

“Sin Mai Meaung Ubon” : The Tubular Silk Skirt of
Ubon Rajchathanee in the past.

Dr. kanya Jungvimutipan
Faculty of Applied Arts and Design,
Ubon Rajchathanee University, Thailand

After historic era began in Ubon Rajchathanee about 2 thousand years ago, at that period, human life have been developed through their civilization from times to time until this land became Mueang Ubon. In the past, Meaung Ubon had been under the Dvaravati, Jen-La or ancient Khmer During the 9th - 11st Centuries. Nearly the end of Ayuttaya Kingdom, Siam defeated the Khmer and gathered this area as a part of Ayuttaya. Until 1786, Thao Khamphong, the Laotian prince who migrated from Viantiane with his people settled down in Mueaung Ubon under the governance of King Rama I of Siam. In 1792 Ubon Rajchathanee or Mueaung Ubon became one province of Siam and the administrative Center of Isan.

At present, Ubon is well-known as the royal city of Lotus Flower and the city of intellectual. This city is abundant with exotic art and culture which have begun with a long civilized history. Therefore, it is no argument that textile products has been beautiful and famous as people in the past produced the textile not only for household used but for people in the royal family as well as the master that govern others city nearby Meaung Ubon. Meaung Ubon in the past had a relative with the royal family of Laos in Jampasak. This relation caused the connection between culture in Meaung Ubon. At that time, most of tubular skirt made of silk and some made form cotton, the so-called “Sin ”. Sin was a daily used products for women in different ethnics different occasion and also even different society level. The exotic Sin is an interesting textile that collected not only creativity of weaver but also stories of life in from the past that make Sin became a trace of old day in Meaung Ubon. Currently, women in Ubon are rarely ware Sin, the old exotic Sin are fading away from human life. This situation becomes and inspiration for me, as a researcher, to explore the story of Sin in Meaung Ubon that could be a connection for us to learn what have been hidden in the past. Moreover, finding the trace of Sin in the past could be a benefit in textile design production in the future.

Historic background of Meaung Ubon.

After historic era began in Ubon Rajchathanee about 2 thousand years ago, at that period, human life have been developed through their civilization from times to time until this land became Mueang Ubon. In the past, Meaung Ubon had been under the Dvaravati, Jen-La or ancient Khmer During the 9th - 11st Centuries. Nearnly the end of Ayuttaya Kingdom, Siam defeated the Khmer and gathered this area as a part of Ayuttaya. Until 1786, Thao Khamphong, the Laotian prince who migrated from Viantiane with his people settled down in Mueaung Ubon under the governance of King Rama I of Siam. In 1792 Ubon Rajchathanee or Mueaung Ubon became one province of Siam and the administrative Center of Isan.

The Role of Sin in Social Status.

The Tai-Laos people in Mueaung Ubon are the agricultural community. When the harvesting season finished, men would start the wicker works while women prepared materials for their weaving as well as other household job. In the past weaving textile was an important responsibility for women as the following aspect;

1. The relationship and responsibility in a house.

Women weave textile as a household products as well as family costumes.

2. Weaving is mental and physical training.

Because weaving textile was a very complex process, women had trained to weave since they were young. To reach professional level, they had to be very concentrate on her weaving task and very patient. This situation was automatically trained women to be matured and ready for her households responsibility in the future.

3. Beliefs and rite in Buddhist.

In Buddhist Society, Buddha 's words mentioned about making merit and virtue, therefore women weaved some textile for religion support. In the past women weaved textile to make product such as pillow, seat, the long flag for decoration. The Tai-Laos women were admired to weaved the tubular skirt used as scripture's cover.

4. Social status.

The costume of each technique are unique and different also people in different social level. For example, The Tai-Laos women in Mueang Ubon wore a delicate Mud Mee Pattern Tubular Skirt while women in royal family wore a Golden Silk Tubular Skirt.

