

# **The Cultural Identity Inheritance of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival, Lao People's Democratic Republic**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Culture and traditions are considered one of the most valuable legacies of humanity, culture considers something that is created and properly selected to be a good way of life for people. therefore, the purpose of this research is to study the Cultural Identity Inheritance of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival. This research study is qualitative research and used the snowball sampling technique, the key informants in the Pak Lai area, Xaiyabuli Province, Lao PDR, the amount of 90 people. Field study data collecting by Descriptive Analysis method. The data collection that includes Document Analysis, Data Surveys, Participatory Observation, and Non-Participatory Observation, Unstructured Interview, Structured Interview, and Focus Group Discussion. The research results found that;

The Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival is a kind of play tradition in Pak Lai, Xaiyabuli, Lao PDR, it can be said that it is a local legend that has been passed down from the people of Pak Lai, known and familiar with each other from small to large, officially returned to the revival in 1975, the Lao PDR established it as the Year of Tourism in Laos, where the Khon Ghost was one of the city's cultural symbols selected to be featured in the annual Xaiyabuli Province. The people of Pak Lai believed that this performance was to pay homage to the souls of their deceased ancestors, to consecrate powerful divine spirits whose rulership is based on the belief that it is sacred to induce fertility or calamity to the country. In addition, Lao people inherit their cultural identity based on the beliefs of the community's cultural way on the basis of the Lao economic and social context and has hoped-for results from the introduction of the Khon ghost from cultural wisdom to the following business system and the direct inheritance from the public sector, which is caused by various departments, including from the powerful people in each era that drive, encourages, and encourages attention. And inheriting traditional conservation patterns through beliefs of supernatural phenomena and Buddhist beliefs which reflects the history of Phi Khon, a cultural identity that has been carried over in various forms, both in the promotion of conservation, restoration, and business expansion with the cooperation of the people in the community and society, until the Khon Ghost is the cultural heritage of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

## **Keywords**

Festival, Phi Khon, Inheritance, Cultural Identity, Lao PDR

## **INTRODUCTION**

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a country with a great history, people have a simple way of life, deeply connected with Buddhism and the Mekong River, there are currently accepted assumptions and theories that the first Tai, Part of the ancestors of the Lao peoples migrated down the Yellow River and the Yangtze River **5,000** years ago, then moved down the Mekong (LanXang River) to settle in southern China, and built many independent small agricultural communities and began to expand, building cities in the south, along the mountains and on the plains of the valley which has Khmer people, Mon people, Lao people, some parts of the area have people of Khang or Lao Thoeng lived before. The oldest archaeological evidence is standing stones and stones pillars which used to define the area where these evidences were found in Laos the most. Another group of archaeological evidence is the tools, utensils and bone fragments of the burnt people contained in stone jars found at the field of stone jars,

PhonsavanTown, XiengKhwang Province, these are believed to have been used in funeral ceremonies some **3,000** years ago (Wit Banditkun. **2012** : 12).

From the historical background of Laos, it is found that the LanXang Kingdom used to be a unified kingdom since the reign of King FaNgum, later split into three kingdoms: Champasak Kingdom, Vientiane Kingdom, and LuangPrabang Kingdom. In **1779**, the three kingdoms lost their independence to the Kingdom of Thailand until **1893** for a total of **114** years, then Laos came under French rule from **1893** to **1944**, until World War II, Japan has come to play a role in the rule of Laos (DararatMattariganond. **2012** : 8). Due to internal divisions, the Three LanXang Kingdom had to become the kingdom of Siam completely in **1779**, and it is the origin of the great extermination of the Lao people, especially during the reign of King Nanthasen (**1781** to **1794**), when the Lao people were forced by Siam to be the most canal-digging workers in Bangkok (BunthanongSomzaiphon. **2010** : 27).

Interestingly, JummaleeZaiyasorn (2017: 13) states that the Lao social and cultural conditions, the way of life of the Lao PDR people still adhere to and follow the traditions that have been passed down over the years. Today is still a traditional way of life, traditional beliefs influence all groups of Lao people, even the Lao people of the Buddhist group but still worship ghosts as well such as the belief in morale (Kwan), which believes that human beings have personal morale when the Kwan leaves the body must perform a reverend ceremony. Religions of Lao Thoeng and Sung Lao people, many tribes worship both natural spirits and ancestral spirits, sickness is often associated with the actions of ghosts, as in the past, unchanged according to world trends and Lao traditions. In addition to the way of life and the Thai-Lao language that are similar to each other, various traditions throughout the year of Lao PDR, which has held 5,000 temples across the country, and 22,000 monks, it does not look very different from the Thai people in the Northeast, almost all of them are traditions related to Buddhism called Hīt̄sīb̄xng (Heet Sib Song; Heet means tradition.). And LuangPrabang people will also have twelve months of tradition in one year (PrayoonAkaraborworn. 2015: 2).

