

The Factors Influencing the Conservation and Development of Handwoven Fabrics from Ban Nonkum, a Thai Yuan Community in Sikhio District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province

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ABSTRACT

The study on the factors influencing the conservation and development of handwoven fabrics from Ban Nonkum, a Thai Yuan community in Sikhiew District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, aimed to examine the factors affecting the conservation and development of handwoven fabrics in the community. The study also analyzed the role of support from the government and private sectors, focusing on factors impacting the conservation and development of handwoven fabrics, particularly in terms of local wisdom, production technology, branding, and support from both government and private sectors. The research findings revealed that the factors influencing the conservation and development of handwoven fabrics in Ban Nonkum include: 1) the preservation of local wisdom and cultural identity of the community through the traditional weaving methods, such as using a simple loom and Jacquard loom, as well as the use of natural dyes, which is knowledge passed down through generations; 2) the introduction of modern technologies, such as the Jacquard loom and ready-made yarn, to improve the production process and add variety to the fabric designs; 3) the development and branding of handwoven products to meet the demand in both domestic and international markets; 4) the support from government and private sectors, including training programs for weaving skills, market promotion, and the establishment of producer groups, which play a key role in product development and creating new markets. The study highlighted the importance of community involvement and the support from both the government and private sectors in ensuring the sustainability of handwoven fabric conservation and development. The findings from this research can be used as a guideline for the development and conservation of handwoven fabrics in other similar communities in the future.

Keywords: Factors affecting the conservation, Development of hand-woven fabrics in Ban Non Kum, Thai Yuan community, Sikhio District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province

INTRODUCTION

The Yuan community of Sikhio is an indigenous group that settled along the Lam Takhong River in Sikhio District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The area lies on the margin between the Khorat Plateau and the forests of Dong Phrayayen (formerly known as "Dong Phraya Fai"). According to Suriya Samutkupt and colleagues (2001), "The Yuan community of Sikhio originated from Yonok Chiang Saen and later became displaced Yuan migrants during the early Rattanakosin wartime period. The first group of Yuan settlers arrived in the area of Nakhon Chanthabuek (present-day Sikhio) via Sao Hai in Saraburi and Vientiane." In addition, there was another wave of Yuan migration (the second group) from

northern provinces such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, and Nan. Most were men who travelled south in search of work and eventually settled in the area after World War II. Many later married women from the local Yuan Sikhio community and from nearby villages such as Ban Sikhio and Ban Nong Kum. A third group of Yuan migrants later settled in Ban Sikhio, Ban Nong Kum, and Ban Khok Multun, especially during the period when local factories were closing down. Most of these migrants were working-age individuals from Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, and Nan.

Sikhio is also home to other ethnic groups, including Tai-Khorat, Lao, Khmer, and Chinese, who coexist and share the region's natural resources. This makes Sikhio a culturally diverse area. Suriya Samutkupt and colleagues (2001) describe Sikhio District's geographical character as an important "*ethnic crossroads*" of Thailand, linking the Khorat Plateau with the Central Plains. Distinct cultural features can be observed in this community, such as language, handicrafts, local wisdom, lifestyle, traditions, beliefs, and religious practices. These cultural characteristics demonstrate a blending of different ethnic traditions shaped by social and environmental adaptation, while still preserving the strong identity of the Thai-Yuan people. The settlement patterns and vernacular architecture of the Yuan community in Sikhio reflect their adaptation to social, political, and local environmental conditions. These architectural forms are the result of accumulated historical and cultural knowledge, creating a unique identity shaped by climatic suitability and cultural values. A significant cultural product of the Thai-Yuan in Sikhio is the **Yuan woven textile**, which has been an important local handicraft for nearly 200 years. Historically, handwoven Yuan textiles were used primarily for important community ceremonies. Today, these textiles continue to embody the ancestral wisdom passed down through generations. In Ban Nong Kum, handweaving represents the traditional craft of villagers in Mittraphap Subdistrict, Sikhio District. Although the precise origins of weaving in this area remain unclear, evidence suggests that weaving has long been integrated into the daily life and cultural practices of the local community. The conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum, a Thai-Yuan community in Sikhio District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, represent a highly valuable effort in preserving local wisdom and cultural identity in contemporary society. The handwoven textiles of this community are not merely garments but also reflect the way of life, beliefs, and traditions of its people—particularly during the early Rattanakosin period, when weaving became a significant cultural marker of Ban Non Kum (Suttichai Likit, 2016). The conservation and development of traditional weaving involve more than the production of cloth; they embody a living process of knowledge transmission across generations. Skills associated with weaving have been cultivated and handed down over many decades, forming a vital aspect of the community's heritage (Siriwan Siriyakon, 2018). The preservation of local wisdom begins with foundational practices such as cultivating high-quality cotton, spinning fine yarn, and dyeing fabric with natural pigments derived from local plants. These natural dyeing techniques—using tree bark, flowers, and other vegetation with cultural significance—give the textiles their distinctive colors and patterns, reflecting the values and lifestyle of the Thai-Yuan people (Chatree Pannanaphon; Suwicha Sukkawong, 2020).

