

# ANALYSIS OF THAI KHON MAIN CHARACTERS AND IMPLEMENTATION INTO HIGH-END FASHION DESIGN

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## ABSTRACT

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Thai Khon is a traditional Thai royal drama. The performance script "Ramakien" is adapted from the ancient Indian epic "Ramayana", which has had a significant impact on the history of Thai literature and art. Thai Khon has been passed down from the Ayutthaya era. It is part of Thai high-end theater performances and cultural arts. Thai Khon is not only a performing art but a combination of culture, art and ceremony. It is Thailand's precious intangible cultural heritage, inheriting Thai traditional customs and historical culture. Thai Khon is famous for its colorful costumes and masks. In this research, the historical background and costume concept of Thai Khon will be analyzed. This research employed research methods such as literature analysis, field observation, and qualitative research methods to summarize and analyze the data, so as to obtain the important data that constitutes the design elements, how a new design method can incorporate the important design elements of Thai Khon in High-end fashion design. In the previous research on Thai Khon, researchers mainly focused on its historical narrative and costume making technology. However, even though there has been attention given to the inheritance of Thai Khon, there is a lack in the research on how to combine innovate this ancient art through the incorporation of modern fashion and design. This research is conducted with the purpose to inspect the inheritance and innovation of Thai Khon culture from a new perspective. The use of high-end fashion design in Thai Khon should make Thailand's unique intangible cultural heritage more approachable and accessible to the public.

**Keywords:** Thai Khon; Thailand intangible cultural heritage; main characters; fashion design; inheritance and innovation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thai Khon is one of the oldest and prestige theatrical dances in Thailand. It is also the unique art and culture of Thailand. Thai Khon is a kind of culture in Thailand's performing arts, which can be traced back to the Ayutthaya period. It has its own unique identity and blends with art, literature, ritual, and craft.

Thai Khon mainly talks about the convoluted love story of Rama and Sita. King Rama and his wife Sita are respected by the people. But one day, Sita was robbed by Thotsakan, a demon with ten heads and twenty

arms. In order to save his wife Sita, Rama went through all kinds of dangers, finally he got help from the god monkey, Hanuman. Hanuman led his army to fight against the devil Thotsakan and finally won the victory, rescued Sita. The storyline of Thai Khon persuades people to have good behavior, be brave, and praise the love in a humorous and understandable way.

The main feature of Thai Khon is that performers must wear masks during performance, except heroes, heroines, and gods. The performance is accompanied by lead singer and chorus, storyteller and dialogue narrator. Thai Khon described Ramakien's story (Thai version of Ramayana's epic).

Thai Khon can be regarded as the epitome of ancient Thai's art and culture, comprised the important elements of Thai classical culture. However, with the acceleration of the daily-life pace by a modern life, Khon has been suffered challenging like other traditional arts. It is difficult to attract young audiences, and facing the innovative problems. Aiming to protect this national culture, Thai government applied Thai Khon as nation intangible cultural heritage. However, it is not enough to carry forward Thai Khon culture and art only from the aspect of performance. In order to achieve the purpose of mass communication, Thai Khon culture should be combined with arts from different regions and generate a new paradigm, so as to meet the aesthetic needs of the younger generation.

From a practical point of view, although the social and environment changes bring challenges and obstacles, it also provides more possibilities and opportunities for the national aesthetic culture to enter the real-life level. How to make the national culture to better connect and correspond to social development and changes, this is the key to whether national culture can obtain self-development and creative transformation in the face of current reality, so as to usher in the rebirth and development of national culture. The combination of traditional culture and modern aesthetic trends has become a hot national issue and academic research challenge today. Faced with such problems, this study will use clothing as a medium to conduct research on the protection and inheritance of Thai Khon culture as seen in Thai Khon performance from Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Thai Khon performance  
Source: Kiriwat (2001)

## 2. THAI KHON

### 2.1 Thai Khon's history

Thai Khon combines many aspects of Thai art: drama, dance, pantomime, and music. The costumes are beautifully made, including decorations, headdresses, and masks, which represent most distinctive feature of Thai Khon. Thai Khon's main performance script is "Ramakien", which is known as a masterpiece in the history of Thai literature and art.

"Ramakien" is an adaptation of the ancient Indian epic "Ramayana". The drama based on Ramakien is called the beginning of a completed Ramayana in Thailand. Ramayana's story is recorded in the Phimai Historical Heritage Park in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. This remains confirms that Ramayana was introduced from India to Thailand at least nine hundred years ago (Srisuchat, 2018).

During the Angkor Dynasty, the stone carvings of Ramayana still carry a strong Indian culture. However, the same story murals located on the cloister of the Wat Phra Kaew Temple, which built in the eighteenth century have been completely Thai's Style. With the evolution of society and the development of spiritual civilization, Ramayana has formed the local cultural characteristics of Thailand. The main story of Thai Khon is similar to the story of "Ramayana", but many other aspects has been translated into Thai context, such as clothes, weapons, terrain and natural elements, these design languages are described as Thai style. Although Thailand is considered to be a Theravada Buddhist society, the hidden Hindu mythology of Ramakien provides

Thai mythology with creative and various spiritual symbols, complementing the beliefs of animism from Thailand.

There are many versions of "Ramakien" (shown in Figure 2), the most widely circulated is the version written by Rama I, the founding monarch of the Chakri Dynasty, and later his son Rama II did change and innovate based on this version, resulted in a Thai Khon's classic script. Ramayana in India was adapted and innovated by Thai culture and became Ramakien in Thailand. It retains the storyline, but the character costumes, stage scene details have changed resembled the characteristics of Thai local culture.

In the period of King Rama V, Khon and Lakhon dance techniques were harmoniously blended and developed continuously. The dance methods of Khon seek to represent human characteristics, with actors singing the lines instead of performing mimes. After Rama IV, the regulations on the division of performance types in the drama were abolished. Women can then played all types of characters, even male characters. After continuous reform and innovation and the precipitation of history, the rearrangement gave birth to the final Khon performance forms and practices.



**Figure 2:** Thai Ramayana (Ramakien)  
Source: Jpatokal (2009)

## 2.2 Thai Khon's main character analysis

Thai Khon performers are divided into four groups, which are: Phra, Nang, Yuksa (demons or ogres), and Simians or monkey. Phra is a male character of gods or heroes, actors have a classic oval face, a healthy, well-proportioned body and elegance arms, legs and long neck, toned body lines. Nang includes female characters such as heroines, goddesses, or ghosts. The players of these characters are often required to have a beautiful oval face and a slim and harmonious body figure. During the performance, they are equipped with delicate and beautiful gestures. Yuksa, demons or ogres, actors who play these characters are usually short male actors with strong and muscular appearance, and built with enough strength to support another performer in the battle scene, or to maintain a strenuous posture for a long period of time. Ling, simians, actors of these characters usually use agile and flexible sporty young performer. The monkey character requires the skills to carry out assault, tumbling, or perform some acrobatics move to match the monkey's image and action of the character. Classification and extraction based on these four groups characteristic variation, the main characters in Thai Khon leading the storyline are: Rama, Sita, Hanuman and Thotsakan. Thai Khon main character is shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Thai Khon Main Characters  
Source: Panpaen (2017)

### 2.2.1 Rama

Some scholars proposed that Rama in Ramakien symbolizes the incarnation of the original mythical character Vishnu. As the ruler of God, Rama is noble, virtuous, perfect, and respected. Therefore, since the reign of Rama VI, the title of "Rama" has been retroactively given to all previous Thai monarchs, him and his successors. However, some scholars believe that although the plot of Khon comes from the Ramayana in India, it has been changed on the basis of it, and Rama is the image of the king after localization in Thailand, representing justice, love for the people, and respected by citizens (Srinin, 2018).

