

The Cultural Diversity of Tai- Yaun Ethnic Mural Arts in Saraburi Province.

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This article was part of a research project titled “Identity and Aesthetics of Tai-Yuan Arts to Design of cultural souvenir products” as a component of a graduate thesis majoring Culture, Fine Arts, and Design, Khon Kaen University. The research aimed to study the mural arts which appear in Tai-Yuan as their historical and cultural diffusion can be traced to some appearances in temples along sided the Pa Sak river in Saraburi Province. The research was qualitative, and the data was collected by field study, survey, observation, and interviews with key-informant persons. The data was then analysed based on the theoretical framework of History and Cultural Diffusion theory of German anthropologist, Franz Boas.. The study results indicate that “culture” was composed by humans as a livelihood through foods, living, appearance, working, and performance to express the meaning of society, which passed from generation to generation. The livelihood was based on the past livelihood principle from the past to the present in Ta-Yuan ethnic in Saraburi Province which integrated livelihood with other ethnic groups in the same areas. The integration brought from cultural and livelihood of Lanna, Chinese, Mon (Minority), and Westerners to adapt with the livelihood harmoniously and correspond with social contexts in the present trend accord to cultural diffusion theory of Franz Boas. The theory of cultural diffusion emphasised that the study of cultural patterns and styles are more important than “the cultural which spread to other ones, must have been adapted to the new culture from the original”(reference) . Therefore, cultural diversity has appeared in the livelihood, language, food, appearance, honour tattoos, and traditions. This includes the Salakphart tradition, Traditional New Year celebration, Khan Khao tradition, and Floating Lanterns tradition, etc. which resulted in the cultural diffusion

maintained in Tai-Yaun in Saraburi province. This phenomena led to correspondence in society, living together, helping each other in the community, and passing the knowledge to post-generations which appears in the mural art as the story memorandum through the painting to illustrate the creator's thinking and reflects the cultural value of the nation in both aesthetic value of humankind and educational advantages.

Keywords: *Culture, Mural arts, Tai-Yuan Ethnic, Saraburi Province.*

Introduction

Yuan is the name designated by northern people in the past when they migrated from Chiang Saen of the Lanna Kingdom when the kingdom was defeated. The Yuan had settled in the north of Thailand around Indochina Peninsula since the pre-historical age and expanded to the valleys and river valleys in the Chiang Rai province, included Ping river's plains in the south, Laos river, and the Kok river in Mueang District of Chiang Rai Province. The arrival of the Tai-Yuan people made them have to live together in harmony with the indigenous people. The territory then became a new kingdom. The Tai-Yuan still embed their livelihood and traditions to carry on in the Lanna Kingdom which similar to other groups of Thai in another region, such as Thai in Xishuangbanna (Thai Lue). Therefore, the phenomena show that Tai-Yaun used to have social and cultural relationships in the past. Nowadays, identifying the Northern people as Yuan people is not preferred,=. It is preferred to call people who speak Northern Thai in the central region instead.

Tai-Yuan people, in the central region, migrated and escaped from the war after the Burmese army attacked from Chiang Saen. About 23,000 people were divided into 5 clusters: 1 cluster per army, namely Chiang Mai, Nan, Lampang, Vientiane (Lao's capital) and Bangkok (Thailand's capital). The immigration was considered to be the major migration of the Tai-Yuan people, which occurred as a family migration to the various district. The capital army migrated to Bangkok, some moved to settle down in Saraburi district, and the rest moved to Ratchaburi district.

Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province descended from the Yonok sub-district in Chiang Saen district of the Lanna Kingdom migrated from the war defeated region caused by the Burmese army, then was evacuated to Bangkok, and moved to settle down around Pa Sak river's plains in Saraburi province. At the present, Tai-Yuan spread out around Saraburi districts in total 11 major districts and the most found are 3 districts and 17 Sub-districts. The most found is Sao Hai district as follows: 1) Sao Hai sub-district consists of Sao Hai sub-district, Mueang Kao sub-district, Reng rang sub-district, Ban Yang sub-district, Ngio Ngam sub-district, Suan Dok

Mai sub-district, Tha Chang sub-district, Phraya Thot sub-district, Muang Ngam sub-district, Sala Ri Thai sub-district, Hua Pluak sub-district and Ton Tan sub-district, 2) Chaloe Phra Kiat district, consists of Ban Kaeng sub-district and Chalerm Phrakiat sub-district, and 3) Mueang Saraburi district consists of Nong No sub-district, Nong Yao sub-district, Nong Khwai So sub-district (Khiewamer, 2019).

According to the cultural diffusion theory of Franz Boaz, the German anthropologist, cultural diffusion is the important process of one culture to spread to another culture after one has adapted to correspond with the new culture. With the aims to compare with different cultures and consider dominant or weakness in each culture however, he still believes that there are no better or worse cultures due to cultures being affected from all directions. The cultural diffusion is influenced by geography and cultural boundaries from the origin resulted in the Tai-Yuan were forcibly evacuated brought their livelihood and traditions of Lanna then adapted with new areas surrounding for maintaining and inheritance as appeared in historical traces until the present, including the mural arts in 4 temples located in the Pa Sak river plain, Saraburi province.

Mural art is a human creation to expresses emotions, feelings, intellect, thought, and beauty (Nimsamer, 1988) which can be expressed in various forms with a variety of aesthetics, impressed or reflected by the knowledge, taste, and expertise of the creator to be satisfied or respond to customs, traditions, or beliefs in religion. Mural art is transmitted through drawing and colouring to shape the artworks to rely on the use of colour, light, and shadow which decorated in the building. The religious buildings such as sanctuary's wall, temple, and so on by using handwriting with pencil, ink, watercolour, powder coat, and oil painting, which reflected religious stories, history, archaeology, livelihood, appearance, traditional games, and so on in each period. With the skill of the royal craftsmen preferred to paint 9 Buddha historical stories, namely, Thep Chumnum, Traiphum Chad, dharma puzzles, religious literature, legends, folk tales, royal ceremonies, traditions and important incidents (Thaonthong, 2005).

The study results of cultural diversity in Tai-Yuan mural arts in Saraburi province indicated that the murals arts reflect the livelihood of Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province in the past. This reflected the socio-cultural appearance of the unique characteristics of Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province, during the reign of King Rama III to King Rama V period, and in early Rattanakosin which were combined from Lanna art, Chinese art, Western art as cultural storytelling of traditions, rituals, beliefs, livelihood, appearance, as well as Tai-Yuan house's characteristics through the mural arts. It's considered as historical incidents recording as prosperity indicator of important cultural heritage of Saraburi province and Thai nation about Tai-Yaun historical traces from the past to the present.

The aforementioned reasons and the importance of this subject inspired the researchers interested in studying the cultural diversity in Tai-Yuan murals arts in Saraburi province. In particular, the researcher was interested in how both of them relate to each other from the past to the present, including livelihood, mottos, beliefs, cultural, and traditions. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct an in-depth study in order to clarify in the new knowledge from findings about Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province from the context and point out the prominence in awareness late generation and useful further study of Tai-Yuan ethnicity in other contexts.

Research Methodology

The researcher used the qualitative research methodology with an emphasis on field study, survey, and observation by selecting an area from a historical background and current conditions of the resources, then refined only the mural arts resources of Tai-Yuan in Saraburi Province according to the data on potential and specialist approval. The data collection was retrieved from textbooks and researches together with interviews from monks, local wisdom, and history specialists in Tai-Yuan arts. This data was then examined and analysed based on the history and cultural diffusion theory of Franz Boas with conclusions and presentation for a final stage.

