus on textiles, a basic product of human cultural activity which can be traced back to the late Stone Age in the Middle East through the survival of artefacts related to textile production (Hearle: 2000, p.11). The variety of patterns and styles in different regions reflect beliefs, history and geographical data which are the distinctive elements of each culture, including that of Thailand. Each region has its own textiles with particular techniques and processes, for instance, the northern region has *Jok*, a weaving technique characterised by horizontal stripes, while the southern region uses multiple heddles to produce designs in the form of flowers. The Northeastern region has a diversity of ethnic groups, each with its own styles of textile such as *Phoo Tai*, an indigo dying technique, and *Phraewa*, while as we have already noted, Surin designs are inspired by the mainland culture of the Khmer. This culture still survives and is expressed through Surin textiles. The cultural significance of this heritage is promoted by the Surin Provincial Committee which holds local annual events to display Surin textiles at the Surin Jasmine Rice and Silk Cloth Fair. This event is recognised and promoted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

Baan Natang in Khwao Sinarin district was specifically selected as a case study because this community still carries out the complete process of textile production, from feeding silkworms, through tie-dyeing and weaving to making up finished items, using designs based on natural motifs and involving the participation of the whole community to produce items for sale. The Chansoma Cloth Weaving Group located in Muang district exemplifies the commercial use of textiles.

Surin: a way of life described through textiles

According to local legend, people in Surin first produced textiles which were influenced by the Khmer when the Khmer Kingdom held an important ceremony. The Khmer had insufficient manpower to weave the large quantities of textiles they needed, so they asked people in the border areas to help them. Since then, the Thai people have learnt the patterns, techniques, and styles of the Khmer. [Plate1] After the fall of the Khmer Empire, its role and textiles disappeared. However, Khmer textiles were revived to make a gift which was presented to the American President, Franklin Pierce, by King Rama IV in 1856. The gift embodied particular techniques which meant it could have been made in



Plate 1
Surin silks with patterns showing Khmer influence.
Photo: Author, August, 2013

either Cambodia or Siam (present day Thailand) by Khmer weavers, but it also demonstrated the practice of cultural exchange between the political and social hierarchies of the Cambodian and Siamese courts. This practice ceased in the reigns of later monarchs as designs were modernised, and this certainly had an impact on marketing and commerce. Traditional Surin textiles influenced by Khmer culture are now in demand in Bangkok (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center: 2013, p.17).

Today, textile weaving, especially silk weaving, is still practised in many villages across Surin province. The variety of forms and different types have continued to be produced on a regular basis. Some weavers plant mulberry trees and raise their own silkworms while others prefer to buy chemically dyed silk thread. Many weavers weave garments for themselves and family members to wear during important Buddhist festivals, or as gifts to offer to a bridegroom's family as part of marriage rituals. Other weavers weave commercially, responding to the demands of customers in Bangkok and neighbouring provinces by adapting modern patterns, techniques and processes (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center: 2013, p.18).

The value and cultural identity of Surin textiles have been challenged by globalisation and commodification. The importance of textiles and weaving in everyday life matters in two ways; at local level as an expression of local wisdom embedded in a way of life, and at national level as evidence of the unique identity of Surin. Baan Natang is a prosperous textile-producing community and the local inhabitants describe their community as a 'Thai Silk Village' to attract tourists and other visitors.

The main stages in the production process are as follows:

1. *Feeding silkworms*

Silkworms have on average a 45 day life cycle. After the eggs have developed into silkworms, women keep them in flat baskets and feed them with large quantities of mulberry leaves. [Plate 2] These baskets are covered by huge cloths, neatly wrapped to protect against flies.

This protection of silkworms from flies is described in a local legend about the love of a Baan Natang couple. One day the woman accidentally discovered that her partner was attracted to other woman. She went to the temple and prayed that no matter how many times she might be born, and whatever she might become, she did not ever want to see him again. The man felt guilty and he also prayed at the temple that no matter how many times he might be born, and whatever he might become, he would always love her and wanted to be with her for eternity. Both of their wishes came true. Today, the woman is a silkworm in a basket which is well protected by a cloth, while the man is a fly which can only fly over the baskets and look at them, but he can never get inside (Sakulreung: 2013).

