

Received: 11 November 2022 Accepted: 15 March, 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33182/rr.v8i4.133>

The Creation of Contemporary Pottery: the Study of Wisdom and Relationship to the Community Life of Lao Wood Kiln in Lao PDR

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Abstract

This article is in partial fulfillment of the dissertation titled Lao wood kiln: the wisdom and relationship to the community life for creation of contemporary arts. The data was collected from documents and research sites at Lao PDR as a qualitative research through survey, observation, and interview. The results showed that wisdom and relationship to community life for the creation of contemporary arts of Lao wood kiln contained an identity that provided effective kilns depending on the location. Rituals such as the respect of Dharani and the prohibition of women and monks from approaching the kiln have been inherited and practiced until nowadays. Six pottery works were designed based on the concept of the "Form of Life". The pottery works expressed the wisdom of wood kilns through the colorful shades of color and the plain shape to create new knowledge relevant to creative pottery works resulting from the study of style and wood kiln community life at Lao PDR.

Keywords: *The creation of contemporary pottery; Wisdom; Style; Lao wood kiln; Relationship to community life; Lao PDR*

Introduction

According to the archaeological research in Lao PDR, the archaeologist claimed from the pieces of evidence that the pottery was identified as belonging to the prehistoric and historical periods and was allegedly discovered everywhere. The period of the New Stone Age which lasted from B.C. 8,000 to 6,000 was a matriarchy. Most houses were settled on flat riverbank areas for cultivation and animal husbandry which was later developed as handicrafts. Wood was made to be swirled, which saved time and produced a smooth surface with a variety of forms and patterns. The society became more complex and altered to be communitic household (Sungkhomsahashipwongtakoon) throughout the late Stone Age thanks to agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicrafts. This led to the group expanding as a tribe in B.C. 5,000–1,200. Worshipping nature spirits has given way to ancestor spirits as people began to become more

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prosperous through farming and animal husbandry. The tribe's growth as a community contributed a variety of cultural elements, most notably the creation of pottery with elaborate patterns. Most patterns were created from the rope that was thought to be 5000 years old. During this time, the tribe community created a large stone known as a Lao wood kiln, which could be found in many locations and had different shapes, e.g. Ban Bok wood kiln shape, Khammouane province, Lao PDR. This particular shape was a bank kiln called Tao Khud expanded in Lao PDR which represented the expansion of wisdom and culture and also highlighted the identity and history of the people in that country.

The historical sources revealed the transferring footprint and cultural diffusion. The pottery and wood kiln has served as the cultural connectivity along the Mekong River since the prehistoric period, particularly the wisdom. Archeological evidence indicates that ceramic fragments were found scattered throughout the banks of the Mekong River, especially in Lao PDR. These pottery handicrafts were produced in various contexts including ethnography, thoughts and beliefs, and geography, in order to convey unique identities. Particular communities created distinctive fine arts reflecting different values, attractiveness, and usefulness. Specific religious practices in a particular place offered a wide range of handicrafts. In summary, the Mekong River basin in Lao PDR was regarded as a place of diversity, including culture, ethnography, religion, beliefs, and rituals, all of which were the sources of fine arts that were diverse in terms of identity and aesthetics (Phikunsri, 2008). The findings of a recent study emphasized that the study of Lao wood kilns in Lao PDR was considered as a part to be more noticeable in Lao history and its development as well as the relationship of Lao PDR and Outsiders. Therefore, the study related to form and history was important for understanding relevant wisdom. One fascinating aspect was that the story related to wisdom and relationship to community life in Lao PDR. All elements can contribute to and explain the meaning, beliefs, rituals, and its relationship. In order to understand the origin of thoughts and beliefs that underlined the intention of the pottery makers to create significant pottery works and also presented the wisdom of people in Lao PDR.