The handwoven textiles are admired for their delicate patterns and aesthetic refinement, showcasing the skill, meticulousness, and artistic expression of the local artisans who maintain the beauty of traditional weaving (Rattana Phuvanaow, 2019). In recent years, the development of weaving at Ban Non Kum has continued to align with cultural identity while enhancing production efficiency through the use of improved weaving tools—such as the semi-mechanized loom—which accelerates the process and reduces production time. The use of high-quality ready-made yarn has also enhanced the durability and visual appeal of the textiles (Sirichai Sombun, 2021). Moreover, modern design approaches have been incorporated into textile patterns to meet changing market demands, attracting both domestic and international consumers. This includes creating contemporary motifs and broadening stylistic diversity (Tanya Phumisart, 2018). Such innovations have expanded the market for Ban Non Kum handwoven textiles and increased their economic value. Government and private sector support has also contributed significantly to the success of textile conservation and development. Community women's groups have been established to lead product design, weaving skill enhancement, brand creation, and marketing promotion. Training programs have supported knowledge transfer in weaving, branding, and both online and offline marketing channels, enabling Ban Non Kum textiles to reach a wider audience and gain market recognition (Jirapa Sirichai, 2020). However, challenges persist. The high cost of natural materials, the time-intensive weaving process, and competition from mass-produced textiles with modern technology pose threats to the sustainability of the craft. Maintaining the quality and cultural authenticity of Ban Non Kum textiles requires careful and continuous preservation efforts. In addition, raising consumer awareness about the artistic value of the textiles is essential for long-term sustainability (Panee Mankong, 2017).

Given this historical and cultural significance, the researcher is interested in examining the factors influencing the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum. The textiles are not only an important economic product but also a symbol of local wisdom and cultural identity, reflecting the values and lifestyle of the Thai-Yuan people. This study aims to explore and analyze the factors affecting the sustainability of handwoven textile production in the modern era—such as the integration of new technologies, improvements in production

processes, branding and marketing strategies, and the role of government and private-sector support. The goal is to identify pathways that ensure the long-term preservation and advancement of Ban Non Kum textiles. Additionally, the research seeks ways to strengthen community engagement and awareness in safeguarding handwoven textiles as cultural heritage for future generations. Ultimately, the study aims not only to assist in the sustainable development of Ban Non Kum's weaving tradition but also to contribute to the wider preservation of local wisdom and cultural identity among Thai-Yuan communities in Sikhio District. The findings may also serve as a model for other traditional weaving communities across Thailand, supporting broader and more sustainable preservation of Thai handwoven textile heritage.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the factors influencing the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum.
2. To analyze the roles of government and private sector support in promoting the preservation and development of local handweaving practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study entitled "Factors Influencing the Conservation and Development of Handwoven Textiles in Ban Non Kum, Thai-Yuan Community, Sikhio District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province" was conducted through the following major steps:

Documentary Research

- a. Reviewing preliminary information related to the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in both domestic and international communities, including examining the roles of government and private sector support in sustaining local handicraft industries.
- b. Examining previous studies on the conservation of handwoven textiles in communities with characteristics similar to Ban Non Kum, including books, academic articles, research reports, and statistical records from relevant agencies.
- c. Investigating successful models of handwoven textile development in other communities, focusing on production technologies, cultural preservation methods, and forms of government assistance.
- d. Reviewing government and private-sector initiatives related to the promotion and preservation of local handicraft products, as well as the development of traditional handicraft industries in other regions, in order to identify applicable strategies for Ban Non Kum.

Field Study and Interviews

This stage involved collecting in-depth information from individuals directly involved in handweaving in Ban Non Kum:

In-depth Interviews

Target participants included experienced weavers, community leaders, trainers, and members of weaving groups. Open-ended questions were used to allow respondents to share their experiences and perceptions of factors influencing the conservation and development of handwoven textiles.

Field Observation

The researcher conducted direct observations of traditional weaving practices and production processes, including cotton cultivation, natural dyeing, yarn spinning, loom operation, pattern design, and weaving instruction. Both traditional techniques and modern tools—such as semi-mechanized looms—were studied.

