

[研究ノート]

A Field Survey for the Protection of Endangered Weaving Technique and Motifs of the Traditional Cambodian Pictorial Ikat Silk *Pidan*: Some findings from the field survey in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam¹

Yukiko Yonekura

1. Introduction: the background and the objectives of this research

The author aims to find out the current situation of weaving the traditional Cambodian pictorial ikat silk *pidan* (hereafter “*Pidan*”) through surveys in Thailand and Vietnam, in addition to that of Cambodia reported in Yonekura (2014). As a result, the author aims to contribute to preserving and protecting the weaving techniques and motifs of *Pidan*. The author aims to: map where and on what scale the production of *Pidan* is taking place; find out what kinds of motifs of *Pidan* exist; and collect and record the motifs of *Pidan*. As a part of the research, this paper reports some findings from the field survey conducted by the author in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam. The author, based on the understanding of the current situation surrounding the production of *Pidan*, also aims to explore possible paths to its survival.

Pidan is a special, elaborately designed pictorial ikat silk for religious architectural decorations. *Pidan* is a silk weft ikat in a 2/1 twill woven using the same technique as ordinary ikat silk in Cambodia. Yet, *Pidan* is distinguished from other ikat silk by its designs of religious narrative scenes relevant to Buddhism, myths, etc. Some common motifs of *Pidan* include *naga*², a half-god-like serpent or dragon, celestial nymphs, Buddha, temple, the tree-of-life, and white elephants³ (See Figure 1 for some samples of ikat silk and *Pidan*).



Ordinary-quality ikat silk for clothing

Ordinary-quality *Pidan*

High-quality *Pidan* with intricate detailed motifs

Figure 1. Sample photos of ordinary-quality ikat silk, ordinary-quality *Pidan*, and high-quality *Pidan*

Yonekura (2014) has compiled the existing records on the production of *Pidan* in Cambodia. High-quality *Pidan* is an endangered cultural heritage facing a crisis of near-disappearance after over thirty years of civil strife in Cambodia. Many antique high-quality *Pidans* have been destroyed or taken overseas, with few remaining in Cambodia. One can hardly find newly-woven high-quality *Pidan* in the markets and silk shops in Phnom Penh. In this paper, “high-quality *Pidan*” means *Pidan* with exquisitely intricate detailed clear motifs, the prices of which can be 10~100 times more than ordinary-quality ikat silk. Only a few skilled weavers of ikat silk can weave high-quality *Pidan* today. Furthermore, the high-quality *Pidan* weavers are getting old. There are not so many weavers who can master the techniques of creating the complicated motifs of the high-quality *Pidan*. It requires a huge investment of time and effort to master such skills. The motifs of *Pidan* are not drawn on paper. They are only taught by producing *Pidan*. Thus, when the old skilled weavers of *Pidan* pass away, the motifs and weaving techniques will disappear with them. In addition, as Siyonn (2008) and Wolfarth (2017) describe, the culture of using *Pidan* to decorate architecture for Buddhist rituals has been fading in Cambodia. *Pidan* is now woven more for aesthetic reasons disconnected from religious practices.

Yet, the Cambodian government policies to support *Pidan* production have been rather weak. In 2003, the author had inquired with the Ministry of Culture of Cambodia, the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, and the UNESCO office in Cambodia as to whether they had collections of *Pidan* or policies to protect and preserve *Pidan*. Only the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh had one piece of antique *Pidan*. Its collections of textiles were lost during the civil war. The UNESCO office was in possession of only recently woven silk cloths and no antique *Pidan*. The UNESCO office used to conduct silk weaving training in Cambodia, but it was not necessarily promoting *Pidan*. Recognising the plight of *Pidan*, in 2003, the author formed a *Pidan* Project Team (PPT), a group of 7 volunteers, aiming to set up a permanent exhibition of *Pidan* in Cambodia to promote *Pidan*. PPT has raised funds in Japan and used their own pocket money to hold *Pidan* Exhibitions in Cambodia more than 10 times since 2003. In 2011, PPT donated 23 pieces of high-quality *Pidan* to the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. Since 2011, PPT has awaited the introduction of appropriate textile preservation facilities at the museum, as well as Cambodian government support to the museum in the form of *Pidan* donations.⁴

Also, weaving *Pidan* is quite time- and labor-consuming. In Cambodia, ordinary weavers who weave ordinary-quality *Pidan* or ordinary ikat silk can only get small net-profits after deducting the costs of silk threads, dye, tools, and looms. Unless weavers can produce high-quality, high-priced ikat silk or *Pidan*, net-profits are small. At the same time, due to its high-price, it is not easy to find customers who can buy expensive *Pidan*. Rather than becoming *Pidan* weavers, youths have alternative occupational choices. They become migrant workers at construction sites or factory workers. Their income is better than that earned by weaving ordinary ikat silk.

For example, according to the NGO Caring for Young Khmer (CYK), recently more young weavers have stopped weaving. They become migrant workers to get regular incomes from the factories operating nearby their villages. CYK has been training weavers in Takeo province in Cambodia for 20 years. For example, the minimum wage of factory workers in Cambodia was 140 USD⁵ per month in 2016⁶. Some workers can earn about 200 USD per month working longer hours⁷. On the other hand, if CYK orders a production of high-quality ikat silk for special use as *obi*, wide belts for the Japanese traditional costume *kimono*, many weavers want to produce it. This is because despite the fee for producing *obi* being lower than the factory wage by working over-time and long hours, CYK pays higher labor fees compared to the net-profits of producing ordinary ikat silk for clothing. Also, weavers can weave at home looking after their children and their working hours can be flexible and relaxed compared to the factory work. Thus, if weavers can earn better incomes than weaving ordinary ikat silk, more weavers may continue to weave and some of them may be able to master the techniques of creating the complicated motifs of *Pidan*.

After the author had done a thorough reading of existing English and Japanese publications on *Pidan* in Cambodia in 2014⁸, the preliminary hypothesis about the prospect of *Pidan* weaving was of a significant endangerment of this art form. The author assumes that not only in Cambodia, but also in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam, people's motivation for weaving *Pidan* might be declining.