Consequently, it is crucial to focus on both the understanding and perception of meaning, wisdom, and relationship to community life for the creation of the pottery and the study relevant to wisdom and relationship to community life for creation since the wood kiln style and cultural diffusion provided historic and academic values to society. This intention played a crucial role relevant to the planning policy of Lao PDR in the Press Conference and Culture from 2010 – 2020. Environmental factors and globalization gave rise to substantial variances in growth, especially in terms of culture and society between Lao PDR and ASEAN countries. Moreover, the recent study was also significant to the ASEAN Community's plan, which has seven objectives to promote cooperation and assistance in the areas of the economy, society, culture, technology, sciences, and management

in order to strengthen regional economic success and cultural growth.

In relation to the rationale and significance mentioned above, the Lao wood kiln has been highlighted particularly in wisdom, interesting form, and relationships to community life which mirrored people's way of life. As a result, the study of **wisdom and relationship to community life in Lao wood kilns** was investigated to invent the creation of pottery with new and useful knowledge that would also be helpful for academic and research contributions and for those with an interest in wood kilns.

Research objective

To create contemporary pottery artworks from the study of wisdom and relationship to the community life of Lao wood kiln

Method

A qualitative study titled "The Study of the Creation of Contemporary Pottery: The Study of Wisdom and Relationship to the Community Life of Lao Wood Kiln in Lao PDR" aimed to examine the creation of contemporary pottery from the study of wisdom and relationship to the community life of Lao wood kiln involved the following processes. The study included 1) the review of relevant documents, 2) the review of documents relevant to the creation of contemporary pottery from wisdom and relationship to the community life in Lao PDR, 3) the review of theories and related studies, 4) the study of documents, maps and research sites, 5) the collection of data at the research site for in-depth analysis, 6) the design of research instrument for fieldwork, 7) the collaboration with participants for data collection, 8) the plan for study and data collection at the research site, and 9) data analysis and research findings.

Results

The study of the creation of contemporary pottery: the study of wisdom and relationship to the community life of Lao wood kiln in Lao PDR examined that the wisdom of Lao wood kiln consisted of Ban Yo, Oudomxay province, Ban Jan Nuea, Luang Prabang province, Ban Dong Dang, Vientiane province, Ban Nong Bok, Khammouane province, Ban Phakkhaya, Savannakhet province, and Ban Tha Hin, Attapeu province. These kilns, which contained exit fuel, had special forms that weren't present in other areas. Kilns' exit fuel was lengthened, allowing air to flow down and saving fuel that could be burned at high temperatures. The space for kilns primarily depended on airflow in the summer since the pottery was made in the post-harvest season which provided effective burning, produced unbroken pottery, saved fuel with high temperatures, and reduced cost. This also verified the identity of shape, form, and wisdom which was relevant to Wasi (Thai

Wisdom for Bangkok Development, 1987) that wisdom was the knowledge generated from thoughts, understanding, and attitudes passed down through the generations. There were rituals based on their cultural beliefs, e.g. showing respect for the sacred was relevant to Clifford Geertz's theory of Cultural Ecology that beliefs and any practices relied on the culture that appears ridiculous and illogical can be logical when it was in the practical use of resources (Wansiri, 1997) According to this theory, the burning processes would be the least damaged, living would be better, and this would lead to family happiness, which in turn leads to a productive life (Manion, 2003). The research findings led to the concept of pottery works as the "form-of-life", which was the modification of the shapes discovered at sites, for instance, the shape of the kiln, the shape from firing, and the shape of the products which represented the wood kilns and the identity of people in the research sites. This represented the dimension of "figure" or shape with the analysis of the community's practice relevant to the rituals, beliefs and occupations related to "life" and hope. Relevant to Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory of Signs, signs represent interpretant, meaning, meaning-effect, or imagination designed by the interaction between signs and presented as object or referent instead. The "Form of Life" concept, which was inspired from the research findings, illuminated human behavior through the shapes discovered at research locations. The results were examined using theory relevant to composition and presented as pottery works, comprising six pottery works based on the following conceptual frameworks (Thaothong, 2014).