Phra Ram is the Thai name of Rama, and Rama is the main protagonist of Thai Ramakien epic mythology. Rama is Phra Ram in Thailand, not reincarnated from the Hindu god Vishnu. Phra Ram, to some point of view is the reincarnation of Buddha, and perhaps a classical figure in Thai Buddhist. Phra Ram also plays a leading character in Thai Khon. He is a symbol of courage, represents a noble and respected god.

Although both claims have yet to be verified, the researchers believe that although the plot of Thai Khon originated from the Ramakien in India, it was adapted by Thai on the basis of it. Rama is the image of the king of Thailand after its localization, whether it's the incarnation of Vishnu or the reincarnation of Buddha, which is actually just a "representational symbol" in fact. The symbolic meaning of this character is a leader with justice, pertains kindness, love for the people, and is respected by all people, as shown in Figure 4.



## CHARACTER

### Character Analysis

Rama is the image of the king of Thailand after its localization, whether it 's the incarnation of Vishnu or the reincarnation of Buddha, which is actually just a "representational symbol" in fact. The symbolic meaning of this role is a leader, who is justice, kindness, love for the people, and is respected by the people also.

### Identity

Brave

Noble

Respected

Figure 4: Rama Character Analysis

### 2.2.2 Sita

Sita is the heroine of the Thai Khon plot. In the Indian story of "Ramayana", she is the daughter of King Janaka, and the beloved wife of Rama. She is the reincarnation of the wealthy and prosperous goddess of Lakshmi, representing a perfect lady. She is beautiful, pious, chaste and peerless. There is not much descriptions of Sita in the existing literature about Thai Khon studies. But the feeling that Sita brings to the audiences is similar. She has been portrayed with a beautiful face and beautiful posture, she not only has the appearance beauty, but also has the inner beauty. She and Rama support each other, care for the people, and are respected by the people. Besides, she is loyal to love. Sita's image is actually a microcosm of a perfect female image. She represents not only the feminine beauty of women, but also the epitome of "beauty". "Beauty" is a topic that has been discussed since ancient times. Beauty is everyone's pursuit. People like beautiful things, but beauty is often fragile and perishable, so it needs to be cherished and protected, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Sita Character Analysis

# CHARACTER

## Character Analysis

Sita is the heroine of the khon plot. She has a beautiful face and beautiful posture, she not only has the appearance beauty, but also has the inner beauty. She and Rama support each other, care for the people, and be respected by the people. Besides, she is loyal to love. Sita's image is actually a microcosm of a perfect female image.

### Identity

Elegant

Holy

Beauty

### 2.2.3 Hanuman

Hanuman, the role of god monkey, he helps Rama to fight with Thotsakan. As with other animal characters, the image of his character is that of a loyal warrior and leader. He leads simian army to help the king win the fight. He is also a symbol of Thai people's wit, flexibility and loyalty. However, he is not only a great fighter but also the philandering lover to many of the female characters, both human and demon.

Hanuman is a great white proboscis monkey or ape monkey, he is the leader of the ape army. Hanuman is very loyal to the King, he is the patron of martial arts and an example of courage, fortitude and excellence in Thailand. He is depicted as wearing a crown on his head and armor. He is depicted as an albino white, strong character with open mouth in action, sometimes shown carrying a trident that symbolized of Thai people's wit, flexibility and loyalty (Miettinen, 2017), as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Hanuman Character Analysis

# CHARACTER

## Character Analysis

Hanuman is a great white proboscis monkey or ape monkey, he is the leader of the ape army. Hanuman is very loyal to the King, he is the patron of martial arts and an example of courage, fortitude and excellence in Thailand. He is depicted as wearing a crown on his head and armor. He is depicted as an albino white, strong character with open mouth in action, sometimes shown carrying a trident. It is also a symbol of Thai people's wit, flexibility and loyalty.

### Identity

Powerful

Loyalty

Protector

### 2.2.4 Thotsakan

Thotsakan, his image is very special, because he has ten-faces. Having ten faces, and perhaps ten bodies can portray a complex image, which is destined to have many complicated feelings and personalities. He embodies all kinds of sins and emotions ranging from shame to greed, love, and lust. Thotsakan's image reflects human's desires. As the plot of the play develops, his image is certainly charismatic. Compared with the perfect image of Rama and Sita, Thotsakan's character is closer to the characteristics of human nature, and the choice bestowed on him also leads to more humanistic development of the plot.

The Ramakien can be called an esoteric allegory of man's spiritual quest (Rama) for Nirvana (Sita). In this way, it is also a purification of physical and intellectual faculties in which Thotsakan and his brothers are coarse passions and imperfections while the monkey warriors stand for virtues. Thai Khon's performance spreads virtue, trust, honor, pride and forgiveness in the form of storytelling, and encourages love and harmony between families and love for society. It recognizes and elaborates the absolute importance of human nature, where the employed of Thotsakan showed the audience how to properly control their thoughts and desires in order to obtain inner peace and spiritual happiness along with the existent of other characters, as shown in Figure 7.



## Character Analysis

Thotsakan, the ten-faced demon, he has the most human characteristics of all. He has ten faces, and perhaps ten bodies. Such a complex image is destined to have many complicated feelings and personalities. He embodies all kinds of sins and emotions ranging from shame to greed and love and lust. Thotsakan's image reflects human's desires. Dramaturges often view villains with more shades of grey.

### Identity

Contrary

Wicked

Ambitious

Figure 7: Thotsakan Character Analysis

### 2.3 Thai Khon's costume analysis

Thai Khon's costumes appeared in the form of "Yuen Krueng", such as Phra, Nang, Demon and Monkey's costume. This kind of costume imitated the "Krueng Ton" used by the royal family at the time, and these costumes were also used to perform the performances of Kong or Lakhon (Thai Drama). From the Ayutthaya era, Thonburi era to the current Rattanakosin era, the form of clothing has been developing (Jongda et al., 2015).

The characteristics of the costumes worn by each character of Thai Khon are different, and the design and matching of the costumes are based on the characteristics of different characters. The costumes of male protagonists or gods convey to the audience the dignity and noble image of gods. The costumes of female characters are beautiful, gentle and kind. The costumes of characters such as demons convey fierceness, rebellion and strength through the combination of styles and colors. The role of the monkey is divine, or the overall shape of their costumes is very lively to the audience. In addition, the material used to make the appearance of the monkey is also quite special, which used the reflective ornaments to indicate fur. From the colors, styles, and patterns of clothing performed by Thai Khon, they found that they basically used primary colors such as red, green, and yellow. The main color of the clothes will have some different colors to contrast; for example, the Thotsakan's clothing uses green to red.