This paper focuses on the findings on *Pidan* from the field survey in North-East Thailand in 2015 and in Southern Vietnam in 2016. The author was prompted to conduct surveys in these two areas in light of studies by Iwanaga (2003) and Morimoto (2008) describing the production by Khmer people of a silk weft ikat in a 2/1 twill, a unique characteristic of Cambodian ikat silk not found in India and Indonesia where ikat has developed. Iwanaga (2003) could identify one piece of *Pidan* in the survey in Southern Vietnam in 2003.

2. The research methodology, schedule, and the research members

The key points of the research methodology are as follows:

- A) Do mapping of the current situation of production of *Pidan* in Cambodia, North-East Thailand, and Southern Vietnam;
- B) Collect and record the motifs of recent and antique *Pidan* remaining in these three areas; Find out the meaning of the motifs through interviews of weavers and "*Pidan*" collectors; and
- C) Find out the current situation of the production of *Pidan*; for example, area, number of weavers, the amount of production in these three areas.

Table 1 shows the list of areas of Cambodia where silk thread production and silk textile weaving have existed since the 1990s⁹. Due to time limitations, this survey has not yet investigated the current situation of production in those areas in Cambodia except workshop-I in Siam Reap

Table 1. The areas where people produce silk thread and weave ikat silk in Cambodia

Province	District	Commune	Village
Kampot	Angkor Chey	Dam Don	Dam Don
		Angkor Chey	Angkor Chey Leu, Angkor Chey Kraom
		Dam Bouk Kpoh	Takor
	Chhuuk	Meanchey	Vial Touvaal
Takew	Prey Kavas	Prey Pdaw	Saivar
		Prey Kabas	Tropeang Krouch
		Tan Yaap	
		Char	Ampil Khan Lech
		Kdan	Vial, Poam (Angkep Baok in old map) ¹⁰ , Kdan
	Bati	Tnaot	Pey, Tanop
	Samraon	Srar	Srar Khan Lech
	Kirivon		
Kompong Speu	Phnom Sroch	Prey Ramdoul	Kaptouk
		Ou	Klan Tatan
Kandal	Ksach Kandal	Preek Leon	Preek Taon
		Preek Takou	Preek Bonkon, Preek Takou
		Preek Ampil	Preek Ampil
	Ponnya Leu	Ponnya Leu	Tuol Ompal
	Kieng Svay		
	Muk Kampol		
	Kandal Stun		
	Saan		
Phnom Penh	Russey Kaew	Koh Dach	Lvea, Chungkoh, Kbalkoh, Koh Dach, Roneah
Prey Veng	Sitow Kandal	Preek Chankran	Preek Tapok
Kompong Cham	Kan Meas	Sdaw	Sdaw
		Rokar Koy	Rokar Koy
	Kompong Siam	Kor Koor	Camkar Sensep, Kor Koor
	Krouchmar	Trea	Trea 1, Trea 2, Trea 3, Trea 4, Trea 5, Cham village along Mekong river near the border of Krachie province
			Samraon ^{*11}
	Koh Sotin	Lvie	Preek Takou ¹²
Banteay Meanchey	Phnom Srok	Paoy Char	Paoy Char
Siam Reap	Siam Reap		Chot Sam*
	Srey Snom		
			Touk Chor*
Uddow Meanchey	Chung Kal		

Note: The author made this table based on Tanaka (2013), Morimoto (1998, 2008), Asahi (2011, 2012), Kojin (2004), Iwanaga (2003, 2005), Kong (2013)¹³, which are Japanese publications, and *The Phnom Penh Post* (2010a, 2010b, 2010c). In those references, if there are confusions in the names of villages and communes, the author has revised the spellings based on NIS (2008), NCDD (2014)¹⁴, and Amakawa (2004). The names of some areas were translated into English from Japanese publications and so some English spellings of the names may be different from the pronunciations in Khmer.

*: Village names which the author could not confirm in NCDD (2014).

and the weavers in Takew weaving for NGO-C. This is left for further investigation in the future.

In addition to those areas in Cambodia where people produce silk thread and weave ikat silk, similar ikat silk is woven in nearby countries as follows¹⁵.

- ◆ Thailand: Buri Lam province, Surin province, Sirisaket province in North East Thailand where the Khmer or Lao-Khmer live.
- ◆ Vietnam: Tropeang Chrau village, Van Giao commune (near Chau Doc), An Giang province in Southern Vietnam
- ◆ Indonesia: Sumatra
- ◆ Myanmar
- ◆ China: Hainan island
- ◆ The Philippines: Mindanao island
- ◆ Malaysia

Considering that the motifs and the cultural and religious meanings of *Pidan* are unique to Cambodia, the author put a priority on conducting a survey in the areas next to Cambodia. These areas are North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam where ethnic Khmer live.

The key fieldwork schedule was the following. On 21 March 2015, the author met Mr. SIYONN Sophearith, Lecturer, Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia, to discuss about the objectives of the research and planning. On the same day, the author also had a meeting with Mr. KONG Vireak, Director, National Museum of Cambodia (NMC), to obtain information on *Pidan* kept at the Museum. The author consulted him about the possibility of utilizing these research findings to request that Cambodian ikat silk weaving and/or *Pidan* be acknowledged by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in the future. The author also met Ms. SAM Thida, Deputy Director, NMC. She helped the author to hold *Pidan* exhibitions at NMC in 2010 and 2014 by coordinating with the textile team of NMC.

In April 2015, the HEIWA (peace)-NAKAJIMA Foundation pledged to provide research funding for this survey. Mr. SIYONN Sophearith drafted a field survey schedule. He conducted a field survey inside Cambodia, including Takew province, which is famous for silk weaving. In August 2015, the author visited Cambodia to finalise the planning of the survey in North-East Thailand with Mr. SIYONN and Ms. SEKIGUCHI from CYK. From 9 to 14 September 2015, the research team conducted a field study in Surin and Ubon Rachatani in North-East Thailand. Mr. SIYONN continued his field survey inside Cambodia visiting Takew, Siem Reap, and other provinces. On 17-19 August 2016, the research team members visited An Giang province in Southern Vietnam.

The research team consisted of seven people. Table 2 shows the names and roles of the members. The research team deployed to North-East Thailand consisted of members nos. 1, 2, 3, and the author (7). The research team deployed to Southern Vietnam consisted of members nos. 4, 5, 6, and the author (7).

