

The study of yellow robe manufacturing knowledge for fair-trade community business in Bangkok and the perimeter

Asia Pacific Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research
Vol. 3 No. 4, 1-5
November 2015 Part II
P-ISSN 2350-7756
E-ISSN 2350-8442
www.apjmr.com

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Date Received: August 14, 2015; Date Revised: September 25, 2015

Abstract – *This investigation was aimed 1) to study the background and the wisdom of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter; 2) to study the present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter; 3) to investigate local business guidelines for the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks. Data were collected by documentary research and field study. Collected data were validated using triangulation techniques and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The results show that the three garments worn by Buddhist monks were only produced in the past out of necessity. These days, the yellow robe has been developed to include patterns and fabrics that enhance daintiness and functionality. The researchers found that local businesses creating yellow robes suffer from a lack of knowledge inheritance, business capital and proper marketing support. Solving these problems requires cooperation between business owners and religious school, providing opportunity for knowledge exchange and marketing networks. The development of yellow robe production as a fair trade community business requires improved design knowledge and familiarity with religious rules concerning clothes. Moreover, the manufacturers need to improve product packaging to be more suitable and modern. In conclusion, the existence of traditional knowledge concerning clerical robe production depends on the cooperation of community members and the development of production capacity, for example packaging design, product quality and uniqueness.*

Keywords – *Buddhism, clothing, community business, fabric, traditional knowledge.*

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism, as the national Thai religion, is the foundation of culture and traditions. It is a large part of national identity. It can be said that Buddhism is Thai national heritage [1]. Ordination is a major ritual of Buddhism. According to religious beliefs, men who reach 20 years of age should attend an ordination ceremony in order to study religion and the philosophy of life before they proceed on their future life path. As Buddhist monks, men should sacrifice their wealth and collect their speech and mind, focusing on meditation and the philosophy of religion [2].

The three garments now worn by Buddhist monks are *Sabong*, *Jeeworn* and *Sungkhadhi*. Production of these clothes is considered a traditional Thai craft but the industry faces many problems, including incorrect pattern production [3]. Production of Buddhist monk robes is widespread as a local business in every area

of Thailand. Production requires weaving skill as well as sound knowledge of Buddhist rules regarding clothing for monks. However the robe production these days has changed due to cost reduction, which has led to a change in the patterns of the robes and a loss of local wisdom. For this reason, local business owners and related organizations should cooperate to help solve these problems.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This investigation was aimed 1) to study the background and the wisdom of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter; 2) to study the present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter; 3) to investigate local business guidelines for the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a qualitative study. Data were collected by interview, observation and focus group discussion. The researchers identified a sample population using a purposive sampling technique from 3 areas in Bangkok and the perimeter. The three locations chosen for the investigation were Wat Thammongkol Community, Bangkok, Baan Huathanon Community, Nakorn Pathom and Wat Asokaram Community, Samut Prakarn. The sample population was composed of 9 Key Informants, 39 Casual Informants and 20 General Informants. Data were collected by documentary research and field study. Collected data were validated using triangulation techniques and analyzed by descriptive analysis.

RESULTS

Background of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter

Table 1. The evolution of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks in the Buddha era

Phase	Pattern
Phase 1	Old cloth or shroud that had been cleaned and sewn to be wearable.
Phase 2	Buddhist monks were allowed to receive clothes or robes from donations. These were called yellow robes or <i>Sabong</i> and <i>Jeeworn</i> .
Phase 3	Buddhist monks were allowed to use wraps or blankets against the cold. The clothes permitted for wear by Buddhist monks were <i>Sabong</i> , <i>Jeeworn</i> and <i>Sungkhadhi</i> .
Phase 4	A belt or <i>Bhrakot</i> was included.

Before being allowed to use the three garments permitted by Buddhist rules, the Buddhist monks in the Buddha era used old cloth or shrouds as clothes. Over time, the rules were adapted to suit the norms of modern society. This evolution of Buddhist monk clothing is summarized in table 1.

The background of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter has been summarized in table 2.

Table 3. The present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Watthammingkol Community

Category	Details
Personnel	Lack of knowledge about products and design
Tools	Lack of sewing machines
Cost	Lack of knowledge about costs
Location	No buildings for the business
Regulations	-
Process	Lack of production capacity and marketing management

The present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Wat Thammingkol Community, Wat Asokaram Community and Baan Huathanon Community can be divided into six categories. These categories are personnel, tools, costs, location, regulation and process. The findings for each of the three communities have been summarized in Tables 3-5.