Data Collection from Community Members

Data were gathered from multiple stakeholder groups to understand factors influencing textile conservation and perceptions of government and private support.

Focus Group Discussion

Group discussions were organized with weavers and stakeholders to explore enabling and constraining factors affecting the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum. Participants exchanged views on challenges, opportunities, and improvement strategies.

Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire was designed to collect opinions from residents in Ban Non Kum regarding government and private-sector support, such as community women's groups, training programs, marketing assistance, and product development initiatives. The questionnaire assessed perceptions of textile value, local wisdom, and community participation in cultural preservation.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised individuals directly involved in the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum, Thai-Yuan community, Sikhio District. The sample included:

1. **Experienced Weavers:** Individuals skilled in traditional handweaving techniques, yarn preparation, natural dyeing, and pattern design—both veteran and newer generations of artisans.
2. **Producers of Handwoven Textiles:** Members of weaving groups and women's groups who produce textiles for sale, including those who use modern tools such as semi-mechanized looms or high-quality ready-made yarns.
3. **Community Leaders and Cultural Advocates:** Community elders, leaders, and individuals who promote cultural conservation, organize weaving training, support local branding, and help develop marketing strategies.
4. **Government and Private Sector Representatives:** Officials from provincial commerce offices, cultural agencies, tourism offices, and private organizations involved in handicraft development and market expansion.
5. **General Community Members:** Residents who use handwoven textiles in their daily lives and participate in cultural activities. Questionnaires collected information on their awareness, perceptions, and appreciation of handwoven textile value.

Sample Size

A purposive sampling approach was applied to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience aligned with the research objectives. The number of participants varied according to the depth and diversity of data collected through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and questionnaire surveys. Selection focused on ensuring a comprehensive representation of individuals involved in the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The study on the factors influencing the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum, a Thai-Yuan community in Sikhio District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, revealed several key factors that affect the sustainability of handweaving in the community. The results can be summarized as follows:

1. Factors Related to Local Wisdom and Culture

Local wisdom and cultural heritage were found to be central factors in the conservation and development of handwoven textiles. The handwoven textiles of Ban Non Kum are not only economically significant products but also symbols of local wisdom and cultural identity that reflect the lifestyle of the Thai-Yuan community. Villagers continue to adhere to traditional weaving techniques, such as using conventional looms and semi-mechanized looms, as well as natural dyeing methods. These practices constitute a body of knowledge that has been transmitted from generation to generation.

2. Technology Use and Production Processes

With regard to technology and production processes, the use of modern technology in weaving—such as Jacquard-type looms to create more diverse designs and the use of high-quality ready-made yarn—has contributed to enhancing the quality of the textiles. Furthermore, advances in dyeing technology have helped produce brighter and more durable colors, thereby increasing the overall quality and marketability of the handwoven textiles.

3. Product Development and Branding

Product development and branding emerged as important factors in enabling handwoven textiles from Ban Non Kum to meet contemporary market demands. The community has begun to build a distinct brand identity by emphasizing the cultural value and uniqueness of its textiles, making the products more attractive to both domestic and international markets.

4. Support from the Government and Private Sector

The role of government and private sector support was found to be crucial. Government agencies such as the Nakhon Ratchasima Provincial Commercial Office and organizations responsible for safeguarding local wisdom have played a significant role in providing training in weaving skills, promoting markets, and supporting the establishment of women's groups engaged in textile production. Financial support and marketing promotion from the public sector have helped give product development a clearer direction.

On the private sector side, local businesses and handicraft-related entrepreneurs have assisted in brand development, organizing trade fairs and product exhibitions, creating online marketing channels, and supporting market expansion to international customers. Collaboration between the public and private sectors has thus contributed to the long-term sustainability of textile conservation and development: the public sector focuses on policy formulation and support measures, while the private sector emphasizes market creation and product development.

In summary, the conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum are influenced by the integration of local wisdom and modern technology, government and private sector support, as well as market creation and brand development. Cooperation between the community and relevant agencies is essential for promoting sustainable conservation and development of handwoven textiles in the future.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the importance of multiple interacting factors that contribute to the sustainable conservation and development of handwoven textiles in Ban Non Kum. The results are consistent with previous research on the preservation of local handicrafts and the development of community-based handicraft industries, which affirms that conserving local wisdom, together with product development and multi-sector support, is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of traditional craft products.