Table 2. The name and role of each member of the research team

	Name, title, organisation	Role in the team
1	Mr. SIYONN Sophearith, ABD, Lecturer, Department of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia	Main Researcher. Conduct research in Cambodia and North-East Thailand.
2	Ms. SEKIGUCHI Harumi, Advisor, Caring for Young Khmer Representative in Cambodia, <i>Pidan</i> Project Team	Coordinate research in Cambodia and North-East Thailand. Accounting in Cambodia. Resource person
3	Ms. Kampoy TONGNAM (Peap), Research assistant, former CYK weaving training instructor	Communication, logistics, interpretation, etc. for research in Surin, Thailand. Resource person
4	Ms. INOU Mayu, Representative, Seed-to-Table, Vietnam	Communication, logistics, interpretation, etc. for research in An Giang, Vietnam.
5	Ms. KIM Kha, Former Head of Women's Union in SS hamlet, Vietnam	Research Assistant. Formed a cooperative of weavers in SS hamlet, Vietnam. Resource person
6	Dr. MIYAMOTO Kazuko, Professor, Yamanashi University Member, <i>Pidan</i> Project Team	Analyse collected information and assess the direction of research
7	Dr. YONEKURA Yukiko, Associate Professor, Showa Women's University Representative in Japan, <i>Pidan</i> Project Team	Research Team Leader. Compile and analyse collected information and write reports. Coordinate between research team members, research assistants, and interpreters.

3. The research findings in Surin and Ubon Rachatani in North-East Thailand from 9 to 14 September 2015

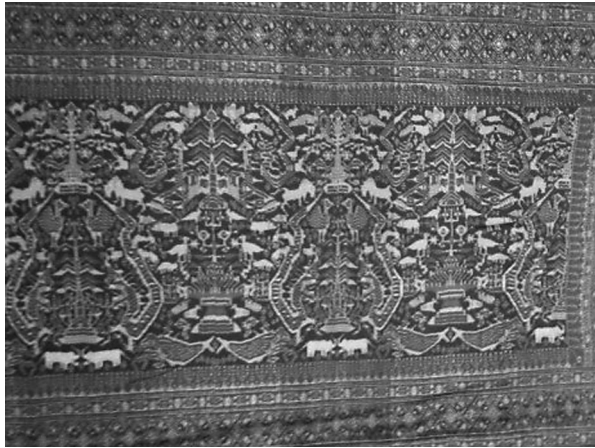
Before this field survey, the author had assumed that in North-East Thailand, people did not actively weave *Pidan*. However, this assumption was overturned during this field survey. The villagers still actively raise silk-worms and produce ikat silk cloth for *sampot hol* (skirt made of silk) and *Pidan*. Some workshops, notably, produce very high-quality silk cloth with traditional and creative motifs. Why are people still actively producing ikat silk there?

3-1. Surin

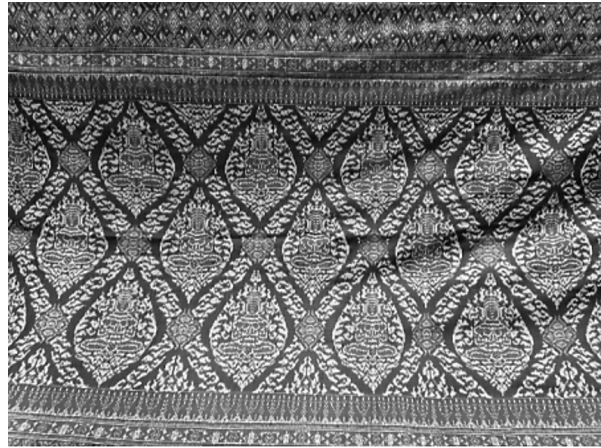
The research team visited the silk weaving workshops and a village where people produce silk threads by raising silk-worms.

3-1-1. The Workshop of Mr. S

Mr. S, a Thai who is married to a Cambodian woman, weaves motifs of *Pidan* as they are woven in Cambodia, including *naga*, tree-of-life, birds, animals, and flowers (See Figure 2). He only uses natural dyes, including indigo, for his silk. Considering the social changes that have made his craft a rarity, he reasonably claims that in Thailand nobody else but he can dye more than one color with natural dye.



High-quality *Pidan* woven at the workshop of Mr. S



High-quality *Pidan* with religious motifs, Buddha's image, woven at the workshop of Mr. S

Figure 2. *Pidan* woven at the workshop of Mr. S

His four-meter long silk cloth with sacred motifs would sell for a decent price of 120,000 THB¹⁶ (about 3,600 USD). This type of silk cloth is produced on order or on a commission basis.

According to him, young people these days move out of his weaving village for “better” work in other cities or places with a reason as simple as that weaving is boring. However, with the government’s support, especially that of the Queen Mother Center, he has put forth great efforts to train young people passionate about weaving by travelling to various places in Thailand.

3-1-2. Making silk threads from golden cocoons in P village

When the author asked Mr. S from where he obtains silk threads, he introduced us to P village. In P village, about 300 households raise silk-worms, more than 120 households make silk threads, and about 15-16 households weave silk cloth. Silk thread production involves the entire village (See Figure 3). For maintaining their enthusiasm and commitment to silk production and weaving, the villagers formed a silk resource center in the village for mutual assistance and to raise awareness of silk production and weaving.



Raising silk-worms



Making silk threads from golden cocoons

Figure 3. Silk thread production in P village

3-1-3. The Workshop of Mr. V

The workshop of Mr. V does not weave *Pidan*, but this workshop gives good tips on how to make a good net profit. This workshop produces a very sophisticated and complicated high-quality silk textile, which looks like embroidery. At this workshop, a weaver earns 230 THB (about 6.9 USD) per day, and a weaver's assistant earns 200 THB (about 6 USD) per day. Since most of the weavers were middle-aged or older people who have difficulties in becoming migrant workers, this income from weaving is important even though their earnings are minimal. To operate one loom requires four weavers. They can only weave five centimeters a day, and it requires one month to produce less than two meters. This process is time-consuming (See Figure 4). However, the intensive work is worth it since the workshop can sell about 3.2 meters of this high-quality silk textile for 250,000 THB (about 7,500 USD). The author calculates that the labor cost of one loom to produce 3.2 meters is about 1,536 USD~1,792 USD¹⁷. This means the workshop can make a reasonable net profit even after deducting the costs of other materials for producing this high-quality silk textile.



At the workshop of Mr. V. Four weavers operate one loom.



Textile woven at the workshop of Mr. V.