The patterns embroidered on the clothes of Phra, Nang, Demon, and Monkey are different. For example, the costumes of female characters are embroidered with exquisite small sequins, while the costume tops of male characters are patterned with Kra jung Ta oiy or Phum Kao Bin. The demon's costume is Na Singha

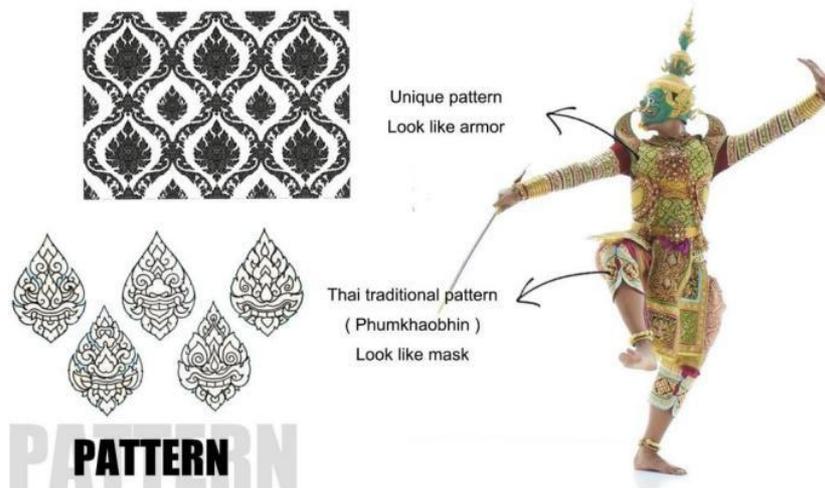
pattern, Dao Krajai pattern or Tee Kriow pattern, but the monkey's character is Taksinawat pattern. The embroidery of opera costumes is a standard process. First, make an embroidery frame with an iron bracket. Then the original canvas was placed on it, stretched to various angles, and embroidered according to the pattern. The craftsman used the opposite colors, such as red and green, then copied the pattern and embroidered sequins and lace on the copied pattern.

- The pattern on the monkey character expresses the hair of the monkey and is drawn in a clockwise design. This pattern is called "Taksinawat", as shown in Figure 8.



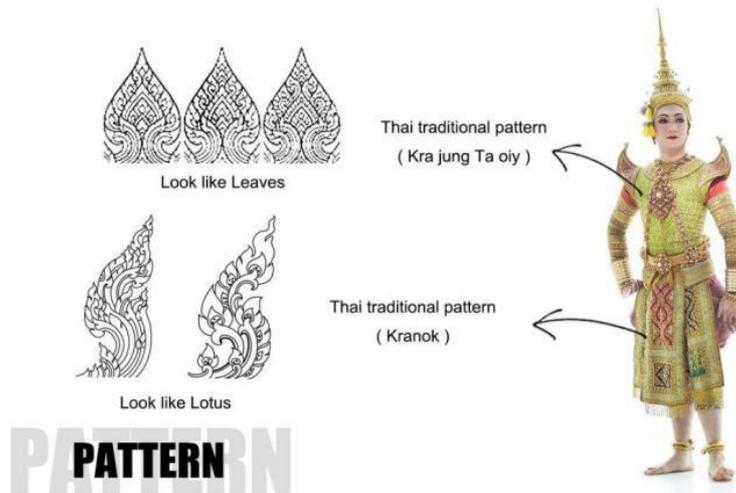
**Figure 8:** The Pattern on the Monkey Character Costume

- The pattern on the demon characters incorporates the evil facial expression into the pattern which is surrounded by a deformed pattern of flames and uses a continuous method to integrate the pattern to make it look like an armor. This pattern is called "Phumkhaobhin", as shown in Figure 9.



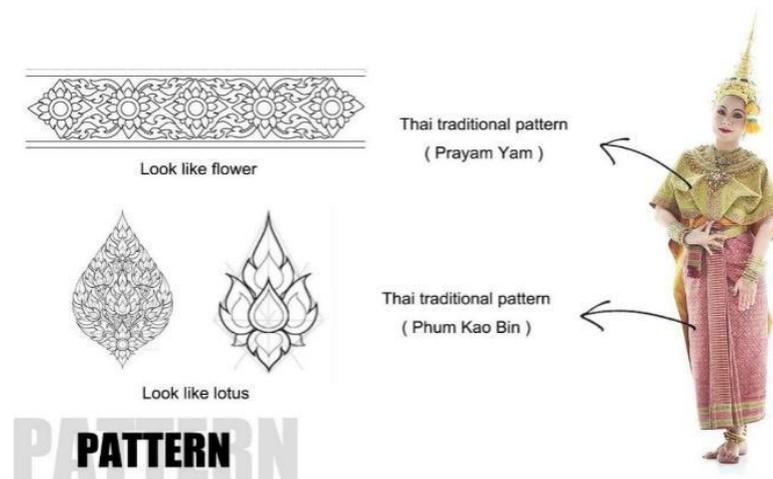
**Figure 9:** The Pattern on the Demon Character Costume

- The pattern on the male characters is a leaf-shaped pattern that represents nobility and majesty. Like the new leaves of bamboo, it is triangular and combined in a two-way continuous way. This pattern is called "Kra Jung Ta Oiy", as shown in Figure 10.



**Figure 10:** The Pattern on the Male Character Costume

- The pattern on the female character expresses the elegance and tenderness of women. Using lotus as the prototype, the square pattern is designed with soft lines. This pattern is called "Prayam Yam", as shown in Figure 11.



**Figure 11:** The Pattern on the Female Character Costume

After finishing the embroidery work, sew the garment lining as soon as possible to avoid wrinkles and deform the pattern. After the embroidery process is completed, match the costume with the actor's body shape, but not too large or too thick. When the actor wears it, the costume should be finished with the finest tailoring. Making of Thai Khon costume is shown in Figure 12.



**Figure 12:** The Pattern on the Female Character Costume  
Source: L'Officiel Thailand (2014)

## 2.4 Thai Khon's headdress analysis

Among the Thai Khon performances, the most famous and attracting the audience's attention is the character masks worn by the performers. Masks are one of the most important costume features of Thai Khon performances. The mask is constructed with traditional colors, and with different decorations and symbols, etc., where the audience can identify the role by the color of the mask. Unlike Kathakali in India, in the early stage of Thai Khon development, masks and make-up colors were used to distinguish character personality. But modern Thai Khon wears masks to distinguish other characters from human.

After conducting a series of information collection and analysis, the researchers made a detailed description, comparing and analyse of Headdress worn by the four characters of Thai Khon. In Thai Khon, human characters wear special hats, while other characters wear masks. So, the researchers will focus on the masks of Hanuman and Thotsakan to elaborate the purpose of character classification and categorization. Thai Khon's masks are shown in Figure 13.



**Figure 13:** Thai Khon's Masks  
Source: Truong (2017)

### 2.4.1 Hanuman's mask

Hanuman is a relatively special character in Thai Khon. He has complicated body figure with human characteristics, divine abilities and monkey appearance, so it is decided that Hanuman's mask is also special, which is obviously different from other characters' masks. In the story of Khon, Hanuman is a loyal and good at fighting character. The main colors of Hanuman masks are white, gold, red and green. In contrast to the tall, pointed headdresses of other characters, Hanuman's mask is smaller and round. The color of the mask is white, the forehead and ears are decorated with gold, highlighting Hanuman's divinity. The facial features of Hanuman's mask are wide green color eyes, wide open mouth, and exposed teeth, which are consistent with the image of a monkey. From the picture, Hanuman's mouth contains a gem. The special design of this detail is to express Hanuman's special strength and divinity. In Indian culture, Hanuman is the son of the god who controls victory. When Hanuman yawns, he exhales the sun, moon, and stars. This is the magical power for people to recognize Hanuman. In addition to the gems in the mouth, Hanuman also has the modeling of gems between the eyebrows. In Buddhist culture, it represents the inner energy (Tillinghast, 2016).

### 2.4.2 Thotsakan's mask

The overall shape of Thotsakan's mask is pretty long with a pointed tip. The main color of the mask is a combination of green and golden. The facial features are dark green, and the forehead and top of the head and ears are decorated with golden. The mask is divided into three layers. Compared with the facial features of the Hanuman mask, the same point is that Thotsakan's facial features are also wide eyes, but the difference is that his mouth is not open. He has sharp fangs, and the length extending from the mouth to the eyes, it proves the characteristics of Thotsakan, which is "devilish". Thotsakan is a figure with three layers of masks in Khon's mask. Through careful observation, it is found that the eyes shape of the bottom mask is round and large, and some scholars have proposed that it is like a crocodile's eye. The facial features in the middle layer are similar to the bottom. But it must be noted that the top layer and the middle layer of Thotsakan's mask are divided into four sides, front, rear, left, and right, and the images of the four sides are the same, so that the audience can see Thotsakan's face from different angles. It corresponds to his image of ten faces, and also expresses Thotsakan's huge power and ability.