Study Results

To Study the Mural Arts of Tai-Yuan Which Appeared in Saraburi Province

Saraburi Province is located in the central region of Thailand and has important cultural diversity in both traditions and culture, historical Buddhism places, and natural tourism. In the plain areas along with Pa Sak River, a main river flows through. The average population is approximately 645,024 people and which is allocated to 13 main districts of Saraburi Province (Provincial Community Development Office of Saraburi, 2017). Saraburi Province has various ethnic groups such as Central Thai, Tai-Yuan, Tai Phuan, Mon, Lao Wiang, etc. Tai-Yuan, in Saraburi Province, originated from the Yonok subdistrict of Chiang Saen and appears that remained historical evidence which referred to the remained historical evidence is the “Mural Arts” were found in several temples along to the Pa Sak river areas in Saraburi province. This includes the Saha Pradit Tharam temple, Nong No Nuea temple, Nong Yao Sung temple, and Khao Kaew Worawihan temple. The mural art seen in the temple illustrate the stories of livelihood, culture, and traditions of the Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province from the past and maintained continually.

The study of Neuaon Khuathongkheaw (2008) found that Saha Pradit Tharam temple in Saraburi province was built in the early Rattanakosin period. The temple was surrounded by communities with various ethnic groups, including central Thais, Tai-Yuan, Laos, Lao Pung

Dam, or Laos from Chiang Saen which were evacuated from Chiang Saen since the reign of King Rama I, and the creator was probably Tai-Yuan people named "Phai Chor Ko". This is a term in the Tai-Yuan language due to the respect they hold for Buddhism and built temples for religious ceremonies. Therefore, temples and Buddhism are like a mediator for maintaining relations in various ethnicities for living together which appeared as symbolic of tangible and intangible culture. Intangible culture includes spoken language and beliefs. Whereas tangible cultures includes houses, temples, and fine arts, especially the murals in the Ubosot of Saha Pradit Tharam temple which refers to cultural transfer and cultural preservation in Tai-Yuan community around the temple. The mural art has been embedded with Tai-Yuan livelihood in the past as traditional Thai mural art which is written with a powder coat and with royal craft school style and influenced by Chinese arts resulted in well-integrated artwork.

Patcharin Sukkhapraman (1986) found that villager's livelihood in the mural arts was the Saraburi people at that time and the most of them were local people, and the rest were minorities, included Tai-Yuan ethnic who was forcibly migrated from Chiang Saen in the late Thonburi period to the first reign of early Rattanakosin period. Currently, Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province still preserves tradition, especially spoken language and some tradition, such as the Fireballs festival or ancestral spirits worship. In addition, the community also has Lao people from Vientiane and other districts along the Mekong river and mixed with Chinese, Mon, and Karen lived together as small community, farm and had monk to be respected person with a temple as the centre of the community, in humble way.

From the field study and interview of Damrong Khiaosamer, the Tai-Yuan Ethnic Association's Secretary in Saraburi Province, it was found that the current Tai-Yuan in Saraburi Province has approximately 180,000 people and the most of them lives in the northern region of Thailand called "Khon Muang" which centred in Chiang Saen. Similarly, in Somchit Yakul's interview, who is the Chairperson of Sao Hai Cultural Council in Saraburi Province and Local Wisdom, it was mentioned that Tai-Yuan ethnic history in Saraburi province was evacuated from Chiang Saen during the reign of King Rama I. It was then settled in the Pa Sak river's plain as community and surrounded by Pa Sak river on both sides in the east of Sao Hai and Mueang Saraburi district. When the family and members expanded, they relocated their residences to various districts in Saraburi province (except Nong Don and Don Phut district).

In retrospect, the Lao and Tai-Yuan people originated from south of Xishuangbanna in China. The Saraburi Province, especially the Sao Hai district, consists of 5 large groups, namely, Central Thai, Tai- Laos, Tai-Yuan, Thai mixed Mon, and Thai mixed Chinese. These groups have lived in Saraburi Province together harmoniously, worshipped in Buddhism, and built temples to conduct religious rituals together. The temples and Buddhism are considered

as a mediator which connected various stories between these groups to have a closer relationship. Therefore, the creation of mural arts which appeared in the temple reflect to thoughts transmission and beliefs of the craftsman about livelihood, history, religion, culture, appearance, traditional games, and so on in each era which reflected to culture of the Tai-Yuan ethnic.

