

Wissenschaftliche Arbeit

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**Lao weaving as cultural heritage  
- a cross-curricular storytelling project for primary school**

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vorgelegt von Ariane Kummetz

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If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.

Margaret Mead<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mead 1935, p. 281.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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The primary aim of this paper is to provide an insight into the beauty of Laos, a country which can proudly proclaim itself to be rich in its cultural and ethnical diversity and which is still in possession of a large knowledge about ancient traditions and weaving techniques.

I was fortunate having the chance to be part of the project “The Laos Experience”, which brought me to Laos and its capital city Vientiane. Immediately after arriving at the airport, I recognized women in skirts which covered hips and knees, which all looked quite similar but stood out with their blaze of color. The impression did not change either during the daylight. I learned that these skirts were called *sinhs* and that they were strongly embedded in the daily life of a Lao woman. On the college ground, every single woman was wearing that kind of skirt and they were even sitting on the motorbike with it. While I was exploring the city, I did not only recognize the skirts anymore but also the plethora of textiles which were offered for sale. I was fascinated by the variety of colors and patterns and certainly also astonished by the differences regarding the price range. It seemed like that textiles formed a major characteristic of the country and were representative everywhere. I realized that the weaving culture of Laos was certainly a field, I wanted to explore. Thus, I visited various handicrafts stores and museums and also got great opportunities to talk Carol Cassidy and Viengkham Nanthavondouangsy, two prominent weavers of Vientiane. Additionally, I found valuable information through literary research.

With the first part of the paper, I would like to underline the development of Laos’ ethical system as well as the historical background of the country. Moreover, I would like to draw a reference to the role of Lao textiles in ancient times.

I then shall outline the present ethnic composition of Laos with a focus on ethnic groups which have a vital role in terms of the field of weaving. Generally, a main emphasis is set on Lao-Tai ethnic groups which are highly engaged in the textile manufacture. The traditional weaving is mostly executed on the country side. As a result, the content and cultural input strongly refers to tribes which live in the villages of Laos and cannot be transferred onto every individual but the majority of Laos’ population.

The great variety with regards to the patterns and motifs of the textiles is nowadays still discernible due to Lao weavers and their effort of continuing the tedious and time-consuming work involved in the textile manufacture. Hence, I would like to dedicate the core parts to Lao weavers by providing a detailed view onto the processes from the raw material to the finished artistic piece.

After having the opportunity to receive a glimpse into the ethnical composition of Laos and its weaving culture, I wondered if it is possible to find unity in diversity and to gain a national identity in a country as ethnically diverse as no other I got to become familiar with. I also questioned myself if Lao textiles, as being so representative in the daily life, give an important contribution to the Lao identity. Besides, I felt the need to receive more information to the questions in which sense textiles support the preservation of the intangible heritage of ethnic minorities and how weaving, as a living art, displays an intangible heritage itself and thus needs to be safeguarded. Therefore chapter 10. examines the outcome of my research to these questions.

The last part targets to I provide ideas for a practical implementation of the topic in primary school. Therefore, the underlying didactic conceptions and methodical approaches are illuminated with short explanations and the help of a model. Hereby, I put a special focus on the storytelling technique which represents the medium that enables children to grasp a foreign language as well as cultural input in a meaningful context.

Since I was able to teach one lesson in the Albert-Schweitzer-Schule, I received the chance to share cultural experiences with primary school students and to broaden their intercultural knowledge. The lesson plan, a weekly schedule and additional ideas for a possible implementation of a cross-curricular storytelling-project are annexed hetero. Hereby, the weekly schedule aims to function as a scaffold and provides room for alterations and extensions which can be elaborated with the help of the provided mind map.

The power-point presentation, videos and photographs of the lesson are found on the external CD.

Lao words, botanical terms and words which I intended to put a special focus on, are written in italics with the exception of Lao names for provinces, cities or ethnic groups.

Furthermore, due to common misunderstandings of Lao-Tai and Laotians which can both be assigned with the term Lao, I will highlight the differences by using the term Lao-Tai for the ethnic group and Lao for the people of Laos.

All illustrations and models, except those referenced differently, were created by the author.

All photographs, except those referenced differently, were taken by the author, volunteers of the project "The Laos Experience" or the supervisor of the project Prof. Dr. Isabel Martin. These photographs are labeled with Kummetz 2017 or Martin 2017. Photographs from the pixabay.com website are subject to the public domain in accordance with the waiver Creative Commons CC0 and thus are merely labeled as Pixabay 2017.

## 2. LAOS IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Laos, officially Lao PDR, is a landlocked country sharing borders with Thailand, Myanmar, China, Vietnam and Cambodia. The Mekong river, which is the longest river in Southeast Asia, runs across almost the total length of the country, is an important medium for trade and commerce and forms a natural border to Thailand.

The landscape of Laos is characterized by its diverse features including forested mountains, highland plateaus and long emerald rice fields growing in the river valleys.

Historically, Laos had to struggle for centuries against the strong and influential border countries which all kept an eye on expansionism and tried to seize even more power through conquest. Moreover, the ethnic composition of the country displays a natural corollary of a lively past, affected by several migrations waves of various tribes.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 Prehistory and Lao-Tai migration

The large territory of Indochina belongs to one of the earliest populated areas around the world, which ancient history can be traced back to the Mesolithic period where first archeological findings of human settlement give rise to a presumption of their provenance.

However, these artifacts do not provide enough evidence to reach clear conclusions of the question whether the material indicates own human development or whether it is due to immigration processes from adjacent fields.

Thus, many controversial theories revolve around the topic of the first settlements, highly discussed by theoreticians and historians to prove its veracity.<sup>4</sup>

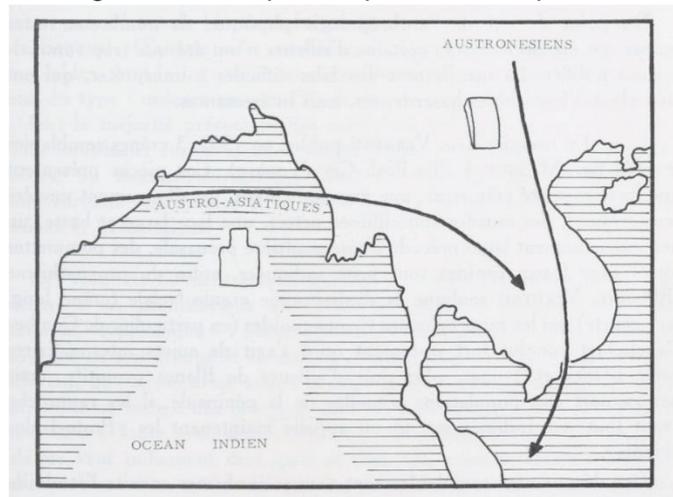


Figure 1: Indochina as an intersection area<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> cf. Rakow 1992, pp. 1–4; Schultze 2003, p. 84; Rattavong 2003, p. 27; Tagwerker 2012, p. 13; Düker 2017, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Olivier and Moullec 1968, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Schultze 1994, p. 13; Düker 2017, p. 101.

In collaboration with Jean Moullec, the professor of anthropology George Olivier set up the hypothesis that Indochina is an intersection area of migration flows coming from the north and west. Consequently, the first settlers in the region had to be of Austro-Asiatic origin.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the research theories about this issue support the statement that the actual Lao-Tai migration began many years after the first settlements.<sup>6</sup>

Similar to the prehistory of Laos, the question of how Lao-Tai people found their way to the present regions is still strongly debated.<sup>7</sup> According to Schultze, some historians have the opinion that Lao-Tai people originate from West Pamir. Suppressed by the Mongolians and Chinese, they were forced to move towards the south. Hence, some tribes walked along the river courses towards the west until they reached the Indian province Assam. The Siamese people went further down the Menam and settled in today's Thailand and a vast number of small tribes spread throughout North Vietnam, South China, North Thailand, Myanmar and Laos.<sup>8</sup>

In comparison, the Nan Chao hypothesis, which is found in several Thai history books, assumes that 1200 years ago Lao-Tai tribes, coming from China, settled down in the kingdom of Nan Chao, which was located at the upper reaches of the Mekong river. Lo-Seng, a king of one of Nan Chao's six principalities, constantly expanded his sphere of influence towards the South, spreading over regions of current Northern Laos.<sup>9</sup>

Other theories claim that in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, many Lao-Tai people from Yunnan, nowadays a province in China, began migrating to Laos, where they seized the river valleys to cultivate rice within these areas. Local people who already lived along the river courses were urged to move further up the highland. The first self-organized principalities, which are known as *muang*, were arising, each headed by a hereditary ruler who was called *chao muang*.<sup>10</sup>

The diverse theories about the Lao-Tai migration prove that “[a]lthough many scholars cling to the concept of Chinese origin, the original homeland of Tai is still unknown.”<sup>11</sup>

Among the Lao people, a legend passed down orally, accounts for the true founding of the Lao nation. It tells the story of Khoun Bourom who was sent by Indra, a Hindu god, from the celestial empire down to earth. He arrived in Muang Theng on a white elephant and first spotted “[...] a strange vine bearing two grounds.”<sup>12</sup> After he tried to pierce one vine with a

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Olivier and Moullec 1968, pp. 29–34.

<sup>6</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, p. 97; Düker 2017, p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 101; Schultze 1994, p. 18. Düker 2017, p. 101.

<sup>8</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Schultze 1994, p. 18; Düker 2017, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Schultze 1994, pp. 19–21, 2003, p. 97, 2005, p. 12; Düker 2017, pp. 101–103.

<sup>11</sup> Naenna 1988, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Connors 1996, p. 1.

glowing poker, men and women jumped out of the vine trying to rescue themselves. According to the myth, the dark shade of the skin can be explained by the intense contact ancestors had with the hot poker causing a dark skin tone. The lighter-skinned people of Laos escaped out of the other vine which was cut open by a knife and therefore they did not have any marks of heat. After Khoun Bourom launched the capital Muang Theng, nowadays Dien Bien Phu, he divided the country among his seven sons who were sent to establish new kingdoms. Khoun Lo, the eldest son, is known as the founder of Muang Sua, the future Luang Prabang.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2 The kingdom of Lane Xang

The kingdom Lane Xang Hom Khao, meaning ‘a million elephants and the white parasol’ was established by Fa Ngum in the year 1353. “According to the legend, Fa Ngum was the twenty-third successor to Khun Lo”<sup>14</sup> and consequently a direct descendent of the ruling family in Muang Sua. Due to his father’s exile in the Khmer court, he grew up in Cambodia and was raised and educated at Angkor in Buddhist belief. He married the Khmer King’s daughter and was sent north to usurp power in many regions of the middle Mekong area.

After several military campaigns, he reached the gates of Muang Sua, which he conquered and, in the position of the new king, renamed Lane Xang Hom Khao. The reference to the million elephants was made by virtue of the massive military impact and power he had. His territory expanded quickly since he conquered many parts of present-day Laos as well as much of northern and eastern Thailand.

He spread the belief in Buddha and a large contingent of monks, artists and craftsmen from Cambodia were sent to Laos, which had a strong impetus on its daily life and development. Thus, Fa Ngum’s regime is considered to be the natal hour of the Lao Buddhism in its Theravada form. Additionally, it is said that the gilded statue of Buddha, called the Pra Bang has come to the later Luang Prabang during this era.<sup>15</sup>

With regards to the meaning of textiles, Connor elucidates that they played an important role in the representation of status and wealth and only the most talented and skilled people were employed to weave for the royal courts.<sup>16</sup> Generally, the royal centers of Laos highly influenced the maintenance of textiles and arts by supporting “[...] workshops in neighboring

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<sup>13</sup> cf. Schultze 1994, p. 19; Connors 1996, p. 13; Schultze 2003, p. 97; Düker 2017, p. 102.

<sup>14</sup> Connors 1996, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> cf. Naenna 1988, pp. 42–44; Rakow 1992, pp. 59–61; Schultze 1994, pp. 21–27; Cheesman 2004, pp. 30–31; Connors 1996, pp. 13–14; Schultze 2003, pp. 98–100, 2005, p. 12; Tagwerker 2012, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 57.

villages to produce court clothing and ceremonial textiles.”<sup>17</sup> Connor explains that “[i]mported Indian silk, Chinese brocades, Cambodian long cloth, and the incorporation of gold-and silver-wrapped threads into locally produced textiles, reflected the kings contact with the outside world.”<sup>18</sup>

Under Fa Ngum’s successors, trade, economy, arts and culture as well as the political system flourished and reached its golden age with the reign of Sourigna Vongsa. Eventually, his high sense of justice could not stop him from killing his own son due to adultery which had a crucial impact on his heritage since he did not leave any descendent who could continue his position. Vongsa’s own death in the year 1694 made the country collapse and Laos split into the three royal centers Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Champasak. The 350-year lasting era of Lane Xang was coming to an end and Laos, in its “[...] vulnerable geographic position”<sup>19</sup>, was affected by the strength of its neighbors. The ruling and centralized empires Burma and Siam ran over Laos and the principality Luang Prabang as well as northern Laos came under the Burmese suzerainty whereas Siam took over Champasak.<sup>20</sup>

In 1805 Chao Anouvong, shortly Anou, became King of Vientiane and strongly improved the image of the capital by establishing new buildings and supporting the Lao fine arts. Moreover, he also strengthened the bonds to Vietnam and Luang Prabang. Led by his Lao pride and the aim to reunite the three royal centers and to receive independence of Bangkok he sent out troops against Bangkok in the year 1827. After failure, Anou could escape the wrath of the opponents, but desperately started another attempt which was directly blighted. After his campaign failed for the second time, the Lao people had to admit defeat and Vientiane was conquered by the Siamese, looted and burnt to ground. Anouvong then had to accept the fate after being defeated the second discomfiture. He fled but was caught by the Siamese and died in captivity in the year 1828.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.3 The French colonization

It was still under the reign of Suriya Vongsa, when the first Europeans found their way to Laos. “[...] [A] mission of Lao traders arrived in Batavia, the Dutch capital of Indonesia, with benzoin and stick-lac that raised the Dutch merchants’ interest.”<sup>22</sup> In 1641, an expedition

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<sup>17</sup> Esterik 1999, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> Connors 1996, pp. 57–58.

<sup>19</sup> Connors 1996, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, p. 105; Düker 2017, p. 104.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, p. 105; Düker 2017, p. 104.

<sup>22</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 18.

led by Gerrit van Wuysthof travelled up the Mekong river reaching Vientiane, the capital of Laos.<sup>23</sup>

Two hundred years later Francis Garnier and Doudart de Lagrée from France arrived in Laos and began to explore the Mekong area.<sup>24</sup> “By the time these Frenchmen arrived, Laos had splintered into three kingdoms, all of which were under suzerainty of either Thailand or Vietnam, or both.”<sup>25</sup> In 1887, the French consul Auguste Pavie, who worked at the court of Luang Prabang, was engaged in opening a mission in Laos.<sup>26</sup>

“Following its colonization of Vietnam, France supplanted Siam and began to integrate all of Laos into the French empire.”<sup>27</sup> The intervention of the French is often analyzed from different perspectives. On the one hand, the French are seen as protectors of the cultural assimilation of Siam. On the other hand, despite the fact that the royal centers Champasak, Luang Prabang and Vientiane were affiliated to the Protectorate of French Indochina, many territories of the country got lost due to the unfortunate trade with Siam which made them give away the Isan region.<sup>28</sup>

For the French, the colonialism in Laos did not have any economic meaning but rather strategic reasons since they followed the aim of separating themselves from the British colonial power who took over Burma.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.4 World War II

Using the defeat of France by the German army in the summer of 1940 the Siamese army attacked Laos, resulting in the acquisition of several territories west of the Mekong. In the years between 1940 and 1945 the Japanese army controlled most of Indochina and took over full control of the region in March 1945. Under pressure from the Japanese, the Francophile King Sisavangvong declared independence from France in the same year.<sup>30</sup>

After the capitulation of Japan in August 1945 the Lao Issara (‘Free Laos’), an anti-French and anti-Japanese movement, declared the Pathet Lao (‘Country Laos’), but was disposed by the former King Sisavangvong only half a year later. After reaching an agreement with China about the status of Vietnam, the French troops started reconquering Laos, acquiring

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<sup>23</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 6; Tagwerker 2012, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Connors 1996, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 105.

<sup>27</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> cf. Schultze 2005, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 106.

control over most of the country by April 1946 and announcing it an independent nation inside the Union Française in 1949.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.5 First Indochina War

In 1950 the Neo Lao Issara was founded with strong ties to the communist party of North Vietnam. With pressure from communist movements around the region the French army suffered a decisive defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, granting independence to the countries of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in the Geneva Conference in July 1954. The Neo Lao Issara transformed into a political party in 1955, changing its name to Neo Leo Haksat, also known as the Lao patriotic front and appointing two ministers in the first coalition government in 1957. In the elections of 1958, the left-wing parties managed to gain the majority of the seats in the parliament. However, strong opposition from the right-wing parties and the US threatening to cut financial aids, left the country without a stable government. With the help of the CIA, the right-wing coalition managed to manipulate a win in the following election. With further engagement of the US, North Vietnam and the growing interest of the USSR and China in the region, the country became a fighting ground of the Cold War and was pushed into a civil war. To prevent the crisis the second Geneva Conference was held in 1962, where the involved nations agreed upon the independence of Laos. However, the second coalition government could not bring stability to the country and dissolved only a few months later.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.6 Second Indochina War

During the Vietnam War, the communist North Vietnamese troops set up the Ho-Chi-Minh-Trail in Laos to supply their troops fighting the Americans in the south. In order to prevent supplies from being transported through the trail, the Americans started bombing the area with cluster bombs and agent orange, with implications still perceptible today. In 1966, the American Air Force started bombing civil targets, resulting in 20-30% of the local population abandoning and fleeing their home region. After failing to stop the supply of munitions and manpower through the Ho Chi Minh trail, the Americans discontinued the bombing operations, withdrawing from the region entirely a few years later under public pressure. In

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<sup>31</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 107.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Düker 2017, pp. 107–111.

the treaty of Paris in 1973, Laos became independent and the third coalition government, dominated by the Pathet Lao, was formed.<sup>33</sup>

In the period of 1945 until 1975, most of the families had to leave their homes to find safe places which could either mean moving to other parts of the country or even living in caves. Consequently, in terms of the weaving sector, families who were fleeing not only had to leave their homes and their possessions, but also most of their weaving equipment including looms and ancient textiles.<sup>34</sup>

“During the sixties and early seventies, factory-made cloth from Hong Kong and Japan replaced home-made cloth, except in the more remote villages.”<sup>35</sup>

The amount of foreigners in Laos diminished after 1975, which had crucial impacts on the urban markets of silk clothing. However, gradual signs of an economic recovery were discernable after a rising demand for inexpensive everyday clothing.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.7 Lao PDR

During the time of the third coalition government the Pathet Lao increased their influence through a combination of military pressure and demonstrations. After a series of demonstrations and the victory of the Pathet Lao troops over the CIA founded ‘secret army’ of the pro-Americans, the Pathet Lao gained control of the country.

On December 2nd, 1975 the monarchy was officially dismantled, and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic was founded, with the Lao Revolutionary People’s Party as the government in a single party system.

In order to stabilize the country, about 50.000 Vietnamese soldiers were stationed in Laos, which had severe problems with their weak economy and nonexistent industry, as well as the destroyed infrastructure as a consequence of the American bombings.

In the following ten years the government managed to achieve no real progress and the country shifted slowly from a planned economy to a market economy by 1986. In 1988 new reforms were passed and the banking system was reworked, state owned companies were privatized, and prices and currency were deregulated. The country was also opened to tourism, which became an important part of the local economy.

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<sup>33</sup> cf. Düker 2017, pp. 111–114.

<sup>34</sup> cf. Esterik 1999, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Esterik 1999, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> cf. Esterik 1999, p. 50.

Between 1992 and 1997 the average economic growth was about 7% p.a. and the very low income per capita was doubled. However, the lack of regulation resulted in destruction of the ecosystem, the growth of corruption and stagnant agricultural production.<sup>37</sup>

Following the end of the Cold War, the country started improving relations to its neighboring countries. Vietnam was still the most important ally, with China and Thailand becoming more and more important. By 1996, three quarters of the total invested money into the country came from Thailand. In 1992 the country set up relations to the USA again and became part of the ASEAN in 1997, moving away from its state of isolation to economic integration.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. THE DIVERSITY OF ETHNIC GROUPS

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Laos once Lane Xang, the land of a million elephants, has become poorer in its number of elephants but is still rich in its diversity of ethnic groups allocated throughout the country. The majority of the people live around the Mekong river basin, whereas a quarter is settled in the high plateaus of Laos.<sup>39</sup>

With a population of 6.5 million people, Laos is the least populated country in South East Asia, equaling about 27 inhabitants per square kilometer. However, in comparison to other countries it is the most ethnically diverse country in that area. The total amount of ethnic groups varies from research to research. In Lao PDR, 49 ethnic groups and more than 120 sub-groups are officially recognized by the Lao government which constantly enlarge the wealth of culture and tradition in Laos.<sup>40</sup>

The variety of Non-Lao ethnic groups are named with the nomenclature 'ethnic minorities' even though they account for approximately half of the population.<sup>41</sup>

Cheesman claims that it "[...] has taken years of research and comparative studies [...]" to be able to understand the cultural differences and the ethnographic terms attached to it. As a result of this and the high total of ethnic groups in Laos, only some characteristics of a few tribes which stand out with regards to weaving and the amount of followers in Laos, will

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<sup>37</sup> cf. Düker 2017, pp. 114–116.