### 2.4.3 Rama and Sita headdress

Because the role setting of Rama and Sita is human, they don't use masks to cover actors or actress faces, only headdresses. During the performance, the audience can see the real face of the actors. Therefore, compared with the masks of Thotsakan and Hanuman, the design of the headdresses is simpler. The shape of the headdresses is also relatively long, with a pointed tip. The main color of the headdresses is golden, reflecting the dignity of Rama and Sita. In order to balance with the simple design, the headdresses of Rama and Sita are relatively cumbersome in the manufacturing process. The headdresses are decorated with silver diamonds on the whole, which looks particularly dazzling. At the same time, it is decorated with flowers near by the ears. The flowers represent respect and nobility in the Thailand culture.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is an interdisciplinary work. It combines the theoretical knowledge from the disciplines of drama art and fashion design. The specific research content will be explained in detail in the design experiment section. The methodological composition of this research is as follows:

- The literature review study the diversity and integration of Thai Khon from the perspectives of cultural communication and innovation by the deductive induction method. Through literature survey and field research, the researchers identified basic composition and elements of Thai Khon culture.
- In the early stage of design creation, a questionnaire survey was conducted on audiences, and feedback data from audiences were collected. The important visual and cultural elements in Thai Khon that have an influence on audiences were extracted and applied to high-end fashion design.
- Interdisciplinary research method - Since this research is conducted with the purpose to develop an approach for cultural protection and an innovative design of the intangible cultural heritage Thai Khon with fashion as the medium, the researchers analyzed other related case studies. After research and comparative analysis, the researchers identified the important artistic elements of Thai Khon inheritance and innovation, and combined them with the discipline of fashion design, as shown in Figure 14.

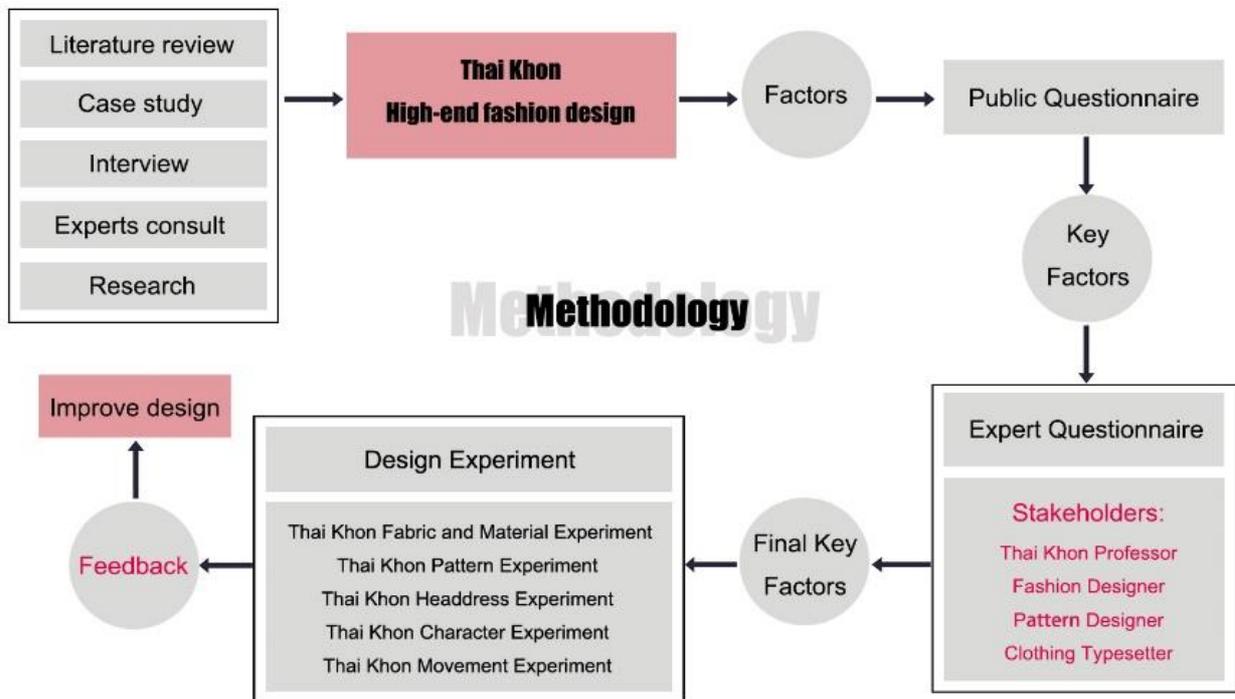


Figure 14: Research Methodology

### 3.1 Drama Research and Analysis Methodology

The object of this study is not limited to introducing Thai Khon's development history or art form, but it aims to recreate Thai Khon's art and culture through fashion design. Therefore, the research method adopted by the researchers are necessarily a cross-disciplinary method. First, the researchers attempted to identify the important cultural and artistic elements of Thai Khon, analyze their essence and connotation one of individual elements, and refine the arguments from relevant aspects. From the the researcher designed a questionnaire and conducted a questionnaire survey of the audience before concluding how the key elements of Thai Khon can be integrated in the design of high-end fashion, as shown in Figure 15.

Main characters	Headwear style	Costume color extraction	Character and personality transforming
Hanuman	White mask, symbol, gold leaf decoration, delicate mask with monkey personality	White	Powerful Loyalty Protector Soldier
Thotsakan	The color of the mask is mainly green, decorated with gold foil, crocodile eyes, three levels	green	Contrary Wicked Ambitious
Rama	White face and Thai crown with three levels, and the face can be seen in every direction	Green Red	Brave Noble Respected
Sita	White face and delicate Thai pointed crown	Green Red	Elegant Holy Beauty Tender

Figure 15: Main Characters' Data Analysis

### 3.2 Extraction methodology of design elements

Questionnaire survey process:

- Literature review: Conduct a literature review on the subject of the survey, sort out and analyze related research, and determine the research purpose.
- Questionnaire design: Design the questionnaire based on the literature review, clarify the theoretical basis of the questionnaire design, test and modify the questionnaire, and determine the final questionnaire.
- Questionnaire investigation: Select the sampling method and survey sample, determine the sample size, and explain the distribution of the sample.
- Result analysis: Analyze the reliability and validity of the returned questionnaires, and select appropriate statistical analysis methods for data processing.
- Conclusion and discussion: Summarize and explain the research results.

#### 3.2.1 Quantitative research: Public questionnaire

The fixed answer items of these two questionnaires use a Likert scale ("very unimportant, unimportant, generally important, important, very important") to check the participants' agreement to specific statements. Taking into account the limitations of the interviewee's time or the place to check the questionnaire, they may be more willing to accept fewer options, which will increase the reliability of the answer.

Finally, considering that Thailand is a tourism country, the participants may come from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, the questionnaire was available in three languages: in Chinese, English and Thai. The native language makes it easier for participants to understand the content of the questionnaire or express themselves. After the conduct of the questionnaire it could be concluded that Thai people filled out 100 copies of the questionnaire, people from other countries filled out 70 copies of the questionnaire, and Chinese people filled out 30 copies of the questionnaire, as shown in Figure 16.

**Popular Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is from the Ph.D. research project of Silpakorn University. The purpose is to understand the importance of Thai Khon Costume factors and the importance of artistic influence. The survey was conducted anonymously. Please fill in objectively. The statistical results of the sample will be of great reference value to my current and future work. Thank you very much for your cooperation and participation!