5. The relationship with social tradition from the birth till the death.

When woman gave a birth to her baby, the old weaving textile of his or her parent would be used as a soft baby diaper. The parent cloth had been cover on the silk worm bamboo winnowing basket as people that the baby would be a good child in the future . women also weave a shoulder towel for her husband, this towel was also used as a baby cradle. When the girl were ready to get

marry, she had to weave herself a wedding costume as well as some other household products for her new family. In the end of life some of the weaving textiles were used as a coffin cover, this beautiful was the funeral decoration and became sacred . After the funeral, the coffin cover textile was kept in a Buddha shelf until the use in next funeral. (Sunai Na Ubon, 2536 : 62)

6. The relationship and unity in community.

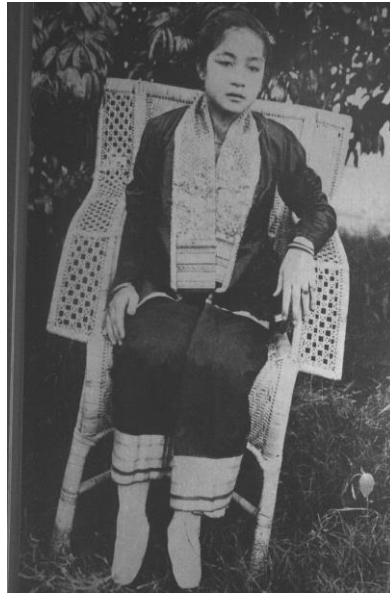
After harvesting season, the Tai-Laos community would organize an even to make a merit together. This traditional is the “long Khaung” day. The even related to the weaving process because people in community would set a plan to weave textile for the monk. The plan must be set in advance at least 6-8 month. It starts from growing cotton, making weft and yarn, weaving process. The distinctive of this tradition was the whole process of weaving that must finish in one day. This means that the whole even must process by all people in the community. It can be seen that the success of this tradition depends on the strongly unite community in the past that had been generate through the weaving activities.

The Pattern of “ Pha Sin Mai” Meaung Ubon.

As the ancestor of Ubon migrated which were the Tai-laos people had migrated form Vientiane, Laos P.D.R., to settle in Mueang Ubon. It is not any argument that the tubular skirt in Laos are similar to the tubular skirt in Mueang Ubon. Tai-Laos people normally use silk for weaving textiles. Therefore there were various beautiful silk skirt in the past. Most of the tubular skirt had vertical strip and it was called “ **Sin Kan**”. Some tubular skirts had a horizontal strips called “**Sin Tew**”. However there are some different details such as the size of patterns, or the skirt finishing called “ **Teen Sin**” as we can see from the traditional costume of the Tai-Laos peple in Mueang Ubon, Vientean and Laungprabang as the following:



Picture 1 The most of Isan women traditional costume made of silk . The silk tubular skirt made of silk and design in a long vertical strip. (The nation chronicle picture, referred in Teerapan Chanjareon, 2547 : 138)



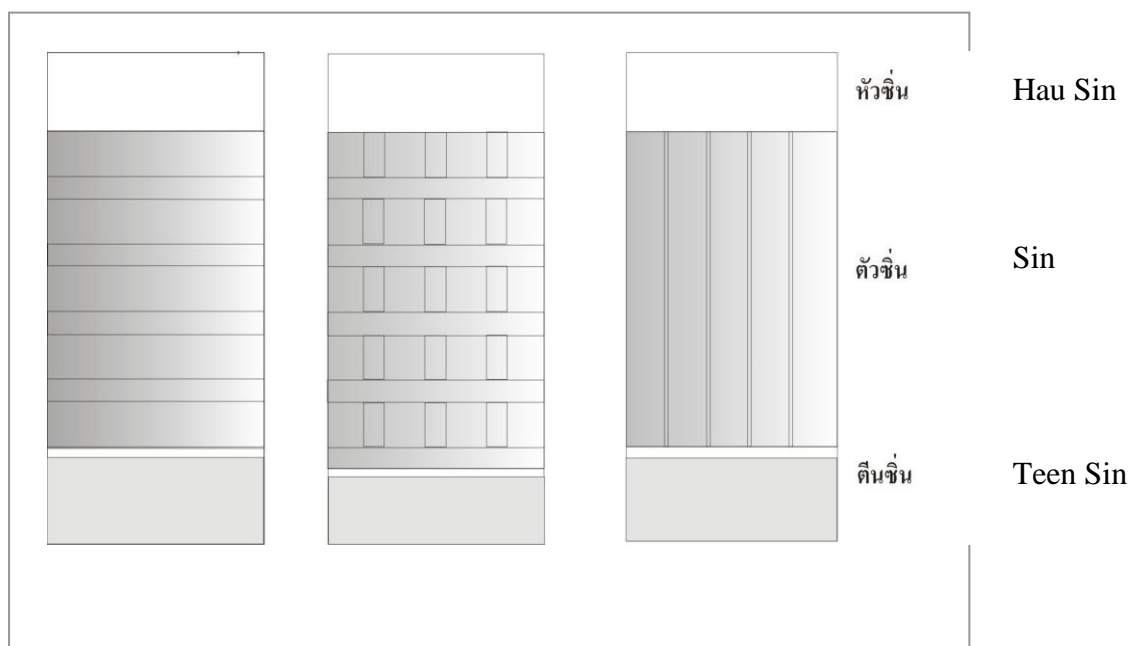
ภาพที่ 2 The women costumes in Laung Prabang was influenced from Lao Paun costume. The tubular skirt had a long vertical strip but the skirt finishing was obviously wider than finishing of the Tai Laos in Isan. (The Ritual Tai Textile Exhibition, The James H.W. Thomson Foundation, Bangkok. 2004)