Local Wisdom and Cultural Heritage: The results indicate that conserving local wisdom through the preservation of traditional weaving methods is a critical factor in maintaining the cultural value and community recognition of Ban Non Kum textiles. These practices also help sustain the unique identity of the Thai-Yuan community. This finding is consistent with the study by Philippe Jantawang (2016), which emphasizes the importance of preserving local knowledge in handicraft production as a reflection of community identity and way of life. The continued use of Jacquard-type looms and natural dyeing techniques not only maintains the traditional character of the products but also differentiates them from other handicrafts in the market, thereby strengthening their distinctiveness.

Technology Use and Production Processes: The application of modern technologies—such as Jacquard looms and ready-made yarn—represents an adaptation of traditional production processes to contemporary conditions and enhances production efficiency for commercial purposes. This is consistent with the findings of Supanee Phantura (2017), who reported that technological development in handicraft production can increase the competitiveness of products in both domestic and international markets. The introduction of new technology in the weaving process not only improves quality but also enables producers to respond more effectively to rapidly changing market demands.

Product Development and Branding: Product development and brand creation for Ban Non Kum textiles are also key to successful conservation and growth. Emphasizing the cultural value and uniqueness of local handweaving in branding contributes to wider acceptance among consumers, both domestically and internationally. This is in line with the research of Maneerat Na Nakhon (2015), which found that developing a distinctive brand identity for local handicrafts helps increase product attractiveness and fosters sustainable marketing. In the case of Ban Non Kum, brand identity that communicates the product's origins and the underlying local wisdom plays a vital role in capturing the interest of consumers who value cultural and artisanal goods.

Support from the Government and Private Sector: The role of government and private sector support was confirmed as an essential factor in strengthening the growth of the local handicraft industry. Government initiatives such as weaving skills training, the establishment of women's producer groups, and marketing support have provided a clear direction for product development. At the same time, private sector support in branding, market development, and expansion to new target groups has further enhanced the competitiveness of Ban Non Kum textiles.

These findings align with the study of Pimchanok Phongpaisan (2019), which concludes that collaboration between the public and private sectors is crucial for the sustainable development of local handicrafts. In such collaboration, the public sector typically assumes responsibility for policy-making and financial support, while the private sector drives market development and creates new distribution channels.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that local wisdom, technological innovation, branding, and multi-sector support are all vital factors enabling Ban Non Kum's handwoven textiles to grow and remain sustainable in the marketplace. Effective cooperation among the community, government agencies, and private actors is a determining condition for the long-term success of conservation and development. Product development must therefore respect and highlight local uniqueness while simultaneously building markets that support broader and sustainable expansion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

1. **Enhancing government and private sector support:** Government agencies should continue to support weaving skill training and market promotion, while the private sector should assist in brand development and the creation of domestic and international marketing channels.
2. **Integrating technology into production:** Appropriate technologies, such as semi-mechanized looms and high-quality ready-made yarn, should be adopted to enhance product quality and production efficiency.
3. **Brand building and product development:** Products should be developed to highlight local uniqueness, with packaging that reflects the cultural identity of the Thai-Yuan community and enhances product value.
4. **Promoting education and the transmission of local wisdom:** Activities should be organized to encourage youth and community members to learn and acquire weaving skills, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge.
5. **Strengthening community cooperation:** The formation of weaving groups and inter-community networks should be promoted to support cooperation in production, marketing, and cultural preservation.
6. **Raising awareness of the value of handwoven textiles:** Knowledge and awareness about the artistic, cultural, and economic value of handwoven textiles should be promoted among community members and the wider public.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future studies should investigate **economic factors**, such as production cost calculations, product pricing, distribution channels, and market competition, to better understand the business dimension of handwoven textile development.
2. Further research should collect **data from consumer groups** in both domestic and international markets, to gain insights into preferences and demands and to inform product development that aligns more closely with market needs.
3. It is recommended to explore the **impacts of new technologies** on handwoven textiles in greater depth, including effects on product quality, diversity of patterns, and implications for the preservation of local wisdom.
4. Future research could examine **branding strategies and brand sustainability**, particularly in relation to expanding into international markets and maintaining long-term brand recognition for Ban Non Kum textiles.
5. Studies should be conducted on **innovative approaches** to combining traditional weaving with modern design concepts, in order to create a more diverse and contemporary range of textile products without compromising traditional identity.
6. Further research is needed on **government policies at both local and national levels** related to the support and promotion of local handicraft industries, especially concerning budget allocations and the creation of marketing networks.
7. Finally, future studies should focus on developing **models of collaboration between communities, government, and the private sector** for sustainable product development, with particular attention to online marketing channels and promotional activities that increase sales opportunities.

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