<sup>38</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> cf. Rakow 1992, p. 1; Tagwerker 2012, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> cf. Rakow 1992, p. 1; Schultze 2005, pp. 23–24; Tagwerker 2012, pp. 14–15; Düker 2017, p. 95.

<sup>41</sup> cf. Goudineau 2003, p. 5.

be outlined. Generally, the focus of this paper is set on the Lao-Tai people due to their high influences on the field of weaving.

Ethnic minorities can widely be categorized into three main ethnic groups, which are classified due to the altitudes of their settlement areas and their ethno-linguistic-family.<sup>42</sup>

1. *Lao-Loum* or the Lowlander - Lao-Tai
2. *Lao-Theung* or the midlander - Mon-Khmer
3. *Lao-Soung* or the highlander - Hmong-Yao, Tibeto-Burman

Dividing the ethnic minorities into these groupings helped to simplify administration and even individuals began identifying themselves with it. “The scheme does not, however, reflect the intricacy of the country’s cultural and linguistic composition.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore, debates about the ‘correct’ categorization of ethnic minorities are still present.

In the research of Yves Goudineau in the year 2003 four major ethno-linguistic families are distinguished and proportionally divided into<sup>44</sup>:

Lao-Tai: 66,2%

Austro-Asiatic/ Mon-Khmer: 22,7 %

Hmong-Yao: 7,4%

Tibeto-Burman: 2,9 %

Regarding the political hierarchy of the various ethnic groups, differences are clearly visible. Generally, Lao-Tai people have three levels in which the village displays the lowest unit followed by the commune which includes multiple villages. The so-called *muang* comprised several villages and communities and symbolized the highest level of the hierarchy. The certain *muang* was ruled by a *chao muang* who had to be part of the aristocratic system.<sup>45</sup> Tai Daeng are characterized to have “[...] an additional council of five to aid the *chao muong*.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> cf. Esterik 1999, pp. 47–48; Schultze 2003, pp. 142–146, 2005, p. 24; Tagwerker 2012, p. 24; Düker 2017, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

<sup>44</sup> Goudineau 2003, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> cf. Silverstein et al. 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

## 3.1 Lao<sup>47</sup> Loum

The Lao Loum entitles ‘the lowlander’ of Laos, which “[...] live in the lowlands, on the banks of the Mekong and its tributaries, and in the cities.”<sup>48</sup> The group is often equated with the *Lao*, by far the largest population group of Laos and belongs to the ethno-linguistic family of the *Tai-Kadai*. Including all *Tai*-tribes and *Lao* people, *Lao Loum* accounts for 65,5% of the population, making it the largest ethnic group of Laos.<sup>49</sup> A variety of other prominent local groups such as the *Phouan*, who mainly live in the northeast, the *Lue* of the northeast and the *Phu Tai* located in the south, can be subordinated to this ethnic group. Furthermore, tribes who were once categorized as *Lao-Tai* do also belong to the *Lao Loum* and include larger groups such as the *Tai Daeng* and *Tai Dam*, which are usually named after the common color applied on dresses of the women.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.1.1 Lao

First, the multifaceted meaning of the designation *Lao* should be mentioned as it can vary regarding the context. Generally, *Lao* is the factual term for the largest ethnic group in Laos which belongs to the *Tai-Kadai* family. The diverse use of the term has led to misunderstandings as *Lao* is another expression used to describe the entire population of Laos. However, to distinguish the citizens of Laos from other ethnic groups in the country, it is more accurate to use *Lao Laotians* for the people of Laos instead of only using the term *Lao*.<sup>51</sup>

Since they are closely related to the *Thai*, the culture and traditions of the *Lao* group and the *Thai* are very similar.<sup>52</sup> Most of their traditional habits and festivities are based on the Theravada Buddhism, but yet impacts of animist folk traditions are seen in common ceremonies like the *baci*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The prefix *Lao* is used to underline the concept of constitutive people.

<sup>48</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 95.

<sup>50</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, pp. 281–283; Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

<sup>51</sup> cf. Schliesinger 2015, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 96.

### 3.1.2 Tai Daeng

The name *Tai*<sup>54</sup> *Daeng* (*Tai Deng*, *Ta Dang*) which is translated as Red Tai, draws a connection to the red clothes worn by women of the tribe. Migrated from China, through Vietnam and finally settled in Laos, Chinese and Vietnamese impacts on the production of silk, and similarities with regards to the weaving patterns are discernable. Most of the communities are located in the eastern part of the Hua Phan province. However, a majority is still settled at the border to Laos in Vietnam.

The main part of people belonging to this ethnic group are followers of the animism, the world's oldest religious belief which is influenced by their faiths in spirits, in Lao *phi*. Thus, the design and color of the textiles worn by its people are determined by the spiritual habits and traditions.<sup>55</sup> "Tai Deng women have sophisticated skills in weaving and dyeing"<sup>56</sup> and their development is promoted and nurtured from early on.

Viengkham Nanthavongdouangsy who belongs to the Tai Daeng explains that to become a part of the society and to be a 'real' woman, young girls must learn how to weave and gain their knowledge from their mothers, often already at the age of six years.<sup>57</sup> The girls learn how to weave on large frame looms, which differentiate from other looms of the Lao-Tai groups.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, Tai Daeng are known for their extensive knowledge and repertoire of complex innovative weaving techniques and dyeing skills displayed in a wide range of ceremonial textiles worn by women of the tribe. An example for a traditional female garment displays the *sinh* which nowadays is usually worn by all female citizens of Laos. With regards to the Tai Daeng, the "[t]ubular skirt is made with a separate waistband and decorative hem piece attached to the main body of the skirt, similar to that worn by all Lao groups. Cloth belts, jackets, shoulder cloth, and headcloths complete the formal costume."<sup>59</sup> The characteristics of the ceremonial skirt *sinh mi* are the "[...] alternating vertical bands of *mut mi* and supplementary weft design, with an added border."<sup>60</sup> Red silk weft yarn alternates with blue cotton weft yarns to create distinguished bands, whereas in many cases a red silk used on the entire skirt will generate a purple shade in combination of indigo dyed bands woven in.

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<sup>54</sup> There are constant discussions about the term Tai, which shows a variety of different spellings (Thai, T'ai, Tay etc.) but can also be used in different contexts and has led to many misunderstandings. Generally, the term refers to its linguistic family (Tai Kadai) and can be translated as people.

<sup>55</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 165.

<sup>56</sup> Schliesinger 2015, p. 137.

<sup>57</sup> cf. Kummetz 12/17/17, line 79.

<sup>58</sup> cf. Schliesinger 2015, p. 137.

<sup>59</sup> Connors 1996, p. 61.

<sup>60</sup> Connors 1996, p. 61.

Apart from the *sinh mi*, the ceremonial skirt *sinh muk*, is another textile by the Tai Daeng which owes its name the *muk* or supplementary warp decorative pattern. It “[...] is a difficult cloth to weave, incorporating not only supplementary weft but supplementary warp decoration, weft, and sometimes warp, *mut mi*”<sup>61</sup> and is of great salience since it can only be adequately woven by a master weaver due to its intricacy. “Quite often it is this skirt that is given by the mother of the groom to her new daughter-in-law, with the implication that it will be saved and worn at the mother-in-law’s funeral.”<sup>62</sup> Generally, besides the major implementation of various *nak* motifs, textiles often feature motifs carrying human beings, star shapes or geometrics. Additionally, the supplementary weft designs are often endowed with small diamonds, geometrics, rhombs or hooks. Costumes of superior wealthy women stand out by the use of high-quality threads and sophisticated woven designs.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.1.3 Tai Lue

The *Lue* (*Lu*, *Lao Lue*) live widely spread throughout the mountainous regions close to the borders of China, Myanmar and Thailand. The original *Lue* skirt is manufactured by a tapestry weave and has two side seams. High usage of bright colors such as red can be seen in various blankets and shawls.<sup>64</sup> Their religious and artisan traditions, which are culturally shaped by the Buddhism, have strong impacts on neighbor groups due to the political and economic dominating positions of Tai-peoples.<sup>65</sup>

## 3.2 Lao Theung

The term Lao Theung integrates people living in the midlands of Laos. The Mon-Khmer and Tibeto-Burman can both be assigned to the second largest group with about a quarter of Lao’s population.<sup>66</sup> It embraces 45 sub-ordinates with local groups such as the *Khmu*, *Alak Ta-Oy* and a lot more, which makes the Lao Theung the group comprising of the highest amount of tribes.<sup>67</sup> Regarding the Lao Theung, a village headman was central connector to

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<sup>61</sup> Connors 1996, p. 62.

<sup>62</sup> Connors 1996, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 61.

<sup>64</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 60.

<sup>65</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 97.

<sup>66</sup> cf. Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

<sup>67</sup> cf. Düker and Monreal 2015, 91.

the government meaning, unlike the Lao-Tai, the tribe was not characterized by a political or social structure.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.2.1 Khmu

The *Khmu* is the largest group of the Lao Theung ethnic categorization. Although they are famous for basketry and their traditional costumes, the Khmu are highly influenced by other ethnic minorities such as the *Tai Lue* and the *Tai Daeng* and show tendencies to acculturation.<sup>69</sup>

## 3.3 Lao Soung

Lao Soung is used to describe the inhabitants who live in the highlands of Laos. The group contains ethno-linguistic families such as the Tibeto-burman and Miao-Yao family. Due to the numerical and economic impact of the *Hmong* group, *Lao Soung* and *Hmong* are often used as synonymous expressions. The ethnic group accounts for approximately one-tenth of Laos' population.<sup>70</sup>

Among the Lao Soung, the Hmong maintained a tradition of large-scale social organization with a king and subchiefs, although these figures were of little significance at the village level. The village consisted of several extended families belonging to one or more clans. If all the heads of households were members of a single clan, the head of the clan was the headman of the village. Where several clans resided together in a large village, there were several headmen, one being the nominal head and the link to the government. The headman had real authority in the village and was aided by a council. The Hmong activated their organization beyond the village for military purposes.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> cf. Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

<sup>69</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 97.

<sup>70</sup> cf. Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

<sup>71</sup> Silverstein et al. 2018, n.p.

### 3.3.1 Hmong

The *Hmong* are the most influential and the largest group of the Miao-Yao which is mainly represented in the Xiang Khouang province.

The tribe itself is classified into the white Hmong, which accounts for approximately 150.000 follower and the blue Hmong with 140.000 people belonging to it.

Originally, women of the white *Hmong* tribe used to wear white skirts made of hemp which is nowadays often manufactured with inexpensive synthetic material. The white color, however, is still present on festivities such as weddings or on the Hmong New Year's celebration where ceremonial garments and accessories are embellished with exclusive appliqué embroideries.

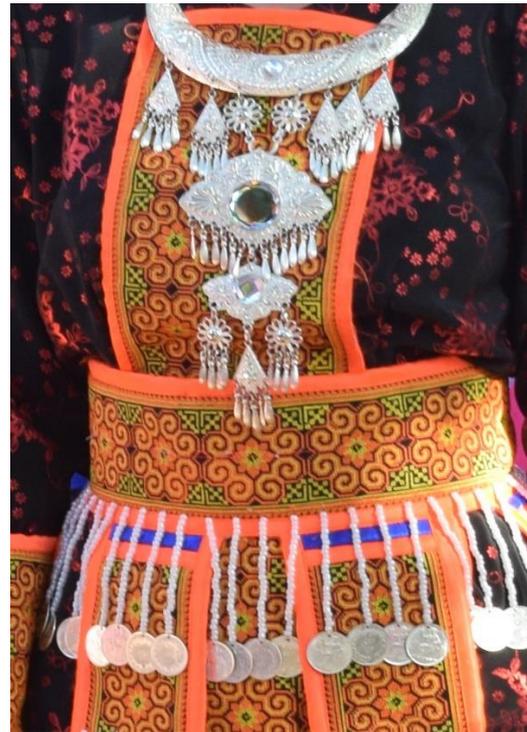


Figure 2: Detail of Hmong ceremonial garments<sup>72</sup>

Daily life textiles of women typically involve wearing kimonos with ringed sleeves in blue-black or green-black, above wide black trousers. Characteristically for male clothes are the widely cut indigo trousers and jackets, sometimes with detached blue cuffs.



Figure 3: Group wearing traditional costumes on Hmong New Year,<sup>73</sup>

The name of the blue *Hmong* is due to the indigo colored cotton fabrics, sometimes covered with batik patterns. Traditionally, women wear circular skirts, which are characterized by magnifying dense pleats. Likewise, it features remarkable luminous patterns of cross-stiches and colored circles which are stitched onto the textile.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Martin 2017.

<sup>73</sup> Martin 2017.

<sup>74</sup> cf. Düker 2017, p. 98.

## 4. NATURAL FIBER

The word 'textile' derives from the Latin verb *textilis* and the French word *texere* which can be translated as 'to weave'. Originally, the term drew a sole reference to woven textiles, however, nowadays it includes all kinds of materials which are composed of natural or synthetic fibers as well as non-textile structures with line, polygone or spatial characteristics.<sup>75</sup>

A huge amount of textiles are produced with the weaving technique that means that they are constructed by interlacing two sets of yarns. Each yarn consists of several fibers which are the raw material for the weaving process. A fiber is the smallest, but the fundamental unit used for the manufacture of a textile or fabric. On the one hand, fibers can be obtained of a natural source which includes vegetables, animals or minerals. On the other hand, it is possible to chemically obtain fibers which are either composed of artificially produced polymers or inorganic material<sup>76</sup>

With regards to the term fabrics, Ketavong indicates a twofold meaning as it can either "[...] mean ethnic apparel or everything relating to textiles, that is to say fibres, dyes, weaving equipment, weaving techniques, patterns, types of clothing and certain textile-related beliefs."<sup>77</sup>

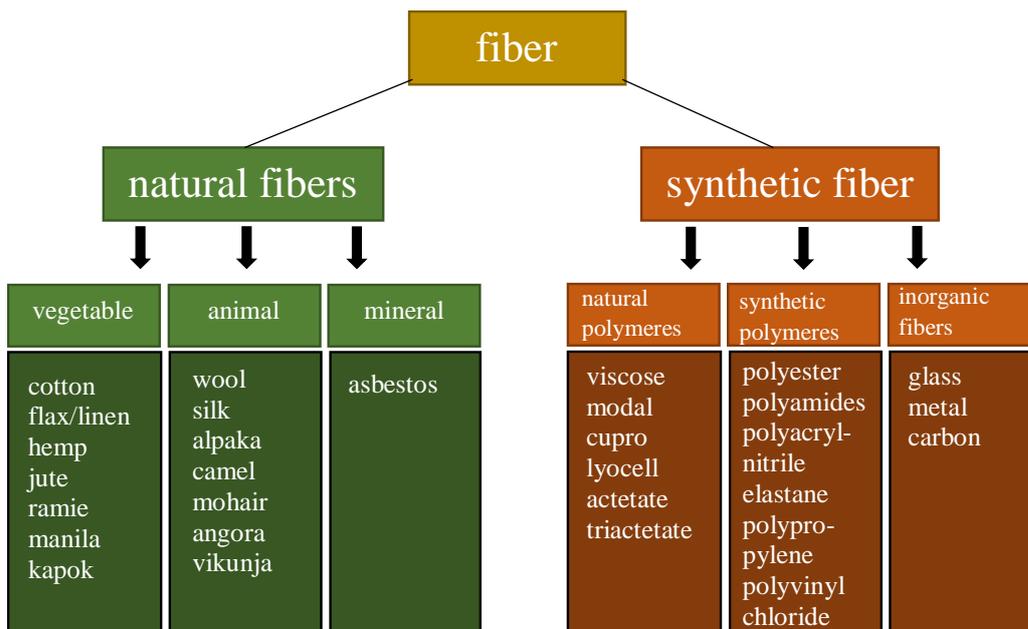


Figure 4: Classifications of textile fibers<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 1; Whewell and Abrahart 2018, n.p.

<sup>76</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 1; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016, n.p.

<sup>77</sup> Ketavong 2003, p. 112.

<sup>78</sup> own illustration based on Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 1

Traditional textiles can be categorized into secular or sacred textiles. However, they must be looked at from a unique perspective as the reason of their manufacture is not merely based on expressing beauty or creativity but also to deliver indirect signs and attitudes.

In Laos, textiles bear various background information about the social and marital status of a person. Likewise, the spiritual or religious beliefs of the certain ethnic group who created the cloth, must be taken into account to fully understand and value the synergy of multiple components used to produce the piece of art. In the past, textiles woven by Lao women traditionally served for personal use, to either express their dreams, hopes and lives or to raise social prestige.<sup>79</sup> Families enjoying wealth could and can still “[...] afford to spare their daughters from the daily chores, and allow them to master technically complicated weaving skills using the finest quality silk and cotton yarns.”<sup>80</sup> Presently, the commercial objective plays an important role in the production of textiles due to the growing number of tourists coming to Laos.<sup>81</sup>

In the following, the fiber production of silk, cotton and hemp will be discussed in more detail.

## 4.1 Silk

Silk in Laos is made by silkworms of the *Bombyx mori* species, which feed on white mulberry leaves (*Morus alba*). The caterpillars are categorized under the insect group *Lepidoptera*, including moths and butterflies.<sup>82</sup> The most famous silkworms of Laos are the “[...]Nang Keo (Miss Jewel); Nang Khao or Nang Don (Miss White or Miss Albino, respectively); Nang Lay (Miss Speckled) and Nang Dok (Miss Flower)”<sup>83</sup> whose main domiciles are the provinces of Huaphan, Xieng Khuang and Bolikhamxay.<sup>84</sup> The insect passes through four stages starting with the egg then hatching as a caterpillar, becoming a pupa and finally ending as a moth. Regarding the silk production, the life circle finishes at the third stage.<sup>85</sup>

A silk moth lays approximately 300 to 500 eggs within two to three days of whom voracious caterpillars hatch.<sup>86</sup> According to Naenna the origin country of silk is China but also in Laos

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<sup>79</sup> cf. Connors 1996, vii

<sup>80</sup> Connors 1996, vii.

<sup>81</sup> cf. Esterik 1999, p. 53; Lefferts, Jr. 2003, pp. 89–92.

<sup>82</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 89.

<sup>83</sup> Ketavong 2003, p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, p. 112.

<sup>85</sup> cf. Wagner 2015, p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 44.

sericulture was practiced even before the first Europeans arrived.<sup>87</sup> “Sericulture is extremely labor-intensive”<sup>88</sup> as the eating behavior of the worms is strongly monophagous and thus the caterpillars need to be provided with mulberry leaves three times a day. After five to six weeks the insects already went through four molting stages and are grown to the size of an index finger.<sup>89</sup> The raising head of the worm indicates that it is ready to be placed on a bamboo frame or in a bamboo tray where the spinning process begins.



Figure 5: Empty bamboo tray<sup>90</sup>



Figure 6: Bamboo tray with cocoons<sup>91</sup>

During the pupa stage, two single threads out of fibroin are ejected through spinnerets located in their head. These joined threads are covered and held together by a glutinous protein called sericin. On contact with the air sericin begins to solidify which results in a cocoon being formed by the caterpillars within 48 -72 hours.<sup>92</sup>

Before having the opportunity to use the cocoon for any further silk processes the living chrysalis needs to be killed under the influence of heat. Therefore, the pupa is often dried in the sun or boiled in water and consequently the insect is killed before eating its way out of the cocoon and causing any damage to the filament<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> cf. Naenna 1988, p. 49.

<sup>88</sup> Connors 1996, p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 44.

<sup>90</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>91</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>92</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 144.

<sup>93</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 90.

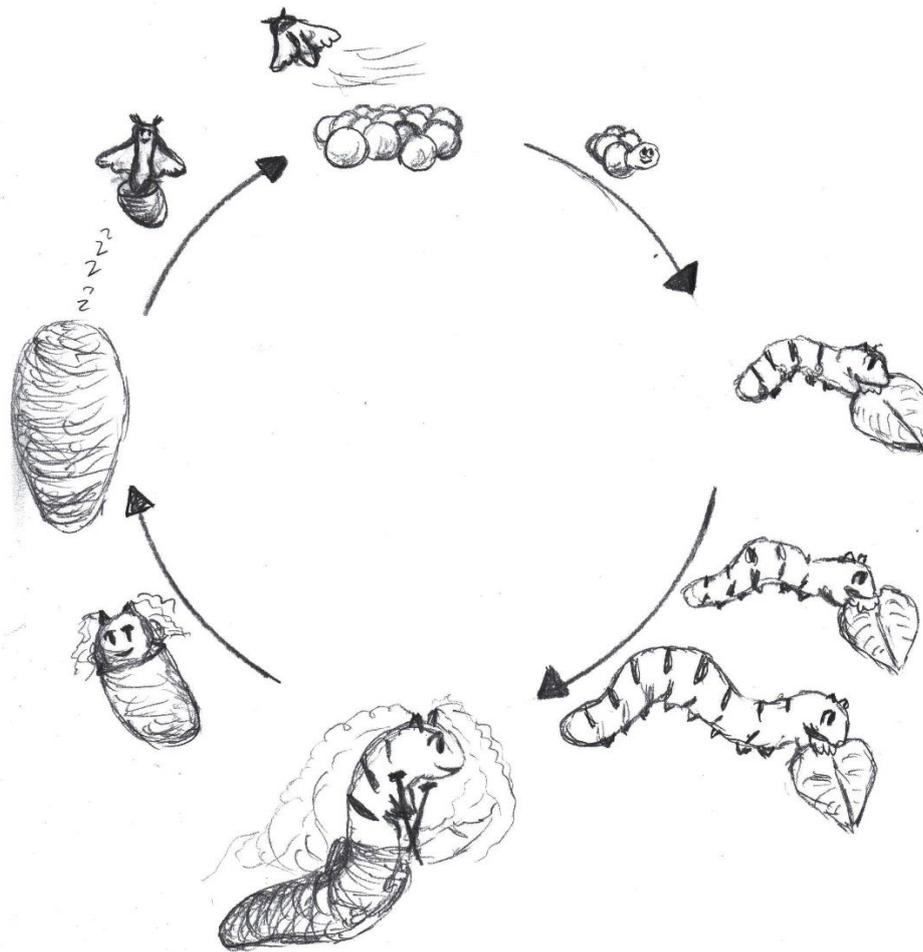


Figure 7: Life circle of a silk worm<sup>94</sup>

Reeling of the silk filaments is usually done by hand. Up to twenty cocoons are placed in a pot over a fire, “[...] drawn up at a time and reeled into a single strand.”<sup>95</sup> Chopsticks are used for submersing the cocoon in the water. The filaments are separated by twining a single thread over the roller-bar of the pot and afterwards dropping an “[...] arm’s length of thread into a waiting basket.”<sup>96</sup> In Laos, cocoons are usually treated with lye and then boiled in hot water to remove the protective layer of sericin, covering the two joined threads of fibroin.<sup>97</sup>

Since, “[...] Lao silk is by nature yellow [...]”<sup>98</sup> or off-white, it must be bleached in hydrogen peroxide or limewater and then dried thoroughly in the sun.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>94</sup> own illustration by Kummetz 2017.