Picture 3 In the past, Isan Women weaved herself a silk tubular skirt from a rough silk yarn that left from weaving. This tubular skirt called "Sin Taa Lae" , it was used in a casual occasion or for a household activities. (Viroj Srisuro, 2543 : 3)

Pattern Design and weaving Techniques.

In the Tai-Laos culture, the tubular skirt must composed of three piece of cloths. Therefore, the ancient tubular skirt fond in Meaung Ubon are not different. The three compositions which are the head of skirt or “ **Hau Sin**” , body or “**Sin**” and the skirt finishing “ **Teen Sin**” . the Head of Ubon tubular skirt is very unique called “**Hue Jok Dow**” . Hau Jok Dow or the stars pattern was produced by special supplementary yarn the technique, the so-called Jok. It was a serious tradition belief that the tubular skirt must composed of this three parts, The tubular skirt without head and finishing was used for the death only.



Picture 4 The three compositions of Tai-Laos “Sin” or tubular skirt.

Pha Sin Mai Meaung Ubon in the past

From the interview Mr. Bampen Na Ubon, a famous philosopher of Mueang Ubon, He is not only a wise man but he is also a direct relative the royal governor of Mueang Ubon in the past. During an interview he talked about an interesting relationship between his family and the royal governor family in Champasak, the Province in Laos. Due to this relation between this 2 cities, the textiles and Pha Sin in Mueang Ubon are not different because they had produced in Mueang Ubon before sending to other cities. From his collection we can see the beautiful Pha Sin Mai of Mueang Ubon as an example;



Picture 5 Mueang Ubong governor's wife of in the past (Mom Jieng Khum) wore "Sin Mai" the silk turban skirt with a vertical strip. (Bampen Na Ubong, 2551)



Picture 6 Men cloth "called Sarong" Those cloth were used as men costume. Most of them made of "Mad Mee Silk", a tid dyed silk. (Bampen Na Ubong, 2551)



Picture 6 The Long vertical tubular silk skirt of Mueang Ubon in the past. (Bampen Na Ubon, 2551)



Picture 7 The horizontal tubular silk skirt of Mueang Ubon in the past. (Bampen Na Ubon, 2551)



Picture 8 the horizontal tubular silk skirt of Mueang Ubon “ Sin tew” in the past.
(Bampen Na Ubon, 2551)

Conclusion

Mueang Ubon at present are no longer the big city, the civilization from various parts of this world have rapidly swallowed our tradition and history in the past. We can not deny that many Pha Sin Mai of Mueang Ubon have also pityingly disappear from our life. Currently, Pha Sin Mai becomes exotic and no longer our everyday life costume. This situation might be an argument that how could we deliver this remarkable intellectual wisdom from the past to our new generation. In my opinion, it's not too late for us to turn back and explore the effective strategy together. At least, this little information of Mueang Ubon tubular silk skirt could be the first starts for this purpose.

References

- Viroj Sirsuro. Sa ta pay ta yak am khoom sai wat ta na tham Tai Lsao. สถาปัตยกรรม
กลุ่มสายวัฒนธรรมไท-ลาว. Khonkean : Faculty of Architecture. Khonkean
University, 2532
- Sunai Na Ubon. Pha kab vi tee chevit khong khoom Chat ti pan Tai-Laos sai
Mueang Ubon. ผ้ากับวิถีชีวิตของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไท-ลาว สายเมืองอุบล. Bangkok :
Department of national cultural Affair, 2536.
- McIntosh, Linda S. Ritual Tai Textiles. Bangkok Thailand:
The James H.W. Thomson Foudation, 2003.
- Bampen Na Ubon, Interview, Yasothorn Proviencie, Thailand , March, 2551.