Figure 4. The Workshop of Mr. V

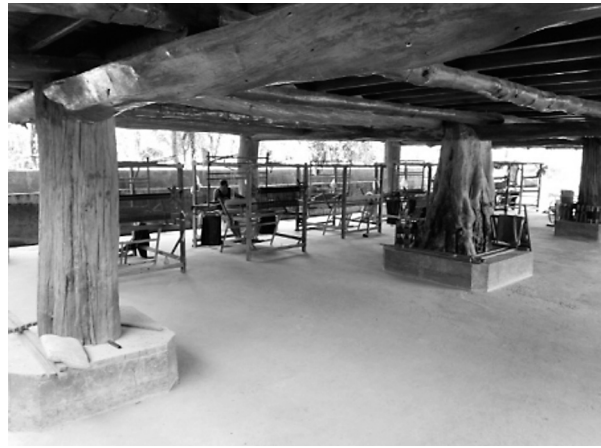
3-1-4. The Workshop of Mr. B, D village

Mr. B produces silk cloth when someone orders or commissions it. The price of a two meter long *naga* motif silk cloth using natural dye is 20,000 THB (about 600 USD). It takes 2.5 months to produce it starting from tying and dyeing the threads to weaving it. The weaving alone takes two weeks. Remarkably, he has also invented a weaving machine which can weave 2 meters of silk in only 3 days.

Mr. B's workshop has produced many works with sophisticated motifs. One of them is the silk cloth with the motif of intertwined *nagas*. His workshop sells silk cloths with various motifs at competitive prices. The price of a four-meter long silk cloth with a diamond motif is 15,000 THB (about 450 USD), one with the *naga* motif of *Pidan* is 50,000 THB (about 1,500 USD) (See Figure 5). The prices are higher at the souvenir shop for tourists. The price of a four meter long *Pidan* with the *naga* motif is about 120,000 THB (about 3,600 USD)~160,000 THB (about 4,800 USD).



High-quality *Pidan* with *naga* motifs designed by Mr. B and woven at his workshop



Mr. B's workshop built with discarded wooden logs



Ordinary-quality *Pidan* and ikat silk sold at souvenir shops nearby Mr. B's workshop



High-quality *Pidan* with *naga* motifs woven by Mr. B sold at the nearby souvenir shop

Figure 5. *Pidan* sold at the Workshop of Mr. B and nearby souvenir shops

Mr. B used to like textiles when he was young, but socially it was not common for men to weave in his home village. When he was about 16 or 17 years old, he decided to emigrate for construction work and other careers including joining a traditional musical troupe. However, his desires and dreams for textile production made him return to his village to take on a weaving career four years later. He started to design and construct his workshop by himself using discarded wood logs left over from illegal logging in the neighborhood. His business began with 6 weavers and 6 looms. Even without government support, he has managed to expand his business. Today he has forty-two people working in his workshop.

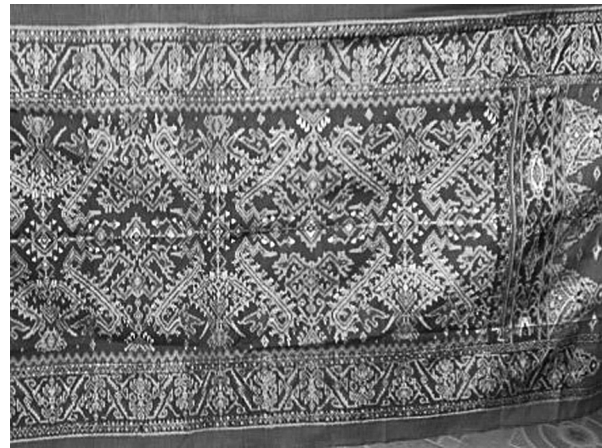
3-1-5. The Workshop of Mr. Y, S village

This workshop produces silk cloth with the motifs of *naga*, tree-of-life, ships, etc. (See Figure 6). They are the motifs of *Pidan*. Yet, the weavers do not call them *hol pidan* but rather “*sot pros* (men’s silk).” *Sot pros* are not worn in daily life, but they are used on different religious occasions, for instance wrapping a sacred ritual object known as *bai sarai*, for wrapping the deceased for a funeral, for the dressing of candidates in monk ordination ceremonies, and for

dressing for weddings. They can also be hung on walls and ceilings. As a tradition in the area, people neither wear silk cloths with motifs of Buddha and pagodas nor donate them to pagodas. Silk cloths with such motifs are woven on order of customers from Sisaket, Ubontani, etc.



Ordinary-quality *Pidan* woven at the Workshop of Mr. Y



Ordinary-quality *Pidan* with *naga* motif woven at the Workshop of Mr. Y

Figure 6. *Pidan* sold at the Workshop of Mr. Y

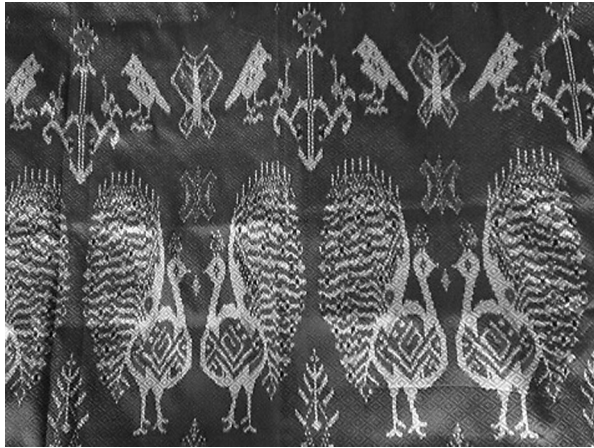
In this village the number of weavers is remarkably low; about 10 people weave out of about 200 households. Moreover, compared to other workshops which the author has visited, the quality of silk weaving in this workshop is not excellent but ordinary. The price of a two meter long *naga* motif silk cloth is 2,000 THB (about 60 USD). Despite this, a sense of pride in weaving as a vocation has particularly taken hold among the workshop's young members. From this can be inferred increased chances for the weaving tradition's continued survival.

3-1-6. T village

The researchers met some silk weavers in this village of more than 390 households. The weavers themselves did not know how many people weave silk in their village. We met Ms. SS, age 60, and Ms. PT, age 40. Ms. SS weaves a vertical stripe motif silk cloth common in Surin, and peacock motifs, etc. They tell us that people do not weave *Pidan*, which she has never heard of. She weaves elephant motif silk cloth recently, but not for wearing. People hang it on walls during auspicious ceremonies such as weddings, house warming ceremonies, etc. People also use silk cloth to wrap the deceased for funerals. Monks are sometimes the recipients of donated silk cloth.