<sup>95</sup> Connors 1996, p. 15.

<sup>96</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 149.

<sup>97</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 242.

<sup>98</sup> Naenna 1988, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 91.

In Laos, there are three diverse types of silk used for textiles. The thick coat of the cocoon is used to make rough silk (*mai peurk*) whereas the medium silk (*mai sao luan*) contains the central filaments of the cocoon, which are the major silk yarns used in Laos due to their “[...] soft and shimmering [...]”<sup>100</sup> characteristics. The finest silk (*mai nyod*) is made of the inner layer of the cocoon.<sup>101</sup>

## 4.2 Cotton

Cotton is still the most common natural fiber used for all kind of fabric materials. Seeds are obtained of the genus *Gossypium* and planted in June. After six to seven months the yellow or rose blossoms develop into capsules as big as walnuts, which begin to open and to reveal its white filaments. Each capsule contains up to ten seeds which the hairy fibers are attached to.<sup>103</sup>



Figure 8: Cotton boll<sup>102</sup>

When harvesting, seeds and filaments are picked out of the capsules by hand or with the help of a picking machine. The fibers

within the cotton's boll then “[...] run through a hand-crafted, hand operated wooden cotton gin (in Lao, *ii*t) – a device that squeezes each cotton lock between two rolling pins which thus extract the hard seeds at the core of the fluffy ball.”<sup>104</sup>

After being flattened, the filaments are carded with a wooden bow to prepare them for the spinning procedure. During the final step, the cotton is spun on spinning wheels (*laa*) or spindles, forming the yarn.<sup>105</sup> “Lao cotton's maximum staple length is 33 mm, or about 1 ¼ inch.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 92.

<sup>101</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 92.

<sup>102</sup> Pixabay 2017.

<sup>103</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 8.

<sup>104</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 194.

<sup>105</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 244.

<sup>106</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 193.

### 4.3 Hemp

Hemp is a plant which can be used as an alternative to obtain fiber. In Laos, it is favored by people of the Hmong ethnic group who mainly grow the species *cannabis gigantea* which belongs to the genus *cannabis sativa*. It requires fertile red or black soil and grows in the mountains of Laos at an altitude of 1200 until 2000 meters. The plant is an annual plant with one thick stem, which is sowed in April and can reach a height of up to three meters.<sup>107</sup> After harvesting the plant, it is cut and dried in the sun. Tagwerker mentions that fingernails or teeth are taken to split yarns which are thicker than the rest of them. Further steps include tying the threads together and wounding them around the wrists, so they can be put onto a spool. After the yarn is boiled and bleached it can be used for further dyeing or weaving processes.<sup>108</sup>



Figure 9: *Cannabis sativa*<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 96; Grömer 2016, p. 47.

<sup>108</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 96.

<sup>109</sup> Pixabay 2017.

## 5. DYEING PROCESSES

Regarding the various ethnic groups existing in Laos, their usage of individual colors, “[...] the knowledge of secret recipes [...]”<sup>110</sup> passed on from mothers to daughters and daughters-in-law and the amount of information about dyeing techniques and color usage could fill a book of its own. Consequently, the focus of this paper is set on the most conventional colors and dyeing techniques used for producing Lao textiles.



Figure 10: Colors of natural dyeing<sup>111</sup>



Figure 11: Dyed yarns in the backyard of the Phaeng Mai Gallery, Vientiane<sup>112</sup>

There are diverse ways of obtaining a color effect. It can either be achieved “[...] by varying the shades of the natural fibres, by painting or by regular dyeing [...]”<sup>113</sup>. Dyeing hereby specifies the process by which color is added to a certain kind of textile like fibers, yarns or

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<sup>110</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 229.

<sup>111</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>113</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 97.

fabrics and “[...] by which the dye becomes a part of the material”<sup>114</sup>. Nowadays the application of synthetic dyeing is much more common in the textile industry due to its wide range of the color palette as well as its financial and temporal advantages. As a matter of fact, this entails that “[a]most all the synthetic colourants being synthesized from petrochemical sources through hazardous chemical processes poses threat towards its eco-friendliness.”<sup>115</sup> However, many villages in Laos are still known for using natural dyes which consist of colors extracted from natural sources such as plants, roots or animals. Raw dye material is processed by comminuting and boiling it to extract the color. The emerging liquid is secreted from the sediment and can then be used as a dye.<sup>116</sup> Dyes giving “[...] a fast[-]lasting color without the need for extra chemical processes are known as substantive dyes.”<sup>117</sup> In contrast, most natural dyes require the process of being treated with mordants, which are also called fixatives to ensure the brightness and fastness of the dye. According to Cheesman “[...] tannin, lye, slaked lime and alum [...]”<sup>118</sup> are fixatives utilized in traditional dyeing methods and also Tagwerker claims that most mordants are of mineral basis “[...] such as alum, tin, chrome or iron, although the oldest and most widespread is urine.”<sup>119</sup> Having different effects on the material to be dyed, the type of mordant must be carefully chosen to prevent lasting damages. Hence, dyeing with natural colors constitutes of a complex procedure, which “[...] requires skill and knowledge [...]”<sup>120</sup> However, knowledge is often not written down but only inherited from mother to daughter and many methods are already lost.<sup>121</sup>

The limited amount of colors within the palette of natural dyes results in the fact that the focus lies on colors like blue, red and black regarding traditional textiles. Furthermore green, yellow and orange are used less frequently but can be seen in the repertoire of colors within the field of Lao weaving.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Baumann and Fletcher 1966, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> Samanta and Konar 2011, p. 29.

<sup>116</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 97.

<sup>117</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 97.

<sup>118</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 229.

<sup>119</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 97.

<sup>120</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 229.

<sup>121</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 230.

<sup>122</sup> cf. Wettstein 2014, p. 71.



Figure 12: Color palette displayed in the Saoban arts store, Vientiane<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Kummetz 2017.

## 5.1 Indigo



Figure 13: Indigo plant<sup>124</sup>

turns into a radiant green.<sup>128</sup> The color is gained by a process called enzymic hydrolysis. “[...] [T]he indicant in the leaves is converted into indoxyl [...]”<sup>129</sup> which causes the water to turn green. Keeping the leaves longer than forty-eight hours in the water to soak can lead to the fact that they begin to decay as “[...] chlorophyll breaks down into the water together with harmful bacteria, destroying the pigment.”<sup>130</sup> The leaves are then removed and the mordant, slaked lime, is beaten into the water.

Indigo, one of the most ancient and most frequent dyes used all around the world refers to its blue dyestuff which can be extracted from the leaves of the *Hohm* Indigo plant (*Strobilanthes flaccidifolius*) as well as the Indian Indigo plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*).<sup>125</sup> “In Laos, the *Indigofera tinctoria* plant grows wild, but it is also in fact cultivated by weavers to ensure a good harvest.”<sup>126</sup>

Its complex procedure needs good preparation and can be divided into three crucial steps: the fabrication of the indigo paste, the preparation of the dye vat as well as the actual dyeing of the yarns. First, leaves are put into water for twenty-four to forty-eight hours until the water



Figure 14: Bamboo tool<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>125</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 230.

<sup>126</sup> Naenna 1988, p.55.

<sup>127</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>128</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 197.

<sup>129</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 197.

<sup>130</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 231.



Figure 15: Blue precipitate on the bottom of the jar<sup>131</sup>

Heating up a limestone, followed by dropping it into cold water and then crushing it to a fine powder describes the procedure of producing slaked lime.<sup>132</sup> However, the right amount of slaked lime is significant for the pigment to succeed as it can easily get destroyed by adding too much of the mordant. By churning the mixture with a bamboo tool, oxygen is added to the water which is essential for

altering the color of the indigo pigment into a dark blue. Arising bubbles, which cause a frothy surface structure, portends the completion of the beating process. Eventually, while time passes in which the liquid settles, the blue precipitate accumulates on the bottom of the jar.

The degenerated paste is then collected and stored in a cloth sieve until the preparation of the dye vat begins. Within the next stage of the entire dyeing procedure, the indigo paste needs to be blended with lye, “[...] a strong alkaline liquor rich in potassium carbonate leached from wood ashes [...] like coconut husks, kapok or banana leaves.”<sup>134</sup> A sweetener such as Lao-Lao (rice whiskey) or a sweet fruit functions as a trigger in order to activate the fermentation process. Some Laotians who believe in spirits and consider themselves as superstitious do often add chilis or nails as preventive measures to repel evil spirits. Furthermore, other prohibitions influence the entire process. For example, “[m]enstruating women are kept away from the indigo jars for fear of upsetting the “indigo



Figure 16: Shades of indigo<sup>133</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>132</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 197.

<sup>133</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>134</sup> Merriam-Webster 2018, n.p.

spirit” and rendering the dye useless.”<sup>135</sup> Likewise, the rising moon is identified as the best time to begin a new vat.

## 5.2 Black

A dark blue indigo resembles black dyestuff and thus is also known as *dam nin*, meaning black. The roots of the *maak bao* plant, a vine growing in the forest, are taken to extract a rubicund brown dye which is needed for further dyeing procedures. By adding lye to the extract of the *maak bao* root, a natural brown dyestuff can be attained. However, to obtain a deep black, the extract of the root is mingled together with indigo dyed yarns or cloths and boiled in hot water.<sup>136</sup>

Taking leaves of the *ben* plant (*Caesalpinia digyna*), is an alternative to the indigo dyeing. Cheesman describes two techniques which are used by Lao-Tai people in two different provinces. In the Xam Nuea province, the leaves of the plant are used to extract a grey dye by boiling them in addition with the *maak bao* root which results in a grey dyestuff. In comparison, the people of the Muang Phuan province boil the leaves approximately three to four times in lye. After the mixture has cooled down, the cloth is put into the liquid to absorb the color within two hours. Eventually, the material soaks in mud for two extra hours.<sup>137</sup>

## 5.3 Red

A variety of ceremonial textiles stand out due to their vivid colors emphasizing the festive purposes. One of the most popular colors used for dyes is red which can either be obtained from *Khang*, known as stick-lac, generating a deep cardinal red or is attained from “[...] sappan wood, making bright vermilion red or maroon depending on the mordant.”<sup>139</sup>



Figure 17: *Khang* of the Lao Textiles Museum, Vientiane<sup>138</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Saoban crafts 2016, n.p.

<sup>136</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 235.

<sup>137</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 165.

<sup>138</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>139</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 236.

The nest of the insect *Coccus lacca* is the source for the red dyestuff. Female lac insects infest trees and spend their entire life collectively in large clusters on the certain host plant. The harvested lac dye consists of dead female bodies of the insect and unhatched eggs, which are covered by the exuded resin of the tree. The creatures are full of red color giving the substance its reddish appearance. In spite of the fact that the essence is made of animals, individual insects are not recognizable anymore merely the red color remains visible. Stick-lac can be dried and stored easily which will make it accessible at any time but will reduce the brilliant red of the fresh insect. After the pulverised resin soaked in water for one night, it is put into a cloth in which the color sieves through. Acidic water and tannin is extracted of two distinguished leaves, which are blended with the dye liquor. Afterwards the complete hybrid is used for the actual dyeing process for which textiles are boiled in the dye bath. People who believe in evil spirits stealing the color, attach spiked vines or thorny bamboo at the pot to protect the dye and to keep the bad spirits at bay.<sup>140</sup>

Sappan wood (*Caesaloinia sappan*) is not only famous for its herbal medical usage, but also for the red pigment which can be extracted by putting its cutted heartwood and roots together in a jar, letting it soak overnight in water and eventually boiling it.<sup>141</sup> Using additives can decisively broaden the palette of red tones. By adding an alum, a luminous vermilion is achieved, likewise, an alkali used as additive alters the dyestuff to magenta and iron has lilac effects. Moreover, treating the dye with a tin mordant will result in a bright pink or purple.<sup>142</sup> Suitable for both, cotton and silk but very “[...] sensitive to light [...] it is mainly used for supplementary yarns.”<sup>143</sup>

Other tones of red are extracted of young teak leaves called *bai sak* to create reddish-purple hue which “[...] is often used to dye monk’s robes, and some dyers prefer the brownish reds that can be derived from the bark of the burmese ebenoy tree [...]”<sup>144</sup> called *puek mai padu*.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 236; Hirschstein and Beck 2017, pp. 161–163.

<sup>141</sup> cf. Ock Pop Tok 2016, n.p.

<sup>142</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 238.

<sup>143</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 238.

<sup>144</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 162.

<sup>145</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 162.

## 5.4 Yellow

As easy it is to receive the natural yellow dye, as hard it is to maintain its original brightness on textiles due to the non-resistant characteristics towards sunlight and washing. The roots of *Hem* (*Arcangelisia flava*), also known as climbing tumeric are often used for dyeing yellow.<sup>147</sup> Peeled and cut into slices, the root gets boiled with slaked lime which can then be dyed on silk as it does not take “[...] well on cotton and is used mainly for silk supplementary yarns or dyeing over pale indigo for green.”<sup>148</sup>



Figure 18: Hem of the Lao Textiles Museum, Vientiane<sup>146</sup>

Another way of obtaining yellow is achieved by using the roots of tumeric (*curcuma longa*). The chopped roots are boiled in water in addition with slaked lime. Afterwards, yarns are either painted on or dyed in the liquor.



Figure 19: Jackfruit of the Lao Textiles Museum, Vientiane<sup>149</sup>

Additionally, the yellow color of Maakmee or Jackfruit can be used by boiling the wood with salt as mordant enhancing its color. Otherwise, Lao people have access to other natural dyestuffs found in *Mai Khae*, Puek mai Maak muang paa.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>147</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 239.

<sup>148</sup> Cheesman 2004, p.239.

<sup>149</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>150</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 239.

## 5.5 Green

As mentioned before one method of obtaining green is achieved by over-dyeing a pale indigo yarn with hem, khiimin or maakmee.

However, using fresh leaves of the indigo or *buek* vine plant (*Marsdenia tinctoria*) can be also used to gain the green color. The leaves are boiled and pounded either with a mortar or by hand in addition with slaked lime. Afterwards, the fluid is squeezed out of the compound and the dyeing procedure begins immediately after to receive a satisfying result. By adding the mordant lye, the dye modifies its color to cyan green.<sup>152</sup>

Apart from using the leaves, “[o]ther sources are the bark of the pueak maak linmai (Indian trumpet tree bark – *Oroxylum indicum*), which is collected from young trees in the rainy season [...]”<sup>153</sup>



Figure 20: Man dyeing yarns green in the backyard of Phaeng Mai Gallery, Vientiane<sup>151</sup>

## 5.6 Orange

The orange dye which emerges of the seeds of the annatto bush (*Bixa orellana*) or Lipstick tree, is not characterized as fast, but can be used on both, cotton and silk. The seeds are removed of their pods and boiled together with alum or lye.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>152</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 240.

<sup>153</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 240.

<sup>154</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 241.

Color	Plant	Part used
blue	Hohm Indigo plant ( <i>Strobilanthes flaccidifolius</i> )	leaves
	Indian Indigo plant ( <i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> )	leaves
black	Indian Indigo plant ( <i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> )	leaves
	ben plant ( <i>Caesalpinia digyna</i> )	leaves
red	Stick-lac ( <i>Khang</i> )	resin of the <i>Coccus lacca</i> insect
	Sappan wood ( <i>Caesaloinia sappan</i> )	wood & bark
	Teak leaves ( <i>bai sak</i> )	leaves
	Burmese ebony tree ( <i>puek mai padu</i> )	leaves
yellow	Hem ( <i>Arcangelisia flava</i> )	roots
	Tumeric ( <i>curcuma longa</i> )	roots
	Maakmee	wood
	Jackfruit	wood
green	buek vine plant ( <i>Marsdenia tinctoria</i> )	leaves
	Indian Indigo plant ( <i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> )	leaves
	pueak maak linmai (Indian trumpet tree bark – <i>Oroxylum indicum</i> )	leaves
orange	Annatto bush ( <i>Bixa orellana</i> )	seeds
	Lipstick tree	

Figure 21: Natural colors<sup>155</sup>

<sup>155</sup> own illustration based on Cheesman 2004, pp. 229–241.

## 6. WARPING AND SPINNING PROCESSES

Before stretching the warp onto the loom, the yarns need to be strengthened to withstand the continuous tension which they are exposed to while weaving. Therefore, the selected strong and well-twisted warp yarns are starched with rice flour and boiled in oily water. The invigorating procedure is repeated a couple of times before the yarns are put onto spools. During the spinning process skeins of silk or cotton are carefully wound onto wooden spools or bobbins made of bamboo.<sup>156</sup>

Afterwards warp threads are stretched onto a wooden frame which is called *lak feua*. The frame is equipped with pegs which serve as fixing points, by tying the warp onto them and stretching yarns over the length of the warp preventing any tangles.<sup>157</sup> “A ‘cross-over’ point for the yarn is established at the lower end of the frame; the rest of the warp is wound up the frame from that point to the required length. The cross-over point is very important since it provides a method of keeping the individual yarns separate.”<sup>158</sup>

For the next step the warp needs to be taken off the *lak feua* and bundled up to be able to finally be passed through the string heddles and the beater. In Laos, this process is known as *seup*, which also includes that new warp is twisted onto the warp of the previous weaving and both strings are joined and fixed with rice paste.<sup>159</sup>



Figure 22: Warping procedure shown in the Lao Textiles Museum, Vientiane<sup>160</sup>

<sup>156</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 247.

<sup>157</sup> cf. Naenna 1988, p. 63.

<sup>158</sup> Naenna 1988, p. 63.

<sup>159</sup> cf. Naenna 1988, p. 63.

<sup>160</sup> Kummetz 2017.

## 7. WEAVING

Weaving belongs to one of the most ancient techniques to produce textiles and plays a vital role in multiple cultures. Throughout history, an individual development and elaboration of certain weaving techniques and weaving cultures took place which was influenced by the availability of raw material, the tools and certainly also by the environment of the people.

In case of weaving, textiles yarns made of cotton, linen, hemp or wool are most commonly used due to their tear-resistant characteristics.<sup>161</sup>

### 7.1 Looms used in Laos



Figure 23: Mone Jouymany weaves on a back-strap loom, Luang Prabang<sup>162</sup>

Ketavong names three types of looms used in Laos: the back-track tension loom, the vertical loom and the horizontal loom.<sup>163</sup> The terms for the certain looms vary throughout Laos thus the back-track tension loom is also known as the back-strap loom and the horizontal loom can be named as standing loom, floor loom or frame loom.<sup>164</sup> The most common and widespread looms are floor looms, originally mainly used by tribes of the Lao Loum but nowadays also of several other ethnic groups. People of the Mon-Khmer mainly weave with the help of the back- strap loom whereas the rarely used vertical loom appears to be part of the Sedang and the Lavi culture.<sup>165</sup>



Figure 24: Opening a shed, Luang Prabang



Figure 25: Kuta weaving technique, Luang Prabang

<sup>161</sup> cf. Albisser-Stierli et al. 2007, pp. 156–162.

<sup>162</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>163</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, p. 113.

<sup>164</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 245; Tagwerker 2012, p. 109; Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 169.

<sup>165</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 109; Ketavong 2003, p. 113.



Figure 26: A traditional floor loom at the Ock Pop Toc, Luang Prabang<sup>166</sup>



Figure 27: A traditional floor loom in the backyard of the Phaeng Mai Gallery, Vientiane<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Kummetz 2017.

A traditional Lao floor loom consists of wooden beams forming a rectangular solid frame approximately “[...] four feet (1.3 m) wide, seven feet (2.2 m) long, and five feet (1.7 m) tall.”<sup>168</sup> It needs to be strong enough to hold a plank on its long lower beams which forms the weaver’s seat.