The silkworms are fed for approximately 20 days. The women feed them three times a day: in the morning after watering the garden, in the afternoon after lunch and in the evening before cooking. Also, while they are feeding them, they are supposed to talk to the worms gently and politely, just as they would talk to their children. For instance, silkworms should be called *Lok* [ลูก] (daughter/son) and they should not use the pronoun *Mun* [มัน] (it) to refer to them. Local inhabitants believe



Plate 2
Woman feeding silkworms with mulberry leaves.
Photo: Author, August, 2013

that being rude to the worms will have a negative impact on their thread production (Songwichai: 2013). They also believe the voices of the silkworms themselves can be heard, especially after they have eaten.

After a good three weeks of eating mulberry leaves, the silkworms will gradually spin cocoons to protect themselves. The women then move the cocoons from the basket to a particular sort of container called a *Jor* [จ่อ] [Plate 3], a bamboo basket with tiny holes in it. They let the worms spin for a further week to complete their transformation into pupae. Sometimes local people use local plants like bamboo for the silkworms' nest. The finished cocoons produce between 300 and 1,000 metres of thread depending on the species of silkworm (Assawanon: 2013).

2. *Spinning the yarn*

The next process is drawing the silk from the fully grown cocoons. This must be done within ten days because if the cocoons are left any longer, the silkworms will transform into butterflies. Local people use domestic utensils - a pot, traditional tools for spinning, wooden tongs, bamboo baskets and wooden reels. Interestingly, these tools are made by the weavers' husbands or other men in the village. Some are engraved with natural patterns or geometric shapes.

The cocoons are simmered in boiling water and the wooden tongs are used to transfer thread from the cocoons to the wooden reels. [Plate 4] The aim is to form multiple threads into a single filament. As the thread is reeled off the cocoons become thinner and thinner until the worm inside can be seen. Local people eat the worms as snacks or in omelettes, in red curry or with spicy papaya (Assawanon: 2013).

3. *Tie-dye: a traditional technique*

As soon as the thread is ready, the next process is designing one of the Surin patterns. The unique traditional pattern called *hol* is the first one to be learned when the complicated technique of resist-dyeing in a pre-determined pattern is being taught (Yodrak: 2013). To begin with, young girls just watch how the threads are tied to make basic patterns. They are taught by their mothers or grandmothers who continue to supervise and advise them on their work until they become proficient.

There is not only technique embedded in *hol* but also the history of the Khmer and cultural inspiration and dissemination. The original *hol* pattern was only worn by men of a certain rank. However, nowadays women can wear a type of *hol* adapted from the traditional one (Tamcharoen: 2013). The other Khmer patterns are



Plate 3
A *Jor* or bamboo basket with tiny holes to hold silk cocoons.
Photo: Author, August, 2013



Plate 4
Reeling the silk from cocoons.
Photo: Author, August, 2013



Plate 5
Silk dyed with natural dyestuffs.
Photo: Author, August, 2013

Lalun Siem, Umprom and *Phaka-Om* which are usually made by older workers. Surin tie-dye techniques are based on local knowledge. Young women are expected to inherit this local cultural practice and learn about different kinds of pattern by watching and listening, like Suphanna who said that:

... I was curious and observed what my grandma did. Her performance was a familiar part of my everyday life and I gradually absorbed what she did. She taught me orally when I was thirteen. Unfortunately, like many young people, I didn't want to learn. The younger generation often ignore local wisdom which they consider outdated and see weaving as a non-honour (menial) *job. This crisis makes me worry and consider how to preserve and transmit Hol and other Surin textile techniques...* (Interview: 2013)

Local people's endeavours to preserve and transmit *Hol* and other Khmer patterns show how significant the Khmer heritage is as part of Surin's identity. In a global context, this is what makes Surin textiles and its iconography into a unique cultural commodity. *Hol* is not only a Khmer pattern but it is also symbolises the outstanding influence Cambodia has had on Thailand through textiles.