Table 2. The background of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter

	Community		
	Wat Thammingkol Community	Wat Asokaram Community	Baan Huathanon Community
Location	Thanon Sukhumvit 101, Bangchak, Phrakanong, Bangkok	Thaibaan, Muang District, Samut Prakarn	Donputsa Dontoom District, Nakorn Prathom
Background	Production began in 1997. The business was founded by Laungpho Wiriyong Sirintharo	Production began in 1957. The business was founded by Luangpho Lee Thammatharo.	Production began in 1992. The business was founded by Dang Thingyodkluang.
Local production wisdom	Produced for the <i>Dhammayutika</i> Sect, directly according to the 9 <i>Khant</i> (Buddhist rules of clothing). Yellow robes made from muslin fabric.	Produced for the <i>Dhammayutika</i> Sect, directly according to the 9 <i>Khant</i> (Buddhist rules of clothing). Yellow robes made from muslin fabric.	Produced for the <i>Maha Nikai</i> Sect, directly according to the 5 <i>Khant</i> (Buddhist rules of clothing). Yellow robes made from woven fabric.
Production management	Managed by 15 members of the clergy.	Managed by 9 local community members	Managed by a business owner with 20 employees

Table 4. The present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Wat Asokaram Community

Category	Details
Personnel	Lack of man-power
Tools	Insufficient production tools
Cost	Insufficient production space and knowledge inheritance
Location	Insufficient location management
Regulations	Working time
Process	Lack of production capacity and marketing management

Table 5. The present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Baan Huathanon Community

Category	Details
Personnel	Lack of knowledge about Buddhist monk's clothes
Tools	Insufficient tools
Cost	Insufficient production space and knowledge inheritance
Location	Production facilities far from town
Regulations	-
Process	Lack of production capacity and marketing management

There are a number of problems and obstacles to the production of monk clothing in the three communities. At Wat Thammingkol Community, there is a lack of publicity about the three garments worn by Buddhist monks, a lack of production knowledge, a lack of product diversity, no trademark, insufficient production space and no wisdom inheritance. At Wat Asokaram Community there is a lack of publicity about the three garments worn by Buddhist monks, a lack of man power, no trademark, no marketing support and management and no wisdom inheritance. At Baan Huathanon Community there is a lack of production knowledge, insufficient budget, a lack of publicity about the three garments worn by Buddhist monks, insufficient production tools, no marketing support and management and no wisdom inheritance.

The following table (table 6) is a summary of local business guidelines for the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in the three communities of Bangkok and the perimeter.

Table 6. Local business guidelines for the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks

Title	Wat Thammingkol Community	Wat Asokaram Community	Baan Huathanon Community
Design	The robe designs should be based on the more advanced Wat Asokaram community products	Production should be more directly related to the ecclesiastical discipline	Product patterns from the <i>Dhammayutika</i> Sect should be incorporated into robe design
Production	Products should be created for the <i>Dhammayutika</i> Sect, directly according to the 9 <i>Khant</i> (Buddhist rules of clothing). Yellow robes should be made from muslin fabric.	Products should be created for the <i>Dhammayutika</i> Sect, directly according to the 9 <i>Khant</i> (Buddhist rules of clothing). Yellow robes should be made from muslin fabric.	Products should be created for the <i>Maha Nikai</i> Sect, directly according to the 5 <i>Khant</i> (Buddhist rules of clothing). Yellow robes should be made from woven fabric.
Packaging	Plastic packaging	Plastic packaging	No packaging
Product distribution	Wholesale and retail sales for <i>Dhammayutika</i> Sect monks	Wholesale and retail sales for <i>Kamadhan</i> or pilgrims	Wholesale only

In conclusion, the production of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks for fair-trade local business in Wat Thammonkol and Wat Asokaram Communities focuses on the 9 *Khant* Buddhist rules of clothing for *Dhammayutika* Sect monks. The yellow robes are made from muslin fabric, dyed orange, reddish brown and dark brown. Wat Huathanon Community business focuses on producing 5 *Khant* yellow robes using woven fabric that is cheaper than muslin fabric. They produce robes for wholesale to *Maha Nikai* Sect monks; these are dyed orange and dark brown.