During the interview with Natthawit Pimthong, the Editor of the Muang Boran Journal, it was found that the mural arts were embedded Tai-Yuan livelihood in Saraburi Province. It can be assumed that the mural arts were created during the reign of King Rama III to Rama V as follows:

Saha Pradit Tharam Temple, Sao Hai District, Saraburi Province

The temple was built in the reign of King Rama IV by Chao Phraya Nikorn Bodin and was largely renovated in the reign of King Rama V. The mural art was painted in 1900 with Thai traditional with western techniques. The mural art illustrated Phra Samut Khod on the west side, Hon Wichai Kawi in the east side, and about Phra Malai Prod Sat in back side of Buddha statue. The painting in the reign of King Rama V was the modern concept which linked to realistic concept, the story began from myths and turn into phenomena and then beyond the myths such as dharma puzzles, folk tales, and local literature from Panya Jataka which is about human beings and is a story for teaching the villagers. This story is embedded with the way of life in the same area. Like Central Thai, Tai-Yuan, Thai-Chinese had reflected the historical images, traditions, Tai-Yuan livelihoods at the time, such as leg-tattooing, Male- Female dressing, Fireballs festival, and Krathong Sia Hua festival.

Painting techniques used were a Thai traditional painting with 2-dimensional features, gilded and cut image for important image, such as the male and female as King assembled with a 3-dimensions image with scenery painting of nature and buildings, namely western building, ocean scene and sailing continued storytelling without cutting line but used the line of the river, road, tree, wall to divide images.

The colour usage integrated between traditional Thai painting mixed with Western from the reign of King Rama IV. It was found that the powder coat mixed with glue to write on the cement wall. The main colour was green, Indigo, dark brown, black, writing which focus on natural scenes which painted by grey and indigo. The ground, mountains, and trees were paint with grey as the discovery of cobalt minerals with silver colour and use the gold colour to cut image lines.

Figure 1. The Mural Arts Saha Pradit Tharam temple, Sao Hai district, Saraburi Province



Khao Kaeo Worawihan Temple, Sao Hai District, Saraburi Province

The temple was built in 1628 during the Ayutthaya period which was coloured by powder coat painting. The wall was the remain parts on the gable. The other side was Buddha religious routine and Asubha-Kammattana or sympathise with a corpse. The painting of hell reflected the reality and painting below the right-hand corner has a female escaping from ravens but is dressed in a sarong with her hair in a bun similar to the Tai Yuan in Lanna. It can be assumed that this reflected the livelihood around the temple to demonstrate the characteristics of Tai-Yuan ethnic and central Thai lived with harmony.

Figure 2. The Mural Arts in Khao Kaeo Worawihan temple, Sao Hai district, Saraburi Province



Nong No Nuea Temple, Mueang Saraburi District, Saraburi Province

The temple was built in 1820 and the murals were painted in the reign of King Rama V which illustrated Buddha's life on evil rival part. The mural reflected patience and determination of the Buddha with goodness to conquer the devil group according to his believe "Good always triumphs over evil." The mural of Vessantara Jataka expressed the great sacrifice, hell, and

heaven to point out everyone to do good things. The Tai-Yuan livelihood mural was painted and demonstrated that they had lived together, the women wore striped pattern skirt which had a border or base in red and white. Green with blue colour background illustrated women with long hair and put up in a bun. It was assumed that the painted mural was Tai-Yuan ethnic who lived around the temple, the community were consisted of children, adolescents, and the elderly. Most villagers were Tai-Yuan ethnic with Chinese who had come to live together. The community was like an urban society or a large society located at the rim of river and able to see harbors and public ports.