4. Dyeing:

Cocoons produce long lengths of high quality thread which is delicate, smooth, and resplendent, especially that from the inner part of the cocoon which is called *Mai Noi* [ไหมน้อย][2]. This characteristic makes Surin silk unique and of outstanding quality, and it has been authenticated and given awards by the Queen Sirikit Department of Sericulture. Also, the process of dyeing with natural materials at Baan Natang enhances those elements, something which is recognised by the Thai people (The Queen Sirikit Department of Sericulture, Surin: 2013).

The local inhabitants of Baan Natang are highly experienced and very skilful in dyeing with natural materials. [Plate 5] The colours of Surin silk are predominantly the primary ones-red, yellow and blue. Red comes from *lac*, yellow is made from *maclura eochinchinensis* and *garcinia*, and blue comes from indigo. There are other natural materials which are chosen because they produce deep coloured dyes – for example, purple bauhinia, tamarind and coconut juice.

The process of dyeing is very simple and uses domestic equipment like pots, spatulas, a stove and firewood. A pot full of water is heated on the stove and is

used to dye all the colours except blue. When the water boils, the natural dyestuffs and mordants are put in the pot and stirred thoroughly with a spatula. The dye will be checked from time to time to ensure that it is strong enough. The length of time the thread remains in the dye affects the colour - the longer it remains in the dye, the stronger the colour will be. Colours can be blended to create other shades – for example, yellow and blue make green.

Indigo is exceptional in that it dyes by a process of distillation. Indigo leaves are steeped in limewater till they decay, then the dyer is left with a type of blue mud which must be repeatedly wetted to prevent it drying out. Consequently, the process of dyeing blue colour is different from dying yellow and red. The basic method consists of placing and spreading the thread in the indigo mud until it absorbs the colour. No boiling is involved. If dark green is needed, the thread is put in indigo and left for longer than usual.

The most outstanding characteristic of indigo is that it stinks, but local inhabitants are taught to neither mention nor talk about this fact in case it affects the process and prevents the dye from taking (Satipha: 2013). Moreover, dyeing with indigo is prohibited on Buddhist holy days (Trakunngoenthai: 2013).

There are other taboos about dyeing which have been passed down from generation to generation. For instance, pregnant and menstruating women are not allowed to dye as inhabitants believe that this will cause the thread to tear. Furthermore, if there is a funeral ceremony in the community, dyeing is banned as they believe that on those days the dyes will not take.

Sometimes, a natural dyeing material like *lac* is not only used as a dyestuff but also reflects a local belief. People at Baan Natang always put *lac* in a wardrobe or use it at a house warming to protect against thieves, as 'lac' in the Khmer language means 'to hide'. If there is *lac*, they believe the burglar can neither see nor steal valuable items that are in the wardrobe or in the new house.

5. *Weaving textiles: weaving stories*

Women in Baan Natang are taught to weave when they are young. [Plate 6] In the recent past girls often resented it and found it boring, but day by day they



Plate 6
A young woman learning to weave.
Photo: Author, August, 2013

became familiar with this everyday female task which had always been a part of their mothers' and grandmothers' way of life. Women then were expected to weave for their homes and families and to create items to pass on to future generations (Yodrak: 2013). Older women still often wore their own hand-made textiles as they went about their everyday tasks. Gradually, however, girls' resentment at being forced to weave has turned into a subconscious pride in tradition. Now young girls willingly learn weaving from older women after school or in their free time.