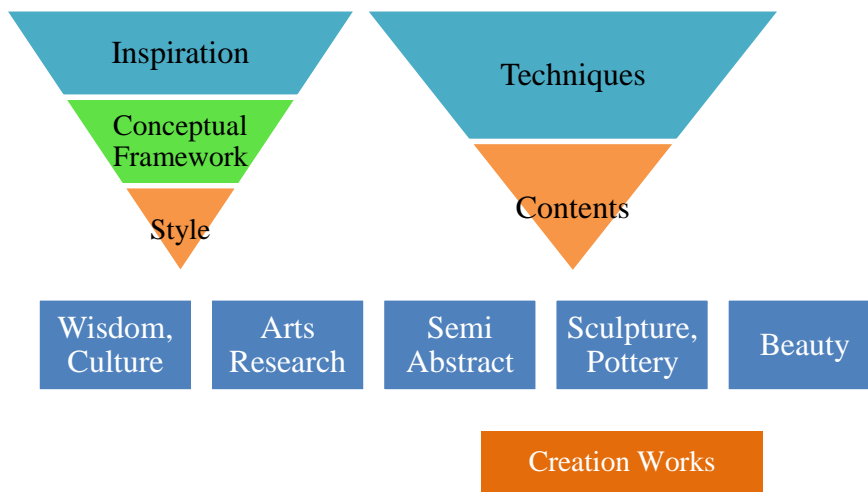


Figure 1: The Creation Framework

The study of the wisdom and the relationship to community life of Lao wood kilns in Lao PDR employed the theory relevant to composition to decode the form, line, color, shape, space, and volume (Nimsamoe, 1988) as a visual element to create the pottery works as shown in the Figure .

Kiln



Figure 2: The Origin of Shape and Decoding using Aesthetic and Sign Theory. The kiln symbol is mutually represented as horizontal line and curve, which refers to life space and security.

Product Arrangement



Figure 3: The Origin of Shape and Decoding using Aesthetic and Sign Theory. The symbol of arrangement is represented in a triangle which refers to security.

Product Position



Figure 4: The Origin of Shape and Decoding using Aesthetic and Sign Theory. The symbol of position is represented as a number and repetition which refers to the products of wisdom.

Product Overlapping



Figure 5: The Origin of Shape and Decoding using Aesthetic and Sign Theory. The symbol of overlapping is represented as a new shape which refers to the new things from the burning process.

Brick Arrangement for Kilns

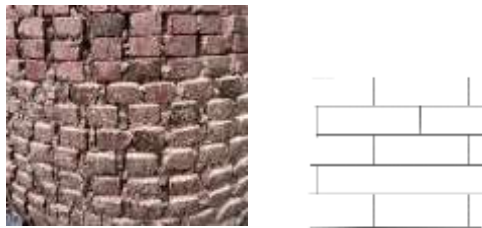


Figure 6: The Origin of Shape and Decoding using Aesthetic and Sign Theory. The symbol of brick arrangement is represented as the intersection of vertical and horizontal lines which refers to the merging or attachment to security.



Burning

Figure 7: The Origin of Shape and Decoding using Aesthetic and Sign Theory. The symbol of burning is represented as independent lines which refers to life.

