

Krajood: Creative Economics Development in Communities through Indigenous Handicraft of Southern Thailand

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Abstract

National development based on indigenous knowledge of Thai society that conforms to utilizing local natural resources is a beneficial alternative that Thai government agencies have given priority and promotion with optimism towards the stability and security of Thai society. Obstacles for Krajood (Sedge) handicrafts in Southern Thailand come from internal and external factors. Internal factors include shortage of local raw materials, limited processing tools that are inefficient and expensive to purchase and repair. External factors include the cheap price of low value massed produced products. Creative economics development through Krajood handicrafts in communities in Southern Thailand must include 1) Consolidation of knowledge, network marketing and diffusion of knowledge, 2) Practical government economic development policy for local communities, 3) Systematic Administration of handicraft manufacturing groups to increase efficiency, 4) design products that meet consumer requirements, 5) Products must be properly, 6) Direct and indirect support from manufacturers, entrepreneurs, government and private organizations in national and international market development and 7) Marketing support from all parties involved in advertisement and public broadcasts.

Keywords: Krajood, Sedge, Handicrafts, Indigenous Knowledge, Southern Thailand

1. INTRODUCTION

Southern Thailand is a region rich and abundant in natural resources which is essential in defining the extension of raw materials used in making handicrafts. The community of Khuan Khreng, Amphoe Cha-uat in the province of Nakhon Si Thammarat has potential in natural raw materials such as Krajoed (Sedge) but lack knowledge in making Krajoed handicrafts. Most handicrafts within the community are used within the family and community. Handicrafts are indigenous knowledge that focuses on usefulness according to the status of each era and period of the community. The indigenous handicrafts of every community in Thailand is closely related to the livelihood of community members that is cohesively entwined with the natural environment, techniques, materials and arrangement of making handicrafts that is culturally distinct and has been passed down through the generations. The development of indigenous knowledge is a viable option to combat rapid globalization and tackle the rigorous changes in modern society and is one in which Thai society is prepared to undertake through the accumulation of cultural capital passed down through family and community heritage. The development of community economics based on resourceful culture is a creative alternative in developing Thai communities. Creative economics is an economic system that reflects the process of integrating culture, economy and technology. It consists of the combined factors of economics initiative based on knowledge, education, creativity and utilization of intellectual property related to the foundations of culture, accumulation of social knowledge, technology and innovations.

National development based on indigenous knowledge of Thai society that conforms to utilizing local natural resources is a beneficial alternative that Thai government agencies have given priority and promotion with optimism towards the stability and security of Thai society. The research study, "Krajoed: Creative Economics Development of Communities Through Krajoed Handicrafts of Southern Thailand" will provide comprehensive knowledge and address the obstacles and importance of the development of the economy of rural communities through indigenous knowledge of handicrafts in Southern Thailand.

2. RESEARCH AREA and METHODOLOGY

"Krajoed: Development of Creative Economics in Communities through Indigenous Handicrafts of Southern Thailand" is a qualitative research. The research area was purposively chosen which included 5 provinces of Narathiwat, Songkhla, Phatthalung, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani in Southern Thailand. The purpose of this research is to study the indigenous knowledge, diffusion of knowledge, potential, obstacles and guidelines towards the development of creative economics for communities in Southern Thailand through Krajoed handicrafts. Ten Krajoed handicraft groups were studied which received Thai Community Product Standard 53/2546. The research was carried out through document analysis of related research papers, documents and field data. Field data was gathered through observations, interviews, group discussions, workshops and included a total of 95 informants. The goals of this research include 1) Study the indigenous knowledge and diffusion of Krajoed handicrafts of Southern Thailand, 2) Study the potential and obstacles of Krajoed handicrafts in Southern Thailand and 3) To Study the guideline for the development of Krajoed handicrafts in communities in Southern Thailand. The research results will respond to The National Economic and Social Development plan of Thailand and conform to The National Cultural Development in applying indigenous knowledge in development to create

value in society and economy to elevate the quality of life and create economic stability in local communities and of the nation.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1 History and Origin

The history and origin of Krajoed (Sedge) handicrafts in Southern Thailand is interrelated with the social community resulting in indigenous knowledge in two ways 1) Existing knowledge that has been passed down through the generations where Krajoed is found naturally in the community environment and 2) Can orally inform and document on the origin of their indigenous knowledge of Krajoed handicrafts in their community.