**Gender:** Male  Female

**Age:** Under 25  26-40  40-55  Over 55

**Occupation:** Government Personnel  Enterprise Personnel   
Professional and Technical Personnel  Student  Other

**Education level:** High School and Below  University and Above

**Respondents:** Resident  Tourist

**Importance Level:** Very Unimportant (0) Unimportant (1) General important (2)  
Important (3) Very Important (4)

Serial Number	Influence Factor	Importance Level				
		0	1	2	3	4
1	The role of Thai Khon					
2	The mask of Thai Khon					
3	Clothing Structure of Thai Khon					
4	Clothing Color of Thai Khon					
5	Clothing Patterns of Thai Khon					
6	Clothing Fabric of Thai Khon					
7	Accessories of Thai Khon					
8	Regional of Thai Khon costume					
9	The Nationality of Thai Khon costume					
10	Ornamental of Thai Khon costume					
11	Uniqueness of Thai Khon costume					
12	Artistry of Thai Khon costume					
13	Thai Khon costume have a ceremonial sense					
14	Thai Khon costume have a religions					
15	Thai Khon costume have a scenario					
16	Unique Traditional Handicrafts of Thai Khon costume					
17	Cultural and Economic Status of Thai Khon costume					
18	Cultural Reproduction of Thai Khon costume Elements Combining with Modern Design					

## 200 Popular Questionnaires

Thailanders	Foreigners	Chinese
100	70	30



Figure 16: Public Questionnaire

### 3.2.2 Qualitative research: Expert questionnaire and interview

Considering that the research on this subject is cross-disciplinary, when selecting the interviewees, the researchers mainly focused on three groups: Thai Khon experts, fashion designers, and art design professors. With interviewees from these three different areas, the researchers found that the experts provided very useful professional information, which is also a great help for further in-depth research and design experiments. The interviewees include 3 Thai Khon experts, 10 fashion designers, and 7 art design professors. (Figure 17, 18)

## 20 Expert Questionnaires



Fashion Designers

10

Art Design Professors

7

Thai Khon Experts

3

Figure 17: Expert Interview

**2.The importance of factor**

Suppose you think that the importance of the index is very important for the evaluation of the Creating the Sacred Sense of Local Temples. Please tick the table☑. As shown in the table below, so on.

Dimensions Criterion	Content	Degree of Importance				
		Very important	Important	Normal	Not important	Very unimportant
D <sub>1</sub> Tangible Image						
C 11 Accessories	Including accessories and headdresses					
C 12 Color	Colors in Thai Khon costume and accessories					
C 13 Fabric	The fabric used in Thai Khon costume					
C 14 Handicraft	Handicraft skills in making Thai Khon costume					
C 15 Masks	Mask worn by Thai Khon character					
C 16 Pattern	Patterns of Thai Khon costume					
C 17 Structure	Cutting structure of Thai Khon costume					
D <sub>2</sub> Intangible Experience						
C 21 Artistry	Artistic design and artistic expression					
C 22 Character	Characters in Thai Khon's story					
C 23 Culture	Thai Khon, as a national cultural heritage, represents national culture					
C 24 Ornamental	Thai Khon's decorative and ornamental					
C 25 Regional	Culture, art, distinctive features with national characteristics					

Figure 18: Expert Questionnaire

**3.3 Result analysis**

Regarding the topic of “Analysis of Thai Khon main characters and implementation into high-end fashion”, there are 8 design elements determined through quantitative and qualitative research, according to the statistics and analysis of the data. These design elements were applied to the high-end fashion design, and the proportion of each element's influence on the design is the final conclusion that the researchers arrived at the statistics on the influence proportion are as follows in Figure 19.

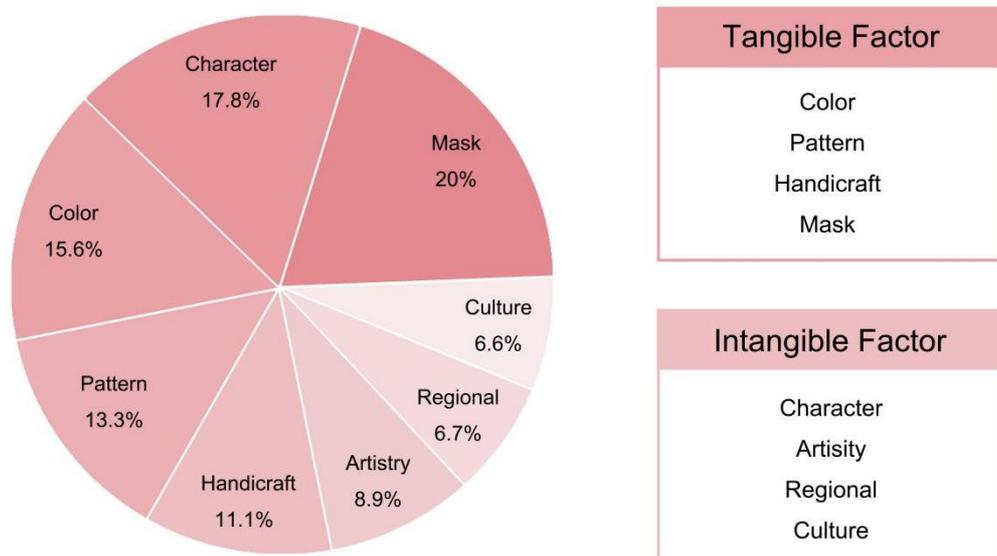
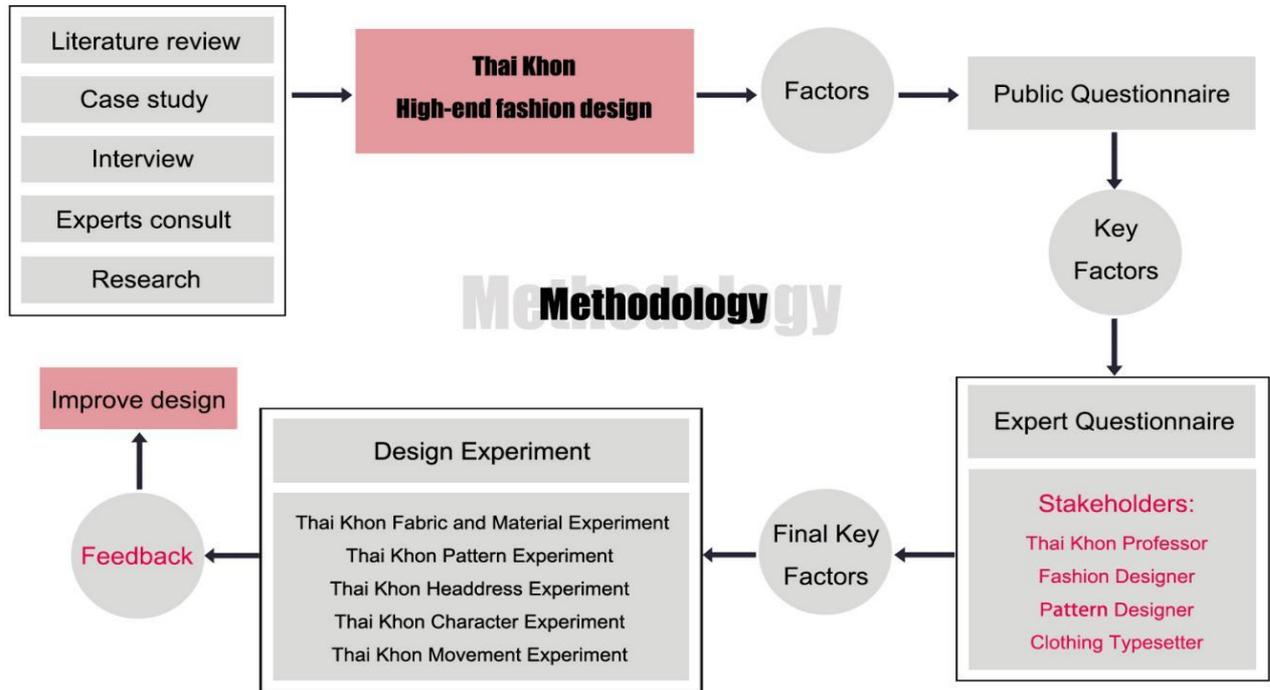