The colours used in the murals were green, indigo, dark brown, black colour by cool-tone and it contained a lot of green and indigo. This colour structure was popularly used during the reign of King Rama IV and mostly emphasised natural scenes with grey and indigo colour for the images of ground, mountains, and trunks. The grey and gold colours were used to draw the lines in the image of males and females as the King.

Figure 3. The Mural Arts in Nong No Nuea temple, Mueang Saraburi district, Saraburi Province



Nong Yao Sung Temple, Mueang Saraburi District, Saraburi Province

The temple was built in 1891 and the mural arts were painted during the reign of King Rama V combined between traditional Thai painting work with local popularity by craftsman was assumed to be local people who had come to study or viewed paintings in Bangkok, These craftsmen then returned to the community worked with royal craftsman from Bangkok. The murals had a similar story with Nong No Nuea temple which reflected concept and tradition of Chanthakorop, Vessantara Jataka, Phra Malai, Ramayana, and included the livelihoods of the villagers who lived together with Central Thai, Tai-Yuan, Laos. The painting of Tai-Yuan has been inserted in various paintings such as Tai-Yuan women with long hair in a bun and decorate with flower, wearing a strike pattern skirt with stripes, and parallel thread pattern. Additionally, the women wear abreast cloth or bandana and leave the cloth's tail close their

breast if the women get older or married the bandana used to tie their breast. The use of women in these paintings is usually related to household chores such as childbirth, parenting, water carrying, and agriculture work such as rice cultivation or harvesting, and fishery. Men are depicted at that time to have Thai-style hair, not wear cloths, but instead wearing Chong Kraben, and posed with sitting and lying such while smoking or opium smoking. In addition, there were other ethnicities like Chinese, Karen, and wild people came to live together in the suburbs or between the border.

Painting techniques got influence from western applied with principles of Vision by using water as a leading indicator and above was ship headed to the sea in both Nong Yao Sung and Wat Nong No Nuea temple. The murals show the villager's livelihoods. From observing the mural art at Nong No Nuea temple the mural shows all Tai-Yuan women as having their hair in a bun on their head around neck, wearing colourful skirts and sarongs with a bandana. The colour painting was similar to colour tone of the murals in Nong No Nuea temple.

Figure 4. The Mural Arts in Nong Yao Sung temple, Mueang Saraburi district, Saraburi Province



Research Discussion

The analysis of the mural arts which appears to trace cultural diversity in the Tai-Yaun ethnic group in Saraburi Province on the basis of cultural diffusion were found as follows:

The theory of cultural diffusion by Franz Boas discovers cultural formations from various factors and not able to make a judgment on any theories or rules as criteria for determining the history of the culture. However, anthropologists should act by taking notes on the phenomena of each culture in detail in each society. Emphasis on patterns and plans of that culture instead rely on existing theories as a framework before directing to investigate facts

from society. There is an important principle of one culture spread to another culture and is customised with the new culture. Another culture, which is also spread out, is an idea which has a symbolic form as it was made by human from their soul and need to be used as amulet for feeling safe and secure.

Tai-Yuan culture was migrated from the past in Saraburi Province and found the culture is as follows:

Lanna culture has a unique identity, namely, accent, food, clothing, residence, included lifestyle, and customs. Tai-Yuan ethnic believes in worshipping spirits and Buddhism resulted in bringing Lanna culture ties with the beliefs of Lanna culture. The mainly symbolic imitated from Tai-Yaun ethnic in Lanna livelihood and traditions which related in livelihood, culture, tradition painted in the murals. Therefore, it is presumed that in the context of the mural temple was the community of Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province who lives around this area. The Kalae house style includes wooden house crossed on the roof above the gable like Lanna. Tai-Yuan dressing style prefers to wear clothes with stripe pattern skirt, top-bottom skirt can be a red, black, or white. With sleeveless tops, wrap breath clothes with a bandana. Tai-Yuan always weaves or sew clothes and do not have patterns sticking together. Furthermore, they also believe that evil or superstition can be inside the body in 2 ways: the middle of the head and the seam wearing skirt which considered as Tai-Yuan technique in women who set their hair like bun to cover the top of head and weave fabric by leaving a hole to prevent mess.