3.2 Preparation of Krajoed Plants

Cropping: There are two methods in cropping Krajoed plants. The first method is to use a sickle which saves time and labor. The second method is to harvest the Krajoed by hand where selected stems of 3 or 6 are manually pulled as a group to reduce hand slashes. Manually cropping Krajoed stems ensures that healthy Krajoed plants are collected leaving the others to fully develop and be cultivated for many years. Selecting which Krajoed to be harvest is considered according to the age of the Krajoed, which should be about 1-3 years old and the length of the stem which is appropriate for the handicrafts, which vary between 1-3 meters. Krajoed harvesting can be performed throughout the year, but the most efficient is after the rainy season where Krajoed plants are tall, durable and can be flattened and stripped with ease.

Size Selection: Selecting the different sizes of Krajoed is called "Soh" (Figure 1) and is performed to group sizes of Krajoed that are appropriate to each type of handicrafts and is usually performed outside in a clearing where there is a naturally elevated ridge about 2-3 meters high. The Krajoed stems are stood upright and the longer ones are separated into short, medium and long stems. This can also be performed on scaffolding. The final step of the "Soh" is to remove the Krajoed tops and uneven bottom leads.

Figure 1. "Soh" (size selection of Krajoed)



Mud Combination: Mud mixing is a process is to prevent the Krajoed bands from drying out which will prevent splintering when sunning. The mud must be white which will give the dried Krajoed a natural cream color and bands that are tough and hard-wearing when woven into handicrafts.

Sunning: Sunning Krajoed can be performed using 3 methods (Figure 2). The first is to lay out the Krajoed in single files for the first day after the Krajoed has been mixed with white mud. This will ensure a quick dry and prevent the stems from cracks. This method is utilized to dry all Krajoed stems after they have been mixed with white mud and is applied to stems that are very long. The second method is for shorter stems where they are dried upright in groups of conical tents. The third method is similar to the first method but takes about 2-3 days of sunning where the Krajoed can be kept in safe storage for 1-3 years.

Figure 2. Sunning Krajoed



Flattening: Flattening the Krajoed can be done in a variety of methods (Figure 3), 1) Using a pestle to flatten the Krajoed is performed on a prepared flat surface and utilizing the pestle to level the stems and remove the sheath. The process is repeated until all the Krajoed has been flattened and the sheath removed. Using a pestle to flatten the Krajoed is time and labor consuming but ensures quality bands that is flexible, unbroken, not fractured and can be woven with ease. Using a pestle makes the highest burnished Krajoed than any other method. 2) Using a solid concrete roller with a (diameter about 14-16 inches and 30 inches long) to flatten the Krajoed. One handful of Krajoed takes about 20-30 minutes to complete where the stems are laid out on a concrete floor and horizontally rolled over by the roller. A handrail is necessary to give support when standing on top and moving the roller. 3) The third method is to mechanical roller powered by an engine where each handful of Krajoed takes only 3-5 minutes to complete. 4) Using a roller powered by an electric motor is similar to using a combustion engine powered roller but is more efficient and takes only 2-3 minutes.

Figure 3. Flattening Krajoed



Dyeing: Dyeing Krajoood bands are performed to give the handicrafts decorative color and added value for consumers. Pre requisites before dyeing include cleaning and drying the bands. The steps in dyeing the bands are; 1) Choose dyes or pigments that are specifically for Krajoood, 2) The temperature of the water must be constantly kept at boiling point. The container must be made of stainless to prevent rust and discoloration of the dye. 3) Drying rack. 4) Plunger sticks to raise and lower the Krajoood into the dye formula. And 5) Water to rinse of the dyed Krajoood. The dye formula used by local communities diverges with each group having their own principle. The most effective formula is used by the Krajoood handicraft group at Ban Ton where the Krajoood bands never run and the colors never fade. Ban Ton's formula is that for 1 Kilogram of Krajoood requires 30 liters of water, 2 grams of salt or sodium chloride per 1 liter of water, dye or pigment in 3-4 percent of the water, the temperature of the water must be maintained at 100 Degrees Celsius and 3-4 minutes of dyeing time. After 3-4 minutes of dyeing, the Krajoood bands are submerged and rinsed in plain water and air dried. The final process is to press the bands before weaving.