Figure 19: Factor Analysis

**3.4 Design strategy research and formulation**

As this is a research on Thai Khon culture and art, and on the transformation design that is carried out through fashion as a carrier, the first thing to pay attention to is the study of Thai Khon costumes (including patterns, colors and accessories, masks, etc.), and how to transform them into a tangible fashion design. The second aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is how the intangible elements such as the culture, stories, characters and other elements as represented by Thai Khon are transformed into fashion design. Finally, through this design, the national culture and philosophical spirit behind Thai Khon can be extracted.

Therefore, the design strategy formulated for this design consists of the intersection of theoretical research and practical experiment. Through the systematic theoretical research of design elements their characteristics are extracted, transformed into high-end fashion design, as shown in Figure 20.



**Figure 20:** Fashion Design Strategy

According to this design strategy, the researchers conducted the following Characteristic design experiment of Thai Khon. Through design experiments on Thai Khon's colors, patterns, masks, and character analysis, the researchers were able to identify design problems, get effective feedback, and make timely adjustments to improve the final design.

After many experiments, the research and formulation of the design strategy were used in the transformation of other intangible cultural heritage into innovative fashion design, which can be beneficial to the promotion and revival of intangible cultural heritage.

#### 4. APPLYING THAI KHON COSTUME ELEMENTS INTO HIGH-END FASHION DESIGN

When traditional Thai culture is combined with modern fashion trends, what effect will it show? This design takes Thai Khon, a representative of traditional culture as inspiration, and selects its important elements, such as masks, colors and patterns, to combine with high-end fashion design. Khon clothing and high-end fashion have one thing in common, both of which attach great importance to craftsmanship. Khon clothing continues the characteristics of traditional Thai clothing to a great extent. In this fast fashion society, the style of high-end fashion is used to express. The traditional art of Thailand has made the traditional culture fashionable and also catered to the needs of localization. This is also the attempt to establish a new generation of young designers. Clothing is the first shell of human beings in this world, and no longer traditionally worn for just protecting the body. It is a kind of culture that through the corresponding of art and design, cutting technology and sewing process, the design concept is integrated into this unique artistic aesthetics among techniques and acquired skills.

##### 4.1 Collection design - Hanuman character

Through the study of Hanuman's character, according to the character's personality traits, "Protector" is used as the design theme. "Protector" is a symbol of a hero. He is a brave character, a good leader, and a fighter. Protector is confident, firm, bold, and has strong willpower, as shown in Figure 21.



Figure 21: Design Sketch - Hanuman

The style of the clothing is simple, the lines are smooth, the sleeves are stiff and the shapes are exaggerated. It shows the warriors wearing armor in the battle. The overall design extracts some traditional Thai clothing features, such as belts and wide-leg pants, etc. make clothing more national, as shown in Figure 22(a), 22(b).



Figure 22: Design Analysis (a)



Figure 22: Design Analysis (b)

The colors most representative of Hanuman is the combination of white and gold. White implies a sense of justice, integrity, youthfulness and transcendent mortality. It reflects Hanuman's bravery and firmness as a warrior. Gold is the most brilliant luster color. It is the supreme pure color in nature. It is the color of the sun. It represents warmth and happiness. It shines on the earth and radiates light. It also symbolizes the light brought by the warrior, as shown in Figure 23.



Figure 23: Design of Color Layout

Two kinds of fabrics are selected. One is the traditional Thai handmade fabric, which is woven with golden silk threads, and Hanuman's hair is used as a pattern to woven into the fabric. This is also a major feature of Hanuman clothing in Khon. The other fabric is the white blended fabric with the golden silk thread integrated into the white fabric to form the luster of horizontal stripes, which complements the golden fabric, as shown in Figure 24.



**Figure 24:** Fashion Editorial

Detail design is the focus of this series of designs. First, the design of the headdress reflects the concept of Hanuman mask. It combines the pattern of the mask with the modern geometric design of the artistic method and transforms the design on the basis of retaining the original figure while adding the fashion sense. The glasses are used to decorate the costume to show the most expressive eyes in the masks. The details of the costumes combine traditional Thai patterns with the expressions of the masks, select some embellishment colors produced in the masks, and use the technique of beading. The patterns are broken up and then recombined in new ways to make the details more three-dimensional and artistic, as shown in Figure 25.



**Figure 25:** Fashion Detail

#### 4.2 Collection design - Thotsakan character

This series is based on Thotsakan's personality traits, extracting the "opposite" in his character as the theme. Thotsakan in Khon's story is an antagonist character; he is the opposite of a good life, the opposite of ease, and the opposite of kindness. If Rama, Sita, Hanuman are the positive sides of human nature, Thotsakan represents the negative desire of human nature. There is no absolute good or bad of human nature. Thotsakan represents all kinds of negative desires. Besides, Thotsakan seems to be a mirror, reflecting life and humanity, as shown in Figure 26.



Figure 26: Design Sketch - Thotsakan

The style is dominated by a simple H-shaped silhouette, and the straight line design makes the clothing more stiff. The H-shaped silhouette is a straight silhouette that weakens the shoulders, waist, and hips. The difference between them weakens the lines of women's body, showing a sense of stability and dignity. The overall feeling of the clothing conforms to Thotsakan's image, with 10 faces and 20 arms. In Khon's design, the clothing design expressed by Thotsakan also uses a "metaphor" approach. The same method is also applied to high-end fashion design. The tough shape and elegant fabric create a mysterious and powerful beauty, as shown in Figure 27(a), 27(b).



Figure 27: Design Analysis (a)



Figure 27: Design Analysis (b)

The color extracted from the main colors in Thotsakan costume is green. In the Middle Ages, green represents the demon, but it also represents love and mystery. Green is slightly saturated, with mystery, power, stunning and sexy temperament. It is high-profile and bright. The matching of green with the gold color exudes a sense of maturity and mystery. Whether it is temperament or gas field, the value has reached the peak. See Figure 28.

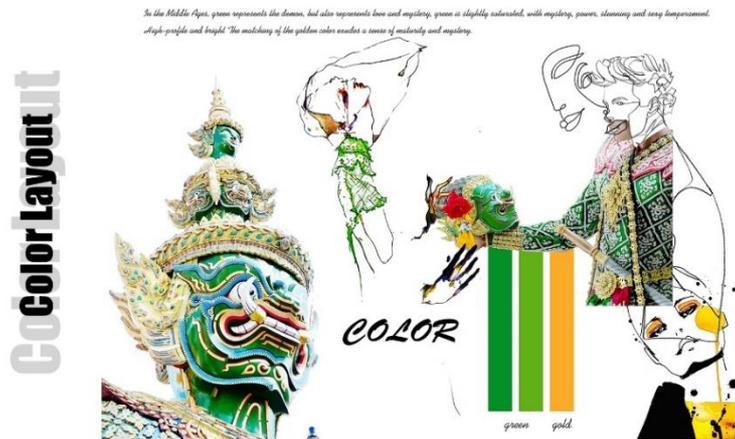


Figure 28: Design of Color Layout

On the fabric, the thin silk yarn fabric is combined with a very wide traditional gold silk handmade fabric to achieve the effect of rigidity and softness. The flowing lines and the mask picture made of hard mesh form a mood that intersects reality and dream. From the texture, the fabric portrays the charm of Thotsakan in a battle shirt. See Figure 29.