Bun Phi Khon Festival, Muang Pak Lai, Xaiyabuli Province, has been passed on from a neglected culture that has become a resurrection of the Khon ghost, Due to the economic, social, and political factors of the Lao PDR, traces of the cultural identity of the Lao Khon ghost have yet to appear from the research and academic records. It is therefore an academic challenge to study and uncover new findings in this research study, in addition, the results of the study will also influence the community to be proud of their roots and continue to carry on their cultural identity. The results of the research will reveal the history of the Bun Phi Khon Festival, which can be used to pass on the cultural identity of the people in the community. This will allow you to know the way of inheriting the cultural identity and the pattern of carrying on the Bun Phi Khon Festival, Lao PDR can be applied to benefit the economy, society and culture, and other areas of the community.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research is to study the Cultural Identity Inheritance of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival, this was held at Pak Lai, Xaiyabuli, Lao PDR.

## RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research uses an educational conceptual framework based on the community's social and cultural context in order to develop knowledge on the inheritance of the cultural identity of the

community. That Identity is a small unit of sociological study that links an attitude towards identity or identity as a role-role and behavioral relationship that arises from the role of the person, the combination of identity is based on Characteristics of roles that link the individual roles, duties, and responsibilities (Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. 2000).

## METHODOLOGY

This research study is a qualitative research study by collecting Field Study data to collect research data in depth by descriptive analysis method. Data collection that includes document analysis, data surveys, participatory observation, and non-participatory observation, unstructured interview, structured interview, and focus group discussion.

Target population: Used purposive selection which was selected from those who were able to provide information about the Lao Khon ghost, and the snowball sampling technique was also used to search for key informants in the Pak Lai area, Xaiyabuli, Lao PDR, the amount of 90 people consisting of; (1) 25 well-informed persons were spiritual leader, villager philosopher, head of the government department, civil servant, monk, community leader, etc. (2) 40 operators were inventors of the Khon Ghost Mask maker, business operators, government officials, citizens, and participants of the festival. (3) 25 service users were tourists, media, and villagers in the community who were able to provide information.

Research tools: The researcher used the designing and development as research tool from the theories, concepts, principles, and knowledge related to the research for use in the study by determining the method of data collection and data collection: (1) survey form is a research tool used to collect basic information about the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival's history and background. (2) Observation form is a research tool used to record the state of facts in a research area, divided into two observations: participatory observation and non-participatory observation. (3) The interview guide is a research tool used to collect insights from purposeful conversational and conversational communications, including unstructured interview and structured interview. (4) Focus group discussion is the process of collecting research data from key informant group discussions comprising two groups, casual information, and general information, who have hands-on experience and can provide research information.

Data collection and analysis: Collected data from document analysis and data from field study by means of surveys, observations, interviews, and group discussions. The obtained data is performed an inductive qualitative analysis.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

In research on the inheritance of cultural identity in the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival, the researcher can summarize the research results according to the research objectives as follows.

**1.** The history of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival found that the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival is a kind of play tradition in Pak Lai Town, Xaiyabuli Province, Lao PDR, which is a local legend that has been passed down from the people of Pak Lai city known and familiar with each other since young Until growing up, and officially restored again in 1975, which the Lao PDR has set as the year of tourism of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

**2.** The inheritance of cultural identity in the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival found that there is an inheritance of belief in the cultural way of the community according to the economic and social context of Lao PDR. In order to establish the introduction of the Khon ghost from cultural wisdom to the follow-up business system and the direct inheritance from the government caused

by the designation of various agencies, including that arising from the powerful people of each era who drive, promote, and encourage interest.

**3. รูปแบบพบว่า** the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival found that is inherited by traditional conservation patterns through beliefs of supernatural phenomena and Buddhist beliefs, and inherits through forms of application and reconstruction to the times.

## DISCUSSIONS

1. The history of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival found that The story of Phi Khon Mueang Pak Lai has concluded that it is a tradition to play in connection with rituals for worship and contact with the audience was an ancestor spirit that Lao peoples believe in a common belief that ancestors are the ancestors, races, people who build a country when they die as a ghost and become sacred and awesome, has the power to induce fertility, or calamity to a country, It is consistent with the study of ThawatPunnōthok (1987: 350) found that belief was born in the consciousness of the human mind for good or harmful supernatural powers, although these supernatural powers could not be proven to be True, but the human being in a society accepts and respects. Therefore, the expression through the phantoms of the Dan Sai and the phantoms of the Pak Lai people thus builds the confidence of the people expressing what they respect, as SrisakValipodom(2007) (SuriyaSmutkupt. **1996** : 35-38), Researchers of Thai culture and archeology say that belief is what gives rise to confidence and encouragement, without them it cannot do anything to achieve a good goal, so faith is part of the As human beings, all human beings, all ages, everywhere are associated with belief, so doing anything is based on faith.