Decoration: There are two methods or formats of decorating Krajoood handicrafts in communities in Southern Thailand (Figure 4). The first type is the traditional format where the Krajoood handicraft is woven with the integrated decorations at the same time. This is accomplished by inclusively finishing the seam by reversing the weave which will automatically create 2 smooth edges without having to sew or use additional materials to level or enclose the rough edges of the weave. The finished product is one that is simplistic, natural Krajoood color, beautiful, flushed and has a smooth seam. The second type is accomplished by straight weaving and the seams are tucked back into the body of the handicraft. The finished seams are not as smooth as the first format. Additional decorative features include the using colorful dyes, sewing, and painting, embroidering and weaving creative line decorations and contour into the material.

Figure 4. Weaving methods for Krajoood



3.3 Diffusion of Knowledge

The diffusion of indigenous knowledge in Krajoood handicrafts in Southern Thailand is conducted through the transfer of knowledge, ideas and skills of community individuals that have accumulated through experiences and adaptation for survival that correlates to their environment through processing Krajoood handicrafts to create additional income and added value to their livelihood. The diffusion of Krajoood handicrafts for commercial and community benefits can be divided into 3 phases which are; 1) Production for family and community consumption, 2) Commercial and 3) Production to revitalize and conservation of indigenous knowledge. Production for family and community uses were created through the relationship of family members and the environment of the community which coalesced in the creation of knowledge, ideas, and technical skills in Krajoood handicrafts and have been passed on through the generations and is the principal method in the diffusion of knowledge (Figure 5).

The commercial phase of production of Krajoed handicrafts is a direct extension of the principal diffusion which created additional family income and value to the community which motivated the teaching and learning of Krajoed handicrafts to expand from individuals into groups for commercial purposes. The successful development of commercial groups and unity within the community widened and received the transfer and exchange of knowledge from government and private organizations in the anticipation to created added value to cultural heritage and strengthen the economy of rural communities. The third phase was conducted by the exchange of knowledge with external individuals and groups outside the community which was influenced by the relationships between community members, community commercial groups and social economics which created an opportunity in accessing additional and innovative knowledge and skills. Many mediums such as websites, radio, television, pamphlets and brochures were utilized and included individuals from other areas and background.

Figure 5. Inheritance of Krajoed knowledge through family for community consumption



3.4 Potential and Obstacles of Indigenous Krajoed Handicrafts in Southern Thailand

Raw materials are an important factor in Krajoed handicrafts and the Krajoed found in local communities in Southern Thailand which can be found naturally and are commercially grown. The Krajoed handicrafts are durable, abundant, utilize local manufacturing base and materials and rely mostly indigenous techniques and processes. The products produced are environmentally friendly and safe for manufacturers and consumers. The handicrafts produced are diverse and received quality standards and efficient marketing and administration by utilizing modern technology, advertisement media and continuous development.

Obstacles to Krajoed handicrafts in Southern Thailand is that the cost of raw materials have risen and have created a shortage of natural Krajoed supplies, lack of investment, lack of continuous product innovations and knowledge of efficient administrative processes. Consistent with Arunrutana (2008) where naturally grown materials were in short supply due to high demand of handicrafts and there were few sources of commercially grown Krajoed. The declines of natural sources of Krajoed were also due to the fact of environmental damage through natural and human causes raising the price of available Krajoed. Another obstacle is that not all manufacturers follow safe standards in their manufacturing process which is

consistent with Sanpradit (1996) where ineffective production processes created illnesses such as back pains and abdominal injuries where workers prefer to cower for long durations over their products instead of making the handicrafts on tables and using proper tools. Seasonal obstacles hinder the manufacturing of Krajoood handicrafts because the manufacturing process of drying the Krajoood mostly rely on natural sunlight and many manufacturers still continue to use synthetic dyes which causes health hazards and destroys the environment (Yadaewha, 2010).

Obstacles for Krajoood handicrafts in Southern Thailand come from internal and external factors. Internal factors include shortage of local raw materials, limited processing tools, inefficient tools, tools provided by the central government are expensive to purchase and expensive to repair. Most communities that manufacture Krajoood lack innovative products and only produce products that are ordered by middlemen and have limited retail outlets of their own. External obstacles include the popularity of modern products that are mass produced, cheaper, have the same uses and applications replacing Krajoood handicrafts.

