

# The Buddhist Banner: Identity and Aestheticism in the Dimension of Meaning Reflection on the Tai Lue Ethnic Group Education

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## Abstract

Tung, the Buddhist banner of the Tai Lue ethnic group (TLEG), has been used for many types of worship and rituals of TLEG living in northern Thailand from the past to the present. Thus, Tung is a symbol that reflects the beliefs and faiths of TLEG. This research aimed to study the characteristics and aestheticism of Tung in the dimension reflecting the beliefs and faiths of TLEG. The in-depth data and information were obtained from the observations and interviews from the key informants, such as the leaders of communities, local philosophers, and Tung weavers of TLEG in Chiang Kham, Phayao, Thailand. It showed that commonly the characteristic shape of Tai Lue Tung is a vertical rectangle that has characteristic patterns that can be divided into three groups: 1) real-world and mythical animals, 2) plants, and 3) utensils and castles, which reflect the stories handed down from the past to the present. Additionally, the aestheticism of Tung takes place through three factors: 1) beliefs and faiths, 2) merit and gratitude, and 3) creativity and imagination from the Tung weavers' experiences obtained from the compositions and arrangements of all patterns based on the principles of visual elements. This study can be implied into curriculum and learning about Tai cultural

education.

**Keywords:** Cultural education, Buddhist banner, Ethnic group, Identity, Aestheticism

## 1. Introduction

The Tai Lue Ethnic Group (TLEG) originated in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province, China, and then migrated into Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam because of the political situation, epidemic disease and additional expansion of the work area. Tai Lue people have migrated into Thailand since the reign of Phutthanyotfa Chulalok Maharaj (also known as King Rama I) starting in the year AD 1804. At present, they are spread throughout the northern region of Thailand, including Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phrae, Nan, Phayao, Lampang, and Lamphun provinces. Most of the TLEG traditions are similar to the communities in northern Thailand (Kanokporn, 2021, pp. 44-45) (Mingkamon, 2014, p. 13) (Social Security Institute, 2008, pp. 40-42).

The histories of the traditions and beliefs of TLEG have been passed down for a long time, and the traditions and beliefs of TLEG may be slightly changed from one generation to another. In addition, the beliefs and faiths of TLEG are related to spirits and Buddhism; therefore, TLEG rituals are involved with ethereal power through ritual devices and practitioners (Chaiwat, 2021, pp. 6-7) (Mingkamon, 2014, pp. 9-10). Religion is often bound to ethnic identity. The criteria proposed to identify ethnic groups include religion, customs, etc. Culture and language. 'Religion' is often part of a 'way of life' that is attributed to ethnic identity (Horrell, 2021, p. 113). Religious rituals play a pragmatic role and religious concepts play a symbolic role in community building and doctrines that can make social identification acceptable (Mitchell, 2005, pp. 16-17). The rituals and religion are very important to the lifestyle of TLEG; therefore, the Tai Lue people support and participate in many Buddhism rituals. As the Tai Lue's beliefs and faiths, they reflect on their requirement for expressing gratitude and making merit via the donation of alms to their deceased ancestors as well as making their family be happy.

Mostly, the denomination of Buddhism held by the Tai Lue people is Theravada, which believes in animism and superstitions passed down from the past to the present that have influences on their life (Songsak, 2008, p. 110). As noted above, these cultures, beliefs and faiths have passed on the Tung (the Buddhist banner), which is used for many types of worship and ceremonies of TLEG, such as the 'Songkran' festival (the traditional Thai New Year festival), 'Poi Luang' (to make merit for the temple), 'Tang Tham Luang' (Vessantara Jātaka Sermon), and the worship of ancestral spirits and the guardian spirits of the villages and towns. Furthermore, the Tung is used for decorating the places of ceremonies as well as public places, such as the attractions for tourists, restaurants, and processions, *e.g.*, the parades organised for the different rituals (Adsadakorn, 2017, p. 17).

