

# Phi Ta Khon Tradition: Pattern of Inheriting Cultural Wisdom Aspects of Thailand-Laos

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## ABSTRACT

Thailand and Laos are Southeast Asian countries that share very similar racial, religious, traditions and cultural ties, especially the spoken languages that people on both sides of the Mekong can communicate without using an interpreter. Thai-Lao people come to each other with ties through kinship, like people of the same house with the same traditions. "Phi Ta Khon" is an important cultural symbol of the people of Dan Sai District, Loei Province, and the people of Mueang Pak Lai, Chaiyabuli District, Lao People's Democratic Republic of Laos. It is a tradition of play that is driven by local cultural representations that will lead to productivity in terms of spiritual and economic value. Therefore, this research aims to study the history of the wisdom of Phi Ta Khon tradition, to identify the inheriting of the wisdom of Phi Ta Khon tradition, and to examine the pattern of inheriting the cultural wisdom of Thailand-Laos. The study found that Phi Ta Khon was a part of the festival in the Boon Luang festival of the Dan Sai district, Loei province. The festival took place between the seventh to the eighth month of the traditional festival merit of the Heet-Sipsong-Khongsibsee. Some called Phi Ta Khon as Phi Tam Khon and Phi Ta Khon. On the other hand, Phi Khon Muang Pak Lai, Laos, was the local myth. The festival has officially revived since 1975 when Laos' government established the tourism year. Phi Khon becomes the symbol of Chaiyaburi and is selected to join the annual festival. Moreover, both Thailand and Laos, believed that Phi Ta Khon was the festival to pay respect to gods and ancestors to bring either abundance or disaster to the town.

In the aspects of inheriting the cultural wisdom, both Thailand and Laos believe in the local culture and way of life along with economic and social context. The two countries aimed to expand Phi Ta Khon into the business system. In addition, Phi Ta Khon has been inherited directly by the government and authority to promote and encourage the festival. In the aspects of the pattern of inheriting, the study found that both Thailand and Laos preserved the original pattern of Phi Ta Khon with Buddhism and local spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, both countries preserved by the pattern of applied and rebuilt.

## Keywords

Phi Ta Khon, Inheritance Pattern, Inheritance, Cultural heritage, Two Lands

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## Introduction

Thailand and Laos are countries in Southeast Asia that are more closely tied to races, religions, beliefs, ways of life, languages, customs, traditions, and cultures than any other country, especially the spoken language that people on both sides of the Mekong can communicate without using an interpreter. In the past, from telling stories of grandparents, the relationship between the two sides of the Huong River and the Mekong River was established. Thailand - Laos have to come to each other with ties through kinship is like people of the same house with language, religion, society, traditions, culture, beliefs, way of life are the same as simple. There are no rules or laws to come into force (Jummalee Xaiyason. 2009: 13) Thailand and Laos have long been affiliated with my brothers and sisters, the

strong bond of people in the Thai-Lao communities living along the Mekong River, who share similar simple ways of life, including traditions, cultures, beliefs, language, and eating is clearly reflected in their traditions and cultures. Similar cultural traditions of the people on both sides of the Mekong in the Loei Province and the Chaiyabuli Province are the Bun Pha Haew, Heet-Sipsong-Khongsibsee (12 Traditions and 14 Governments of Isan Region), it appears there is the Phi Ta Khon tradition at Dan Sai District and the Phi Khon Bun Festival at Muang Pak Lai, which is an important tradition in such merit-making ceremony.

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the cultural representation of the local people that will lead to productivity in terms of both spiritual and economic value which is due to the unique identity of Phi Ta Khon that is pleasing to the general audience and most importantly, having a history of history that is tied to the way of life of the people in the community (Loei Provincial Cultural Center. 1998: 4-5) Phi Khon Muang Pak Lai is a cultural play in the Pak Lai called Phra Vessantara Bun, which is the Great Tradition that is held annually, especially in 2018, the year of Laos tourism (Visit Laos Year 2018). The people of Pak Lai have greatly restored the tradition of playing Bun Phi Khon, once again, The Phi Khon dance was also selected as a cultural symbol of Pak Lai town, which was sent as a cultural representative to the Chayabuli Province (Bunsien Jantamala. 2019), thus, Phi Khon is considered one of the cultural symbols that people of Pak Lai are proud of.

