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Article: 'Su'a Senakut'- Thai Royal Guard Tunic: The Revival and Preservation in Today's Thai Textile

The 'Su'a Senakut' is Thai royal guard tunic. The objectives of this study were: (1) to investigate the design origin and the symbolic message of 'Su'a Senakut' in Thai culture and its international links, (2) to find out the initial date when 'Su'a Senakut' became available in Siam (Thailand), and (3) to review the preservation and revival of 'Su'a Senakut' pattern in Thai fashion nowadays.

The examination of surviving textile samples in available collections reveal that motif designs of 'Su'a Senakut' were possibly derived from those on old Chinese metal armors rather than from 'Kala' as Guy suggested. The motif depicted on the Heavenly King who guarded the Buddha or Bodhisattva. It was also symbolically corresponded to the message that Thai king has held the position of 'Bodhisattva'.

Although 'Su'a Senakut' is Thai court's cloth, it had historically been made to order in India by using Indian painted and block printed techniques. The earliest record of 'Su'a Senakut' initiation was from the 16th century during the Ayutthaya period under the reign of King Naresuan (1590-1605).

Recently during the reign of King Rama 9 (1946-2016) to present, 'Su'a Senakut' has still been in use, but only in the royal barge procession. However these tunics were re-made by using the silk-screen printing technique in Thailand. The Indian made old textile samples are now preserved in the national museum, Bangkok. In the revival of its pattern, the young Thai designers have applied digital printing technique to make T-shirts and shirts. It is an evocative fashion for TV drama and popular merchandise for today's society.

Personal Information

Insert relevant CV information about yourself for the audience

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For his education, he graduated from Chulalongkorn University on Art-Education (1985-1989). Later, he was awarded the ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) scholarships for studying MFA and Ph.D. at Visva Bharati University in 2000-2007. He also conducted his research on 'Investigation of 'Shamu-Sarasa' (Siamese chintz) in Japanese collections and textile evidence in Thailand' in 2010 as visiting researcher at Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts, Japan.

He has done research on the chintz (Indian painted and block-printed textiles) for Siamese market since 1998. His survey trips for the chintz have covered Indian continent, Thailand, and Japan. At present, he is a lecturer at Ubon Ratchathani University. He also work for non-profit organization as Vice-President of AHPADA-ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association.