Tung is a word in the Tai Lue language, which means the Buddhist banner. It is a symbol for the morality and auspiciousness for use in the worship in numerous ceremonies expressing gratitude and merit to the ancestral spirits. It is used in both auspicious and inauspicious rituals (Songsak, 2008, p. 112) (Natchanoke, 2021, pp. 175-176). The beliefs and faiths are

reflected in the various patterns of the Tai Lue Tung due to the images from the traditional stories, *i.e.*, the poems of ‘Mae Ka Phueak’ (White Crow) or ‘Phra Phutthachao Ha Phra-Ong’ (the Five Buddhas), appearing on TLEG’s Tung often found on the murals of the pantheon within the Tai Lue monasteries (Songsak, 2008, p. 110). According to the beliefs of the Tai Lue people, they offer the Tung to indicate their willingness to express gratitude to their ancestors. They believe that offering a Tung is a tribute to their dead ancestors, who would receive their philanthropy for use in the afterlife. Thus, the Tung reflects the intention of gratitude to their ancestors and the desire to save them from hell, as they also believe that when offering Tung, they will be taken to heaven and be happy. In the past, TLEG people believed that offering the Tung would lead to the Buddhist Bodhisattva Maitreya and Nirvana, whereas, at present they believe that offering Tung will lead to happiness for their life, protection from sickness, becoming rich and having peace afterlife.

Tung is a sign of good fortune. For example, whoever hangs the Tung in a chapel or uses it to decorate the temples and then prays, will feel auspiciousness (Phuttiwangso, 2020, p. 93). Hence, when taking a Tung to the temple, the consecrators should write the first or last names of their dead ancestors on the upper or bottom parts of the Tung and the sentences dedicating merit for them so that they gain merit from the consecrators. The first name or last name of rich consecrators’ ancestors will be embroidered with a sewing machine due to it being more beautiful and durable than handwriting (Adsadakorn, 2017, p. 17).

At this time, the social changes of TLEG are occurring simultaneously with the desires of humans impacting on the culture and domestic wisdom of TLEG, which should be conserved (Premvit, 2019, p. 115). The objective of this research is to study the identity and aestheticism of the Tai Lue Tung obtained from their beliefs and faiths.

## 2. Method

This research is qualitative, and the key informants for this study are the community leaders, local philosophers and Tung weavers of TLEG in Chiang Kham District, Phayao province, Thailand, which is an area with a large number of TLEG people and Tai Lue culture.

The research team collected the information and data from various sources, *i.e.*, previous research and the documents found after 1957 that were obtained from the community agencies. First, the collection of information and data within the area began with the community leaders. Then, the observations and interviews in terms of the *behaviours*, lifestyles, social structures, awareness, and feelings of the informants were collected via sound recordings and photography. In addition, the places to collect the data and information were as follows: 1) the temples of Phrathat Sop Waen and Saeng Mueang Mang, 2) the museum of Saeng Mueang Mang temple and cultural centre of the Tai Lue, and 3) the festival named ‘Kat Pattern Nam Pattern Tai Lue Chiang Kham’ held at Phrathat Sop Waen temple.

The collected information and data were categorised as follows: 1) the characteristics in terms of shapes and patterns, and 2) the aestheticism in terms of beliefs and faiths, merit and gratitude, and creativity and imagination. Moreover, the correlations among the information in the contexts such as the society, traditions and economics of TLEG are discussed.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Occurrence of Tung

The Tai Lue Tung is a religious textile that is woven as a flag with various patterns using a technique known as *Khit* in Thai as well as *Kep Dok* or *Kep Muk* in the Tai Lue language. This technique creates patterns by adding special threads in order to produce patterns along the width of the fabric. The Tung of the Tai Lue are woven with white cotton thread and the design must incorporate threads of many colours, *e.g.*, red, black, green, yellow, blue, orange, and purple, etc. In the past, TLEG used only red and black threads that were dyed with the natural substances, while the threads of other colours have been applied and increased in the present time as well as those dyed with synthetic colours because they are more vivid, durable, and cheaper than the natural threads. For this study, the characteristics of Tung were categorised as follows.