DISCUSSION

According to the results the local yellow robe businesses have been inherited within communities from one generation to the next. Production is based on faith and Buddhist beliefs. The three garments worn by Buddhist monks are holy objects that provide the inspiration to work and inherit wisdom. This is related to the research of Somsak Srisantisuk, which states that local products typify local wisdom [4]. This wisdom is transmitted in and by the community.

Equipment and innovation has been developed to increase cultural productivity and respond to this transmission of local knowledge. This is also related to the research of Thawat Poonnotok, who argued that folk wisdom is the knowledge and experience of local people that has been inherited from descendents and internalized [5]. Similarly, Yos Santhasombat argued that most people in society are deficient of creativity and, instead of innovating, imitate others [6]. One of the major problems in the production of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks is coloration. In the past people used natural materials for fabric dyes, for example yellow from turmeric, red from Sappan tree and Claret from mangosteen pericarp. These days the local fabric businesses use chemical dyes that pollute the environment. For this reason it is necessary to promote the use of natural dyes and help preserve the environment [7].

The major problem with local production of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks is the lack of knowledge inheritance. The young generation these days is not interested in the wisdom of Buddhist robe production, which has led to a loss of traditional knowledge and culture. The researcher aims to aid inheritance of the wisdom of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks by supporting the learning of yellow robe production in religious schools and promoting knowledge exchange in the local community, especially concerning career support. The principles of this endeavor are based on the cultural diffusion theory by Niyomphun Wannasiri [8]. The theory states that culture can spread everywhere. The inheritance of knowledge concerning the production of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks requires support from local community members and related government organizations.

According to this study, most businesses focus on production and trade, taking advantage of profit and the capitalist economy. Businesses are falling into the hands of the big capitalists who have invested. This has reduced business opportunities for community or small businesses. However, local production of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks survives because of the local faith in Buddhism. The production of these fabrics is a handicraft that requires precision and endurance.

The three community businesses in this investigation have the visions to continue creating the three Buddhist garments for the clergy and distribute their products at a fair value. This is related to the

concept of the Dhammapitaka [9]. Buddhist economics or Buddhist marketing is a moderate form of economics focused on the balance of the quality of life and satisfaction. This is entirely different to a capitalist economy that aims to make the most profit from sustainable production.

CONCLUSION

This investigation was aimed 1) to study the background and the wisdom of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter; 2) to study the present situation and problems with the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks in Bangkok and the perimeter; 3) to investigate local business guidelines for the production of three garments worn by Buddhist monks. Data were collected by documentary research and field study. Collected data were validated using triangulation techniques and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The results show that the three garments worn by Buddhist monks were only produced in the past out of necessity. These days, the yellow robe has been developed to include patterns and fabrics that enhance daintiness and functionality. The researchers found that local businesses creating yellow robes suffer from a lack of knowledge inheritance, business capital and proper marketing support. Solving these problems requires cooperation between business owners and religious school, providing opportunity for knowledge exchange and marketing networks. The development of yellow robe production as a fair trade community business requires improved design knowledge and familiarity with religious rules concerning clothes. Moreover, the manufacturers need to improve product packaging to be more suitable and modern. In conclusion, the existence of traditional knowledge concerning clerical robe production depends on the cooperation of community members and the development of production capacity, for example packaging design, product quality and uniqueness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions for related authorities

Following the outcomes of this investigation, the researchers wish to make some practical suggestions for implementation of the research results by related government authorities:

1.1 Involved government organizations should manage and support local community activities to

support and distribute Buddhism as the national religion of Thailand.

1.2 Involved government organizations should support the local product distribution and marketing of the three garments worn by Buddhist monks.

1.3 Involved government organizations should provide financial support for local business creating the three garments worn by Buddhist monks.

Suggestions for community businesses

Following the outcomes of this investigation, the researchers wish to make some practical suggestions for implementation of the research results by community businesses:

2.1 The community businesses should develop product variation and quality

2.2 The community businesses should provide more opportunities for cooperation between members in production and marketing

2.3 The community businesses should always improve business management and public relations

Suggestions for further research

Following the outcomes of this investigation, the researchers wish to make some practical suggestions for further academic research:

3.1 Further study should be conducted to consider new forms and fabrics for the three garments worn by Buddhist monks

3.2 Further study should concern quality and product variation

3.3 Further study should analyze community business networks in Bangkok and the perimeter

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