**Photo 1 WatXieng Thong, a great cultural symbol of Laos, is located in LuangPrabang**(Photo by: PornphithakMaensiri)

2. The inheritance of cultural identity in the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival found that there are 3 types, which are (1) continuation of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival according to the belief in the cultural way of the Lao community, (2) continuation of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival according to the Lao economic and social context. (2) Continuing the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival according to state policy. Considering the 3 cultural identity inheritance approaches in the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival, it is found that there are three common characteristics were Guidelines for the

inheritance of beliefs in the community culture, the approaches in the socio-economic context, and according to the state policy which resulted in the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival in accordance with SanyaSanyawiwat (2007: 56) proposes that society is like a living being, this being has many components, each has a specific duty to perform for the existence of the collective, that is, the organism, and so is human society. Every part of a society has a function to form a society known as the Structure of Society, and the components of these subsystems have a function that must work in a systematic manner for the existence of a society. The path to the inheritance of traditions and cultures as the intellectual heritage of both communities follows a study by American sociologist Willbert E. Moore. (1967), who emphasized the flexibility of the theory of structure and function: Society will adapt to both natural and man-made environments, the change is a common feature of society, coupled with the 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 changes in society (WichienRakkan. 1986: 70-72).



**Photo2 Monks perform important rituals before the beginning of the Khon Bun Phi Festival, with important people in the community and the people participating in the ceremony (Photo by :PornphithakMaensiri)**



**Photo 3 Phi Khon Parade to participate in the ceremony of inviting Vessantara into the city at the garden area 36, at the back of the village. (Photo by: PornphithakMaensiri)**



**3.** The model of the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival was found that is inherited by a traditional conservation model in line with KraewjitSriboonnak (2007: 17) It is found that identity is the common sense of human beings that exist at every age. It is the consciousness that appears from the individual level to the Ethnic Identity, which is the traditional identity of the person before it is transformed into the self in modern society. The pattern of inheriting Phi Ta Khon traditions and Bun Phi Khon festivals that are inherited by the community's traditional conservation model are also in line with the concept of the Department of Cultural Promotion (2016: 11 - 12) that describes the concept of 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 The application and form follows Julian H.Steward (1955), an American anthropologist who studies the cultural ecology, commenting on adaptive adaptation as Survival of the Fittest. That is, all living things in this world must survive must be those that nature chooses to be the strongest, able to adapt to every kind of environment, in harsh environments the weak will eventually die, those who thrive are those who are able to adapt to the environment at all levels. At the same of Franz Boas (1970), believed that each culture has its own identity and value, each culture has its own history and history and development (YotSantasombat. 1997: 25-27). Culture never stands still, but it is constantly changing, reflecting its formative development, according to Edward B. Tyler (1877), a British anthropologist, who based the theory of evolution studying human behavior, both personal and tribal, have questioned, how individual behaviors that became group behaviors became so accepted in society, human religious beliefs evolved in a straight line, it divides the social-cultural evolution stages that every society has to go through these phases. And classified into 3 steps; Savagery, Barbarianism, and Civilization.



**Photo 4 Phi KhonYai (Big), Researcher with Pak Lai lady, taking a photo with KhonKhon Lao ghost while waiting to join in the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival Parade. (Photo by: PornphithakMaensiri)**



**Photo 5 Phi KhonNoi (Little): most of the players are young men from the same village gathered in one group, wearing colorful masks and costumes to join the Parade. (Photoby : SompongPhatthawong)**

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

There were the important suggestions were: (1) Governments should pay more attention to promoting the cultural identity of the community as well as its preservation, restoration, and continuation. (2) Local, community, and all relevant agencies should support and promote cultural and traditional activities in cooperation with the community, building on the cultural heritage. (3) The inheritance of the community's cultural identity is a reflection of the ability of local people to adapt and learn with nature.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The Bun Phi Khon Festival should be studied in the developmental patterns of each period how it was influenced by factors, and how it affected the inheritance of Lao cultural identity at different times. In addition, there should be a comparative study between the Bun Phi Khon Lao Festival and the Thai Phi Ta Khon tradition, whether they are related or not.

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