##### 3.1.1 Characteristics of Shape

Commonly, the shape of a Tung is a vertical rectangle with a width of 10-50 cm and a height of 1-6 m of height or more, depending on the financial status of the donors and/or the application of the Tung. At the upper part of a Tung, there is a bamboo stick to which a string is tied so that it can be hung from the top of the pantheon within the temple. The upper section of the Tung is woven with coloured cotton threads alternating with white and other colours to form a border with a width of 20 cm. The woven patterns in the central part of a Tung are various. Meanwhile, the bottom end (tail) of a Tung is knitted delicately and beautifully, which is the part that people believe is leading toward heaven.

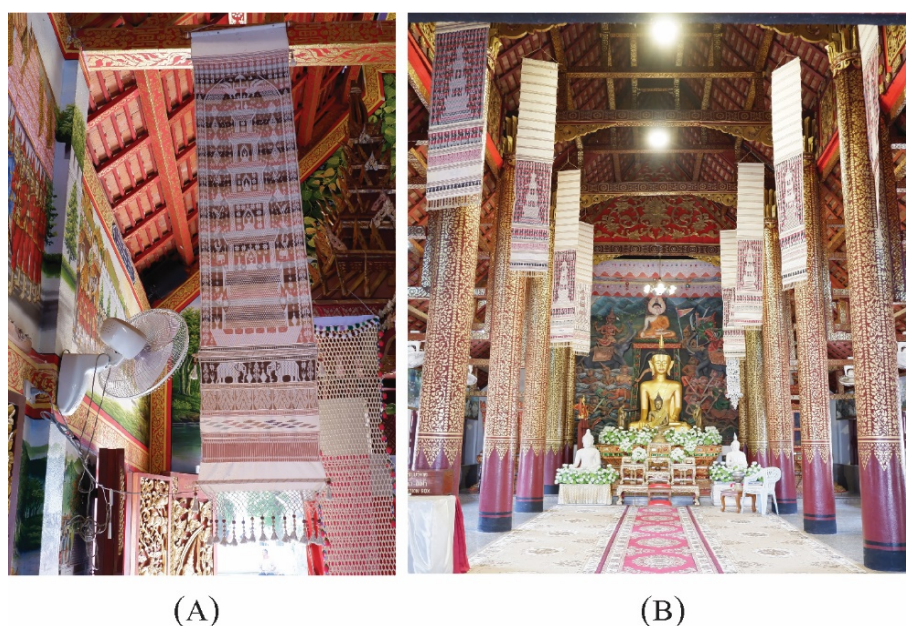


Figure 1. (A) and (B) are Tai Lue Tung that TLEG will bring Tung to hang on the pantheon inside the temple when the time of the Buddhist tradition



### 3.1.2 Characteristics of Patterns

The patterns of Tung can be divided into three categories as follows.

#### (1) Animal Patterns

The animal patterns presented on the Tai Lue Tung are both real creatures, such as chickens or turkeys, and mythical animals, reflecting on the fertility of nature. For the poultry patterns, the patterns of flying birds found on most Tung would be found with horses as well as the pattern of birds riding on the back of a horse. Moreover, peacocks occur on the Tung and are always found in Xishuangbanna and the Tai Lue villages located in the Mae Sap sub-district, Samoeng district, Chiang Mai province.

In the past, TLEG used elephants and horses for construction and transportation. The patterns showing butterflies reflect beauty and natural fertility. For the patterns of mythical animals, the Hasadilink bird is a combination between a bird and an elephant, which is Nok Nguang Nga (a bird having the tusks and the trunk of an elephant), which refers to heaven because this bird/elephant hybrid would bring the souls of dead people to Trāyastriṃśā (the heaven in Sanskrit representing serenity and sacredness). The Naga (a giant serpent) represents the ecological balance of nature and also the worship of ancestral spirits in order to bring fertility. The Lion represents the power of the Himmapan forest (a fantasy forest) and heaven. In addition, there are the patterns of small humans found on the Tung that represent the servants bringing people to heaven.