The local weaving tradition is transmitted orally, starting with basic information about tools and looms, the meaning of patterns and the taboos which reflect local wisdom and beliefs. When they first start to weave, girls are taught to worship the spirit embedded in loom by placing *Bai Sri* [3] trays with tributes to encourage the 'spirit of the loom' to help them remember patterns and weave well. Whenever a woman starts to weave, she first of all pays her respects to the loom. A woman does not allow any man other than her husband to sit at her loom or touch her weaving shuttle.

Gender

Gender played an important role in the story of weaving in Khmer culture. Originally *Hol* patterns were only worn by men in the gendered hierarchy of the Cambodian court bureaucracy but over time things changed. Surin textile patterns with authentic Khmer designs were adapted and mostly used by women. Women dominate textile production and transmit their traditional knowledge to younger generations. Men may also participate but their role is solely restricted to creating the tools the women use in textile production.

Values

Surin people are profoundly involved with textiles which play a major role in their everyday lives and which they try to promote among the younger generation. They regard textiles in a variety of ways as follows:

1. *As a source of pride*

Nongyao Songwichai, the founder of the Women's Weaving Collective of Natang, of Baan Natang Village, said that she felt proud whenever she wore hand-made clothes as they were not just textiles but an embodiment of so many complicated processes and of so much hard work and local wisdom.

This sense of pride inspired Surachote Tamcharoen, the head of the Silk Weaving Center, to try to integrate and display Surin textiles in everyday life, especially those with traditional patterns. He believed textiles should be used at home to display one's pride in Surin, as they were part of the region's heritage and should not just be museum pieces.

Most Surin people know that weaving is their local tradition and culture and that it is important they continue to practise it otherwise it will be lost (Yodrak: 2013). They are proud to be custodians of the tradition. Textiles are known as *Mo Ra Dok* (heritage), which means they are valuable antique assets. Grandmothers and mothers weave for their children, choosing patterns particularly designed to suit their personalities (Nakkhiew: 2013). Such a heritage needs to be preserved and transmitted to the younger generation who must be taught to understand its significance and antiquity. The development of the 'Thai Silk Village' was intended to encourage local people and the wider public to appreciate the significance of silk.

2. *As a valuable memory*

Danfah Sakulreung told us that:

...I have an impressive memory of my grandma, especially when she sat at the loom and wove whenever she had free time. Moreover, she forced me to learn weaving but I refused and resisted as I wanted to play like other children. It is an unforgettable memory since at that time there was nobody learning to weave with me. I was forced to learn the whole process of weaving starting from the most basic task of feeding silkworms to the most complicated one, weaving. My classroom was at home and my teacher was my grandma. I learned the craft by heart through everyday practice not in a class. I felt bored in the beginning but I gradually came to enjoy learning. My grandma passed away a long time ago and I now realise why she forced me to learn weaving when I was young. She gave me valuable heritage...

According to Danfah, textiles reflect the matrilineal relationship within the family.

Surin textiles are unique. Wearing Surin textiles not only reflects bilateral and mutual relationships, and a long history, but they also enhance Surin identity which is advantageous for both personal and commercial reasons (Assawanon: 2013). Surin people are well known because of their textiles and this makes the identity of Surin absolutely clear if it is compared to that of people in other regions like Sakonnakorn or Nong Bualamphoo (Trakunngoenthai: 2013). It is this unique identity derived from a long history with authentic Khmer origins, that attracts tourists.

3. ***As a significant element in ceremonies***

Surin people's lives are inextricably linked with textiles in every cycle of life. The elderly often wear hand woven silk clothes on a day to day basis, despite their simple way of life. On special occasions, textiles are the key elements in ceremonies. For instance, textiles are gifts from the bridegroom to the bride's mother on the wedding day. Normally, the groom's mother will design and weave such textiles to suit the bride's characteristics. Textiles are regarded as symbols of high merit on ordination days. Mothers of men to be ordained as Buddhist priests weave elaborate and intricate textiles for their sons to wear on that day, while their neighbourhood will use textiles to decorate the temple and other buildings. Surinese people also normally wear silk clothes on Buddhist holy days. Furthermore, textiles are not just used as garments but are also the main element used to decorate items and sacred places on various occasions such as the *Bai Sri* ceremony, temple fairs and funerary ceremonies (Thongyon:2013).