Ms. SS told the research team that she had never heard of *Pidan* and she stated that she did not weave it. However, the elephant motifs of ikat silk for hanging at the ceremonies and not for wearing were the same motifs of *Pidan* in Cambodia. The white elephants are the motifs relevant to Buddhism (See Figure 7).

In this village, silk threads are not produced but bought from Pecchabun province. The price of silk threads is 800 THB (24 USD) per kilogram. To produce a silk cloth, it takes about two weeks to tie, dye, and weave the silk (about 8 days to weave). Ms. PT weaves pictorial silk for



Peacock motifs



Ordinary-quality *Pidan* with elephant motifs woven there

Figure 7. Ordinary ikat silk with peacock motifs and *Pidan* woven in T village

customers. The price of an 8 meter (about 2 kuben) long silk cloth is about 10,000 THB (300 USD), from which she earns a net-income of about half of the selling price, about 150 USD. Since most of the weavers were middle-aged or older people who have difficulties in becoming migrant workers, this income from weaving is important even though the amount is minimal.

The author considers this net-income to be better than that in Cambodia. In Cambodia, the price of imported silk threads have increased from an average of 25 USD per kg in 2008 to 55 USD per kg in 2013 while the price of silk cloth has decreased from 70 USD per 1 kuben (3.8 meters) in 2007 to 40~50 USD per 1 kuben in 2010¹⁸. The net income from producing 1 kuben decreased to 14~19 USD. Therefore, if a weaver can produce and sell a 2 kuben long silk cloth, the net-income can be 28~38 USD after deducting the costs of silk threads and dye.

3-2. Ubon Rachaternee

3-2-1. The Workshop of Mr. M

The workshop of Mr. M¹⁹ seems to financially sustain itself and be independent, a situation apparently facilitated by the various awards he has received for the high quality of his works of silk. He receives no financial support from either the Thai government or the Queen Sirikit Foundation. Commercially he seems to be very successful. For example, one bank has asked him to produce original, special silk gifts for the bank's special customers (See Figure 8).

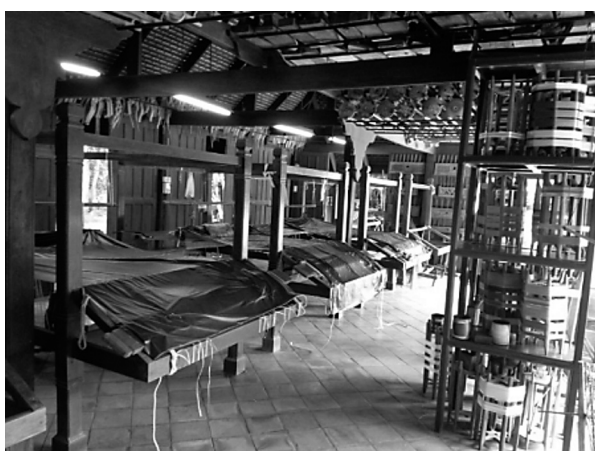
The ancestors of Mr. M worked as high-ranking government officials for generations. Mr. M is from a prestigious family which is very well-known in the area. His mother used to produce textiles. It was his mother who inspired him to take on a weaving career after working for many years as a flight attendant. His workshop produces very high quality and expensive silk cloth including *Pidan*. Mr. M designs original motifs and invents original techniques. About 90% of his weavers consist of local people and about 5% consist of people from outside the community who moved in due to marriage.



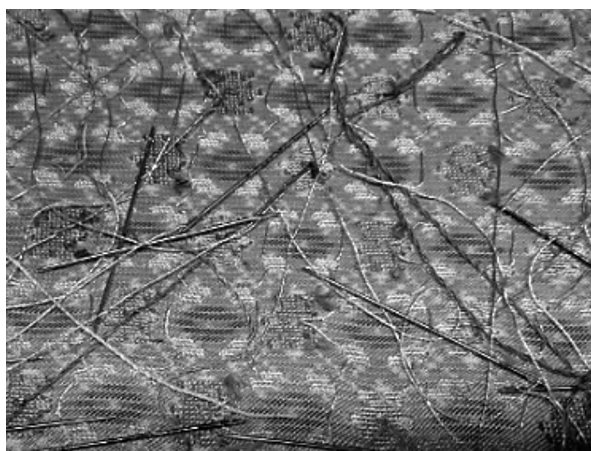
The entrance to the Workshop of Mr. M



Mr. M's originally designed silk



Mr. M's collection of antique weaving tools



Unique technique invented by Mr. M

Figure 8. The Workshop of Mr. M

Mr. M has inherited from his mother and collected quite a remarkable number of traditional weaving tools and equipment. During the researchers' visit, he was constructing a museum next to his workshop for the preservation and exhibition of traditional tools and equipment. He aimed to open the museum in 2016. He also consented to show us his personal collection of hundreds of pieces of extremely high-quality *Pidan*.

3-3. The research findings in North-East Thailand

As a whole, Mr. SIYONN Sophearith, the main researcher identifies five key points about silk weaving in Surin and Ubon Ratchatani based on his interviews. First, people weave for their living. In Surin, people produce the pictorial ikat silk cloth with sacred motifs known by the Khmers living in Cambodia as *Pidan* only when customers order or commission it. The pictorial *ikat* silk cloth is not called *hol Pidán* as in Cambodia. Instead, it is called by its motifs, for example, *hol rup neak*, a silk cloth with *naga* (multiple-headed serpent), or sometimes called *sot pros* (men's silk). Second, weavers who produce silk cloth have diverse reasons and interests. For example, Mr. B²⁰ expresses a strong commitment to weaving as the preservation of a local

tradition, and as a way to make a living. Mr. Y, a young man, seems to use his village's traditional weaving techniques to follow today's popular trend in Thailand. Third, weaving communities gain support and favor from the public, and also from the Royal family, particularly the Queen Sirikit Foundation. Fourth, the demand for traditional silk is higher in Thailand than the demand in Cambodia. The Thai government has a policy of promoting the use of silk. Lastly, as Mr. S stated, difficulty in obtaining natural materials for natural dye can be a serious challenge for producing naturally dyed silk cloth in the future.