Figure 2. Animal patterns

## (2) Plant Patterns

The pattern of this type reflects fertility, prosperity and aesthetics. In most cases, patterns of this type are woven to decorate Tung to be beautiful and without greatly dispersed intervals in order to make them look strong and impressive. Plant patterns seen on Tung include the ‘Ton Dok’ pattern (Figure 4), which is used for decorating around the Tung, meaning all of a monk’s utensils (things made for and given to monks) or sometimes it is referred to as the ‘Khan Dok’ pattern, and the ‘Laem Hit’ pattern, which is an original and ancient pattern woven for a small long handkerchief or a blanket. However, at present, this pattern is used for decorating the ends of Tung for aesthetic purposes.

In addition, there is a pattern that is used for decorating Tai Lue Tung and the paper Tung of the Tai Yuan ethnic groups, which is called the ‘Ka Kok’ pattern, which signifies fame and honours. It is based on the rectangular shape of ‘Ka Kok’, a floating water plant that TLEG feed to ducks, representing the fertility in nature. The pattern of ‘Dok Chan’ means an idealistic flower that is found in several cultures, looking like a star (‘Chalaeo’ or ‘Ta Laeo’), which is a basketry item that TLEG use for expelling ghosts or evil spirits. The pattern of ‘Dok Chan Paet Klip’ (eight-petal flowers) symbolises the eight directions, namely, north, south, east, west, northeast, southeast, northwest and southwest. The ‘Dao Phaedan’ pattern comprises a round centre with 8, 18 or 36 petals, depending on the Tung weavers. Tai Yuan Ethnic Groups often call it the ‘Kaeo Ching Duang’ pattern, or the ‘Dok Khwak Noi’ (small) pattern and ‘Dok Khwak Yai’ (large) pattern depending on the size, similar to the ‘Laem Hit’ pattern. All of the aforementioned patterns are used for decorating the ends of Tung for aesthetics purposes. The ‘Mak Kha Naet’ pattern, which looks like a pineapple, is also used for decorating the top of a castle for uniqueness and aesthetics. TLEG have weaving methods and patterns that reflect lifestyles that are bound to the environment. Natural resources combine with the local identity and imagination of the weavers.



Figure 3. Plant Patterns



Figure 4. Ton Dok pattern

### (3) Utensil and Castle Patterns

The shapes of the utensil patterns, which represent the alms for the dead, are varied. The boat patterns can be divided as follows. The pattern of the ‘Samphao’ boat (a barque) or ‘Winyan’ boat (a ship for souls) refers to the vehicle delivering the utensils to the dead in the afterlife world, and the rite offering the utensils may be called ‘Than Samphao’ (the alms carried on a barque).

The pattern of hooks (‘Ngo’ or ‘Kho’ in the Tai Lue language or ‘Takho’ in Thai) consisting of small or large sizes was often found on the potteries in the prehistoric period. ‘Kho’ in the Tai Lue language refers to the bracken fern (*Diplazium esculentum*), which is a type of local vegetation. This pattern is often found in the Tai ethnic group.

The Tai Lue Tung must have a castle pattern on the elephant, horse or boat and it is called ‘Mae Non-Sai’ in the Tai Lue language, which implies sending the dead to heaven. Moreover, the ‘Khap’ or Hasadilink bird also occurs on the castle pattern and has a small flag showing that it is victorious. The pattern of ‘Khrua Tan’ (the utensils donated to the Buddhist monks) implies victory as well. They believe that these are the supplies sent with the castles to their ancestors in the world of death.