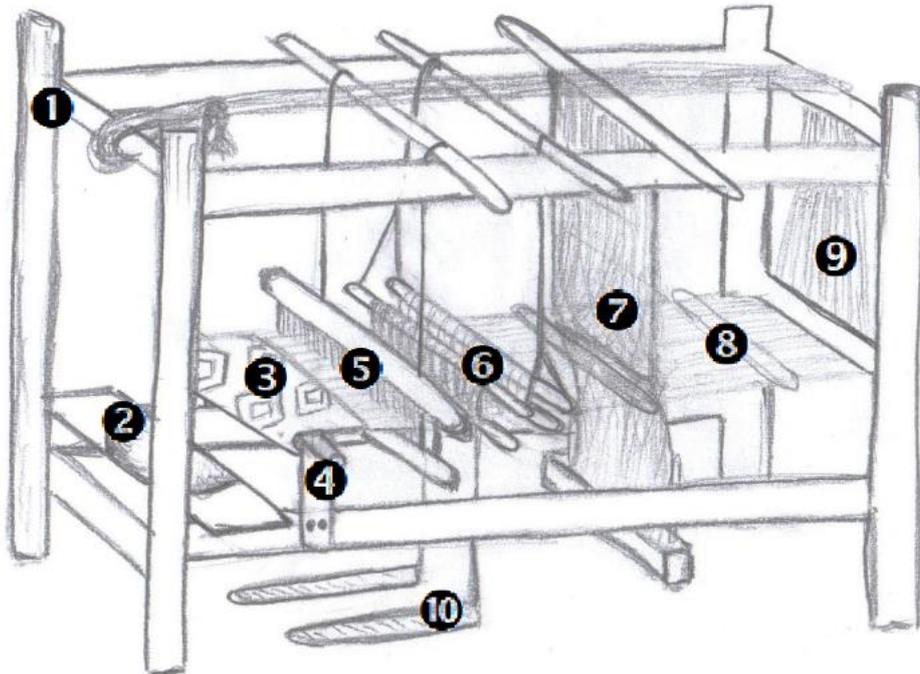


Figure 28: Sketch of a floor loom<sup>169</sup>

- |   |               |   |                 |
|---|---------------|---|-----------------|
| ① | loom frame    | ⑥ | shaft + heddles |
| ② | weaver’s seat | ⑦ | weaving sword   |
| ③ | woven textile | ⑧ | khao nyeung     |
| ④ | cloth beam    | ⑨ | warp yarns      |
| ⑤ | beater + reed | ⑩ | treadles        |

<sup>167</sup> own illustration based on Cheesman 2004, p. 245; Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 169.

<sup>168</sup> Hirschstein und Beck 2017, p.169.

<sup>169</sup> Kummetz 2017.

Additionally, it consists of a beater hanging down from the top of the loom which is used to beat the newly inserted weft yarns onto to the woven cloth. In Laos, the beaters teeth are usually made of bamboo reed. Behind the beater are two shafts named *khao* with thread loops, called heddles.<sup>170</sup> These heddles are shaped by an upper and lower loop, creating an eye through which a warp yarn is stretched. Furthermore, the shafts are connected to foot treadles which raise or lower the heddles when being pressed by the weaver.<sup>171</sup>

On a Lao loom, there is also a complex heddle system, which Hirschstein and Beck define as *khao nyeung*<sup>172</sup>. The heddle system “[...] records the pattern and isolates each weft row’s design for the weaver. It is composed of vertical heddle strings and horizontal pattern strings”<sup>173</sup> and is placed behind the heddle shafts. All, the *khao nyeung* and the heddle shafts are linked to bars which are mounted on top of the loom.<sup>174</sup>



Figure 29: Beater<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 246.

<sup>171</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 16.

<sup>172</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 169.

<sup>173</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>174</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 173.

<sup>175</sup> Kummetz 2017.



Figure 30: The *khao nyeung*<sup>176</sup>

Traditionally, certain weaving tasks are assigned to the particular sex. While the plethora of women are in charge of the actual weaving part, men are responsible of making all the weaving equipment.<sup>177</sup> This also includes building a loom, “[...] especially when constructing the main column, called soul column. String that has been blessed is tied around this column during the original construction. Tongue and groove joints are used so that the loom can be dismantled when not in use.”<sup>178</sup>

Before stretching the warp onto the loom, the yarns need to be strengthened to withstand the continuous tension which they are exposed to while weaving.<sup>179</sup> First, strong and well-twisted yarns are selected, dyed and “[...] starched with glutinous rice flour boiled in water with a little oil.”<sup>180</sup> After further procedures where the warp is starched with rice flour, the yarns are put onto spools which are placed into the warp frame. The warp is then wound around the pegs of the wooden frame and stretched over the length of the frame. Afterwards the yarns can be taken to install them on the loom.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>177</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 16.

<sup>178</sup> Connors 1996, p. 16.

<sup>179</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 247.

<sup>180</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 247.

<sup>181</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 247.

During the assembling process, the warp threads are passed through a heddle and the reed to ensure that yarns are held separately from each other. Afterwards warp threads are tied onto the cloth beam and stretched out to the full length of the loom. At the end of the loom they are wound around two wooden beams, stretched back over the upper side of the loom and then tied up on the bar above the weaver's head.<sup>182</sup>



Figure 30: Bouavanh Phouminh inserts the weft threads by moving a *shuttle*, which contains a bobbin of yarn, through the shed



Figure 32: A shuttle with a bobbin of yarn<sup>183</sup>

In course of the weaving procedure, the treadles are pushed by the weaver, forming an opening, which is also called shed. This opening enables a shuttle with a bobbin of yarn to be passed through leaving a layer of weft thread between the warp. A sword made of bamboo or wood is used to widen the warp yarns in the certain shed. Next, the treadles are released, and the beater is used to connect the newly created weft yarn with the previously woven cloth by pushing it onto the woven textile.<sup>184</sup> “The woven cloth is wrapped around a cloth beam”<sup>185</sup> on which the textile is wound up when the beam is being rotated.

<sup>182</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 173.

<sup>183</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>184</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 173.

<sup>185</sup> Connors 1996, p. 17.



Figure 33: Bouavanh Phouminh teaches how to weave in the Lao Textiles Museum, Vientiane<sup>186</sup>

Connor mentions that devices used for weaving processes are often decorated with floral or plant design due to the importance of Lao textiles and time-consuming aspects. Consequently “[t]iny floral designs are often beaten into the surface of the sword and boat-shaped shuttles”<sup>187</sup> or cloth beams are embellished with decorations on both ends.



Figure 34: Women weaving at Carol Cassidy's weaving studio<sup>188</sup>

There is a variety of weaving techniques which can be implemented on the loom to create cloths with magnificent patterns. In this context Connors underlines that “[i]t is the skill of the weaver rather than the complexity of the loom that produces intricate and varied Lao textiles.”<sup>189</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>187</sup> Connors 1996, p. 17.

<sup>188</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>189</sup> Connors 1996, p. 16.

## 8. WEAVING TECHNIQUES

### 8.1 General weaving techniques

Warp describes the yarn that stretches lengthwise on the loom to be crossed by the weft yarn. During any weaving processes weft and warp yarns are firmly interlaced which results in a so called ‘binding system’. There are three important types of basic binding systems.<sup>190</sup>

#### 8.1.1 Tabby or plain weave

Tabby weave, also called plain weave, is the basic and easiest technique to create a woven textile. In this procedure the weft is going over and under the warp in a constant routine. To create a pattern, either the color of the warp or weft can be varied which leads to longitudinal or horizontal stripes. It provides an optimal surface for further operations like “[...] printing, painting or embroidery [...]”<sup>191</sup> as well as cutting or sewing processes. Standard commercial descriptions are batiste, voile, cretonne, etc. Additionally, there are forms deriving from the tabby plain such as the panama weave or rib weave.<sup>192</sup>

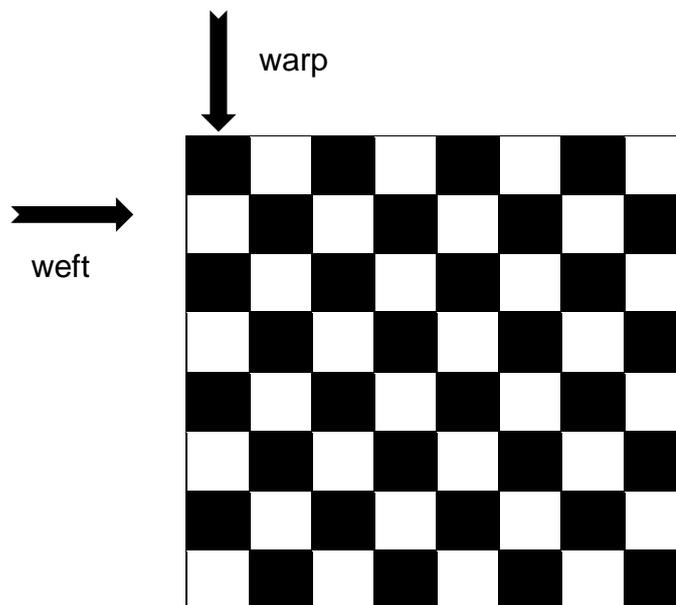


Figure 35: Structure of tabby weave<sup>193</sup>

<sup>190</sup> cf. Albisser-Stierli et al. 2007, p. 163; Völker and Brückner 2014, pp. 128–129; Albisser-Stierli et al. 2007, p. 163.

<sup>191</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 105.

<sup>192</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, pp. 129–132; Albisser-Stierli et al. 2007, p. 164; Tagwerker 2012, p. 105.

<sup>193</sup> own illustration based on Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 129.

### 8.1.2 Twill weave

With regards to the twill technique, the weft is going over and under two warp threads which is continued in the next passage “[...] but staggered, to produce a textured effect with raised diagonals.”<sup>194</sup> Due to its density, it creates a strong and durable textile which is seen in textiles such as drill, gabardine, jeans or tartans.<sup>195</sup>

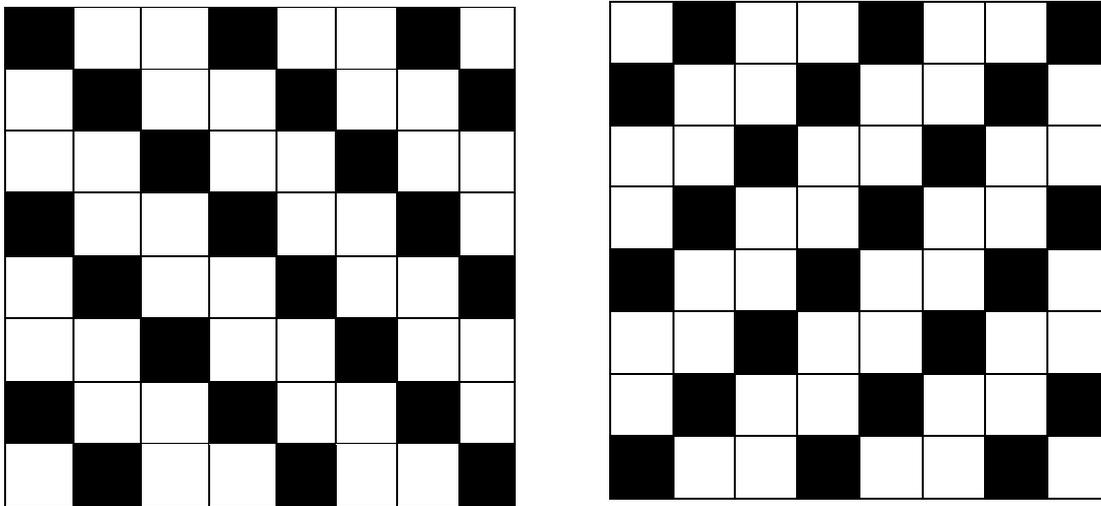


Figure 36: Structure of twill weave <sup>196</sup>

### 8.1.3 Satin weave

The satin weave is characterized as a loose binding system, since the weft thread undergoes four or more warp threads after passing over one. Consequently, the front side shows a majority of warp threads whereas the reverse is mainly pervaded by weft threads. As a result, the textiles have a high density and a very smooth texture. The satin weave is often applied on glamorous wardrobes or decorative cloths as light causes shimmering effects on the fabric.<sup>198</sup>

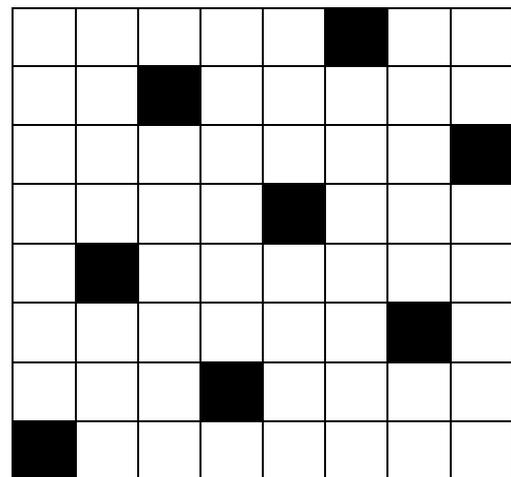


Figure 37: Structure of satin weave<sup>197</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 105.

<sup>195</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, pp. 133–135; Albisser-Stierli et al. 2007, p. 165; Tagwerker 2012, pp. 105–106.

<sup>196</sup> own illustration based on Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 129.

<sup>197</sup> own illustration based on Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 129.

<sup>198</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, p. 135; Albisser-Stierli et al. 2007, p. 165; Tagwerker 2012, p. 106.

## 8.2 Decorative weaving techniques

Due to the personal identification and the self-realization through textiles a variety of decorative patterns are significant for the weaving industry. The supplementary weft and supplementary warp display two general methods to embellish a textile which can be used continuously or discontinuously. Passing the shuttle from selvage to selvage generally describes the process of weaving continuously. In contrast, not expanding the pattern throughout the full width of the fabric but rather selecting particular sections of the fabric, is named as a discontinuous technique.<sup>199</sup>

### 8.2.1 Supplementary weft

Creating patterns by using supplementary wefts entails that additional threads are substituted to the textile which are not part of the foundation structure. Usually the texture of yarn which is woven into the fabric, is thicker in comparison to the wefts used for the ground body.<sup>200</sup>

“To build up a pattern an extra-weft thread must be made to appear or disappear by floating across several warp strands at strategic points. This type of weave is called a weft float.”<sup>201</sup>

Characteristic attributes of supplementary weft designs are the contrary images when turning the fabrics. A dark pattern created on a lighter ground structure usually labels the face of the textile whereas the reverse side shows the negative form of the pattern which means a darker base and lighter motif. Supplementary wefts can be used continuously or discontinuously depending on the weaver's intention. Therefore, consistent designs are achieved by using continuous weft threads, and specific motifs such as animals or domestic objects are usually created by discontinuous supplementary wefts.<sup>202</sup>

Since discontinuous supplementary wefts are merely woven into selected sections, similarities to tapestry weave are visible. In case of tapestry weave, threads are also woven individually into the textile to create a pattern. That is the reason why tapestry weave is often called discontinuous weft-tapestry weave.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 21.

<sup>200</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 107.

<sup>201</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 107.

<sup>202</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 21.

<sup>203</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 106.

## 8.2.2 Supplementary warp

In general, supplementary warps are additional yarns woven onto the background fabrics aiming to achieve decorative effects. Normally, the extra yarns are thicker than the ones used for the ground structure. As the extra warps are not part of the basic structure, they often float either on the face of the textile or on the back.

## 8.3 Weaving techniques used in Laos

“In Laos, almost each ethnic group use [sic] weaving and stitching as channel through which the belief in the otherworld is conveyed with respect to spirits and rituals.”<sup>204</sup> Therefore, there are a plethora of names and the terms used for the weaving techniques may differ with regards to their spelling. Cheesman elucidates seven main weaving techniques which are typically used by Lao-Tai people whereas Tagwerker focuses on six techniques.<sup>205</sup>

### 8.3.1 Plain weave -Thor Thamada

The ground structure of Lao-Tai textiles is mostly woven with tabby weave. The average warp densities lie between 30 to 50 ends per inch for both silk and cotton. In case of finer silk, it can go up to 70 or 80 ends per inch. Generally, warp densities are named as *lop* by weaver of the Lao-Tai. “One *lop* is the equivalent of forty spaces in the comb; thus a comb of eight *lop* and twenty inches wide makes a fabric with a warp density of thirty-two ends per inch, since two warp ends are passed through each space in the comb.”<sup>206</sup> The wooden frames of the combs are removable so weaver can easily adapt the frames to various combs. Additionally, they have a number of sets which can be used for particular textile structures.

A variation of the tabby weave is the log cabin weave which is called *lai ket tao* and stands for “a tabby weave with two-coloured warp and weft yarns arranged in alternating sequence so that the light coloured wefts coincide with light coloured warps and similarity for the dark colours.”<sup>207</sup> A combination of fine wefts with thick weft yarns creates a thick fabric with a checkered pattern.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 111.

<sup>205</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, pp. 248–255; Tagwerker 2012, p. 111.

<sup>206</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 245.

<sup>207</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 246.

<sup>208</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, pp. 245–246.

### 8.3.2 Continuous supplementary weft - *Khit*

Most patterns in Lao textiles are created by using supplementary wefts which are “[...] non-structural threads added to the basic weave.”<sup>209</sup> To create a pattern, a particular grouping of heddles is raised up forming a shed through which the shuttle with weft threads can pass. Generally, the process of continuous supplementary weft is called *khit*, which refers to the targeted development of a pattern and can be translated as to think or to plan. In her research about Lao-Tai textiles, Cheesman focuses on tribes of the *Lao loum* which generally call the continuous supplementary weft *lai kep*. In addition, some tribes still use an ancient method to create patterns which they name *Kep sai diu*. The traditional supplementary method is done by placing bamboo sticks (*diu*) into the warp which determine and record the shed needed for the pattern.<sup>210</sup> “After weaving one or two picks specified by that pattern stick, [...]”<sup>211</sup>, the weaver uses the pattern stick to push up the warp threads. Each time a pattern stick is taken out and the weaving process continued until one half of the pattern is fully executed. The process is then repeated reversely by weaving “[...] the pattern in the mirror image, until all the sticks are removed”<sup>212</sup> Afterwards the weaver decides either to pick a new design or continues weaving the same pattern until the fabric is completed.

### 8.3.3 Discontinuous supplementary weft – *Chok*

Chok is the name of the discontinuous supplementary weft method, which is used when a pattern is woven into a selected area on the textile and does not necessarily appear on the full width of the textile. However, when using the discontinuous method supplementary wefts need to be picked by hand instead of using a shuttle which is very time consuming and therefore nowadays, the technique is rarely used.

Tagwerker names an ancestor figure as an example of which half of the body is colored differently which creates an unique and spectacular design.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Connors 1996, p. 17.

<sup>210</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 248.

<sup>211</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 248.

<sup>212</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 248.

<sup>213</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 113.

### 8.3.4 Mat Mii

Mii, also known as weft ikat, is a decorative weaving technique favored by a lot of Lao weavers. The word *ikat* stems from the word *meng*, a Malay-Indonesian term for to tie or to wrap around. The technique is very time consuming as weft threads need to be dyed before the weaving process nevertheless, it is less difficult compared to *Chok* or *Yiap koh*. Before dyeing, weft yarns are attached to a frame in which the pattern is determined by tying off pieces of the weft with a plastic thread. After dyeing the yarns irregular patterns are predicted as dye may soak through the plastic thread.<sup>214</sup>For each color new “[...] plastic tape is wrapped around the sections where the weaver does not want that colour to be absorbed.”<sup>215</sup>After being finished with dyeing, plastic tape is removed to either continue with a second dye or start the weaving process. Regarding the quality, judgments are made based on the number of applied colors and the precision of the design which also exemplify the knowledge and skill of the weaver.

Cheesman lists various ways of the weft ikat: “[...] mii luat (full ikat), mii luang (open ikat), mii taa/khan (banded ikat) and mii noi (little ikat).”<sup>216</sup> To create the open look of the mii luang, “[...] plain coloured yarns are placed regularly amongst the ikat yarns to separate the ikat pattern [...]”<sup>217</sup> When weaving the banded ikat, wide ikat bands are used whereas mii noi is woven in narrow stripes.

According to Tagwerker, the *Mut mii* weaving technique is most commonly used in southern Laos. However, Cheesman claims that Muang Phuan is the heart province where the technique is practiced especially in terms of working clothes, cotton weft ikat is often applied on tubular skirts usually in Muang Xam Nuea or Muang Phan. Furthermore, she says that Buddhist ethnic groups like Tai Nuea, Tai Khang and Phuan also take usage of the technique when creating ceremonial *sinhs*, which was prior merely used for shamans and dead people.<sup>218</sup>

### 8.3.5 Muk

Generally, designs in Laos are put into the weft using supplementary weft techniques. However, one exception exemplifies the *muk* techniques, often also known as *ta mok* or *mouk*, where patterns are placed into the warp yarns of the cloth. The exceedingly complex

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<sup>214</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 252; Tagwerker 2012, p. 116.

<sup>215</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 116.

<sup>216</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 252.

<sup>217</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 252.

<sup>218</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 252.

technique presupposes the major difficulty of constantly keeping the tension in the warp during the weaving process. Moreover, it can be differentiated into *lai kit* and *lai chok*, translated as continuous or discontinuous supplementary warp.

To proficiently perform the *Lai kit* technique, Cheesman reiterates that people of the Lao-Tai family require two assistants who raise the heddles with warp yarns by hand which eventually enables the weaver to create a pattern in the warp. In this case, the heddles are vertically arranged, “[...] their groupings separated by sticks of bamboo which pass right through them. As each stick is reached, it is removed in turn and placed below the strings of the heddles which pass through the shed of the warp and hang down below.”<sup>219</sup> The process continues in the reverse way after reaching the end. Whilst the warp yarns are raised, a weaving sword is put into the shed to hold up the threads, so the shuttle can be passed through. Moreover, to reinforce the density and strength of the textile, each supplementary warp yarn is fixed by a plain weave.<sup>220</sup>

People among the Tai Lue ethnic group prefer using a hook which is connected to the plain weave heddles and “[...] transfers the *kit* heddles one at a time on to the strings attached to the foot peddles”<sup>221</sup> thus they are capable working on their own without the requirement of extra helpers.