The commercial use of textiles

Significant efforts have been made to safeguard the textile heritage of Surin. In the process, the textiles have become both cultural icons and commercial products.

1. ***By individuals***

For example, Sano Choowa is a seventy-two year old inhabitant of Surin who tried hard to make money out of textiles. He ran an online business with his daughter, encouraging foreigners to appreciate silk and hand-made textiles. They hired female weavers to make textiles for the orders he received and it seems that at first the business went well. However, it later became uneconomic when Government policy set the minimum wage at three hundred baht and he could no longer afford his workers' wages.

2. ***By localities***

Some business units are run by localities. At the Women's Weaving Collective of Natang Village the weaving is neither a mere story, nor a boring task, nor an uneconomic job. It makes money. The policy of this centre is to motivate independent weavers to sell their products and share the fruits of their labours. A community bank has been founded and its funds are applied to community activities and development, and in some cases to assist individual villagers.

3. ***The Silk Weaving Centre***

The Silk Weaving Centre was initiated by Surarchote Tamcharoen, a man from a neighbouring province who married a Surinese woman and was interested in textiles, especially natural dyeing. He recognised that the current situation of traditional weaving and knowledge related to Khmer silk was at risk because of social change and globalisation. His original idea was to encourage local inhabitants to weave at home. Later, the weaving centre was established with the broader aim of safeguarding local knowledge about weaving, Khmer patterns and natural dyes, and to educate young people, as well as to promote the significance of Surin textiles and transmit local wisdom to future generations and to the public. Currently, his activities have raised the significance of natural dyeing to national level through the emblem of the Peacock[4], which identifies genuine silk dyed with natural dyes and hand woven in the traditional way, and is certified by the Queen Sirikit Department of Sericulture. His reputation has been widely acknowledged, as is proved by the fact that he was invited to showcase the process of natural dyeing and creating Surin textiles in international and national publications, *Textiles Across the Seas, The Textiles of Cambodia, Thairath Newspaper* and *Image Magazine*. Moreover, he has provided training courses in natural dyeing and tie-dye techniques for women in neighbouring provinces and for anyone else who is



Plate 7
Surachote Tamcharoen teaching a woman to dye with indigo.
Photo: Author, August, 2013

interested. [Plate 7] He has used social media to publicise his activities and to distribute his hand-made products.

4. *The Chansoma Cloth Weaving Group*

The Chansoma Cloth Weaving Group was established by Wiratham Trakunngeonthai, a Surinese art lecturer interested in textile patterns and traditional techniques. His idea is that weaving can have value added by combining the attractive and exquisite designs of the royal court with the techniques of traditional weaving. [Plate 8] He combines complicated processes with distinctive materials such as the hundred heddles and gold thread. He studies and researches the Khmer textile designs which had such a great influence on Siamese royal textiles in the past (Tourism Authority of Thailand: n.d., p.18). He has attempted to revive this traditional knowledge by applying high quality materials and techniques to Surin textiles. His production based on Surin weavers and their local wisdom, is aimed at high-end and foreign customers, thus achieving international recognition for the craft. These luxurious elements make him widely known and attract many people to visit his centre to see the complicated process of traditional weaving. This community has become a tourist attraction where local inhabitants can sell their products. This outstandingly creative concept promotes Surin textiles as being representative of Thailand - as was shown when they were used for shirts and shawls for the APEC leaders and their spouses. Demonstrations of weaving are one of the methods of safeguarding knowledge about textiles. However, Wiratham Trakunngeonthai also attempts to actively preserve this heritage through a museum to educate visitors and young people.



Plate 8
Silks with designs like those for the Khmer royal court.
Photo: Author, August, 2013

Textiles: from cultural heritage to cultural commodification

Textiles are not only the tangible heritage of Surin but also the representation of the Surin community as defined by Surinese people. Surin textiles exhibit both tangible and intangible elements. The tangible is the silk and the unique textiles, while the intangible elements are the local wisdom embedded in the processes, oral narration and local legends.