The ‘Prasat’ pattern (castle) is very essential. Each Tai Lue Tung must have the castle pattern, which will be different from one another, dependent on the weavers. The pattern of the castle (‘Prasat’ in Thai) is very essential on Tai Lue Tung as the castle pattern reflects the identity of the Tai Lue Tung. The Tung weavers said, “*If the castle is not presented on a Tai Lue Tung, it will not be a Tai Lue Tung*”. The castle pattern refers to the worship of Phra Kaet Kaeo



Julamani (the Lord Buddha's Hair Relic) in the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, which is performed for collecting auspicious power and prosperity in life. The castles are stacked in layers with different widths and types of bases depending on the creation of the weaver. There are single castles and double castles. There are two types of castle including a single castle and a double castle because TLEG considers them to be offerings to both parents at the same time. The castle pattern has several levels. The castle patterns range from 3-9 levels, with the most popular number being between 3-5 floors. The number of levels depends on the family status, as a higher number of levels of the castle makes the price of a Tung more expensive.

TLEG in Chiang Kham district, have a cultural inheritance that dates back for a long period of time, for example, the rite of 'Tan' (merit making) and 'Than Prasat Pha White' rite (offering of the white fabric castle), because they believe in the next life with the happiness achieved through adherence to Buddhism to reach Nirvana according to Buddhist teachings. The white fabric castle offering is a noble tradition used by the TLEG as part of the 'Tang Tham Luang' (Vessantara Jātaka Sermon) ritual organised every year for making the merit for themselves and their deceased relatives. It aims to dedicate charity in the next life or to dedicate it to dead ancestors.

The castle patterns found are divided into two types: 1) those that are structured as houses, with several layers stacked in appearance, arranged with large layers to small, reduced in size accordingly. There are an uncertain number of floors (3-9 floors) and 2) a castle-shaped stacked roof with a Chinese castle-shaped detachment shape that looks like a typical Tai Lue temple roof.

The pattern of 'Nam Ton' (flagon) is a long-necked ewer, which is a type of pottery containing drinking water that is now designed to be decorated with money for beauty.

'Ton Ngoen' or "Kanstang" (grass tree with silver) refers to a pot with money, which has the belief that when dead, it will have money to spend. In the past, there were no banknotes embroidered on the Ton Ngoen, but now weavers have created the imagination gained from the way of life in the community. The Ton Ngoen is a long-standing old pattern that is seen on the Tung in Tai Lue temples in Chiang Kham district, Phayao province.

'Phan Dok' is located inside of the castle to show the importance of offerings. At present, weavers have added patterns by including khan Thet (the pans with the Buddhist scriptures placed on top). 'Khruea Thao' are vines or flowers that refer to nature and beauty's abundance. Small patterns with flowers and people are added to make the work look more detailed, to avoid being too far away, and also to make the background of the Tung firmer depending on the weaver's creation.





Figure 5. Utensil patterns

At present, weavers are becoming more creative by adding modern patterns, *i.e.*, adding a Thai flag pattern to the top of the castle. Each Tung is unique to each weaver. Increasing or decreasing the details of the pattern is therefore based on the creative ideas and imaginations of each weaver. They can identify where each Tung comes from based on the pattern, whether they belong to themselves or are those of others because they are all unique because of the pattern placement, cotton line counting, and detailed collection of different stripes.

It should be noted that the patterns of the Tai Lue Tung are similar to the patterns and graphics from Luang Prabang, Laos, which are categorised into three groups, *i.e.*, names, animals, and nature (plants, flowers, fruits, humans, and folktales) (Teerayut, 2016, p. 167). Therefore, it is presumed that the patterns of the Tai Lue Tung are partially influenced by the Tai-Yuan ethnic group, who reside in the areas of Laos connected to Chiang Kham District, Phayao. This indicates that some patterns on the Tai Lue Tung are related to the patterns on the Tung of the Tai-Yuan ethnic group, *i.e.*, the Dao Phaedan and Dok Chan patterns that are both similar to a square shape. Thus, it is possible that the cultures and traditions of the Tai Lue and the Tai Yuan people could overlap, and their lifestyles are similar to other groups of people in the areas of northern Thailand.