Figure 29: Fashion Editorial

The detailed design is the highlight of this series of designs. Using stiff mesh fabrics, combined with the expression of the sketch avatar painting, Thotsakan's most representative mask is produced. The layering of the mesh shows the "real" and "virtual" patterns and gives people a magical feeling like a dream, as shown in Figure 30.

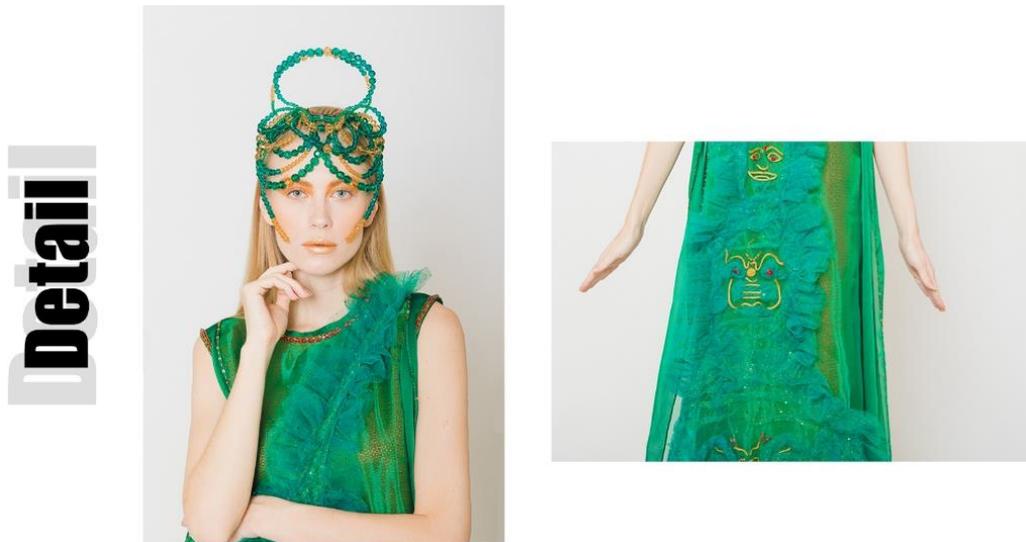


Figure 30: Fashion Detail

The production process of this collection will adopt the manual bead making method of Thai Khon costumes. In order to retain the original sensibility of Thai Khon costumes, the bead pattern expresses Thotsakan's combativeness and even the heroic characteristic.

#### 4.3 Collection design - Rama character

This series uses "Descendants of the Sun" as the design theme. Rama is the king that people admire. He is the incarnation of God and is admired by thousands of people. He is like the sun and protects everything in the world. The sun is very important to human beings. The circulation of the earth's atmosphere, the rotation of the day and night and the four seasons, the changes in the earth's warmth and coldness are all the result of the action of the sun. The king is like the sun - noble, brave, and omnipresent, as seen from the drawing in Figure 31.



Figure 31: Design Sketch - Rama

The style uses a simple and smart suit style. Since YSL's smoking suit, the suit is no longer a male favorite, and has also become one of the essential items in every female wardrobe. The wearer is more handsome and neutral, and the design of the belt adds some femininity. As self-reliant and independent modern women, they pay more attention to their own temperament. In this series, Rama's leader style is extracted, and the female elements of the new era are integrated to create a handsome queen style, as shown in Figure 32.



Figure 32: Design Analysis

Metaphorical colors are used in the design. Blue represents the sky. It is the most noble color; it is very pure, usually reminiscent of the ocean, sky, water, universe, and represents the respected king. Pure blue expresses beauty, calmness, reason, serenity and expanse, which symbolizes the power of emptiness, infinity, tranquility, dignity, justice, wisdom, fraternity and sacredness. Combined with women's clothing design, it also represents the noble and calm temperament of women, as shown in Figure 33.

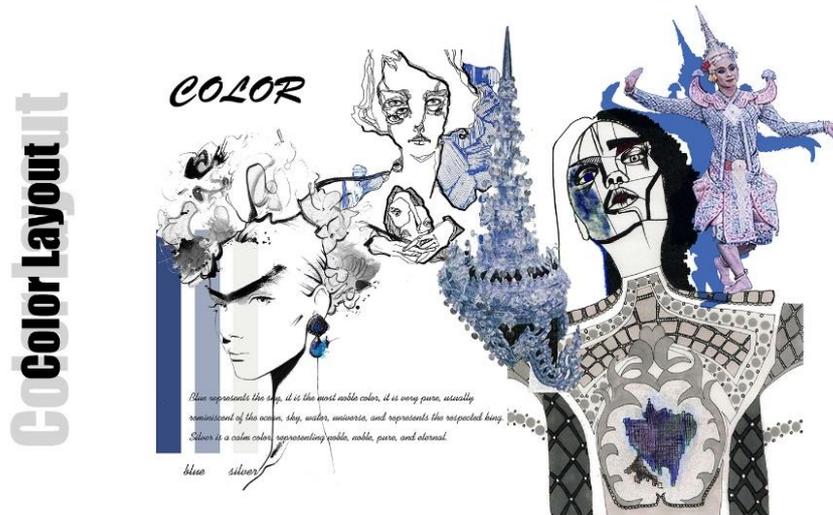


Figure 33: Design of Color Layout

Thai traditional fabrics are used in the design. Thai traditional fabrics embody the traditional wisdom of the Thai people. Thai fabric patterns have a long history and reflect national characteristics. Different Thai fabric patterns tell different ancient and mysterious Thai folk stories and give Thai fabrics higher value through the hands of designers and craftsmen. Fashions made with Thai fabrics are both elegant and modern and can be felt by everyone who wears them. This is more special than wearing ordinary clothes, because Thai clothes are traditional Thai culture and modern Thai handicrafts are the perfect work, as shown in Figure 34.



Figure 34: Fashion Editorial

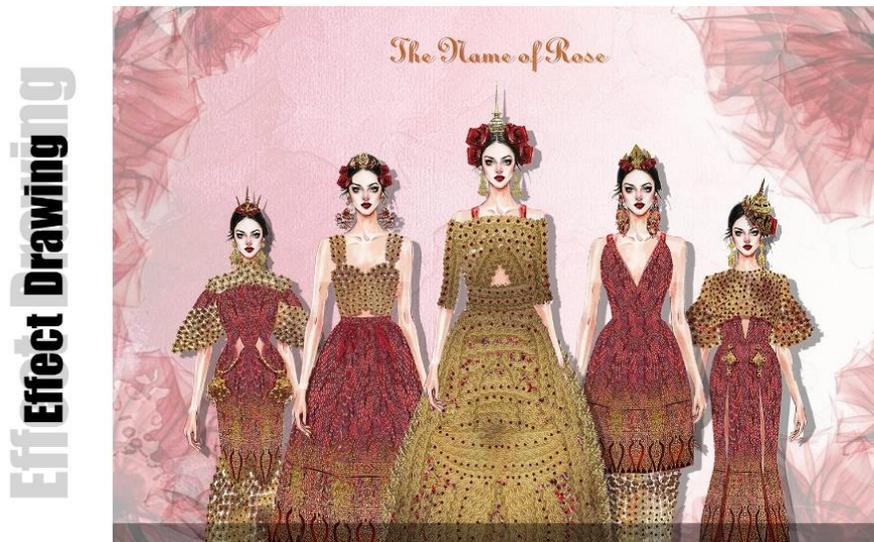
The details are decorated with pearls and ethnic silver silk, which are adapted according to the characteristics of traditional patterns to make the patterns more fashionable. Pearl is an element of repeated reincarnation and eternity as it never disappears from the fashion circle. It is retro, romantic and luxurious. It has been favored by women since ancient times to the present. It adds feminine features to stiff suits and shows a noble atmosphere. The silver thread with a national character also adds national customs to the clothing, as shown in Figure 35.