For Laos, Chinese, and Mon culture in the context of Saraburi province had contained variety of ethnics, included Tai-Yuan, Tai-Phuan, Tai-Raman, Chinese, Lao Wiang These ethnic groups had moved to live together due to their evacuation from the war to use in farming and to send supplies to the army. These people emigrated from Luang Prabang Vientiane, Myanmar, and Chiang Saen during in Thonburi period to the reign of the King Rama IV of Rattanakosin.

For this reason, Saraburi Province is surrounded by various ethnic- Central Thai, Tai-Yuan from Chiang Saen, Laos Wiang, Tai-Raman and Chinese to settle down and when they migrated, they usually bring a culture, such as livelihood, customs, spoken languages, food, and appearances from hometown, then adapted with a new context in currently domicile resulted in the occurrence of cultural diversity as symbolic. The result of this phenomenon is not only reflected in just livelihood but is also reflected in the murals arts in Saraburi province which is mostly found in Sao Hai district and Mueang Saraburi district. From the assumption, Sao Hai district probably was the original of Tai-Yuan settlement in Saraburi province who migrated from Bangkok again and when the family had expanded,. They

relocated their homes to various districts of Saraburi Province. Later, they moved to nearby provinces like Lopburi, Nakhon Ratchasima, Sa Kaeo, Nakhon Sawan, and Phetchabun.

The phenomena corresponded with the cultural diffusion theory of Edward B. Tylor and Lewis H. Morgan who mention that culture which spreads to other targets have are based on the concept that culture was thought and behaviour (thought result) embedded in person to the target culture. Thus, the cultural diffusion is dependent on various factors, namely, geographical principle such as mountains, ocean, forest, and so on, affection, cross-cultural marriage, Buddhism rites, and immigration. This becomes directed cultural diffusion and is caused from social harm such as wars and conflicts. These factors affected the cultural diffusion entirely. The cultural diffusion affected the mural art in Saraburi Province and resulted in the mural story was integrated cultural ethnics from Chinese, Lao, and Myanmar as appeared with mainly Lanna cultural ethnicity.

Research Conclusion

The mural art which illustrated cultural diversity can be traced to Tai-Yuan in Saraburi Province. This is found in Saha Pradit Tharam, Nong No Nuea, Nong Yao Sung, and Khao Kaew Worawihan temples which corresponded to the migrated area of Tai-Yuan settlement from the past to the present. Tai-Yuan still maintains their living in the same context and leaving, when the member has exceeded, then moved other districts in Saraburi Province and later to nearby provinces. Although time has passed, Tai -Yuan in Saraburi Province, especially the Sao Hai and Muang Saraburi districts, continue and preserve their livelihood and culture. This includes Lanna accent, legs tattoo with immortal beliefs, strike-stripes dressing in red and white rim and have green with blue as background. Young women preserve the long hair braced with buns, food, Lanna house architecture. There is a continuation of cultural tradition such as Salakphart tradition, Traditional New Year celebration, Khan Khao tradition, and Floating Lanterns tradition, etc. From this knowledge, Tai-Yuan in Saraburi province discovered the ethnic origin of themselves which makes them feel proud of ethnicity, and inspired to preserve it, inheriting the tradition and culture, keeping it from disappearance. Another aspect of Tai-Yuan's pride is the technique of sarong weaving which is a traditional weaving for household usage and additional income from tourists who interested in Tai-Yuan culture in Saraburi Province from both Thai and foreigners with famous Thai proverb "In-depth root knowledge, recognise past and live with the present.

Interviews

Mr. Somjit Yakul, Tacher Damrong Kiewsamner, Mr.Nattawit Pimtung, Buddhist monks, Local Wisdoms, and the villager who reside around the temples: Saha Pradit Tharam temple,



Nong No Nuea temple, Nong Yao Sung temple, and Khao Kaew Worawihan temple in Saraburi province.



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