### 3.2 Aestheticism of Tung

The aestheticism of *Tung* depends on three factors, which are as follows.

### 3.2.1 Beliefs and Faiths

The TLEG believe that their deceased ancestors will receive merit through the offerings of the Tung of the Tai Lue. They have faith about doing good and avoiding evil through the power of faith and belief in Buddhism, and as a result, create the motifs on the Tung that have meanings that encourage happiness in spite of suffering. At the same time, the consecrators are happy to make merit and display it. Therefore, this beauty is born of the happiness, satisfaction and exhilaration in the hearts of TLEG who have faith and devotion in Buddhism and beauty as a feeling.

The beliefs and rituals of the TLEG are a type of psychological beauty, and there is a creative art associated with the dharma that exists in the human mind that is pure beauty. Therefore, dharma and art are the same beauty. The castle is a motif with a unique beauty indicating a historical story. Their way of life includes the beliefs, faiths, and good deeds of the TLEG from the past to the present. The beauty of other forms of art is also characterised by the relationships with the beliefs and religion of the TLEG. Similarly, Jaipak Burapajatana & Porsanong Vongsingthong explained that the colours and patterns of textiles are typically connected to religious beliefs. The patterns of textiles were derived from a combination of the plants and animals. Tai Lue textiles include the appearance of geometrical motifs, mythical animals floral depictions (Jaipak, 2015, p. 104).

### 3.2.2 Merit and Gratitude

The belief about the dedication of philanthropy to the deceased family members is a sign of positive thinking, good deeds, and expressing concern and gratitude to those who have died so that they do not experience the hardships. Positive thinking and doing good are the psychological well-being that is conveyed as a beauty reflected by the offerings of the TLEG.

The resulting family relationships make the children grateful for the good deeds of their ancestors, thus making the offerings to their ancestors is another tradition. Beauty as the relations in the family is therefore a beauty that has a bond in the structural system of the Tai Lue family that has been handed down from the past to the present. The goodness and gratitude of the TLEG are expressed by the offerings that it is a psychological beauty based on the foundation of morality, resulting in a noble beauty rather than physical beauty. Beauty and goodness are therefore things that correlate with virtue. True human beauty is not one that comes from the physical appearance but from the mind and good intentions (Wanida, 2020, p. 82).

Beauty is the perfect development of humanity. Psychologically, good deeds and philanthropy dedicate charity to their deceased ancestors. These are traditional expressions of humility, the conservatism in preserving art and culture that is the intellectual heritage of the ancestors. These are traditional expressions of humility, the conservation of the Tai Lue's arts and culture that is the intellectual heritage of their ancestors.

This is in agreement with Chaidet Kaesosa-Nga who reported that aestheticism improves the perfection of a human being via acceptance from society due to tradition (Chaidet, 2013, p. 4). Furthermore, the conservation and development of ancestral wisdom as the pride of all Thai

people is beauty in human minds. Beauty not only refers to physical beauty, but also to morality and wisdom, *i.e.*, as justice, perseverance, virtue and good traditions. The value of these things is beauty in the mind (Wanida, 2020, p. 83).

### 3.2.3 Creativity and Imagination

From belief and faith in Buddhism, the experience and skills of weavers passed down from their ancestors have led to their dexterity. They have the aim of creating the Tung and conveying Tai Lue's identity.

The aesthetic of the Tung of the Tai Lue is borne by touch, eye vision or elemental vision. Weavers have applied those elements to place patterns on the Tung to create beautiful or visual elements, *i.e.*, dots, lines and colours, to be arranged in equal proportions that are balanced, rhythmic and harmonious with the patterns that accompany them, creating an elemental aesthetic.