2D Sketching

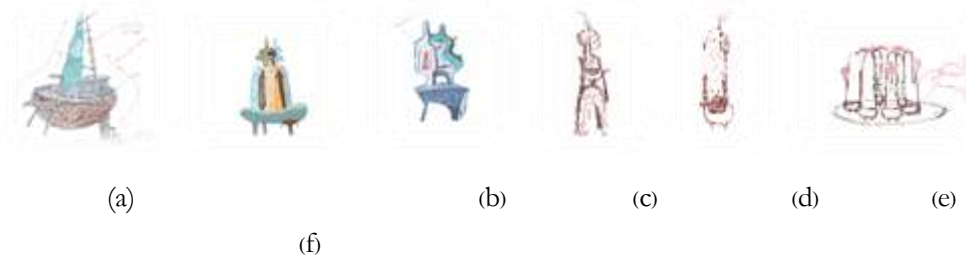


Figure 8: a, b, c, d, e, f Show 2D Sketching

3D Sketching

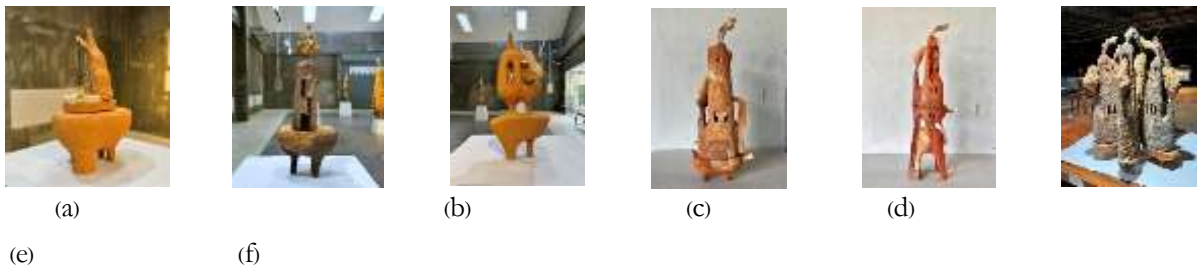


Figure 9: a, b, c, d, e, f Show 3D Sketching

The analysis of 2D and 3D sketching discovered the relationship between an idea and the pottery works represented by shapes and symbols may be described by the denouement process and advancement of shapes relevant to visual elements. These were displayed as pottery works in the form of complicated shapes based on the conceptual framework of the form of life which was similar to the burning process found in the Lao wood kilns where the colorful works relevant to the community life of beliefs and rituals were produced. This resulted in a unity of works from concept and shape as suggested by Nimsamoe (Nimsamoe, 1988) that the inspiration for creative works should be developed from 2D and 3D drafting to find forms and creation guidelines in order to convey its concept and origin with appropriate composition.

Six pottery works



(a)

(b)

(c)

Figure 10: a, b, c The 1st Pottery Work, Form of Life 1, Size : 20 x 25 x 120 cm.



(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

Figure 11: a, b, c, d The 2nd Pottery Work, Form of Life 2, Size : 80 x 80 x 90 cm.



(a) (b) (c) (d)

Figure 12: a, b, c, d The 3rd Pottery Work, Form of Life 3, Size : 35 x 45 x 140 cm.



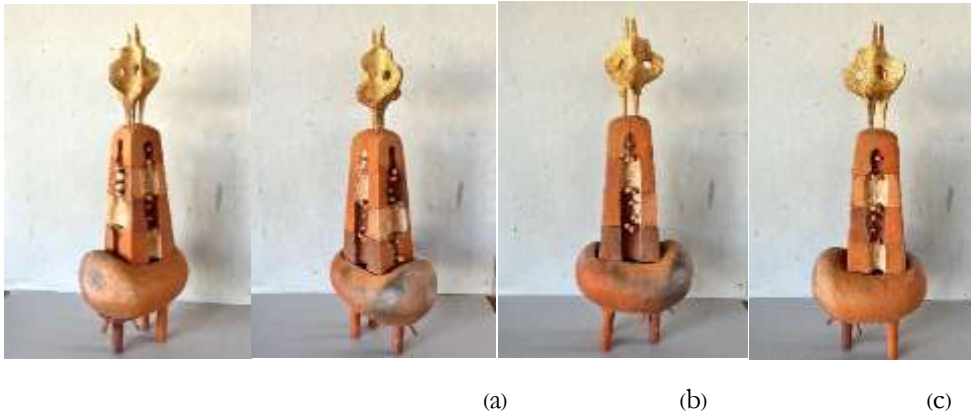
(a) (b) (c) (d)

Figure 13: a, b, c, d The 4th Pottery Work, Form of Life 4, Size : width 32 x 45 x 70 cm.



(a) (b) (c) (d)

Figure 14: a, b, c, d The 5th Pottery Work, Form of Life 5, Size : 35 x 45 x 140 cm.



(d)

Figure 15: a, b, c, d The 6th Pottery Work, Form of Life 6, Size : 35 x 45 x 60 cm.