However, it is clear that textiles have economic value and local communities can cooperatively benefit from their local heritage. The process transforms something which was not originally a commercial product into a commodity based on the monetary system and with intrinsic value.

Social change and globalisation also enhance the commercial process as

... anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. It includes physical objects, service, person, places, organization and ideas... (Kotler et al.: 1999, p.51).

Consequently, textiles as cultural products can be used for commercial transactions. The following analysis of the commodification process will increase our understanding of the main aspects of textiles which are transferred to consumers. Examining the principles of marketing, especially the product concept, will highlight the way textile products satisfy consumers by their quality, supported by both tangible and intangible elements (Kotler: 2003, p.26). There are three levels of product: core product, real product and augmented product (Kotler and Armstrong: 2008). This analysis of Surin textiles will show them as cultural commodities:

Level 1: *'Core' product*

'Core product' means the product as a functional artefact– but the value is the function, not the object itself.

Level 2: *'Real' product*

'Real product' is the artefact that can be seen and

touched and recognised as different from other similar products on the market. This applies to Surin silk in the various ways described below.

1 Surin silk comes from locally reared silkworms. The villagers have received governmental support through the Queen Sirikit Department of Sericulture to develop new silkworm species.

2 The colours of Surin textiles come from natural dyestuffs. This both preserves local traditional knowledge and also fits the 'green' agenda which appeals to a particular demographic.

3 The Surin patterns are unique because they are influenced by Khmer designs and adapted from Cambodian stylistic language.

Level 3: *'Augmented' product*

'Augmented product' in this context refers to additional knowledge the purchaser may derive from the experience of acquiring the item. This relates to the concept of creative tourism (Richard and Raymond: 2000, p.18) which offers tourists or visitors the chance to explore and experience intangible assets with their creative potential through tangible ones. The value of the core product may be enhanced by information about production techniques (e.g. natural dyestuffs) and in the case of Surin textiles it is this information that determines their commercial value. The following factors add value to Surin textiles.

1 The authenticity of design, the use of traditional colours and patterns, the historical associations, techniques, creative processes and artistic expression (UNESCO: 2009, p.8) embedded in Surin textiles turn them into an 'augmented' product. Consumers are less concerned with quality, availability and affordability but with a perception of the 'authenticity' of a product and its differentiation from other similar products. (Gilmore and Pine: 2007, p.5)

2 Intangible symbolic representations that signify knowledge and value. Knowledge of textile processes has always been shared orally between grandmothers and mothers and between mothers and daughters. The legend of the silkworm is a story which explains how and why people should protect their silkworms. This legend is based on the nature of flies and silkworms and their similar life cycles and choice of places to lay their eggs. It is obviously not a true story but it presents information in a way that is easy to understand and remember (Bal: 2009, p.4). Such stories and legends add value to the end product.

3 Words are also important. Language is a human invention with the ability to reflect beliefs, society and culture (Prachakul: 2009, p.361). It is also the basic tool for preserving traditions and knowledge (Steiner: 1989, p. 56). The Khmer language has become embedded in Surin textiles through the names of patterns like *Hol, Lalun Siem, Umprom, and Phaka-Oom*. These names also express the Khmer traditions of wearing clothes. Consumers and tourists can therefore also learn a little about the Khmer language and culture through their purchase of silks from Surin.

4 'Surin textiles' is not a brand name as such but the term implies the qualities listed above under both 2 and 3.

Marketing techniques

Displaying products at events or exhibitions makes them attractive to potential buyers and ensures that customers are well informed about the products they are buying. This in turn makes them appreciate the products more. (Tilden:1977, p.1-9). Surin textiles are displayed in the weaving centres and Baan Natang textiles are shown at an annual event in Surin which promotes the region and its products.