**Figure 35:** Fashion Detail

#### 4.4 Collection design - Sita character

Sita represents a perfect woman. This series uses “The Name of Rose” as the design theme. The red rose symbolizes the unrelenting love, and also represents the elegance and femininity of women. It is believed that three things work together to create beauty: completeness or perfection, proper proportion or harmony; and clear “harmony”. The beautiful scene means shining light, which is also the first impression that love brings to people, as appeared from drawing shown in Figure 36.



**Figure 36:** Design Sketch - Sita

The style design focuses on highlighting women's S-shaped curves. The fishtail skirt design reflects the noble and elegant curves of women, and the one-shoulder design shows the beautiful clavicle of women. The A-shaped skirt adds princess style of clothing. The bubble sleeve top shows the feminine elegance and tenderness, as shown in Figure 37(a), 37(b).



Figure 37: Design Analysis (a)

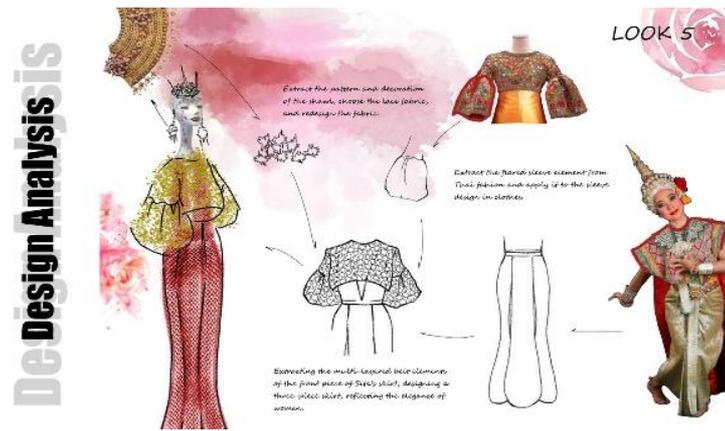


Figure 37: Design Analysis (b)

The color extracted the color of Sita's clothing in Thai Khon is the combination of red and gold. Red is the most emotional color, symbolizing enthusiasm and courage. It has a strong visual impact and always shows enthusiasm and passion. Gold symbolizes brightness and brilliance. It is a representative of light, but also signifies noble, glorious, luxurious and brilliant quality. The combination of the two colors makes this collection noble and beautiful, as shown in Figure 38.



Figure 38: Design of Color Layout

A golden lace with a beam of light is chosen to match with a traditional Thai red fabric. The lace fabric is light and transparent in texture, with an elegant and mysterious artistic effect. In the middle, the red traditional Thai fabric, under the background of lace, embodies the mysterious beauty of oriental women, as shown in Figure 39.



Figure 39: Fashion Editorial

In the handmade production of fabrics, red jewels are nailed into golden lace garments, echoing the color of skirts, making the garments more noble. The focus of this costume is the red hand-made Thai traditional fabrics, with hand-sewn golden beads according to the texture of the pattern, making the dress more dazzling and showing the essence of feminine beauty: loyalty to love, life love and longing for freedom, as shown in Figure 40.



Figure 40: Fashion Detail

## 5. SUMMARY

In this collection design, the researchers learned according to the expert feedback that the artistic aesthetics of Thai Khon is more derived from the dancers' movements during the performance, which is also the unique charm of Thai Khon, as the promotion of traditional drama, the artistry and decoration of clothing are very important. Only by extracting the invisible artistic elements from the drama and incorporating high-end fashion design can the soul of the drama be promoted.

Costume art is an integral part of culture. Costume culture plays an important role in understanding the thoughts, culture and customs of various periods, inheriting precious intangible cultural heritage, and promoting traditional national styles.

The artistry of high-end fashion design lies in the aesthetic needs of its clothing. The main function and requirement are to continuously pursue creativity, promote clothing in popular culture, guide consumers' consumption orientation, and find new design directions for clothing design. The highly creative and aesthetic clothing we often see in fashion conferences reflects the creative talent of designers. The practicality and artistry of clothing are a unity, and the artistry is more valued than the practicality. Only by satisfying the practicality can the artistry be created again.

High-end fashion design originates from the West. It is characterized by perfect version, fit tailoring, precious fabrics, time-consuming handwork, and coincides with the concept of Thai Khon costumes. In this design, three-dimensional decorative details were added, and the original accessories of Thai Khon were combined to carry out an innovative design. Some changes have been made in the selection of colors, which are more appropriate to the colors of the characters themselves, and fully express the concept of combining drama costumes with fashion. In the process of making clothes, some changes will be made.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In order to integrate Thai Khon costumes into modern clothing design, this study conducted an in-depth analysis of Thai Khon's history, evolution process, and related art elements, aesthetic value and cultural connotation. The researchers consulted a large number of materials about Thai Khon culture, and combined it with the concept of clothing design in order to extract cultural elements that can be transformed in clothing design.

In this study, the researchers conducted design experiments from the patterns in Thai Khon costumes, the masks worn by Thai Khon's main characters, and the personality traits of Thai Khon's main characters.

The traditional Thai patterns in Thai Khon costumes are refined. They are decomposed, reconstructed, and abstracted to form new geometric patterns, using modern gradual arrangement, and contrasting plane composition rules. In the hand-painted way, the innovative patterns are applied to the clothing to inherit the artistic beauty and cultural meaning contained in the patterns in Thai Khon clothing.

In the design transformation of the masks of the main characters of Thai Khon, the masks of Thai Khon's characters have a special personality beauty and distinctive Thai cultural characteristics. Its exaggerated patterns and shapes reflect a kind of original and continuous precipitation and accumulation.

In the transformation of its mask patterns the original religious emotions, concepts and artistic styles are decomposed and reconstructed into geometrically abstracted elements to form new patterns that can be used high-end fashion production methods and presented in the final product.

In the design aimed at the character traits of Thai Khon's main characters, the four major characters integrate Thai cultural concepts of humanity, religious and social values. In this stage of the design, the analysis and transformation of cultural and humanistic concepts are the mainstay.

The simple geometric outline is used as the shape of the clothing and combined with the visual experience brought to the audience by the four major characters.

In the design of the pattern, the four main visual elements of key characters, such as colors, costume patterns and masks, are integrated to convey the aesthetic characteristics of clothing while expressing the visual characteristics and cultural connotation of the main characters.

Thai Khon is an intangible cultural heritage in which the most distinctive Thai cultural characteristics in the fields of literature, music, clothing, performances are embodied. This research stemmed from both a personal interest and the recognition of the value of Thai Khon culture. The study seeks to refine the design elements that can be transformed into new clothing design, and innovating the Thai Khon culture. The process of this research is also a cultural journey that explores the cultural and historical influence of Thai Khon and approaches it from a new perspective with fashion design as the medium.

In addition, there is still room for future research in this subject. In this study, the personal thinking process of Thai Khon culture was analyzed as the main thinking system to provide a multi-angle and omnidirectional framework structure, some of which are summarized from the framework system. There is also room for research and room for thinking. The future task is to continue to expand every point on the basis of art theory, that may contribute to the promotion of Thai Khon culture.

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