3.5 Guidelines for Creative Economic Development of Krajoood Handicrafts of Communities in Southern Thailand

The successful development of Krajoood handicrafts of communities in Southern Thailand relies on the unified ideas and cooperation of all individuals and organizations in their responsibility of creating a sustainable development of business and conservation of indigenous knowledge through the collective of knowledge, networking, diffusion of knowledge, application and implementation of national and regional economic development plans, efficient administration of a systematic product development, manufacturing and distribution which will create a diverse and satisfactory quality handicrafts. This is consistent with Kaeopankan (2009) where the development of handicrafts should include the processes of 1) development of raw materials, 2) development of manufacturing process, 3) development of product design and 4) quality development.

Important guidelines for product development consists of 6 factors 1) Manufacturing must emphasize on promoting the use of quality local raw materials and utilize local labor, 2) Product development must ensure the quality, value, packaging and industry standard manufacturing processes, 3) Balance between manufacturing, natural resources and the environment and 4) Knowledge development of entrepreneurs for sustainability in product development and efficient processing and marketing 5) Development of product benefits that are appropriate with the environment, culture, traditions and livelihood of local individuals and 6) Packaging development should emphasize sanitation and safe packaging materials and structure so that products are safeguarded and reflect the quality of the products (Charungchitcunthon, 2004). The appearance and quality of the packaging is very important because it will advertise and entice consumer's selection. The packaging must be carefully designed to meet market demands and can be achieved through the exchange and enhancement of knowledge from the study of markets in other communities, products that meet consumer demands and market study and survey of current market trends (Chutipphon, 2008).

4. DISCUSSION

Creative economics development through Krajoood handicrafts in Southern Thailand depend on the cooperative participation from all parties involved to drive the development

of Krajoood handicrafts. Relative organizations include 3 sectors; Government organizations, Private Organizations and Entrepreneurs or Manufacturers. Every involved sector has different responsibilities in the development of Krajoood handicrafts and there are three philosophies or methods employed in the development of Krajoood handicrafts in Southern Thailand. The first is the conservative method where the development focuses on manufacturing traditional Krajoood handicrafts, preservation of community identity, environment friendly production methods and materials, scrutiny of selecting quality raw materials, use small bands of Krajoood, natural cream color, rely on manual labor, minimum machinery and technology. The second philosophy relies on consumer trends where products are produced to meet consumer fashion and requirements. Most products are created to follow consumer trends and patriotism where the products are designed for modern social applications and lifestyles. The handicrafts are produced with vibrant colors to created added value (Figure 6). 3) The market trend viewpoint is to develop quality Krajoood handicrafts and incorporate modern marketing techniques. Creative marketing is performed by utilizing network marketing and modern advertisement mediums such as radio, television, internet, brochures and pamphlet's to create product awareness so that consumers favor Krajoood handicrafts and realize their benefits in their daily lifestyles.

Figure 6. Commercial Krajoood handicrafts



5. CONCLUSION

Creative economics development through Krajoood handicrafts in communities in Southern Thailand must include 1) Consolidation of knowledge, network marketing and diffusion of knowledge, 2) Practical economic development policy for local communities, 3) Systematic administration of handicraft manufacturing groups to increase efficiency, 4) Design products that meet consumer requirements by using creativity and innovation in creating products that are of high quality and good value, 5) Products must be properly priced according to current economic environment and in equivalence to same product groups, 6) Direct and indirect support from manufacturers, entrepreneurs, government and private

organizations in national and international market development and 7) Marketing support from all parties involved in advertisement and public broadcasts.

6. SUGGESTIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The knowledge from this research can be applied in defining development strategies by Sub district Administrative Organization (SAO), Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO), Community development centers and local educational institutions. Applications can be implemented in the development of indigenous handicrafts to create added value by entrepreneurs, Provincial Industry Office and the Thai Industrial Standard Institute in local communities. Future research topics should include the study of developing and creating a network marketing guideline for Southern Thailand Krajoed handicrafts with the purpose of utilizing indigenous knowledge and raw materials to their maximum value and the application of technology in the diffusion, conservation and revitalization of indigenous Krajoed handicrafts. Future research studies should also focus on native and foreign business administrative process of Krajoed handicrafts and development of creative handicraft products with analysis of consumer marketing studies to create products that are in demand and valued by consumers.

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