Plato had the idea that one thing goes the same for another, with imitation being united and inherent. It is called 'from' because plagiarism comes from the 'Idea of Beauty' that is in the 'World of Ideas' (Wanida, 2020, p. 89). Aristotle said that whatever is beautiful, whether it is something alive or something inanimate, must be caused by the harmony that comes from the correlation of size and proportion, and he also saw that imitation is a good thing because it is human nature, which can learn and subsequently gain satisfaction and enjoyment from that imitation. Therefore, aesthetics or beauty is about the cognition that one of the components will not be able to have beauty on its own, but may be beautiful in a way that is entirely harmonious (Laksanawat, 2008). According to the research that has considered the beauty of the Tung of the Tai Lue according to the principles of artistic composition, the details are as follows:

#### (1) Balance

Horizontally, the weavers arrange the patterns on the Tung in a balanced manner, aligning them with patterns with shapes and colours that are the same and equal left and right. In the lower part of the vertical axis, large patterns are arranged to make them heavy, *i.e.*, elephants, horses or boats so that the top of the Tung is not too far away or too tight. Weavers add patterns with continuous characteristics, such as animals, people or small trees, and arrange them beautifully and balance with other parts. Beauty as relation comes from a perfect fit. The weavers use the centre of the image or the central dividing line primarily to compose and balance the overall image. Balance, therefore, provides a beautiful visual arrangement.

#### (2) Proportion

Weavers beautifully arrange patterns with appropriate proportions, integrity and relationships within the width and length of the Tung. The proportional arrangements are divided into parts as follows:

##### (a) Lower base range

A horse or boat that supports the castle on top is proportionate in appearance, which makes it

look beautiful. Beauty is a visually appealing composition as a relationship that results from a balance based on the centre of the image or the centre line.

(b) Mid-range

This is the central part of the Tung where the castle is placed as a hallmark of a Tung, which is unique to the Tai Lue Tung. The castle ranges from 3-9 levels in height, and the number of levels of the castle depends on the economic position or purchasing power of the buyer, with three levels being the popular number of castle floors. Inside the castle, there is a Phan, which is an artistically decorated tray with a pedestal that supports the scriptures or offerings that are believed to be presented to those who have passed away. Beside the castle, there is the Hasadilink Birds pattern. The castle is a consistent width, which gives the same amount of space along the sides of the Tung, allowing other patterns to be added to the decoration. If the castle is shaped with a large to a small base, reduced to the size of the floor, it will leave little space on the sides so that only floral or small animal patterns can be inserted.

(c) Upper range

This is a section of the top of the castle, adorned with a small flag pattern. The empty space between the top of the castle and the edge of the Tung is adorned with bird images, butterflies and botanical patterns. It was found that weavers arrange pattern proportions in each range of the Tung that have relative meaning that is in line with Aristotle and the Pythagoreans believed that anything can be beautiful because of tidiness, size, and proportion with balance (Wanida, 2020, p. 93).





Figure 6. Tung of the Tai Lue from various weavers that have castle patterns are the main symbol

### (3) Rhythm and Emphasis

Weavers arrange patterns to create a focus and have a beautifully appropriate rhythm of placement, taking into account the spaces in which the patterns are neatly arranged repeatedly. The patterns are arranged to produce the continuous movement of the lines, weights, colours, and shapes that make interesting points, *i.e.*, the rhythm of a simple pattern. Interconnected pattern rhythms and alternating shape rhythms are the patterns that are highlighted by the composition to create the unity and appeal of the castle, which has a larger size than the other elements. The castle is formed by using a variety of lines, including straight, horizontal and zigzag lines. The patterns use colourful yarn, for example, castle patterns are larger than others and use colourful yarns to make them attractive and are placed in the centre of the Tung. Therefore, they appear to be outstanding and beautiful.