After this field survey, the author came to the conclusion that the main reason for the survival and popularity of silk cloth production in North-East Thailand is because the silk producers and weavers are able to earn a reasonable net income while taking pride in preserving their long weaving tradition. Regarding what kinds of motifs of *Pidan* are woven there, most motifs are traditional motifs that are already known except the *naga* motifs newly designed by Mr. B.

4. The field survey in An Giang in Southern Vietnam from 17 to 19 August 2016

Three Japanese research team members visited An Giang province in Southern Vietnam from 17 to 19 August 2016. On the afternoon of 17 August, the researchers explored Chau Doc Market and the city of Chau Doc looking for hand-woven cloths. The team only found one shop in the market selling some small bags. Those bags were made by ethnic minorities, according to the seller. Also, a souvenir shop in the Victoria Chau Doc hotel sold some cloths but no *Pidan* (See Figure 9).



Chau Doc Market



Victoria Chau Doc Hotel



Khmer-style pagoda in the area



Khmer-style pagoda in the area

Figure 9. Chau Doc Market and Khmer-style pagodas

4-1. SS hamlet

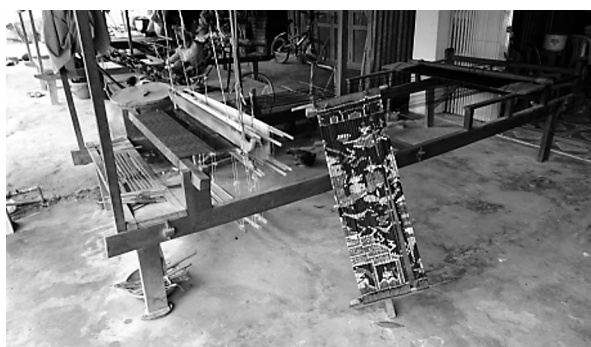
On 18 August, researchers visited SS hamlet with the guidance of Ms. Kim, a former representative of the women's union in SS hamlet. Ms. Kim supported and coordinated village female weavers to form a cooperative to revive weaving in SS hamlet in 1999. Since Vietnam is a one-party state under a socialist regime, strong government support was necessary for Ms. Kim, a women's union representative, to form a cooperative. In 1987, the villagers had to flee the hamlet to Soc Trang and Tra Vinh for 2-3 years because of the armed fighting at the border of Cambodia. After the villagers could return to SS hamlet, women wanted to start weaving again. They discussed and consulted with Ms. Kim about their desire. They formed a cooperative and started to weave again in 1999. Ms. N led the group of 12 women who wanted to weave.

They wove and sold for their families inside the hamlet. At its peak, the number of weavers reached about 300 people, but today less than 100 people weave²¹. Young people prefer to migrate to work, for example, in the industrial area in Dong Nai province, far beyond Ho Chi Minh city. Merchants of the Cham ethnic group²² come from Cambodia to buy silk for later resale. Their market is not Vietnam but Cambodia.

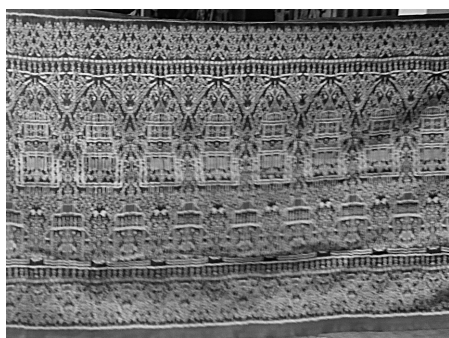
Ms. N brought out their hand-woven silk, including *Pidan*, and showed them to the research team. When the author asked about how they use such silk cloth, she replied that they use it for weddings (See Figure 10). When a daughter gets married, her mother weaves and gives two pieces of silk cloth to the daughter. People use silk as a deposit when they borrow money. People sometimes also donate silk to Pagodas.



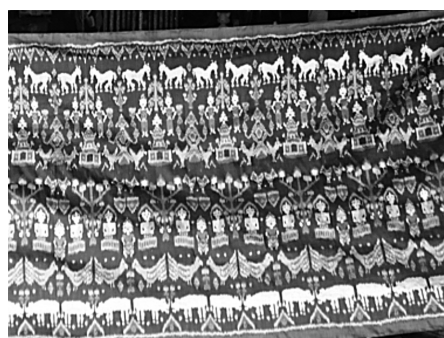
A *Pidan* being woven



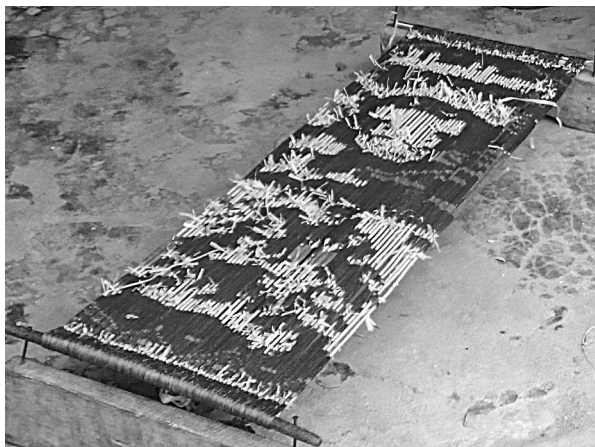
Tied and dyed silk threads for *Pidan*



This ordinary-quality *Pidan* (90cm x 290cm) was 1.5 million VND²³ (67.6 USD by an exchange rate of 1 USD=22,200 VND)



This ordinary-quality *Pidan* (90cm x 290cm) was 1.5 million VND (67.6 USD by an exchange rate of 1 USD=22,200 VND)



Tied and dyed silk threads for *Pidan* with Buddhist motifs.



Tied and dyed silk threads for *Pidan* with motifs including celestial nymphs and an elephant.

Figure 10. The weavers' cooperative and *Pidan* woven in SS hamlet

She buys silk threads from Lam Dong, near Da Lat. In the past, they used to raise silkworms and practice natural dyeing. However, recently natural dye is very expensive and thus difficult to buy. It takes two or three months to produce one piece of ikat silk including dyeing the threads. Within that time, weaving takes a half-month (See Figure 11).

Ms. N has stopped weaving due to failing eyesight as she has grown older. She has been succeeded as a weaver by her eldest daughter, Ms. NS (age 51). Ms. NS, however, has also begun to experience worsening eyesight.

