

Lao Song or Thai Song Dam

Lao Song or Thai Song Dam or Thai Dam lived around Guangzi, Yunnan, and Tung Gia. Thai Dam immigrated to Thailand in Thonburi period since they were caught in the war with Vien Tian Laotians at Muai and Tang cities (Somsong 1981, Page 6). Vien Tian Laotians moved to Saraburi, Ratchaburi, and Chantaburi while Thai Dam lived in Petchaburi.

From this evidence, it can be assumed that Thai Song Dam tried to move back to their home country in Tang while some of them did not want to go back and travel northward to live in Nakhon Sawan, Pichit, Phitsanulok, and Chainat, etc.

In Nakhon Sawan, Lao Song (Thai Song Dam) live in different districts including Chumsang, Nong Bua, Paisalee, Kao Leaw, and Tha Tako, etc.

5.1.1 Cultural Identity of Lao Song or Thai Song

5.1.2 Residence and Lifestyle

Lao Song lifestyle is usually simple. Their houses are the type that the first floor is lifted up high. Their occupations are planting, rice farming, pig farming, chicken farming. As for handicraft, men like to make basketwork while women like embroidery and cooking. Popular occupations are rice farming and planting on foothill. Animals used are buffaloes. There is a story that Tan (god) sent buffaloes to help human. Most dishes of Thai Dam use vegetables as ingredients. These people know how to preserve food by fermentation. As for rice, in the past, they ate sticky rice but now it has been changed into steamed rice.

5.1.3 Language, tradition, and belief

Thai song dam community is at Kamang Sub-District, Chumsang District, Nakhon Sawan Province. They have maintained tradition and culture from the past including belief, spoken language, written language. The information found about Lao Song in Kamang Sub-district, Chumsang District, Nakhon Sawan Province is as below.

Every year slogan of Lao Song is *“In the top north of Nakhon Sawan is an area of agriculture. Thai Song Dam is famous for tradition and a great Buddha image called Luang Por Pan”*

Currently, it has been found that Lao Song in Kamang Sub-District or Thai Song Daom or Thai Dam are originally from Sib Song Ju Thai area, in Dam and Daeng river basin in northern Vietnam. Afterwards, they immigrated to Thailand for work and living. There is a shrine of Chao Por Thamyia that Thai Song Dam and Thai people within the village respect.

5.1.4 Clothing

An identity of Thai Song Dam is their clothes. Men wear shorts with narrow ends covering their knees in Chinese style called “Suang Ka Ten” or “Suang Kom”. The shirt for

men has long sleeves with ends as wide as palms. The front of the shirt is cut through with silver buttons called Chon Shirt. For women, in daily life, they wear black-based fabric consisting of 3 pieces. The first one is black without any graphic, about 12 inch wide. The second one is black and white. The third one is about 1 foot wide with white straps connected to the end of the cloth. If their husbands die, they have to remove this ending piece for mourning. Their shirts have long sleeves, the front is cut through and put with silver buttons called Kom Shirt. Sometimes, there is a chest cloth called Biew with graphic stitched on both ends. Married men and women wear black or navy Biew in special occasions such as wedding. Lao Song people wear a full dress called Hee Shirt made of dyed cotton. Men Hee Shirt covers the thigh with round neck decorated with red silk topped up with other colors with one strap button put beside. The sleeves are long with narrow ends. The lower end of the shirt is stitched with silk in different colors and small pieces of glass. On the side is cut from the end up to the waist and beautifully decorated. As for women, the shirt is bigger and longer with deep sharp neck and not cut in the front. The sleeves are narrow. It is put on together with long skirt cloth.

5.1.5 Food

Most of Lao Song Dam food is vegetables which can be easily found around the house or canals such as Kratin, Kum, Tamlueng, Mawang, Sadao, Mara, Faktong. Some fruits they have are mango, papaya, Thai melon. These vegetables can be eaten together with chilli paste or used for making other types of food such as curry or spicy salad. Desserts are Tong Yib, Tong Yod, Foi Tong or coconut recipe such as Salim and Lod Chong.

5.1.5 Medical Treatment

Thai Song Dam believe in black magic so the illnesses are treated by local doctors using herbs and rituals to get help from local gods. Holy water is also used to cure some disease. Currently, medical treatment of Thai Song Dam has developed with the economic and social conditions. Those who are rich or hi-society people usually get medical treatment from a medical center or hospital. Thai Song Dam society is divided into 2 groups of high-society people from ruling class in Sib Song Panna and minority of ordinary people.

5.1.6 Thai Song Dam Occupation

The main occupation is rice farming both in low land and foot hill as well as fishing. Animals used are buffaloes. There is a story that Tan (local god) sent buffaloes to help human work. Therefore, buffaloes are involved in Thai Song Dam lifestyle from the past. It is the origin of the word “Ko Kud”, which is the symbol of patience, fighting spirit, and prosperity gained through the help of buffaloes.



Pic.6 Thai Song Dam Village

In Thai Song Dam village, there are some tourist destinations as follows.

Chao Por Thamyra at Wat Kamang is respected by Thai Song Dam. Praying to this shrine is to ask for permission to visit and blessings for good luck. Thai Song Dam regard Luang Por Thamyra as god of land who protects the community. Inside, there are other sacred Buddha images as follows.



Pic.7 Chao Por Thamyra Shrine Pic.8 Luang Por Pan



Pic.9 Luang Por In

Another important destination is a museum which shows the identity of the community, the history of Thai Song Dam, lifestyle and working tools, etc.



Pic.10 Thai Dam Museum at Kamang Sub-District, Chumsang District, Nakhon Sawan Province



Pic.11 View Ping River

Lao Song (Thai Song Dam) reflects social and cultural identity of Lao Song. Even though Lao Song do not wear black dress like the past 10 years, their identity appears in historical location. Wat Kamang is regarded as the temple of the community with long history. The Thai Song Dam museum which represents their lifestyle. Example of their food has fermented fish as the main ingredient such as Kai Pum curry, Bon curry, and bamboo sprout curry, etc. Traditional performance of Lao Song has been transferred to education at Kamang school to represent art and cultural values of the community.

Lao Song reflects their cultural identity by making a cultural tourist map as follows.



Pic.12 A Map of Thai Song Dam (Lao Song) community in Kamang Sub-District, Chumsang District, Nakhon Sawan Province