The six pottery works employed **hand-sculpturing techniques** using local soil texture, which was burnt at 1,100 degrees Celsius with incomplete combustion firing. The color was created from a coloring agent on the soil texture.

Discussion

Six ceramic pieces were created employing visual elements made up of shape and form, based on the concept of the form of life. The elements found in the pottery works represented the unity from the combining of shapes which expressed the value of the wisdom of the wood kiln through the burning process. Volume of pottery represented the wisdom of the kiln. Mass represented the relationship between wisdom and community life which was merged. Tone is represented as life and color. Texture represented simplicity. Space represented life space. All of those presented in the exhibition consisted of two types of presentation: solo exhibition and co-host exhibition with international artists. Solo Exhibition titled FORM-OF-LIFE was held at Art Centre, Faculty of Fine And Applied Art, Khon Kaen University from January 9 – 31, 2023. The exhibition displayed six ceramic pieces, poster presentation, and international artworks of “Capturing the Moment” by Malaysian and Thai artists under the Malaysia and Thailand Art Project in Khon Kaen 2023 at the first floor, Khon Kaen Treasury Museum, Khon Kaen between March 9 and 25, and was divided into 1 floor for the ceramic works in Form of Life 2, a poster presentation, and an e-catalogue.



Figure 16. a, b, c Posture for Exhibition

Both types of the exhibition which were solo exhibition and co-host exhibition with international artists were the first publication which was relevant to the diffusion of innovation of Everette M. Rogers (1983). The diffusion of innovation theory is the spread of ideas, practices, news, or behaviors to publics from individual or group of people to general and that was widely accepted and eventually had an impact on social structure, culture, and social change. In particular, working with international artists would be the platform for presenting the research's key findings and producing useful works. This was regarded as the complete and systemic creative process to be presented in general and international publications.

Conclusion

The study of the creation of contemporary pottery: the study of wisdom and relationship to the community life of Lao wood kiln in Lao PDR referred to the form of life using semi-abstract. It was the creation of pottery based on the “form of life” developed from the field study relevant to wisdom and relationship to community life in Lao PDR. Then analyzed and crystallized based on visual arts and presented as ceramic works. The techniques of creation relied on the natural process of the pottery, which expressed simplicity and related to the incredible pottery-making process. Regarding the recent study, the soil from Ban Wang Tua, Wang Chai Sub-district, Nam Phong District, Khon Kaen Province in this study divided into 70 percent of the soil used and the left 30 percent was the grog. It was burnt at 950-1,100 degree Celsius with incomplete combustion firing to burn the soil texture, stunning color was created in this process. The study also employed the

conceptual framework of Thaothong (Thaothong, 2014) to decode and substitute meanings of shapes in order to generate a new shape. The wisdom and relationship to community life were decoded based on the composition to form the meaning. Firstly, the kiln symbol is mutually represented as a horizontal line and curve, which refers to life space and security. Next, the symbol of product arrangement is represented in a triangle which refers to security. The symbol of product position is represented as a number and repetition which refers to the products of wisdom. The symbol of product overlapping is represented as a new shape or union which refers to the new things which were generated from two things. The symbol of brick arrangement is represented as the lines which provided the structure of things. Lastly, the symbol of burning is represented as independent lines which refer to life. The decoding and substituting of meaning led to the creation of pottery works as Boonmi (Thepsrimuang, 2010) focused on the separation between form and content without emphasizing to what appeared, but considered beneath the surface of the appearance to reconstruct and find the hidden structure in those circumstances. The pottery was created by hand sculpturing with appropriate soil texture. Relevant to the concept of House of Hope by Boonma and Ratchamroensuk, the contents used to create were signs instead of emotions and personal feelings to connect the personal belief and culture to create individual works. The ceramic pieces based on the concept of Form of Life employed visual elements including shape and form representing the unity from the combining of shapes which expressed the value of the wisdom of the wood kiln through the burning process and developed as the pottery. Volume of pottery represented the wisdom of the kiln. Mass represented the relationship between wisdom and community life which was merged. Tone is represented as life and color. Texture represented simplicity. Space represented life space.

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