An example of the costs and benefits of weaving is the following. If the price of silk is 1 million VND, the materials, including silk threads and dye, cost about 40% and the labor costs 60%. They consider the labor cost to be about 25,000 VND (about 1 USD) per day. They state as an example that the monthly salary of a factory worker is about 4 to 5 million VND (181.18 USD~225.23 USD with an exchange rate of 1 USD=22,200 VND). To work at the factories, the workers have to pay for their own living expenses for house-rents, foods, transportation, etc, but if both a wife and husband work at the factories and the whole family migrates, it is affordable.

For example, the author bought two pieces of *Pidan* in SS hamlet. The size of the *Pidan* was 90cm x 294cm. The price was 1.5 million VND (67.6 USD with an exchange rate of 1 USD=22,200 VND). The villagers told us that the labor cost is 60% of the price. It means that the labor cost was 40.6 USD to produce this *Pidan*. It takes two to three months from dyeing threads to weaving. One producer can make several pieces of *Pidan* in parallel while tying and dyeing needs time to dry while one can continue weaving. Or if several producers cooperate and divide their roles of tying and dyeing threads, and weaving, they may be producing not only one *Pidan* but several *Pidan* concurrently. This is an important source of income for weavers who stay in the hamlet since most of them are middle-aged or older people. They have less alternative occupational choices. Also, since the living expenses in the



Ordinary-quality ikat silk



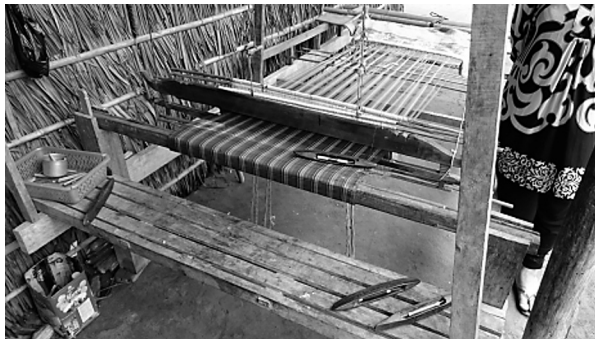
Ordinary-quality ikat silk for clothing



Ordinary-quality ikat silk woven in neighborhoods



Weaving looms made by hamlet residents



Traditional wooden thread shuttles



Silk threads brought from outside the village

Figure 11. Ordinary ikat silk woven in SS hamlet

hamlet are less than the outside, this income from weaving is advantageous even though the amount is less than the wage of factory work.

The author considers this net income to be better than that in Cambodia. As described in section 3-1-6, due to the price increase of imported silk threads in Cambodia in 2010, the net income of producing 1 kuben of silk cloth decreased to 14~19 USD. Therefore, if a weaver can produce and sell a 2 kuben long silk cloth, the net income can be 28~38 USD after deducting the costs of silk threads and dye.

The researchers left SS hamlet and visited the Khmer-style VR Pagoda. The Pagoda was undergoing renovations. According to the villagers, VR Pagoda used to have *Pidan* hanging

on display before the start of the renovations. The renovations are taking a long time due to a lack of available funding. Funding efforts are ongoing, with individual donations often ranging from 410,000 VND to 520,000 VND (See Figure 12).



Gate of VR pagoda



Wall paintings of VR pagoda created with the support of donations from local people



A building inside the compound of VR pagoda

Figure 12. Khmer-style pagoda nearby SS hamlet

After the researchers left the pagoda, we also visited the Khmer Textile Weaving Training Center, Van Giao commune, Tinh Bien district (See Figure 13). The government constructed it with funds of about 25,000 USD (about 2.5 million yen).



The government constructed the Khmer Textile Weaving Training Center, Van Giao commune



The Vietnamese government has a policy of promoting the textiles of the Khmer, an ethnic minority

Figure 13. The Khmer Textile Weaving Training Center constructed by the government near SS hamlet

4-2. The research findings in Southern Vietnam

In conclusion, regarding what kinds of motifs of *Pidan* woven in SS hamlet in Southern Vietnam, all motifs are traditional motifs that are common in Cambodia. After this field survey, the author came to the conclusion that the main reason for the survival and popularity of silk cloth production in SS hamlet in Southern Vietnam is because the silk producers and weavers are able to earn a reasonable net income, while taking pride in preserving their long weaving tradition.

5. Conclusion

Before conducting these field surveys, the author had assumed that not only in Cambodia but also in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam people probably did not actively weave *Pidan* today. However, the findings of these field surveys overturned this assumption (See Table 3). In fact, in North-East Thailand, there are young weavers who choose to weave ikat silk in their home villages after returning from migrant work. Some youths choose weaving as an occupation. They weave ikat silk and *Pidan* to sell. They seem to be successful. Also in North-East Thailand, there are some weavers who are weaving very high-quality expensive ikat silk on order from customers. Since those weavers have customers who pay high prices and appreciate the high quality of ikat silk, it is worthwhile for the weavers to weave high-quality ikat silk and also *Pidan* with pictorial motifs, even though the production process is quite time- and labor-consuming. Also, in Southern Vietnam, female weavers weave ikat silk including *Pidan* since merchants order and buy their products to sell in Cambodia. In short, individual weavers can earn reasonable net incomes after deducting the cost of materials including silk threads, dye, tools and looms. Also, in both countries, many weavers were middle-aged or older women who have difficulties in becoming migrant workers. Therefore, the income from producing silk cloth is important for those who have fewer alternative occupational choices.

Regarding what kinds of motifs of *Pidan* are woven in North-East Thailand, the author observed that most motifs are traditional motifs already recorded except the *naga* motifs newly designed by Mr. B. In SS hamlet in Southern Vietnam, all motifs are traditional motifs that are common in Cambodia.