The present hypothesis that the technique originated with the Tai Daeng is also confirmed by Cheesman and Tagwerker. Nevertheless, pattern woven with the supplementary warp technique are often seen in Vientiane province.

### 8.3.6 Yiap Koh

*Yiap Koh*, which defines tapestry weave, is still relatively unknown to weavers of Tai Daeng or generally weavers of the northeast of Laos. Cheesman, Tagwerker, Hirschstein and Beck rather associate the technique with the Lue whose people have woven a number of their traditional skirts with this technique.<sup>222</sup>

Hirschstein and Beck note that “[ta]pestry weave is particularly challenging to do well, as it requires incredibly precise attention to weft tension.”<sup>223</sup> Weavers in Laos use their hands to interlock various colored weft yarns around the warp yarns which creates a pattern.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Naenna 1988, p. 72.

<sup>220</sup> cf. Naenna 1988, p. 72.

<sup>221</sup> Naenna 1988, p. 72.

<sup>222</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 255; Tagwerker 2012, p. 114; Hirschstein and Beck 2017, pp. 179–180.

<sup>223</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 180.

<sup>224</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 113.

## 9. PATTERNS AND MOTIFS

There are several individual ways and opinions how motifs can be distinguished, which vary in some aspects but generally have the same context. Taking all variations into account, motifs and patterns can be divided into four groups.

1. Motifs representing the environment such as plants, water etc.
2. Motifs which refer to mythological creatures like the *naga*.
3. Motifs having religious impacts and meanings.
4. Motifs integrating geometrical shapes.

### 9.1 The environment

Motifs which draw a connection to the environment can also be seen as “[r]eal-world motifs”<sup>226</sup>. These motifs represent objects which do exist in our natural environment like



Figure 38: *Sinh* with flower pattern<sup>225</sup>

plants, real animals or nature elements.

Plants including flowers, fruits, seeds or any other plants usually function as decorative instruments underlining the beauty of the nature and the thriving agriculture. Furthermore, another very popular motif used to emphasize existence and life is ‘The Tree of life’.<sup>227</sup>

“With its roots in the earth and branches in the

heavens, this Buddhist-inspired motif connects the two realms of the worlds and helps healing ceremonies.”<sup>228</sup>

By integrating real animals such as elephants, snakes, roosters, horses or any other animal into the pattern, weavers sometimes aim to either implement symbolic ulterior motives,

<sup>225</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>226</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 135.

<sup>227</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 135.

<sup>228</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 135.

authentic situations with animals, or intend to use animals as an emblem for something else. Therefore, a pair of butterflies can often be interpreted as a harmonic human couple.<sup>229</sup>

## 9.2 Mythological creatures

### 9.2.1 The Naga–Naak–Ngueak

The most common motif, which can be seen in various Lao textiles is the *Naga* symbol. Likewise, it is often known under *Ngueak* or *Naak* and designates a water serpent with magical power, which can transform into “[...] other beings such as animals and humans.”<sup>230</sup>

Originally, the word *Naga* comes from the Pali language and is translated as *Naak* into the Lao language. In many parts of Laos, the essential meaning of *Naak* and *Ngueak* is the same. However, depending on the ethnic group, differences between *Ngueak* and *Naak* are claimed to be existent since *Ngueak* is often determined as an evil animal bringing illness or death.<sup>232</sup> In contrast, “*Naak* are followers of the Buddha, and thus do not carry the quite deliberate fierceness of the *ngueak*.”<sup>233</sup>

The diverse interpretation regarding the *Naga* can be traced back to the various ethnic groups existing in Laos. Consequently, tribes of the animist ideology like Tai Daeng peoples believe in the *Ngueak* motif and its meaning whereas Buddhist are representatives of the *Naak* and promote its kind and protective characteristics.



Figure 39: Nagas in front of a temple, Vientiane<sup>231</sup>

<sup>229</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 135.

<sup>230</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 130.

<sup>231</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>232</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 131.

<sup>233</sup> Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 130.

Due to the religious and spiritual beliefs of animists and Buddhists, they symbolize the energy and protection since they bear “[...] responsibilities for bringing rain[,] for drinking, bathing and farming and are known to protect the complex, vital irrigation networks.”<sup>234</sup>

Nevertheless, some ethnic groups still believe in the *Ngueaks*'s power and deeply respect them wherefore they would not hurt any snake to keep its sentiment tender. Moreover, the red color is often “[...] considered as of the *Nagas*'s crest”<sup>235</sup> and hence wearing red when crossing a river is seen as a dangerous matter since the legless dragon could interpret this behavior as being disrespectful, which could damage its sentiment and result in a sinking boat.<sup>236</sup>

Significant for the entire Lao culture and its society, the *Naga* motif is not only visible on Lao textiles but do also serve as symbol on architectural designs. A one-headed to seven-headed *Naga*, leading the way to the temple, for instance, is a fixed component of the architecture and outer design of temples. In addition, *Naga* heads flaunting at the roof of a temple and looking up to the sky are common architectural characteristics.<sup>238</sup>

Due to its vital role in the Laotian culture, the *Naga* is a common figure which is found in a variety of stories. The folk tale *Mai Faa and the Pretty Girl* is an example for a typical tale



Figure 40: *Naga* motif<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Hirschstein und Beck 2017, p.129.

<sup>235</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p.131.

<sup>236</sup> Nanthavongdouangsy 2004, p.12.

<sup>237</sup> Martin 2017

<sup>238</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p.129.

of the Tai Daeng where the *Naga* can be seen as the protagonist. It is recorded in Viengkham Nanthavongdouangsy's book *Weaving Cloth, Weaving Nagas*.

### Mai Faa and the Pretty Girl – a folk tale of the Tai Daeng

by Viengkham Nanthavongdouangsy

Once upon a time there was a poor family of a Mother, Father and a beautiful little Daughter living in a small village. The Mother and Daughter grew mulberry bushes to feed silkworms. The silkworms had to be fed for two full moons before they made their cocoons, and they stayed inside for a long time and hatched only once a year. So, the family named this silk worm Mai Faa (Faa means a year).

The Mother reeled the Faa Silk yarn out of the cocoon. Mai Faa was very strong and very hard to break. The Mother gave Mai Faa to the Father, and the Father made it into a fishing net. After fishing, the Father gave the net to the Daughter who then went fishing. The Daughter carried her a basket of embroidery equipment such as yarn, fabric and a knife, and she embroidered her Sinh (skirt) while she fished. After a while there came a noise from the river. She looked down and saw a long Nak (water snake) caught by the net. Young girl, please help me! I am in pain! The net is very strong. It is stronger than any nets I have ever seen! Cried the Nak. The Daughter listened to the Nak's pleading and felt pity for it. She took her knife and began to cut the net. She tried very hard but the knife could not cut the yarn. Then she tried again while singing a song. La ni noi, La ni neu, La ni nut. Cut this yarn to the next, Cut the next to the near. Please! Please yarns, leave the Nak. As soon as the song ended the yarn released the Nak. The Nak was very happy and invited the Daughter to visit his town under the river. At first the Daughter refused but the Nak asked her again and again to give him a chance to return her kindness. The Daughter went down to the Nak's town and met with the parents of the young Nak who were the King and Queen of the town. The King and Queen listened to the story and were very grateful to the Daughter for allowing their son to survive. Before leaving the Nak's town, the King and Queen gave the Daughter a couple of bags. The first bag contained white ginger, and the second contained yellow ginger. The Daughter returned home with the two bags, and when she opened them the white ginger turned to silver and the yellow turned to gold. Since then the poor family became wealthy and lived together happily.

Ever since that day, when people travel by river, they like to have the Mai Faa yarn tied to their wrists to protect them from the danger of the water snake.<sup>239</sup> Once upon a time there was a poor family of a Mother, Father and a beautiful little Daughter living in a small village. The Mother and Daughter grew mulberry bushes to feed silkworms. The silkworms had to be fed for two full moons before they made their cocoons, and they stayed inside for a long time and hatched only once a year. So, the family named this silk worm Mai Faa (Faa means a year).

The Mother reeled the Faa Silk yarn out of the cocoon. Mai Faa was very strong and very hard to break. The Mother gave Mai Faa to the Father, and the Father made it into a fishing net. After fishing, the Father gave the net to the Daughter who then went fishing. The Daughter carried her a basket of embroidery equipment such as yarn, fabric and a knife, and she embroidered her Sinh (skirt) while she fished. After a while there came a noise from the river. She looked down and saw a long Nak (water snake) caught by the net. Young girl, please help me! I am in pain! The net is very strong. It is stronger

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<sup>239</sup> Nanthavongdouangsy 2004, pp. 21–23.

that any nets I have ever seen! Cried the Nak. The Daughter listened to the Nak's pleading and felt pity for it. She took her knife and began to cut the net. She tried very hard but the knife could not cut the yarn. Then she tried again while singing a song. La ni noi, La ni neu, La ni nut. Cut this yarn to the next, Cut the next to the near. Please! Please yarns, leave the Nak. As soon as the song ended the yarn released the Nak. The Nak was very happy and invited the Daughter to visit his town under the river. At first the Daughter refused but the Nak asked her again and again to give him a chance to return her kindness. The Daughter went down to the Nak's town and met with the parents of the young Nak who were the King and Queen of the town. The King and Queen listened to the story and were very grateful to the Daughter for allowing their son to survive. Before leaving the Nak's town, the King and Queen gave the Daughter a couple of bags. The first bag contained white ginger, and the second contained yellow ginger. The Daughter returned home with the two bags, and when she opened them the white ginger turned to silver and the yellow turned to gold. Since then the poor family became wealthy and lived together happily. Ever since that day, when people travel by river, they like to have the Mai Faa yarn tied to their wrists to protect them from the danger of the water snake.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Nanthavongdouangsy 2004, pp. 21–23.



Figure 41: Part of the That Luang temple complex in Vientiane<sup>241</sup>



Figure 42: Royal palace in Luang Prabang<sup>242</sup>

<sup>241</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>242</sup> Kummetz 2017.

### 9.2.2 Siho

The *Siho*, a motif whose head embodies an elephant and whose body portrays the body of lion, is known as a powerful being featured with supernatural forces. It is a common motif applied on textiles and is said to keep diseases and injuries at bay. Likewise, it represents a symbol of fertility and is sometimes depicted with tiny animals inside of its womb. As elephants used to have a crucial task during the war, on some fabrics, *Sihos* do also carry people on their back to express the strength and power of these animals. In most cases, these people are ancestors.<sup>244</sup> In addition, *Saang* is another term used to represent elephants.<sup>245</sup>



Figure 43: Siho pattern<sup>243</sup>

### 9.2.3 Khon Buhaan



Figure 44: Ancestor figures riding on the back of elephants<sup>246</sup>

Humans are depicted on many textiles, mostly in “[...] shamanic healing cloths, mens’s shoulder cloths, Buddhist women’s shoulder cloth, curtains, women’s head cloth and tube skirts.”<sup>247</sup> In general, a *Khon Buhaan* is illustrated as person who stands and raises two arms with one, two or three fingers stretched out. The small number of fingers stretched out does not intend to have a special meaning but has practical reasons due to the intricacy of weaving five fingers.

A standing figure, which is also called *huea hong* is a symbol for shamans on their journey to the other world

<sup>243</sup> Martin 2017

<sup>244</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 133.

<sup>245</sup> cf. Findly 2014, p. 144.

<sup>246</sup> Martin 2017

<sup>247</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 268.

Moreover, *Khon Buhaans* have a special meaning, if woven on *sinhs* which are taken for the burial of women in Xam Nuea. They believe that by wearing patterns with depicted ancestors, the dyeing women is accompanied by them on their way from the world into heaven.

Another version of a *Khon Buhaan* who lies on the ground represents an ancestor giving birth which can be interpreted as an ancestor giving birth to mankind. However, due to the fact that the original meaning is unknown, it is still a matter of interpretation.<sup>248</sup>

#### 9.2.4 Hong

The mythical bird *hong* has various meanings represented in Lao textiles. Generally, birds are the expression of freedom and the free spirit of the weavers. For the ethnic group Tai Daeng they are creatures with a rainbow in the trunk and often weaved with multi-colored stripes.<sup>249</sup> In folktales like *The Princess and a Bird by Thao Nanghong Nanghai*, birds are described as comrades of young female weavers who then turn into men who marry the women.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, pp. 268–269.

<sup>249</sup> Cheesman 2004, p.261.

<sup>250</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 134.

## 9.2.5 Phii Nyak

An image emphasizing “[...] great beauty, power and mystery”<sup>252</sup> is known as the motif of *Phii Nyak* also called ‘the giant spirit’. A serpent with a head shaped as a diamond, its crest upright, often one-eyed with two arms sprawled out. “In some textiles the arms become spiral, and the image is more like a mirror repeat of the hong”<sup>253</sup>. It often resembles the design of the *Naak* or *Ngueak* as its head is created similar to the one of the *Naga* and it has the body of a serpent. According to Findly, there are also overlapping characteristics to the triangular designs of the elephant as well as to the *koom*, which “[...] is often used in a larger format to hold things like flowers and small birds, and found as a design element in its own right or as a filler in other designs.”<sup>254</sup> The giant spirit can be seen in a wide range of textiles, since it represents an animal worshipped and feared at the same time. Tales claim that after sunset it turns into a horrifying creature attacking people who wander around in the forest, breaking their skull and finally drinking their blood. However, it can not only eat people physically, but can also draw out the spirit of their bodies with the addition that they habitually target people with bad personality traits and intentions. Conversely, the giant spirit connotes protection since it is also known as a symbolic bouncer who keeps away other evil spirits by fighting against and scaring them.<sup>255</sup> Therefore, the motif of the giant spirit is commonly used on door curtains to scare bad spirits and is part of many textiles utilized for children to shield them from any harm.<sup>256</sup>



Figure 45: *Phii Nyak* statue<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Kummetz 2017

<sup>252</sup> Findly 2011, p. 48.

<sup>253</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 269.

<sup>254</sup> Findly 2011, p. 50.

<sup>255</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 134.

<sup>256</sup> cf. Findly 2011, pp. 54–55.

### 9.3 Religious motifs

Religious motifs found on textiles usually contain depictions of stupas or temples which are a representation for ancient monuments. In some cases, a head of a Buddha can be seen on various cloths as well as two *Nagas* with connected tails which form the popular candlestick motif. A human figure standing in between the two *Nagas* is often interpreted as Buddha who is the center of the religion.<sup>257</sup>

### 9.4 Geometric designs and other motifs

The diamond or Lozenge, a triangular figure, is a significant motif depicted on a plurality of Lao textiles. It allegorizes power and requires profound knowledge about the weavers' cultural and ethnic background due to the variety of different meanings and interpretations. In some cases, it is connected to fertility and designed to express a womb or navel.<sup>258</sup>

Cheesman claims that the *Kaap*, or house gable, is the most common motif which is displayed by a triangular shape. It is “[...] woven in both very small and large sizes and seen in nearly every type of textile. The images represent gables on houses with woven bamboo patterns, which are sometimes made with dark and light coloured materials so the patterns stand out [...]”<sup>259</sup>

Generally, a plethora of geometric designs aim to represent celestial objects such as the sun, the moon or stars. However, the majority of flowers and plants are illustrated with the help of geometric figures and can be seen on funeral banners, blankets or curtains.<sup>260</sup>

Other motifs can include illustrations of the *Khon Khob*, a frog figure which symbolizes “[...] rain and reproduction [...]”<sup>261</sup>, and the *Mom* motif which represents a magical horse.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 130.

<sup>258</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 26.

<sup>259</sup> Cheesman 2004, p. 272.

<sup>260</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, pp. 270–271.

<sup>261</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p.132.

<sup>262</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, pp. 132–134.

## 10. THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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The cultural wealth, formed by the ethnic minority groups living in Laos, is an important and unique feature of the present-day Lao PDR. However, it may hinder the country of establishing a national culture to which all diverse ethnic groups feel allegiance and in which people are able to create a national identity. Thus, it is necessary to think of options which help to protect and preserve the intangible heritage of ethnic minorities in Laos with the aim of integrating cultural heterogeneity into a national environment.

In the following, the substantial factors which pose a threat for the various ethnic groups, making them lose a number of tangible heritage or even extinguishing some groups, is a topic which will be discussed in more detail. Additionally, the vital role of textiles with regards to their effects on the preservation of the intangible heritage of Laos, is looked at more precisely and in what sense textiles as tangible cultural heritage and weaving as one dimension of the intangible cultural heritage support the journey of finding national identity in diversity.

However, for ease of understanding, it is useful to examine various definitions of the terms culture and cultural heritage in order to understand the entire scope of the issue.

In 1871 Edward Burnett Tylor established a definition of 'culture' saying that culture "[...] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society."<sup>263</sup>

According to UNESCO "[c]ultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations."<sup>264</sup> Further definitions by UNESCO make clear that.

[t]he term 'cultural heritage' has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.<sup>265</sup>

As a result, the cultural heritage can be divided into: the *tangible cultural heritage* and *intangible cultural heritage*.

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<sup>263</sup> Tylor 1871, p. 1.

<sup>264</sup> UNESCO 2017a, n.p.

<sup>265</sup> UNESCO 2017b, n.p.

The tangible cultural heritage consists of three subgroups which contain movable, immovable and underwater cultural heritage such as paintings, monuments and shipwrecks which are beheld as dignified to be preserved. In contrast, the intangible cultural heritage refers to oral traditions, performing arts and rituals.

UNESCO also underlines that the value of intangible cultural heritage is not only cultural manifestation, but also economic and social advantages are provided with the abundance of knowledge and skills which is passed on from generation to generation.<sup>266</sup>

## 10.1 Dangerous to weaving as a living art

When looking at the intangible cultural heritages of minority groups in the Lao PDR, the incredible variety of artefacts, living arts or thoughts is clearly visible. “s describes that these objects and ideologies used to interoperate with each other to enable the various peoples to live their life under their ancient traditions and spiritual aspirations.<sup>267</sup>

The present Laos and its wealth of colorful diversity is a result of a long-lasting migration process in which each ethnic group brought their own beliefs, language and customs. With 49 ethnic groups, the dense diversity offers a broad unique culture with a variety of techniques and traditions with regards to the textiles production. From the usage of natural fibers such as cotton, silk or hemp to the various techniques used to create patterns and their distinct intention, differences among the ethnic groups are identifiable. Dyestuff is still extracted from natural sources such as from the bark, the roots or the leaves of a plant or obtained of an animal source. Hand-made looms are used for the weaving procedures which do not only involve the women’s skills to operate them but also the men’s manufacturing abilities. The knowledge and skills delivered from mother to daughter and daughter-in-law is mostly transmitted through oral communication and the techniques have ancient roots. Hence, preserving the living art, the intangible heritage of these ethnic minorities, may be a gift for future generations. However, creating national identity in a country with 49 ethnic groups all bringing different customs, traditions and languages proves to be a problem since the ability to develop a feeling of unity in diversity bears difficulties. Besides, various other aspects represent a burden for the weaving culture which runs like a red thread through the past until the present.

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<sup>266</sup> cf. UNESCO 2017b, n.p.

<sup>267</sup> cf. Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 89.

The French colonization and the several wars had devastating impacts on the intangible and tangible cultural heritage of Laos.

The aim of founding one nation by a non-supportive system towards ethnic minorities brought several identification conflicts during the French colonization.

During the war, some ethnic groups had to struggle with transition as the war can be interpreted as a trigger for modern development. Ethnic minorities had to move to distinct locations and were forced to assimilate new unfamiliar customs.<sup>268</sup> Connor claims that merely the people who lived in the remote valleys in the high plateaus of Laos have accomplished to preserve their unique identity, habits and rituals due to their geographical separation and thus are not concerned of modern concepts like political boundaries or group identities.<sup>269</sup>

The war was not only claiming millions of victims but also the eco-system was tremendously harmed after one of the largest bombing campaigns which had serious consequences on the textile production. The soil was poisoned which made cultivation of cotton or hemp impossible and families had to flee from their houses, leaving their looms and weaving instruments behind.<sup>270</sup> Even though Cheesman underlines that women of the Lao-Thai ethnic group never stopped weaving even in times where they had live under horrible circumstances such as in caves,<sup>271</sup> Van Esterik asserts that generally “[w]eaving was almost abandoned during this period, in spite of the need for self-sufficiency.”<sup>272</sup> Consequently, an enormous number of weaving techniques and textiles got lost during this period.

Despite meeting great challenges, several artefacts, textiles and traditions survived throughout the history of Laos which made Lefferts draw conclusions that “[...] members of the country’s ethnic groups are resourceful people who have developed accomplished mechanisms to survive in a changing world.”<sup>273</sup>

Nowadays, the lifestyle is under external pressure of tourists visiting the country and again, the rapid development and change has crucial impacts on minor as well as major peoples. On one hand, the impacts have dynamic effects on people who try to adapt themselves to new, change-driven ideologies and an effective cultural framework. On the other hand, people who are not able to live their life in accordance to their dreams and cultural beliefs are consequently left behind and forced to live constructed lifestyles.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> cf. Beck and Hirschstein 2017, n.p.

<sup>269</sup> cf. Connors 1996, vii.

<sup>270</sup> cf. Beck and Hirschstein 2017, n.p.