### (4) Harmony

The weavers' creations are arranged in a balanced proportion, with rhythm and focus, that is harmonious with both straight and horizontal lines. In addition, the botanical patterns are chosen to create a slinky and beautiful feel. The selection of the colours includes synthetic

dyed yarns for durability, which makes them clear and beautiful when hanging, as opposed to in the past, when yarns from natural dyeing were used. In Figure 6, the artisans have arranged the patterns to be harmonious, forming relationships linked in the same group, rather than scattered or causing confusion. This harmony is the placement of patterns in relation to Buddhist beliefs and concepts, in line with the beneficence and remembrance of the favours of their deceased ancestors. Physical or external beauty depends on the correct shape and organisation. In the opinion of Saint Thomas Aquinas, beauty must be proportional or harmonious and show the right proportions (Laksanawat, 2008).

Determination of proportionality is according to the characteristics of the structure that are consistently related in both the properties of the workpiece and the form. The positioning and selection of materials are no more than a fit, in which the weaver uses the feeling and expertise generated by intuition to determine both the right forms and proportions to create a pattern that presents aesthetic value. Aristotle and the Pythagoreans believed that beauty is created from balanced orders, sizes and proportions. Moreover, Aristotle believed that beauty could create pleasure and enjoyment (Wanida, 2020).

TLEG have developed their minds by adhering to moral practices and intellectual pursuits. The Tung is what convinces the minds of the TLEG to be happy and pure for the offering. The creations of weavers are depicted by the selection of lines and colours, creating a harmony between the content, and the suitability of the aesthetic style. The acceptance of the rituals of the Tai Lue society has been passed down from their ancestors, which gives the weavers an understanding of the context of the Tung of the Tai Lue. The beauty of the Tai Lue Tung is not only due to relationships, but also the stories from other sources, *i.e.*, belief and faith in Buddhism, as well as the values and changes in current society that have economic factors involved. Weavers are artists who can discover this beauty that is results from combining different proportions of elemental vision, thereby creating the beauty of the Tung. When they have belief and faith in their minds, the Tung weavers have created Tung beautifully.

Professor Silpa Bhirasri, who is considered the father of modern art in Thailand and was instrumental in the founding of Silpakorn University in Bangkok, explained that aesthetics includes morality (Dharma) and Buddhist intellectual and tangible properties that make us feel delighted because of the perfection of forms, colours and proportions of such properties (Kamchon, 2013, p. 99).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The TLEG have a lifestyle linked to their culture, traditions and religion inherited from their ancestors in the past to the present, thus providing them with many rituals. The Tung is a tribute to these Buddhist beliefs and concepts. The offerings of the TLEG aim to dedicate a portion of philanthropy to themselves and to their deceased ancestors to escape hell and enter into heaven.

The Tung has been analysed by researchers, who grouped the patterns into three types: 1) animals in reality and imagination, 2) plants, and 3) utensils and castles, which are all motifs

that are depicted as the identity and characteristics of the Tai Lue ethnicity that dates back to the past. At present, the Tung of the Tai Lue is used for ritual purposes and parades and to decorate the places because of the intention to express the identity of the TLEG. The Tung of the Tai Lue has a beauty that shows the identity of the Tai Lue in which the beauty of the Tung results from three factors: 1) belief and faith in Buddhism that has been passed on and become tradition and custom, 2) goodness and gratitude from the desire to let their deceased ancestors avoid agony and meet happiness, and 3) the creativity and imagination of Tung weavers who produce Tung with imagination, skills and experience until they become the unique work of each weaver. However, these creations are still within the framework of Buddhist beliefs and traditions and the appreciation from the offering of Tung. As a result of the aforementioned factors, the TLEG are mentally happy to convey stories resulting from things related to individuals, beliefs, cultures and traditions that are appropriate and in line with the conditions of economic and social change. Although the Tung is currently transformed or slightly altered, the pattern is beautiful because it is a significant form that has the lines and colours of the Tung produced by the visual elements from the combination and relationship of the shapes and patterns that still have the original meaning, which has not changed but is formed by the elemental visual elements from the weaving of shapes and pattern relationships, which have not yet changed. Although the current situation has changed, the drive within the Tai Lue community continues. This research provides an insight into the characteristics and aesthetics of the Tung that show the strength and identity of the TLEG that have been modified to match the changing circumstances of society.

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