Comparing such situations of active weaving in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam with the situation in Cambodia where young weavers decide to work at the factories, the author could identify some similar points in active silk weaving in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam. First, some have customers who are willing to order ikat silk and pay high prices. In Cambodia, weavers struggle to make ends meet due to rather high costs of imported materials²⁴ and a lack of such demand for high-quality expensive ikat silk. Second, as Mr. S describes, the royal family and the government of Thailand has policies to promote the production of traditional ikat silk. Also, in Vietnam, the government

Table 3. Findings on production and sales of silk cloths and *Pidans* in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam during the field survey in September 2015 and August 2016*

Country	Province	Village/hamlet/workshop/NGO	High-quality <i>Pidan</i>	Ordinary-quality <i>Pidan</i> /ikat silk	High-quality silk textile	High-quality ikat silk	Young successors	Silk thread	Price of two-meter silk textile (USD)
Thailand	Surin	Mr. S***	○	×	×	○	Train youths	Made in Thailand	1,800
		Mr. V	unknown	×	○	unknown	unknown		4,700
		Mr. B	○	×	×	○	○		225~750
		Mr. Y	×	○	×	×	○		60
		T village	×	○	×	×	unseen		75
	Ubon	Mr. M	○	×	○	○	Train youths		unknown
Vietnam	An Giang	SS	×	○	×	×	Met 1 young weaver	Made in Vietnam	46
Cambodia**	Takew	villages	×	○	×	×	Some	imported	in village 21~26
			at markets/shops in Takew & Phnom Penh 40~200						
	Phnom Penh	NGO-C***	○	×	○	○	Train youths	imported/ Made in Cambodia	plain silk cloth 40~54 ikat silk 126~156 <i>Pidan</i> 400~1,400
	Siam Reap	workshop-I***	○	×	○	○	○	Made in Cambodia	~3,000

*The author made this table based on the interviews. “○” stands for “producing”.

“×” stands for “not producing”. “Unknown” means that the author did not ask.

**See Table 1 for areas where they used to produce silk threads or cloth but the current situation is unknown. The author visited and interviewed NGO-C in 2013-2017 and workshop-I in 2011.

***All natural dye

supported the women’s union leader to form a weavers’ cooperative in SS hamlet and constructed the Khmer Textile Weaving Training Center. Such supportive government policies are rather weak in Cambodia²⁵. Third, good quality silk threads and the materials to make dyes, either natural or chemical, are produced in Thailand and Vietnam. The costs of materials of silk production seem to be less than in Cambodia. This means that the net profits of individual weavers can be relatively higher in Thailand and Vietnam than in Cambodia²⁶. These points seem to encourage and motivate more weavers to continue to produce ikat silk in Thailand and Vietnam than in Cambodia.

Based on these findings from the surveys in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam, the author identifies several factors contributing to the survival of traditional ikat silk weaving, including *Pidan*. First, the weavers in both countries tend to express a love of, and

pride in, this traditional ikat silk. Second, in addition to this love of their crafts, what motivates people in North-East Thailand and Southern Vietnam to produce traditional ikat silk weaving seems to be the reasonable net profits available for individual weavers. Otherwise, some youths in North-East Thailand with alternative occupational choices would not choose weaving. Also, for middle-aged or older people who have no other choices like becoming migrant workers, income from weaving is highly advantageous. What seems to be crucial to allow the survival of traditional ikat silk weaving, including *Pidan* could be: the market demand for high-priced ikat silk; and the access and low-cost of ikat silk production materials. The government policies or patronage of royal families promoting the production of traditional ikat silk seem to be helpful but not essential.

Therefore, for the survival of the endangered weaving technique and motifs of traditional *Pidan*, new and increasing customers' demands and new markets for *Pidan* and the access to low-cost production materials seem to be crucial. They motivate people to continue to master the technique and carry it forward to succeeding generations. If the excellence of high-quality *Pidan* is acknowledged as an endangered intangible cultural heritage and becomes better known around the world, it may create an expanded customer base and market demand, thereby helping weavers to continue this precious cultural heritage.

[Notes]

- 1 The author sincerely appreciates the research fund partly provided by *HEIWA* (peace) - *NAKAJIMA* Foundation, Tokyo, Japan to conduct this field survey for April 2015 - March 2016. Yet, the author is solely responsible for any misunderstandings or mistakes stated in this report.
- 2 It is known in Cambodia as *Neak Poan*.
- 3 See Uemura (2003) and Iwanaga (2003).
- 4 See Yonekura (2014).
- 5 "USD" stands for "US dollar".
- 6 See *the Phnom Penh Post* (2016).
- 7 A factory worker whom the author interviewed in Takew on 28 August 2016 also said that if she worked long hours, she could get a monthly net income of about 190 USD after deducting transportation costs.
- 8 See Yonekura (2014).
- 9 See Yonekura (2014).
- 10 According to Iwanaga (2003), Poam village is next to the east side of Kdan village. According to NCDD (2014), there is no record of Poam village in Kdan commune but there is a village called Peem in Kompong Reap commune, Prey Kavas district.
- 11 According to NCDD (2014), Samraon village exists in the Krouchmar commune, Krouchmar district, but there is no Samraon village in other communes in Krouchmar district.
- 12 According to NCDD (2014), there is Prek Takae village but no Preek Takou village.
- 13 According to Kong (2013), most of 1700 households identified as doing weaving lived in the 5 villages shown in Table 1, in the Koh Dach weaving production community located about 10 km north-east of Phnom Penh. Kong (2013) did not state the names of the provinces containing major silk-producing areas, but the author cross-checked the locations based on the other publications

- and integrated them into Table 1. The author did not include “Lovea Prek Chrey, Leuk Dek, Peam Chor, Lovea Em” in Table 1 since the names of the provinces where they existed in were unknown. Kong described that they are “located in between the Mekong river and the Tok river”.
- 14 The Cambodian government set up The National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD) in 2008.
- 15 See Yonekura (2014).
- 16 “THB” stands for “Thai Baht”.
- 17 The simple calculation of labor cost is: (320cm/5cm) days x 6~7 USD/day x 4 weavers=1,536 USD~1,792 USD.
- 18 See Yonekura (2014).
- 19 To visit this workshop, it is essential to have some connection with those who know Mr. M personally. The researchers appreciate sincerely that one textile expert has kindly introduced us to Mr. M.
- 20 He was 39 years old.
- 21 There are 544 households in SS hamlet today.
- 22 Ethnic Cham people in Cambodia also weave “*Pidan*”. Their religion is Islam.
- 23 “VND” stands for “Vietnamese Dong”.
- 24 See Yonekura (2014).
- 25 See Yonekura (2014).
- 26 As described in section 3-1-6, due to the price increase of imported silk threads in Cambodia in 2010, the net income of producing 1 kuben of silk cloth decreased to 14~19 USD after deducting the costs of silk threads and dye.

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(米倉 雪子 国際学科)