<sup>271</sup> cf. Cheesman 2004, p. 245.

<sup>272</sup> Esterik 1999, pp. 49–50.

<sup>273</sup> Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 89.

<sup>274</sup> cf. Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 89.

In regions closer to a city, the globalization and thus the importation of western-design clothing, plastics and machine-made clothes began to displace local manufacturers and weavers as well as ancient traditions.<sup>275</sup>

However, this development does not merely imply a negative impact on the prior weaving culture. According to Lefferts, cloth which was imported from China and India was very significant for the cultural heritage during pre-industrial era since elite groups were given a superior status by having access to non-native textiles.<sup>276</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the advantages provoked by the globalization, the cultural heritage of Laos is threatened. The demand for textiles is still very high but a great number of tourists is not aware of the labor-intensive work involved with the textile production and consequently “[...] try to bargain the price down to the equivalent of Thai machine-made cloth. [...] [T]he ultimate insult and dismissal of the skills of a Lao weaver.”<sup>277</sup>

Additionally, ancient traditions such as weaving are very time-consuming, and the fashion rapidly changes.<sup>278</sup> As a consequence, in a world where new media and technology takes over control and where development is directed towards the aim of reducing time exposures, many young weavers do not see the importance of learning weaving techniques which are not documented and merely transmitted orally.

Beck and Hirschstein summarize this issue by saying that

[e]thnic minority artists, elders and others recognize that modern times are making many traditional beliefs and ways obsolete; there is deep concern that ethnic identity and elder wisdom is being forever lost. Perhaps the greatest weight for maintaining tradition falls on the artists who create and maintain the materials and methods, and thus the rites, associated with their ancestors' ways. Traditional daily life and traditional belief were - and still are in certain places - intricately and seamlessly woven together.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> cf. Beck and Hirschstein 2017, n.p.

<sup>276</sup> cf. Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 91.

<sup>277</sup> Esterik 1999, p. 53.

<sup>278</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, no. 112112.

<sup>279</sup> Beck and Hirschstein 2017, n.p.

## 10.2 The importance of textiles for cultural preservation

As mentioned, the past was affecting the ethnic minorities and the traditional textiles production in many aspects. Lefferts clarifies that “[s]ome of these ideas and objects brought about drastic, horrific change. Other provided vehicles for constructive change and new expanded lives.”<sup>280</sup> Nevertheless, it is reasonable to think that the living art is an important heritage due to its meaningful contribution to the unique culture of Laos and pursue an approach to cultural preservation.

The question why textiles and the weaving culture play a vital role in preserving the intangible heritage of ethnic minorities and help in creating a national identity will be discussed in the following chapter.

According to Völker and Brückner, the main purposes of humans wearing clothes are not merely based on protecting the body from external influences or due to reasons of shame, it bears a lot more. Clothes can serve as medium of the individual self-portrayal and they can express the affiliation or in contrast, the conscious differentiation to a certain group. Moreover, garments function as symbol of approval and are often used as an expression of value and standards which also influences the behavior of people.<sup>281</sup>

This statement makes clear that textiles are significant for the process of creating an identity and expressing cultural values.

Especially in Laos textiles are of high importance and generally characterize a majority of cultures in South East Asia.<sup>282</sup> Throughout the traditional life of a Lao person, “[...] from infancy to maturity, through marriage and parenthood, and finally, at death, to the honoured role of ancestor”<sup>283</sup>, textiles play a key role in influencing and defining the life of a person living in Laos. Impacts of the ethnic background, the social position and the present moment of the individual’s life can be analyzed with the help of textiles worn by the person.

As a matter of fact, an expert of Lao textiles could simply view a piece of cloth and provide details about the age, the martial and social status as well as the ethnic background of the weaver and identify the village or valley of origin merely with the help of its design, motifs, material and the color usage.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 89.

<sup>281</sup> cf. Völker and Brückner 2014, IX.

<sup>282</sup> cf. Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 90.

<sup>283</sup> Connors 1996, p. 34.

<sup>284</sup> cf. Beck and Hirschstein 2017, n.p.

The vital significance of fabric and textiles in various forms, is instantly recognizable since textiles are representative almost everywhere. In a ceremonial occasion such as a wedding, the traditional garments stand out due to its vibrant and colorful splendor. Likewise, during a *baci*, each one who asks and wishes for protection gets a cotton thread tied around the wrist.<sup>285</sup> Apart from festivities, textiles belong to the people's everyday life and in many regions of the Lao PDR, traditional garments are still part of daily wardrobe of women and men.

The statement of Ghandi saying that “[a] nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people”<sup>286</sup> strongly supports that weaving in Laos, which does not merely mean producing a textile but rather functions as a mirror of the soul and aims to express the culture and values, is a living art which can create a national identity and culture.<sup>287</sup>

Carol Cassidy has the opinion that weaving is fundamental to humanity as it emerges from the origin of human being or human life. She explains that the beginning of weaving was merely based on the necessity and arouse in a time where the human beings were in a relationship with their environment and lived with the rhythm of the seasons. The raw material such as cotton, silk or hemp depending was harvested on the plant which was growing, and the color used for dyeing was extracted from a source which was available. Due to the roots of weaving, it is conceivable that weaving originally was not linked to religion but rather to nature and the fundamental relationship between a human being and nature.<sup>288</sup> Cassidy's argumentation strongly supports the statement of weaving being essential for creating identity and the need of preserving such an ancient heritage as it is closely related to humanity and no matter the fact that all ethnic groups differ in the implementation, the origin is still the same.

Globalization and national pressure are the reasons that various ethnic groups began to cooperate with each other in an effort to gain a profit for themselves and also for the community. Examples given by Van Esterik emphasize the intertwined groups. She writes that peoples from the midlands such as the Mon-Khmer supply the Lao Loum weavers from the lowland with cotton, or women of the Hmong ethnic group go further down to lowland areas in order to assimilate weaving techniques of the Tai Dam.<sup>289</sup> Ethnic groups not only begin to cooperate and exchange their expertise and resources, but they also begin to share

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<sup>285</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, p. 112.

<sup>286</sup> Gandhi 1968, p. 283.

<sup>287</sup> Beck and Hirschstein 2017, n.p.

<sup>288</sup> Kummetz, Martin 12/10/17, line 1-15.

<sup>289</sup> cf. Esterik 1999, p. 53.

a variety of motifs and designs with other ethnic groups. In fact, overlapping characteristics of costumes between several groups as well as same cuts but distinctive colors and decorative patterns, occur prevalently even though most of them are still closely related to the tradition and based on the knowledge of the previous generations.<sup>290</sup>

However, in some cases, the specific color or an exceptional cut still functions as an indicator for a certain ethnic group. Austro-Asiatic groups, for example, possess costumes with the main color usage of red and black and the Tibeto-Burman's eight subgroups are identified as all "[...] having its own cut for the skirt and trousers."<sup>291</sup>

Besides, the shared patterns and similar cuts, a garment worn by most women in the Lao PDR can be seen as a symbol for national identity. The tubular skirt which is called *sinh* is a garment which initially was only produced and worn by women of Lao-Tai ethnic groups. Promoted by the French, the *sinh* is nowadays worn by females of almost all ethnic groups thus became a symbol for national identity and forms an important part of the feminine wardrobe.<sup>292</sup> Each ethnic group is still able to include own cultural facets in the manufacturing process of the *sinh* while the skirt still represents Laos as country, thus the *sinh* supports the statement that textiles are objects which help to integrate cultural heterogeneity into a national environment and help to create a national identity.

Due to variety in the type, the pattern arrangement or the weaving techniques, alterations of the name can appear from ethnic group to another. Additionally, variations regarding the color, the shape or structure can cause a change in the name. Ketavong has given a table which provides an overview to some of these names.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, p. 112.

<sup>291</sup> Ketavong 2003, p. 112.

<sup>292</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, no. 112112.

<sup>293</sup> cf. Ketavong 2003, p. 114.

Name	Area	Observations
1. <i>Sinh Mane</i>	North-east	Named after the Mane ethnic group
2. <i>Sinh Kane</i>	North-west	Named after the arrangement of the patterns
3. <i>Sinh Mi</i> (Ikat)	Widespread	Weaving technique
4. <i>Sinh Muk</i>	Widespread	Weaving technique
5. <i>Sinh Chok</i>	Widespread	Weaving technique
6. <i>Sinh Kor</i>	Widespread	Weaving technique
7. <i>Sinh Xat</i>	Vientiane	Weaving technique
8. <i>Sinh Chuk</i>	Vientiane	Weaving technique
9. <i>Sinh Pak</i>	Luang Prabang, Champassak North-east	Xam Teu (Tai Muong)
10. <i>Sinh Thive</i>	Widespread	<i>Sinh Thlan</i> (Red Tai, Tai Khao)
11. <i>Sinh Hua Buan</i>	North-east	Tai Deng and Tai Muong (upper band of the skirt)
12. <i>Sinh Hua Khuay</i>	North-east, Xam Neua	<i>Khuay</i> : 'crossed over'
13. <i>Sinh Hua Pong Deua</i>	Champassak	Alternations of red and black, as on the serpent <i>Ngu Mark Deua</i>
14. <i>Sinh Ta Teup</i>	Xieng Khuang	Ta: weave
15. <i>Sinh Ta Mud</i>	Central and south	Phu Thai, Lao Vieng
16. <i>Sinh Tako</i>	Kham Keut	Tai Meuy
17. <i>Sinh Kado</i> (Kalo)	South	Austro-Asiatic
18. <i>Sinh Khanh</i>	Widespread	<i>Khanh</i> (vertical alternations)
19. <i>Sinh Duang</i>	Muang Xai	Name used in Oudomxay Province; also called <i>Muong Ngeun</i> , <i>Sinh Xaya</i> (in Xayabury), <i>Hong Sa</i> Also called <i>Hunh Khana</i> (front paws)
20. <i>Sinh Hun</i> (Khalang)	Muang Hun (Xieng Hung)	<i>Khalang</i> (back paw) or <i>Hunh Xieng Hung</i> (Yunnan) near Muang Sing
21. <i>Sinh Hun Khana</i>	Muang Khua (Phongsaly)	Near Muang Sing
22. <i>Sinh</i> (Muang) <i>Phong</i>	Laotian-Chinese border	
23. <i>Sinh Mat</i> (Sinh Khay)	Xieng Khuang	Named after the Tai Mat ethnic group and the Nam Mat River
24. <i>Sinh Le</i> (Tamlè or Nam Nè or Tè)	Widespread	Also called Tinh Tam
25. <i>Sinh Tinh Ha May</i> (five sticks)	Vientiane	Similar to Tamlè
26. <i>Sinh Kalom</i>	Talieng (Stieng)	Nkriang, Sekong

**Figure 46: Names given to the *sinh* garment<sup>294</sup>**

Women do not only wear the garment which stands for national identity, most of the textiles are also produced by them. Generally, the two major products of Laos, baskets of steamed rice and textiles, are mainly produced by women which is an important characteristic shared by most of the ethnic groups. Van Esterik sees this fact as one of “[t]he clearest markers of Lao national identity [...]”<sup>295</sup> and highlights the importance of textiles as being an important source of income. Since a large part of the female population in Laos is capable to demonstrate sophisticated weaving skills, the women’s identity is strengthened by being able to always earn money or even being the breadwinner.

Therefore, women gained power in the indigenous culture since due to their knowledge they are in command of the production of textiles.<sup>296</sup>

<sup>294</sup> Ketavong 2003, p. 114.

<sup>295</sup> Esterik 1999, p. 48.

<sup>296</sup> cf. Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 91.

As a matter of fact, the weaving abilities are promoted from an early age. Connors says that most of the girls learn how to weave when they are around twelve years old<sup>297</sup> whereas Viengkham Nanthavongdouangsy even started at the age of six.<sup>298</sup>

Being able to weave not only means being able to gain money but also to get married. In her research *Why do they weave?* Nagisa Ito gives an insight in the life of Lao-Tai women and displays the close correlation of weaving and marriage.<sup>299</sup> Nanthavongdouangsy also claims that for some Lao-Tai tribes not being able to weave or to dye can be put on the same level as not being able to be a good wife.<sup>300</sup> Consequently, women who can demonstrate sophisticated weaving skills are more likely to get married and being married is the epitome of being “[...] a mature and independent member of the society.”<sup>301</sup> As a conclusion of her research which Nagisa Ito conducted in villages of the Houa Phan province, she states that weaving is a very important part in a women’s life and even women who are not as highly skilled as other weavers are in some ways still involved in the textiles production.<sup>302</sup>

Additionally, poems, songs and textiles of the largest ethnic group serve as an intermediary to express admiration. Moreover, the context of the songs often contains weaving terms to characterize young appealing women and “[t]raditional Lao poems and sayings advise how to choose a young woman, based on her ability to weave.”<sup>303</sup> In contrast, women give woven pieces as a present to possible future husbands aiming to impress them with their exceptional skills.<sup>304</sup>

Indeed, Lao textiles are not only in the women’s interest but significant for both genders and play a crucial role with regards to political, religious and daily life contexts. Besides, the origin of the cloth, the quality and design are of immense value.<sup>305</sup>

However, despite the importance of women with regards to textiles production, a widespread tendency in terms of the traditional role of genders is clearly visible. Even though the equality of women and men is regulated by the law, the transfer onto the daily

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<sup>297</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 35.

<sup>298</sup> cf. Kummetz 12/17/17, oral.

<sup>299</sup> cf. Ito 2015, pp. 72–79.

<sup>300</sup> cf. Kummetz 12/17/17, line 79.

<sup>301</sup> Ito 2015, p. 72.

<sup>302</sup> cf. Ito 2015, p. 72.

<sup>303</sup> Connors 1996, p. 36.

<sup>304</sup> cf. Connors 1996, p. 36.

<sup>305</sup> cf. Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 90.

life often remains essentially unimplemented and many women are under-represented in leading positions.<sup>306</sup>

Finally, the role of textiles in Laos in the process of creating a national identity and preserving the intangible heritage of ethnic minorities is of high importance since they are embedded in the daily context of an individual's life in Laos. Especially women make a significant contribution by being the ones who are in charge of the textiles production. By being the ones who earn the money, they gain a solid reputation in the society. Besides, the *sinh*, a product of women's labor, can be seen as a unique feature and symbol of Laos. Moreover, Lefferts' statement underlines the vital significance of textiles by saying that they "[...] weave indigenous cultures together; they thus provide strands of meaning and action which can be picked up by observers to understand cultures and assist them in coping with pressures of modern life."<sup>307</sup> As a result, urgent support of holding up the household textile production is essential for supporting the preservation of ethnic minority groups and enhances the national consciousness.

### 10.3 Preservation of the cultural heritage

Regarding the preservation of the rich cultural heritage of Laos, it is useful to examine the results of research which was conducted in Laos. After the general analysis with regards to preservation of the intangible heritage of ethnic minorities, it may be helpful to take a look at factual circumstances and options which support the promotion of the weaving culture and thus are key for the preservation of the uniqueness of Laos.

Condomina's research about the intangible heritage of minor ethnicities and how a national identity regarding traditional cultures can be maintained, revealed that a differentiation of various objectives, which are interconnected by the nexus of safeguarding, protecting, respecting and promoting traditional cultures, is necessary to comprise.<sup>308</sup>

Firstly, he claims that over decades the number of intangible cultures which are to be found in Laos diminished to a substantial extent either because of the growing international tourism, "[...] which is developing at breakneck speed and offering an increasingly numerous clientele cheap imitations of local craftwork and exotic travesties of local rites, or on the pretext of a so-called progressive ideology."<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> cf. Schultze 2003, pp. 159–161.

<sup>307</sup> Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 90.

<sup>308</sup> cf. Condominas 2003, 22.

<sup>309</sup> Condominas 2003, 22.

Secondly, he supports the statement that

[...] a traditional and popular culture must be considered at the level of the groups which created it and through which it continues to live. The culture in its turns reserves, but of the group's pride in its identity. Otherwise its members through victimization and despoilment, will lose their self-respect and inevitably become a group of second-rate citizens. Proud of their traditional culture, they will be proud of being Laos.<sup>310</sup>

Thirdly, language which functions as the transmitter of cultural awareness, is the first component which requires mandatory safeguard measures. Therefore, texts of ethnic groups must be translated into the most-spoken language as well as other languages to make them available not only for the members of the certain ethnic group but also for the majority of other Lao people.<sup>311</sup>

The last objective Condomina emphasizes the imperative of showing respect for the work of ethnic minorities since a lack of respect can result in a false image of culture. The distorted perception of culture can be avoided by collecting works of minorities “[...] correctly in their varying forms, not only to safeguard them in their entirety (including of possible local variations and the stages of evolution), but also as a reservoir and source for inspiration for national artists.”<sup>312</sup>

As a result of the objectives the promotion of the intangible heritage is carefully undertaken by researchers such as ethnologists, linguists and ecologists in allegiance with the Lao Institute of Research on Lao Culture to ensure the dissemination of cultural awareness and national identity. Integrating diverse customs and habits of various ethnic groups in the school curricula from primary school on will help students to understand other ethnicities and enable them to develop national identity and ethnic affinity.<sup>313</sup>

Laos is an ideal example for a country where the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities can be preserved by perceiving the importance of textiles. Indeed, according to Lefferts, textiles represent “[...] the single most vital element by which cultural preservation can be facilitated and change expressed. As a matter of fact, taking the textiles out of their active, formative contexts deprives them of much of their meaning”<sup>314</sup>

Due to the changed intention of traditional textiles which used to function as expression of prestige and status in the society, Tagwerker claims that “[...] it is vital for the people to study and analyze the social and environmental impacts of domesticated production.”<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Condominas 2003, 22.

<sup>311</sup> cf. Condominas 2003, 22.

<sup>312</sup> Condominas 2003, 23.

<sup>313</sup> Condominas 2003, 23.

<sup>314</sup> Lefferts, Jr. 2003, p. 89.

<sup>315</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 160.

According to Tagwerker, the globalization and development tremendously affected young people in terms of not appreciating and recognizing the value of their own cultural heritage. Western wedding dresses are often preferred by young women as well as western lifestyles rather than the time-consuming work of weaving and embellishing the garments by themselves. Likewise, some men tend to impress ladies by having modern consumer goods such as mobile phones or notebooks even though many of them are not able to afford such items.

Tagwerker also underlines that putting an effort in the education of the population by working on increasing the level in “[...] literacy, numeracy and recording, they will eventually grasp the value of their heritage, and will be able to choose and manage production and distribution themselves.”<sup>316</sup>

Furthermore, extending the focus from the mere export and trade to the maintenance of the ethnic tradition, the number of textile craft centers making traditional garment would increase since individuals would be encouraged to wear an authentic wardrobe at festival or other occasions. Consequently, the number of cheap imported clothes from China or Thailand would decrease which can ensure the conservation of authentic Lao textiles quality.<sup>317</sup>

After looking at the research of Condomina and Tagwerker, it is clear that the traditional weaving culture can be maintained by raising collective awareness in terms of their effects on the ethnic minorities and unique culture of Laos. Textiles are valuable and strong in raising this kind of awareness. In comparison to other countries, the traditional textiles production is still present and thus institutions which promote the preservation and research are crucial for maintaining the rich cultural heritage.

One of these institutions is the *Lao Textile Museum*. It is located in Vientiane and offers possibilities to participate in workshops or explore the large field of weaving at the site. Additionally, by having a broad collection of ethnic garments and texts from ancient palm leaf manuscripts, it gives people the opportunity to reproduce and comprehend the development history of the living art of Laos.<sup>318</sup>

Another institution which sees the importance of offering an insight into weaving culture of Laos by showing the magic of the traditional textile production is the *Ock Pop Tok* company. It is one of the most important artisanal institutions with stores spread throughout Laos. Its aim is to make tourists aware of the beauty of hand-made textiles and the tedious process

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<sup>316</sup> Tagwerker 2012, p. 161.

<sup>317</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 161.

<sup>318</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 160.

from the fiber to the finished piece. By offering workshops and exhibitions in the stores, tourist can widen their knowledge with regards to the historical and cultural aspects which influence the weaving process.



Figure 47: V. Nanthavongdouangsy<sup>319</sup>

Viengkham Nanthavongduangsy is a talented weaver who runs the *Phaeng Mai Gallery* which is also located in the capital city, Vientiane. She is in the possession of a wide knowledge and acquired her weaving skills from her early childhood. As being a member of the Tai Daeng ethnic group her motifs and patterns are mostly based on her cultural beliefs, however she is also adapting designs of the Tai Lue. Since Viengkham is a prominent person in the weaving community and has received several awards for her contemporary designs, she is putting a lot of effort in publicly raising awareness and

maintaining traditional weaving techniques. By combining antique motifs with contemporary designs and improving the natural dyeing of textiles, it is possible for her to form a bridge between the traditional ideas and new modern concepts.<sup>320</sup>

Carol Cassidy is an American weaver who came to Laos in 1989 as a textile expert of the United Nations Development Programme. *Carol Cassidy's Lao Textiles* weaving studio is located in the heart of Vientiane city. She employs forty weavers, with sophisticated weaving skills who implement her innovative techniques and designs in high fashion pieces. The designs are mostly reproduced by being analyzed from antique motifs and the textiles are internationally displayed in galleries and museums. Carol's aim is maintenance of the Lao weaving culture by using traditional techniques and designs to create a contemporary woven piece. She also reintroduced techniques which were then adapted from a variety of ethnic groups.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Kummetz 2017

<sup>320</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, pp. 60–61; Kummetz 12/17/17, n.p.

<sup>321</sup> cf. Esterik 1999, pp. 51–52.