The tradition of playing Phi Ta Khon by the people of Dan Sai, Loei Province, although there are many aspects of research and study, studies that clearly indicate their history can be used for academic reference, further research is required. Due to changing times, the discovery of new documents and statements made the information recorded and transmitted from different sources inconsistent, the body of knowledge showing the inheritance of wisdom from Phi Ta Khon traditions still lacks the connection that completely reflects the cultural wisdom. More importantly, the new findings concerning a pattern of cultural heritage inheritance have not yet materialized, while the Khon Khon ghost tradition in Pak Lai Province, Chaiyabuli province, has been inherited from a neglected culture, becoming a resurrection of the Khon Ghost by the economic, social and political factors of the Lao People's Democratic Republic of Laos. The traces showing the cultural heritage of Phi Ta Khon Lao have not yet appeared in the documents resulting from studies and academic records, Therefore, it is an academic challenge to study and uncover new discoveries in this research study in order to make people in the community take pride in their roots and share in the inheritance of cultural heritage of two lands Thai-Lao.

### Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the history of Phi Ta Khon traditions, to study the continuation of Phi Ta Khon traditions, and to develop a model for the inheritance of Phi Ta Khon traditions: cultural heritage of Phi Ta Khon Thai-Lao land.

### Research methodology

The research title of Phi Ta Khon Tradition: A pattern for the inheritance of Thai-Lao cultural heritage was the qualitative research, field Study to collect research data by in-depth study) and present it by Descriptive Analysis. Data sources include; document analysis, field survey, participatory observation, and non-participatory observation, unstructured interview, structured Interview, finally focus group discussion.

The sample of this research used a purposive selection method, which is able to provide information about Phi Ta Khon both in Thailand and Phi Ta Khon in Laos. In addition, Snow Ball Sampling is used. The key-informant is located in Dan Sai District, Loei Province. And Muang Pak Lai, Chaiyabouli Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic of Laos consisting of (1) 25 philosophers; Spiritual leader, Folk philosopher, Head of government office, civil servant, clergy, the village headman, and others. (2) 40 operation persons; the inventor of the Phi Ta Khon mask, business operators, civil servants, people, and participants in the event. (3) 25 customers; Tourists, media, and people in the community who can provide information.

Data Collecting and Analysis: The researcher has designed and Development the Research instrument from the knowledge related to the research for use in data collection which consists: (1) Survey Form is a research tool used to collect basic information about the history and history of Phi Ta Khon tradition, Thai-Lao cultural heritage. (2) Observation Form is a research tool used to record the state of facts in a research area by dividing observations into 2 were; Participatory Observation and Non-Participatory Observation. (3) An Interview Guide is a research tool used to collect communication insights from purpose-built conversations and conversations, including the Unstructured Interview and the Structured Interview. (4) Focus

Group Discussion is the process of collecting research data from Key Informant group discussions including the Casual information) and the General information, which is experienced and able to provide research information. Data Analysis: Using qualitative data analysis, including content analysis, and triangulation methods.

### Research Results

Research on Phi Ta Khon traditions: a model for the inheritance of Thai-Lao cultural wisdom, the researcher can summarize the research results according to the research objectives as follows:

1. History of the Phi Ta Khon tradition found that Phi Ta Khon tradition is a kind of play as part of the Royal Boon tradition of Dan Sai people, Loei Province, held during the seventh or eighth month of merit following the Twelve-Heet (12 traditions of Isan people), Some groups call Phi Tam Kon and Phi Kon. However, it was called "Phi Khon" was Pak Lai Town, Chaiya Boulie District, Lao People's Democratic Republic of Laos, which is a local legend that has been passed down from legends, people of Pak Lai are known and familiar from children to adults and have just returned. Officially restored again in the year 2518 that the Lao People's Democratic Republic of Laos has set as the year of tourism in Laos.

2. Inheriting the Phi Ta Khon tradition, both Thai and Laotian people have inherited the beliefs in the cultural way of the community according to the Thai-Lao economic and social contexts, there are objective to hope from the introduction of Phi Ta Khon from cultural wisdom to the follow-up business system and direct inheritance from the government caused by various agencies. Including those arising from powerful individuals in each era who drive, encourage, and encourage interest.

3. Patterns: It was found that both countries inherited the traditional conservation patterns through the beliefs of supernatural phenomena and Buddhist beliefs and their application and creation styles.

### Discussions

1. The history of the Phi Ta Khon tradition, the Thai-Lao cultural heritage, found that The story of

Phi Ta Khon, Mueang Dan Sai and Phi Khon, Muang Pak Lai, has a similar conclusion that it is a tradition that is a play related to rituals for worship and connection between the audience or the viewer of the play, which is the ghost spirit of the ancestor which Tai-Lao peoples share the belief that the ancestor is the descent ghost, the one who builds houses and develops cities, so when death is a drought it is sacred, awesome, has the power to inspire fertility or a disaster to the country that is consistent with the study of Thawat Punnotok (1987 : 350) found that belief is an acknowledgment born in the human consciousness of the supernatural force that is good or bad for man, although these supernatural powers could not be proven to be true, but the human being in one society accepts and respects it. Therefore, the expression through the Phee ta Khon signs of the Dan Sai people and the Phee Khon of Pak Lai people thus build the confidence of the people who show what they respect. As well as Srisak Valipodom (1982); Suriya Smutkupt. 1996: 35-38) Researchers of Thai culture and archeology say that belief is what makes it feel more encouraging, without them it cannot do anything to achieve a good goal. Consequently, faith is a part of humanity in which all human beings and ages and everywhere are associated with belief, so doing anything has faith in it.