Products can be bought as souvenirs to remind the buyer of a particular experience. Catering for tourists can be developed into a business as it is at the Women's Weaving Collective of Natang Village, the Silk Weaving Center and the Chan Soma Cloth Weaving Group. Selling the textiles on-line enhances the reputation of Surin textiles and brings them to a wider public. As a result, there has been an increase in creativity and the region has become wealthy (Howkins: 2001).

The above analysis of textiles as cultural products illustrates that intangible heritage can be turned into a commodity and used as an important element to support

and enlarge the significance of a tangible product. The cultural commodification process is an active way of motivating, transmitting, and preserving the value of the textile's associated intangible heritage through creating a market for commercial products.

Conclusion

Textiles are the cultural heritage of Surin and have intrinsic value both as the embodiment of a way of life and traditional local wisdom and in their own right as fabric. However, this analysis of cultural commodification has reflected both sides of their impact on heritage. Firstly, they have had a positive effect on the economy of this region. Currently, the economic approach is the key factor in assessing the global value of a product (Tomlinson: 1999, p.79-82). The production of textiles can turn particular skills into money. This transformation not only serves the demands of marketing and tourists, but also leads to more income for the weavers and a better economy. Furthermore, infrastructure is developed, new buildings and roads are constructed to make it easier for tourists to visit and this leads to a better quality of life for the local community. However, textile producers still earn less than they would in other jobs. Young people would rather go to university and get a qualification which enables them to get a good job rather than staying at home and weaving. The situation is quite similar in Japan (Sarashima: 2013, p. 148).

Finally, there is a negative effect in the loss of 'authenticity'. Authenticity is associated with the truthfulness of origin which is an important way of assessing the value of cultural heritage (Jokilehto: 2006, p.1-15). Some concerns have been expressed about the authenticity of the Surin textile designs that are being produced for tourists. Market forces mean that contemporary and popular patterns depicting flowers and images of creatures are being adapted because they are what tourists want. Traditional patterns are only woven for local people, especially the elderly. Also, natural dyestuffs are being replaced by chemical dyes to reduce cost and increase the speed of production. The highly skilled craft of weaving textiles for domestic use will gradually disappear. Mass production will take over and local beliefs and stories will be forgotten. Truly authentic textiles are made but are expensive, as authenticity has become a selling point allowing producers to sell their goods to a wealthy and exclusive market of connoisseurs (Moon: 2013, p. 82). This paradox occurs with other cultural heritages as well.

Surin people try to balance their economy and their heritage to safeguard, and sustain their culture despite the inevitable effects of tourism. Raising public awareness, ensuring custodianship and creating a sustainable, self-sufficient economy may preserve textile production in Surin. The media enables the region to explore, preserve and formulate its unique identity and find customers, worldwide, for its products. Finally, Surin textiles provide a model for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage through turning the textiles into a cultural commodity.

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ENDNOTES

1. The ASEAN Community is the result of cooperation between ten countries in South East Asia, and will be formally inaugurated in 2015. Its main purpose is to develop human resources and enhance regional cooperation in economics, politics, security and social and cultural practice. The involvement of the private sector across the region will also be promoted to strengthen ASEAN. This cooperation will transform South East Asia into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour and capital.
2. Because of the high quality of *Mai Noi,* Surin people only use it for special occasions like a daughter's marriage. This textile is very expensive.
3. *Bai Sri* are votive objects made from banana leaves with a pattern of pyramids. Northeastern people usually use them to show respect or offer a warm welcome in ritual and religious ceremonies.
4. The emblem of the Peacock is certified by the Ministry of Agriculture to authenticate Thai silk and protect it from imitation. There are four different levels of quality and process categorised by four colours: gold (royal Thai silk made of silk from Thai silkworms and hand-woven and dyed in the traditional way), silver (classic Thai silk made from a specific breed of silkworm and hand-woven), blue (Thai silk of pure silk thread dyed with chemicals) and green (Thai silk blended with other products).

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