Figure 48: Banner of the Lao Handicraft Festival<sup>322</sup>

The *Lao Handicraft Festival* which takes place on an annual basis in Vientiane and targets the promotion and development of Lao handicraft products which are characterized by its uniqueness and its representation of the Lao identity. The main aims of the festival are to preserve the Lao

crafts heritage including the weaving culture by promoting Lao designs and products.<sup>323</sup>

Additionally, the festival provides an opportunity for Lao craftspeople to share designs and techniques with other exhibitors and to extend their own knowledge by being able to learn from other designs. Due to the open setting of the festival, there is a high chance that the quality of products improves and that Lao designs are internationally recognized. While demonstrating and exhibiting the beauty and variety of Lao textiles, the cultural heritage of Laos is celebrated in form of speeches, workshops or a fashion show.<sup>325</sup>



Figure 49: Booths at the Lao Handicraft Festival<sup>324</sup>

In conclusion, the statement of UNESCO emphasizes the importance of the intercultural understanding and the respect towards an intangible heritage which is not only crucial for Laos but for all unique cultures. Essentially, UNESCO argues “[w]hile fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.”<sup>326</sup>

<sup>322</sup> Kummetz 2017

<sup>323</sup> cf. Ireson-Dolittle and Moreno-Black 2015, p. 88.

<sup>324</sup> Kummetz 2017

<sup>325</sup> cf. Ireson-Dolittle and Moreno-Black 2015, p. 88.

<sup>326</sup> UNESCO 2017b, n.p.

## 11. IDEAS FOR THE REALIZATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Due to depth and variety of the weaving culture of Laos it is recommended to realize the topic within the framework of a project. The content and the advantages of project-based learning will be further explained in chapter 12.1.1.

The project can be implemented in a bilingual context since English and working with textiles is a holistic approach. Children are artistically involved in the lesson and learn how to follow instructions in English.<sup>327</sup>

Massler and Heine name three arguments which support that textiles lessons are appropriate for bilingual learning. First, they explain that artistic lessons automatically involve working with material which provides a good opportunity to illustrate and verbalize the contexts of the lesson and the working processes integrated in the lesson. Secondly, the context promotes the children's ability to express themselves since they are enabled to use supportive gestures to clarify statements. Lastly, working with arts and crafts includes learning with all senses which follows the principles of an action-oriented teaching which is closely related to the children's everyday life and their pre-experiences.<sup>328</sup>

Implementing the topic of the Lao weaving in two diverse subjects also follows the approach of cross-curricular teaching. Additionally, the intended cross-curricular project is based on the multi-perspectival approach of a textiles lesson by Marianne Herzog which will be displayed with the help of a model in chapter 12.1.2.

With regards to the English teaching part of the project, it is suggested to teach and introduce new content with the help of the storytelling technique. The advantages and didactic implementation will also be displayed in the 12.2

Eventually, the project in relation to the Bildungsplan 2016 of Baden Württemberg will be illustrated by means of models in chapter 12.3

An idea for a weekly schedule and a lesson plan of one lesson of the project is available in the attached appendix.

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<sup>327</sup> cf. Bechler 2014, p. 107.

<sup>328</sup> cf. Massler and Heine 2008, p. 6.

## 11.1 Methodical approaches and didactic conceptions

### 11.1.1 Project-based learning

Project-based learning (PBL) or learning in projects describes a methodological approach which aims to convey deeper knowledge through an active exploration in an authentic realistic context. Projects allow students to intensively deal with a real-life problem or a topic over a longer period and it enables students to experience the creative power of their ideas in a social environment. Based on didactic ideas of John Dewey and Kilpatrick, the PBL developed into an elaborated methodology.<sup>329</sup>

Peterßen explains that projects target to deliver the matter of context not only in its holistic nature and originality, but also through a personal holistic approach by providing opportunities to experience matters with the head, the heart and the hands. The three dimensions of Pestalozzi refer to the intellectual, moral and physical powers which are essential components of human development and thus crucial for elementary education.<sup>330</sup>

Schmidt underlines that the idea or intention of PBL is closely related to a promotion of cross-curricular teaching which covers objectives of progressive educational approaches.<sup>331</sup>

Despite the plethora of interpretations regarding the term 'project', overlapping characteristics, which are consistent features of all interpretations, are discernible. Firstly, projects must contain a main task. Secondly, the task must embrace further operations which are necessary to complete the task. Thirdly, the self-responsibility of students with regards to the planning and execution of the task displays another major characteristic. Finally, the project must represent a practical work which is targeted towards the solution of the task.<sup>332</sup>

Moreover, common characteristics of PBL include learning by doing with examples, dealing with real-life situations as well as teaching students in a meaningful context. Taking aspects of cross-curricular teaching into account and thus the usage of multiple methods are additional features of PBL. By creating opportunities for differentiation, PBL promotes the integration of a wide range of levels which makes it possible for all students to grasp the learning subject.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> cf. Peterssen 2005, p. 236.

<sup>330</sup> cf. Peterssen 2005, pp. 236–237.

<sup>331</sup> cf. Schmidt 2004, p. 204.

<sup>332</sup> cf. Reintges 1978, pp. 55–59.

<sup>333</sup> cf. Schmidt 2004, p. 206.

There are various ways to integrate projects into the teaching, either in the regular lesson or by a cross-curricular realization. In many cases projects are implemented in the scope of project days or a project week.

### 11.1.2 Cross-curricular project with multiple perspectives

In terms of the textiles subject, the cross-curricular project is oriented towards the didactical approach of including multiple perspectives in the lesson. The following presents some aspects which are connected to a multi-perspectival lesson and gives an overview of which perspectives are embedded in the project.

Cross-curricular teaching intends to promote the problem-oriented and creative work with a topic and makes it possible to create a lesson with a variety of perspectives which is accessible for a wide range of primary school students.<sup>334</sup>

Learning contexts need to draw a connection to the everyday life of the children which requires a multi-perspective view to be able to support children in recognizing correlations and differences.<sup>335</sup>

Students gain extended knowledge and learn to produce and use language by reading stories with a meaningful context and by writing own creative stories which refer to textiles.<sup>336</sup>

The structure of the project characterizes the development of a textile with regards to the Lao culture. Therefore, the theme 'from the fiber over manufacturing processes to the product' displays a central idea and contains several perspectives which are found in the didactical approach of Herzog.

Herzog underlines that nature can serve as field of experience and learning and thus is a vital component of a lesson to raise environmental awareness.

As a consequence, textiles lessons bear ideal conditions for a realization of PBL since it covers the practical work which is one aim of a project.

The following models illustrate which perspectives may be integrated into the project.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> cf. Herzog 2011, p. 20.

<sup>335</sup> cf. Herzog 2011, p. 22.

<sup>336</sup> cf. Herzog 2011, p. 23.

<sup>337</sup> cf. Schmidt 2004, p. 207.

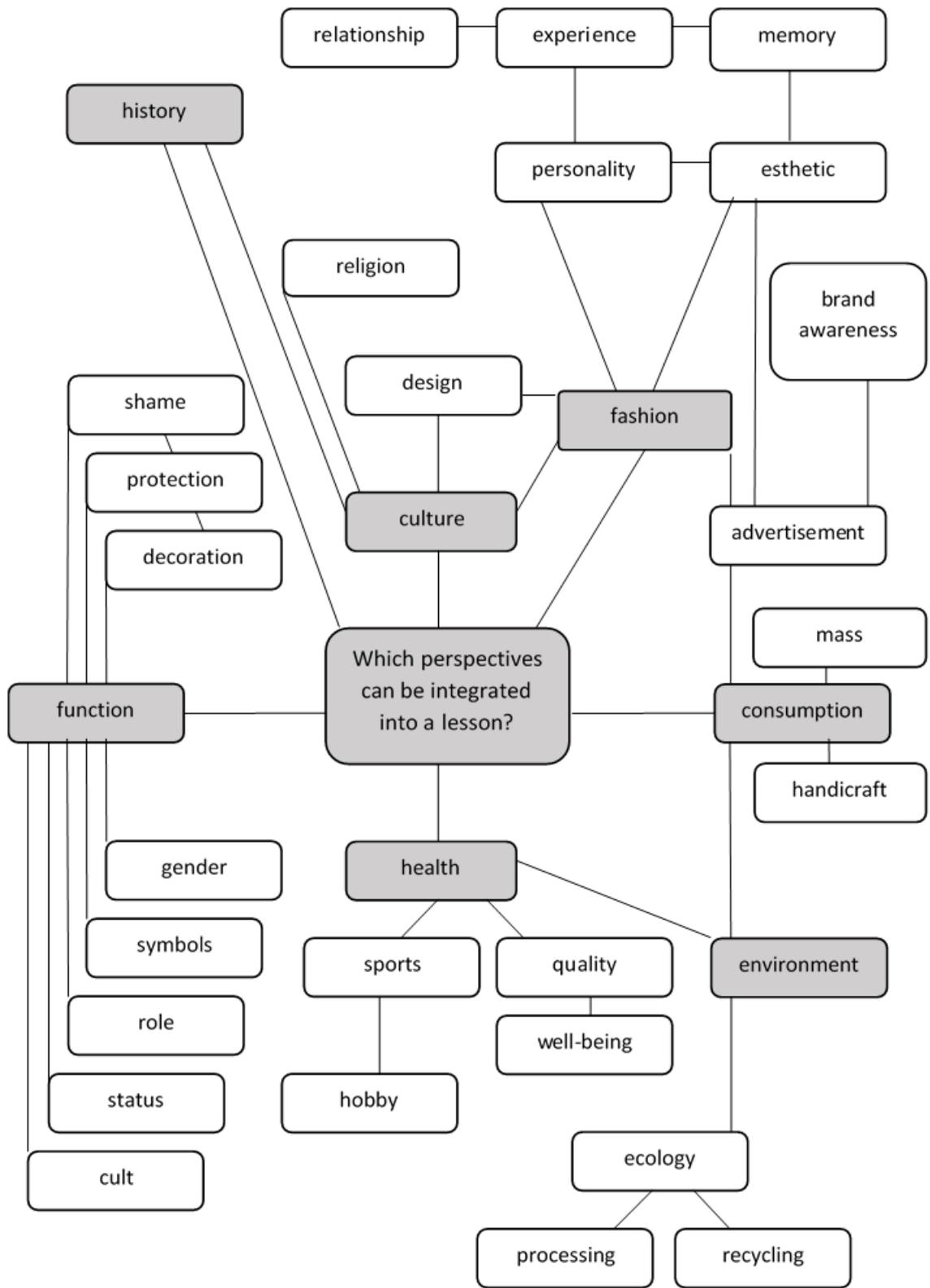


Figure 50: Multiple perspectives - each position opens another point of view.<sup>338</sup>

<sup>338</sup> own illustration based on cf. Herzog 2011, p. 19.

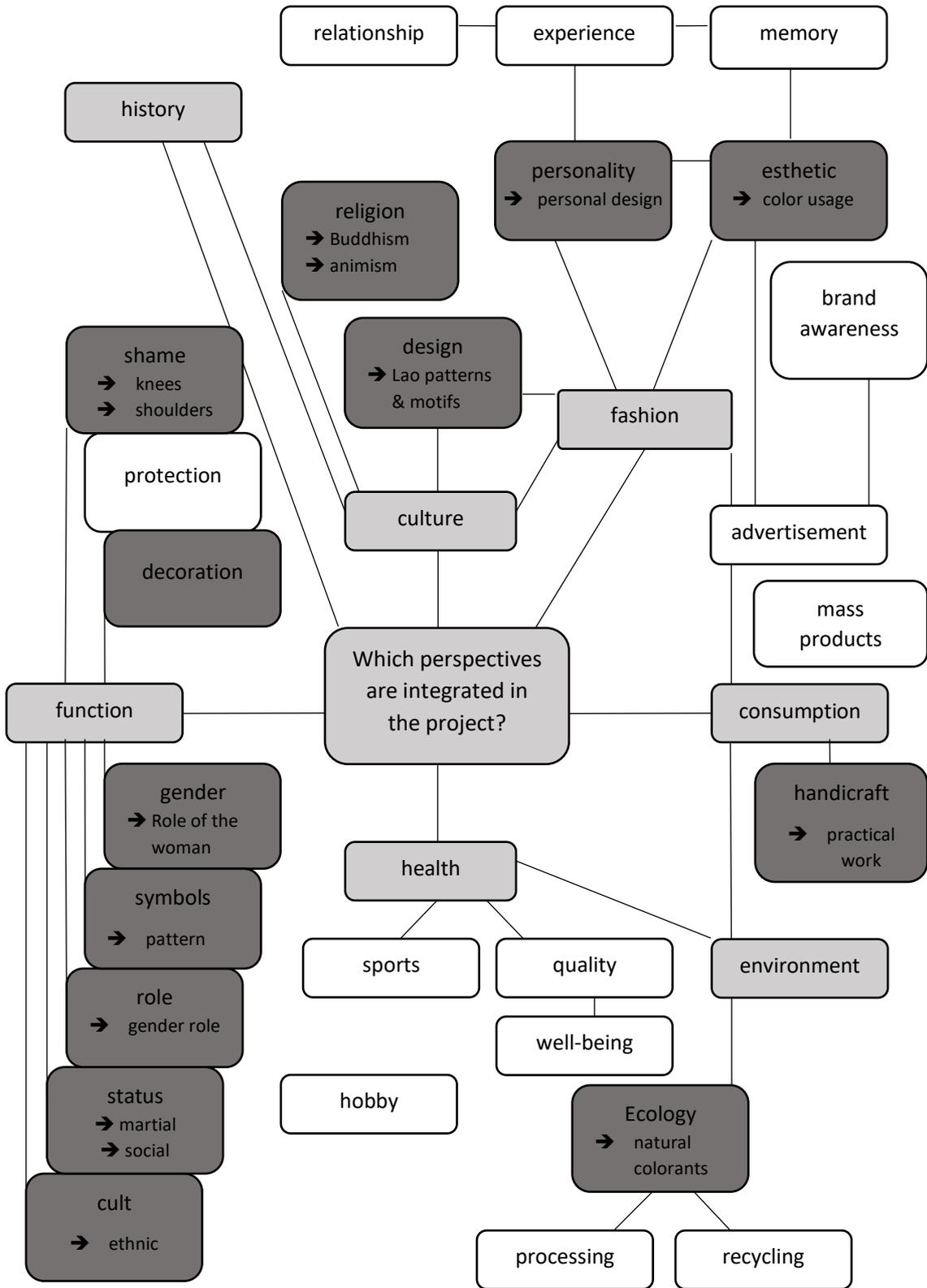


Figure 51: Perspectives of the project<sup>339</sup>

<sup>339</sup> own illustration based on cf. Herzog 2011, p. 19.

## 11.2 Storytelling as a methodical technique

*“You may tell a tale that takes up residence in someone's soul, becomes their blood and self and purpose. That tale will move them and drive them and who knows that they might do because of it, because of your words. That is your role, your gift.”<sup>340</sup>*

Erin Morgenstern

Storytelling is the technique of presenting a story to other people, by either telling or reading it aloud. Reading or telling have both their advantages and disadvantages and can both be effectively integrated into the classroom.<sup>341</sup>

When reading a story aloud, the teacher does not necessarily need to learn the story by heart since the book can be used as a guide. However, if the story is read out too quickly, students may have difficulties in listening to it and thus the ability to perceive key moments could get disturbed. Additionally, some people reading out a story forget the actual listeners since they are too focused on the written text. In turn though, after reading out and working with the story multiple times, teachers probably know it by heart and hence do not merely become set on the book and its words.<sup>342</sup>

Furthermore, the direct access to the storybook prevents any linguistic mistakes and children are enabled to read along as well, which makes it easier for them to give predictions. Due to the visual support which is provided by books containing illustrations, children may gain a better understanding of the context and the meaning of the story. Eventually, if the story aroused interest, students can borrow the real storybook to go through it again by themselves.

When telling a story, the teacher has a crucial role as being the mediator of the story due to the lack of a book. Thus, the story becomes the teacher's story and children could appreciate it as a personal gift for them since it is influenced by the tellers' personality and individuality. Giving visual support either by mime or pictures and deliberately choosing the appropriate language regarding the age and level of students, makes the storytelling an enriching experience for students to listen to. However, compared to reading out the story, the teacher must learn the story from the very beginning to be able to convincingly tell it without the help of a book, thereby considerably heighten the risk of linguistic or content errors.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Morgenstern 2011, p. 386.

<sup>341</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 10.

<sup>342</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 10; Brewster et al. 2012, p. 193.

<sup>343</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 11.

Regarding the educational value of storybooks in the English primary classroom, teachers first did not recognize nor appreciate its value for early language learning. In the 1990s more handbooks and material dealing with storytelling were published. After several developments, the technique of storytelling gradually received more attention and teachers learned how to reap out benefits and use it in the primary school classroom.<sup>344</sup>

### 11.2.1 Reasons for using stories in the EFL primary classroom

Children love stories. From the youngest age on, children are confronted with them by learning matters about the world through stories. On the lap of parents and grandparents, children get aware of historical changes throughout generations, of the beauty existing in the world and are introduced to values and standards with the help of stories. However, it does not mean that stories merely tell positive things. Authentic stories also consist of problems, conflicts and search for solutions. As a result, children are often confronted with demanding situations and learn to reflect and to discuss about issues.<sup>345</sup>

Accordingly, the entertainment and educational value of stories is either within the frame of an institutional or a home setting of high importance.<sup>346</sup>

The short story writer Eudora Welty summarizes her first experiences with stories in her autobiography *One writer's beginning* (1984).

Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening for them is something more acute than listening to them. I suppose it's an early form of participation in what goes on. Listening children know stories are there. When their elders sit and begin, children are just waiting and hoping for one to come out, like a mouse from its hole.<sup>347</sup>

This statement makes clear that children demand to hear narrations as it is part of their daily life and symbolizes an approach of starting to participate in the society. They first need to listen to stories to be able to reflect them and develop own language production. Consequently, listening skills play an important role when facing a new foreign language. According to Brewster and Ellis, children are acquainted with narrative conventions even before going to school by merely listening.<sup>348</sup> "Many stories contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structures"<sup>349</sup> wherefore children are often indirectly aware of a story's

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<sup>344</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 6.

<sup>345</sup> cf. Herbst 2011, p. 13.

<sup>346</sup> cf. Slattery and Willis 2001, p. 96.

<sup>347</sup> Welty 1984, p. 14.

<sup>348</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, 16.

<sup>349</sup> Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

composition and can draw predictions to further contents. Besides the repetitive patterns, stories entail a melodic character by which children have the chance to immerse into a language with different rhythms, intonations, pronunciation and can develop a sense for different tuneful patterns.<sup>350</sup>

Providing a comprehensible story in a meaningful context can also activate the children's own thinking and progressively supports them in producing own speech. Hereby, meaningful refers to the support of the context with the usage of mime, gestures, pictures or realia as it makes the content relevant for students. Stories are comprehensible when making frequent stops, so children have time to imagine and visualize the heard input.<sup>351</sup>

Integrating storytelling in the EFL classroom provides a good opportunity to introduce or revise vocabulary by embracing a foreign language in a memorable and familiar context.<sup>352</sup> The following statement by Kline and Martel clarifies that introducing language with the help of stories is a good option

[s]ince language is made up of words, people thought the words must be learned first, then sentence, and so on. But this is not the case. Words are best learned as part of something larger: something that tell you about the words: something that makes up a story. So it could be said that the basic unit of a memory is the story. You can remember the parts of the story best because you remember the story.<sup>353</sup>

As students do not necessarily need to understand every single word to understand the content and meaning of a story, it represents a useful technique for Early Foreign Language Learning (EFLL), to improve listening comprehension and vocabulary.<sup>354</sup>

When listening to stories an automatic personal involvement is given as children draw connections to characters within the story and determine similarities or differences. Stories allow young learners to capture and reflect the context of narrative world and refer it to the children's real world. As a result, students are often able to identify themselves with protagonists or any other character and try to construe the plot which encourages their visual imagination.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> cf. Becker et al. 2008, p. 5.

<sup>351</sup> cf. Niemeier and Urban 2010, p. 36.

<sup>352</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>353</sup> Kline and Martel 1992, p. 91.

<sup>354</sup> cf. Klippel 2000, p. 160.

<sup>355</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 6.

Imagination, in turn, plays a vital role in being a child, hence, at an early age, new things are discovered by using fantasy and the power of imagination. Children “[...] test out their versions of the world through fantasy and confirm how the world actually is by imagining how it might be different. In the language classroom this capacity for fantasy and imagination has a very constructive part to play.”<sup>356</sup>

In addition, storytelling strengthens the social and emotional development of a child when delivered in a classroom situation. Children can share same emotions such as happiness, thrill, anticipation or sadness which are provoked by listening to the narrative and can interconnect them with each other.<sup>357</sup> With regards to the foreign language teaching, it can also have motivating effects experiencing a narration in an appealing presentation within the classroom setting and can enhance their concentration ability.<sup>358</sup> Reading out stories in an appealing way means including visual clues such as high-quality illustrations which facilitates the children’s perception and understanding. Additional support is given by providing audio clues which involve sound variations and onomatopoeia.<sup>359</sup> Brewster and Ellis also emphasize that “[...] their prior knowledge of how language works [...]”<sup>360</sup> and “[...] their prior knowledge of the world [...]”<sup>361</sup> are key for the development of listening and concentration skills.