2. Inheriting the Phi Ta Khon tradition, Thai-Lao cultural heritage: It was found that the Thai Khon Ta Khon tradition and the Lao Khon Bun Phi Festival were carried out in the following three ways: (1) Continuing the Phi Ta Khon tradition according to the beliefs in the cultural way of the Thai-Lao community, (2) Continuing the Phi Ta Khon tradition in accordance with Thai-Lao economic and social contexts, and (3) Continuing the Phi Ta Khon tradition according to the government policy of Thailand and Laos. Therefore, considering the way of carrying on the Phi Ta Khon tradition, the 3 characteristics of Thai-Lao cultural heritage, it will be found that both Thailand and Laos share the characteristics of the following 3 approaches; (1) A path of inheriting the belief in the culture of the community, (3) The economic and social context guidelines and, (3) according to the state policy which results in the Phi Ta Khon tradition and the Lao Khon Bun Festival stably. Consistent with the concept of Sanya Sanyawiwat (2007: 56) which

proposes that society is like a living being, this organism has many components, each having a specific function, must be performed for the existence of the collective that is, the living being is like that, so is human society, every part of society has to have a duty to integrate into a society called Structure of Society. And The components of these subsystem structures have a function to work in a systematic manner for the existence of society. The path to the inheritance of traditions and cultures as the intangible heritage of both communities is based on a study by Wilbert E. Moore (Wilbert E. Moore.1968; Wichien Rakkan. 1985: 70-72) the American sociologists who emphasize the flexibility of the theory of structure and function that society adapts to both the natural and man-made environments, the changing is a common feature of society, coupled with an order, which may occur on a limited basis, without severe repercussions in the short term, but in the long run it can cause a lot of change.

3. The pattern of carrying on Phi Ta Khon traditions and cultural heritage of both Thai-Lao lands found that still appearing, there is a continuation of traditional conservation patterns in accordance with Kraewjit Sriboonnak. (2007: 17) found that identity is the common sense of human beings that exist at every age, being a sense that appears from the individual level to the entire ethnic identity, it is a traditional identity of a person before it is transformed into a self in modern society. Therefore, the patterns of the inheritance of Phi Ta Khon traditions and Bun Phi Khon Festival which are inherited by the traditional community conservation model, are consistent with the concept of the Department of Cultural Promotion (2016: 11 - 12) which describes the concept, culture, way of life and wisdom as a valuable legacy of knowledge that ancestors have accumulated and passed down from generation to generation, and continuation by a new application and form. According to Julian H. Steward (1979), American anthropologists who study Cultural Ecology have commented on Survival of the Fittest that means all living things in this world must be the ones that nature has chosen as the strongest, able to adapt to all kinds of environment. Therefore, in a harsh environment, the weak will eventually die, and those who grow are able to adapt to the

environment at all levels. As well as Franz Boas (1887; Yos Santasombat. 1997: 25-27) believe that each culture has its own identity and value, each culture has its own history and history and development, the culture never stands still, but it is constantly changing and reflects a form of development, which is according to Edward B. Tyler (1877) The British anthropologist, who based the theory of evolution, has studied human behavior, both personal and tribal, he questioned how individual behaviors that became group behaviors were generally accepted in society, the human religious beliefs evolve in a straight line, and divided the social-cultural evolutionary steps that every society has to go through these phases Savagery, Barbarianism, and Civilization. However, the continuation of the new application and creation model can be studied from the objectives of the annual events such as the pattern of parades and the opening ceremonies that differ from the government's policy-making authority involved, especially in the part of Laos, which is a direct policy order from the state to take action to create a trend to promote cultural tourism in the Lao tourism year.

### Suggestions

Suggestions for application: the governments should focus on the co-cultivation of good culture and values, including the maintenance of religion, the preservation, and restoration of art and culture. The agencies at both local, regional and educational levels should support and promote cultural and traditional activities with communities in order to extend the cultural heritage. The people in the area who own the cultural heritage need to realize value, accumulate wisdom, diverse knowledge, and develop and adapt to be in harmony with nature

Suggestions for further research: the Phi Ta Khon traditions should be studied in the form of development in each period and how it was influenced by factors, and how does it affect the inheritance of two Thai-Laos cultural heritage in each period?. In addition, how the role of the Thai-Lao Phi Ta Khon traditions should be compared to the level of relations of the people of the Mekong communities.

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