

Social design : the mystical naga

Hong, Yu Ran

2012

Hong, Y. R. (2012, March). Social design : the mystical naga. Presented at Discover URECA @ NTU poster exhibition and competition, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/102290>

© 2012 The Author(s).

Downloaded on 21 Apr 2025 20:07:26 SGT

Category: 1
School of Arts, Design and Media

Student: Hong Yu Ran

Project ID:ADM11048

01: The Scope



05: The Naga

- Motifs in Lao textiles are deeply symbolic. Anthropologists can determine: ethnic group, marital status, region and function from looking at textiles. Some motifs are mythical creatures of legends and folktales such as the Naga.
- The Naga is the main symbol of Laos textiles
- The word Naga is from the Buddhist language Pali, in Lao it is called Nak.
- A Naga is a mythological water serpent with unparalleled magic powers. They can protect and save at the same time cause death and destruction.
- 30 different variations of the Naga is widely used throughout Buddhist textile.



Different Variations of the Naga

02: Introduction

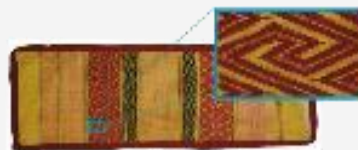
- Laos is a landlocked country with a population of 6.3 million people, the country consists of 49 officially recognised ethnic groups.
- The Lao textile and garment sectors is critical because of the revenue and job opportunities for the country.
- Laos is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, but its annual per capita income is still only US\$850.
- Most Laoian are rural dwellers, who still live under the poverty line, earning an income of less than USD\$2 per day.
- Laoians had been weaving for centuries, though their skills had faded after 100 years of French colonization, Japanese occupation and American bombing.
- Farmers had switched from producing silk to growing opium poppies. Women had all but given up the unique, intricate designs and were using simpler patterns.



Images courtesy of Saeban & Tarmachai

03: The Social Context

- Lao textiles is an important and fast fading part of Lao cultural diversity, there is a need to secure the place for Lao textiles on the world platform.
- This URECA project will be collaborating with the Laos Institute of Cultural Research (ICR).
- The ICR is a government institution dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Lao culture and is active in various fields of research, including folklore and custom, ethnomusicology, language and literature, crafts and textile art, scenic art, architecture and monuments and antiquities.



Images courtesy of Institute of Cultural Research

04: Iconography Research

- Research process enables the project to understand the purpose and significance of each icon individually.
- Initial Research: Spiral designs, Spiral as a symbol transcends culture and time, the Spiral icon has its place in Laoian Culture
- The Naga symbol became a recurring icon across all form of Laoian textile.
- The information and knowledge gathered would enable designs to have significance value in a contemporary context.

06: Looking Ahead

- The research aims to further bolster and refine the database of knowledge on Laoian textile so that information can be freely accessed and passed down to future generations.
- This research will build the foundations for further plans to create a virtual museum from the information of the database.