Another reason for using stories is that individual children are assigned to distinct learner types and the center of gravity of various intelligences can differ. “Storybooks cater different learner types and intelligences and make learning meaningful for each child.”<sup>362</sup>

With regards to the curriculum, a majority of stories are transferable onto other subjects which offer opportunities to work with them in a cross-curricular context. They often deal with topics which exceed the level of basic dialogs and enable children to reflect their feelings and to think about themes which are of personal relevance.<sup>363</sup>

The joy of listening to stories may cause that children enter the foreign language in its authenticity, since, in many cases, the context of the narration is strongly connected to the authors culture and social environment which can evince crucial cultural differences. Thus, in terms of intercultural learning, telling stories is an essential and potent instrument to pass

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<sup>356</sup> Halliwell 1992, p. 7.

<sup>357</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>358</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>359</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>360</sup> Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>361</sup> Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>362</sup> Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>363</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

on cultural information and to promote tolerance towards other cultures as well as intercultural understanding.<sup>364</sup>

Lastly, stories bear the advantage for teachers to be able to provide a language input which might be at a higher level as of the children.<sup>365</sup>

In a nutshell, storytelling brings good possibilities to grasp and experience the foreign language in an everyday life situation and is a vital component of the human's daily life. Jimmy Neil Smith, the director of the international storytelling, gets right to the point that "[w]e are all storytellers. We all live in a network of stories. There [is not] a stronger connection between people than storytelling."<sup>366</sup>

### 11.2.2 Readers vs. authentic storybooks

The usage of so-called 'readers' which refer to "[...] adapted and simplified versions of popular fairy tales, fables, nursery rhymes or specifically written stories [...]"<sup>367</sup> was favored by a lot of ELT teachers due to their supplementary characteristics. However, the original purpose of readers was not based on them being read out but rather should function as material for students to enhance their reading skills.<sup>368</sup>

In the 1990s the popularity of authentic storybooks rapidly increases since they delivered an authentic language input with regards to vocabulary in the scope of a real-life context. Furthermore, the motivating aspect for children was recognized since they experienced a feeling of proudness being able to cope authentic and 'real' books.

### 11.2.3 Visual literacy

Visual literacy can be determined as ability to 'read' illustrations and pictures displayed in a storybook which supports them in understanding the context of the narration. Likewise, children are encouraged to talk about images, its illustrative design and the media used to produce the pictures. Asking questions about the pictures will promote the general understanding of the context and will provoke students to reflect about what they see.

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<sup>364</sup> cf. Slattery and Willis 2001, p. 96; Becker et al. 2008, p. 5; Legutke et al. 2012, p. 75; Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>365</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 7.

<sup>366</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 14.

<sup>367</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 14.

<sup>368</sup> cf. Brewster et al. 2012, p. 188.

Therefore, devoting the attention on pictures has crucial effects on the children's development of observation skills and is significant for acquiring global communicative competences. In a nutshell, the integration of discussing about images will support students to develop visual literacy and can arouse general interest in art.

#### 11.2.4 Good features of storybooks

Based on the reasons for using storybooks in the English primary classroom, there are various guidelines for teachers which outline good features of storybooks and can assist in the decision-making process of choosing a storybook. In their storytelling handbook for primary English teachers, Brewster and Ellis accumulate numerous good features which are displayed below.

Generally, they emphasize it is fundamental that teachers like the story themselves to be able to present it in an enthusiastic and authentic way. Certainly, the story needs to be enjoyable and interesting for students, so they can keep up the attention and are motivated to work with it.

In addition, the appropriate length of the story is a significant factor which keeps the children's interest and concentration. Therefore, teachers must check if a long story can be shortened and adapted.

Familiar stories such as fairy tales or stories of their own culture will allow children to make predictions and to work with prior knowledge.<sup>369</sup>

Other helpful features involve "[...] a clear, uncomplicated story line"<sup>370</sup> and appropriate language use which is rich in linguistic expression but is possible for students to access.

Repetitive grammatical structures are helpful for students to acquire phrases which can be used in a communicative everyday life situation.

Besides repetitive structures, a repetition of contents is useful for students to give any predictions about the course of the action and consequently enable children to participate in the storytelling act.

Storybooks containing onomatopoeia are supportive characteristics to receive a better understanding of the content since it is closely connected to the living environment of the children due to their enjoyment of doing these sounds as well.

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<sup>369</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 11; Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 18.

<sup>370</sup> Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 18.

Additionally, if the text of the storybook is full of rhymes and is written rhythmically then children are enabled “[...] to develop a sense of rhythm in English.”<sup>371</sup>

Certainly, a humorous, suspenseful or surprising atmosphere are appealing and increase the interest as well the attention of students.

Generally, storybooks which open up further possibilities to involve students into the plot such as allowing students to think, predict, repeat or to guess, form an important attribute.

Likewise, students should be encouraged to practice their imagination. Thus, storybooks which deal with universal topics make it possible for a wide range of students to participate.

In addition, an increased growth of knowledge about the world and an integration of moral and values which are strongly connected to our society, displays a good feature of a storybook.

Regarding the visual literacy, clear and large pictures which can be viewed by each student and provide support for the meaning of the text, are important to verify.

Aside from features which are found within the book, an anticipatory view on possible subsequent task is important to bear in mind. Therefore, given topics and opportunities to continue working with the students and the story is significant for a comprehensive work with the storybook.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Brewster et al. 2012, p. 164.

<sup>372</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 18; Willgerodt 2005, p. 51.

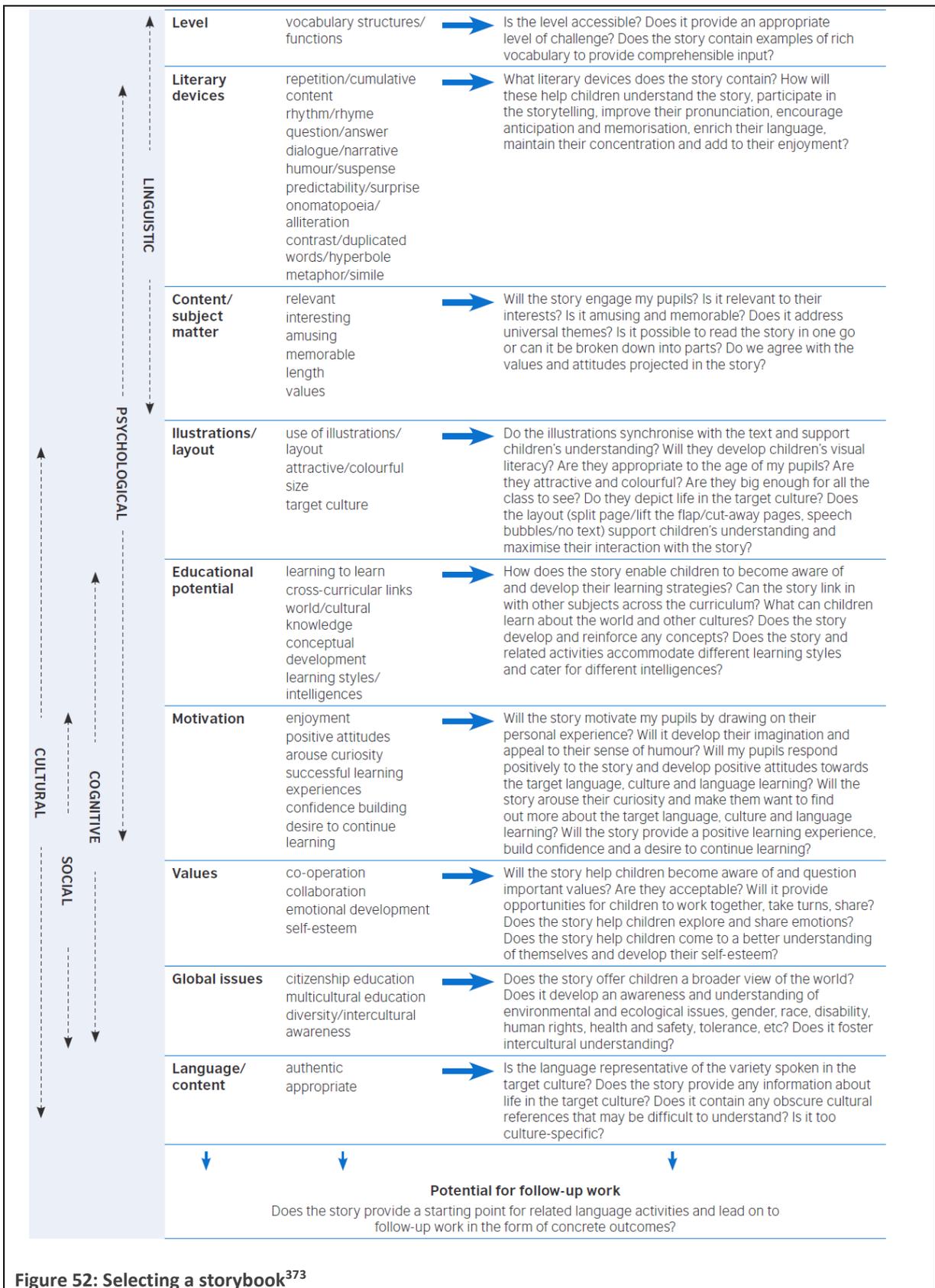


Figure 52: Selecting a storybook<sup>373</sup>

<sup>373</sup> Brewster et al. 2012, pp. 190–191.

### 11.2.5 Adapting stories

When using authentic book material, teachers have to bear in mind that not every story is fully appropriate for every age group. On the one hand, there is always a chance that the language or content of the given story is too advanced for students to understand. On the other hand, by modifying and simplifying stories, the authenticity and the magic of the original could get lost. That is the reason why adapting stories may cause positive effects, but teachers need to carefully decide what to adapt. Brewster and Ellis give teachers some recommendations what to comply with to make stories more accessible for students.<sup>374</sup>

First, it is important to alter unfamiliar or uncommon contents or words as not knowing a word could lead to misunderstandings. However, it is important to maintain words which are key for the story and may be purposely used by authors for stylistic reasons.

Secondly, it is suggested to check if any idioms or ideas are too difficult to understand. By rephrasing these idioms or ideas, the meaning can slightly change but this step is necessary for students to gain a clearer comprehension.

Thirdly, teachers should consider integrating more examples in the story to achieve a clearer meaning.

With regards to grammar issues, the two authors underline that is very important to make sure that there are not too many various tenses or distinct structures within the story subject. If so, tenses structures can be simplified or reduced.

Additionally, stories with an incorrect grammatical order which is often applied to dramatize some aspects, can confuse students and might cause an adaption of false word structures. Consequently, teachers must weigh if an alteration of the word order harms the original effect too much.<sup>375</sup>

In terms of organizing the ideas, it is recommended to shorten or split sentences which are too long. Apart from this, adding more words will help to underline the meaning.

Moreover, the correct order of events needs to be clear, thus, in some cases time markers such as first, afterwards, the day after, etc. could be added to outline the temporal order.

Direct speech helps to get a better idea of the content of the story as it draws a close connection to the everyday life of the students. Therefore, narrative speech can often be transferred into direct speech that students can follow the content more easily.

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<sup>374</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 17.

<sup>375</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 17.

In many instances, parts of the story can be ignored to reduce the length of the story as long as these parts are not crucial for the content of the story.<sup>376</sup>

Finally, Klippel, who supports most of these aspects, emphasized that in case ideologies or role models displayed in the story do not correspond with the ones of our present, an adaption is significant to avoid false moral concepts.<sup>377</sup>

### 11.2.6 Cultural information

A variety of stories can be seen as a mirror of the authors' inner life and their social and cultural background. Hence, foreign stories give an ideal input of cultural knowledge and may broaden the intercultural view as well as the general intercultural understanding. When dealing with foreign storybooks linguistic aspects are automatically conveyed through the usage of certain words or phrases for example to express politeness. Multiple stories provide geographical information which may broaden the general knowledge of students about the country and its geographical setting<sup>378</sup>

### 11.2.7 Using stories in the classroom

A plethora of teachers still avoid using stories as methodological tool due to a lack of confidence regarding their knowledge and skills to present stories in an appropriate way. Besides, either the level of the language or content involves a degree of doubts as the language level of the story may be too high or the content not appropriate for the age group. Brewster and Ellis do also underline that the true value of storybooks is often not recognized.<sup>379</sup> Therefore, the usage of recorded versions of the story are more often integrated into the lesson since it is an uncomplicated way to present a story which is authentic due to its native pronunciation and may contain other sound effects to draw the children's attention. In spite, the benefits with regards to the native language used on CD and the number of sound effects or different voices, the active performance of a story by the teacher brings opposing advantages.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 17.

<sup>377</sup> cf. Klippel 2000, p. 160.

<sup>378</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 46.

<sup>379</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 6.

<sup>380</sup> cf. Brewster et al. 2012, p. 196.

First, it is hardly possible to involve students when playing a recording and to spontaneously ask questions about the content or about the children. Thus, teachers, who read out or tell the story by themselves, are more flexible to repeat parts of the story in case students do not understand the content or meaning. They can let them repeat sentences or let them predict what is going to happen next.

Despite hearing different authentic voices and sound effects within the recording, it can become quite a challenging task to stay focused throughout the whole story. Maintaining the attention is therefore often only possible if the teacher manages to involve students somehow in the listening activity.<sup>381</sup>

Based on these facts, it is useful to adopt storytelling techniques which will help the teacher to feel more comfortable and confident when reading out or telling stories in front of the class.

### 11.2.8 Storytelling techniques

There are several storytelling techniques that can be used to support the student's understanding of the plot. If the class is unfamiliar with storytelling, teachers may start with short session to maintain concentration.

Furthermore, creating a natural communicative situation with the help of children sitting in a circle on the floor or on chairs, will ensure that students feel comfortable. However, the circle should enable all students to see either the book or the teacher and the teacher should be able to keep eye contact with all the children.

While reading out or telling the story, teacher must focus on speaking slowly and clearly and should give students the time to look at the pictures as well as giving them the time to ask questions or give comments. In case, students do not give any comments, teachers are obligated to point out important things either by gearing the children's ideas or by giving own comments on pictures. Nevertheless, it is essential to encourage students to participate during storytelling that is why asking questions or making students actively repeat words or phrases, is an effective way to promote participation.

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<sup>381</sup> cf. Brewster et al. 2012, p. 196.

To convey the story more vividly it is necessary to use gestures, mime and facial expressions which also helps learners to gain a better understanding of the context as well as to distinguish different characters. As a matter of fact, the teacher as the storyteller must employ a variety of voices to make clear that different characters are speaking. Likewise, the intensive use of sound effects, also done with the teacher's voice or with instruments, are very appealing for students and increase the students attention.<sup>382</sup> It is clear that the person telling or reading out the story attains central importance and the ability to fascinate students with the help of mime, gestures and the voice, makes an essential contribution to the storytelling experience of children.<sup>383</sup> Pace, tone and volume are fundamental to express suspense or surprise. In addition, making pauses before a climax or a suspense situation will dramatize the moment even more. Also, it is very important to repeat the story again and again, so that the students can work out the meaning.<sup>384</sup>

### 11.2.9 Organizing a storytelling lesson

Before holding a lesson based on the storytelling method, teachers carefully need to plan and structure the frame of the certain lesson which involves a lot of aspects. First, teachers must consider what kind of story they want to present. What is a good story? Where does the focus lie on? What does the teacher want to achieve? Is it possible to do pre-activities or follow-up activities with the story? Where can be good stories found?

Apparently, a lot of questions arise when looking for a delightful story. That is the reason why an overview of good features of storybooks are indications which help teachers to choose an appropriate story. Good features of stories are explained in more detail in chapter 12.2.4. Basically, good stories can be found everywhere. Beside children's storybooks and story collections, taking the internet, journals, newspapers, English books into account or using the own environment as resource is worth an attempt.<sup>385</sup>

When choosing activities which surround the storytelling part, it is important to determine in what sense young learners are involved into the happening which can either activate and stir up the children or can settle them down. For instance, TPR activities have positive

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<sup>382</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 26.

<sup>383</sup> cf. Hogh 2005, p. 41.

<sup>384</sup> cf. Ellis and Brewster 2014, p. 26.

<sup>385</sup> cf. Klippel 2000, p. 160.

effects on raising the energy level of children and let them romp whereas they are physically settled down by giving tasks which mentally engages them.<sup>386</sup>

In general, the actual storytelling session can be divided into three phases which are entitled with various names. While Büning, Kummerow, Becker, Brunsmeier and Frisch as well as Brewster and Ellis put the focus on the teacher's role by naming the phases *pre-(story)telling activities*, *while-(story)telling activities* and *post-(story)telling activities*,<sup>387</sup> Niemeier and Urban as well as Bleyhl designate the phases in relation to the stronger active part of the storytelling process: *pre-listening*, *interactive telling*, *post-listening*.<sup>388</sup> Wright simply calls these stages *activities before the story*, *activities during the story* and *activities after the story*.<sup>389</sup> During the three phases the teacher can integrate numerous different tasks and activities to involve the students as much as possible into the whole storytelling experience. When looking at tasks for students, teacher need to ponder if the activity should function as groundwork before starting with the story, as supporting task during the story or as consolidation after the story. Additionally, there are a variety of activities which are appropriate for different ages and language levels therefore teachers need to determine these aspects as well as generate opportunities for differentiation by simplifying or making it more difficult.

### 11.2.9.1 Before the story

Before starting with the storytelling session, it is essential to create a learning atmosphere which evokes feelings such as curiosity and excitement. This can be achieved by forming a circle with chairs or with pillows on the ground. In a lot of classes, the different arrangement of the classroom is automatically understood as a beginning of a story, whereby other teachers establish a certain nonverbal signal such as a bell or a gesture to herald the beginning of a story.<sup>390</sup> Büning and Kummerow include the "setting the stage" procedure as part of the pre-telling activities to emotionally prepare the students for the upcoming session.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> cf. Legutke et al. 2012, p. 36; Brewster et al. 2012, p. 99.

<sup>387</sup> cf. Becker et al. 2008, p. 6; Büning and Kummerow 2011, pp. 18–19; Brewster et al. 2012, pp. 194–195; Ellis and Brewster 2014, pp. 22–24.

<sup>388</sup> cf. Bleyhl 2002, pp. 35–42; Niemeier and Urban 2010, pp. 37–39.

<sup>389</sup> cf. Wright 2007, pp. 23–63.

<sup>390</sup> cf. Klippel 2000, p. 160.

<sup>391</sup> cf. Büning and Kummerow 2011, p. 18.

Pre-knowledge is not only acquired in English classes but can additively be gained in other subjects when dealing with the topic in the mother tongue. Working cross-curricular can have great synergy effects when topics are broached as an issue in other subjects <sup>392</sup>

Further preparations of the 'stage' can include the introduction of important places or the protagonists of the story with the help of pictures or realia.<sup>393</sup> Children get curious when only seeing objects without knowing the purpose which will stimulate their imagination. In fact, this unawareness of the children can be used to actively involve them into the story before it even started by having tasks which demand predictions about the story.<sup>394</sup>

If the story contains vocabulary which are key for the understanding and cannot be changed, introducing new vocabulary before head should be also taken into consideration.<sup>395</sup>

In the following some activities which can be used for the certain stage of the lesson are represented. Due to limited scope of the paper, only an excerpt of activities is shown to get an idea of the concept.

### *11.2.9.1.1 Activities which demand predictions about the story*

The following activities allow learners to give predictions about the story which promotes the children's power of imagination and their creativity.

#### Working with illustrations to demand predictions

1. By showing a front cover of the book students are encouraged to think about possible topics and contents the story is dealing with.<sup>396</sup>
2. By presenting pictures which are integrated in the storybook and draw a connection to the theme of the story further predictions about the storyline can be made.<sup>397</sup>
3. Pictures with key moments of the story can either be placed on the board or photocopies are given to a pair of children. Afterwards the young learners are asked to put the muddled pictures into an order they think the story will be in.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> cf. Hogh 2005, p. 40.

<sup>393</sup> cf. Niemeier and Urban 2010, p. 38; Büning and Kummerow 2011, p. 18.

<sup>394</sup> cf. Becker et al. 2008, p. 6.

<sup>395</sup> cf. Wright 2007, pp. 24–29; Büning and Kummerow 2011, p. 18.

<sup>396</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 29.

<sup>397</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 30.

<sup>398</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 31.

### 11.2.9.1.2 Games to introduce and practice new vocabulary

Sometimes it is crucial to broaden the vocabulary of students before head in cases where it is necessary to understand the context. In spite, it is not recommended to know every single word of the story to understand the meaning and context. That is why merely introducing some unfamiliar keywords with the help of pictures, realia, mime or with the help of the context, is an effective way to prepare children for the story. According to Niemeier and Urban, five to a maximum of ten words are recommended when introducing new vocabulary.

**T = teacher**

**S = students**

<b>Repeat after me<sup>399</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on their seats, T. at the blackboard		<b>Time:</b> about 5 minutes <b>Media:</b> flashcards, sticky tape/ magnets
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- practicing vocabulary</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T. puts the flashcards on the blackboard</li> <li>2. S. have to stand up</li> <li>3. T. points at a certain flashcard and pronounces the word.</li> <li>4. S. repeat the word in a chorus</li> <li>5. T. points at the next word and says the word</li> <li>6. S. repeat the word</li> <li>7. T. points at a certain word and says a wrong word</li> <li>8. S. who repeat the wrong word have to sit down. S who do not repeat the word continue with the next round.</li> <li>9. T. takes turns</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- variable topics</li> <li>- let a student say the word</li> </ul>

<sup>399</sup> own illustration based on Brecht, p. 1.

<b>Memory<sup>400</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner <b>Social form:</b> group work <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on the ground,		<b>Time:</b> about 5 minutes <b>Media:</b> picture cards (every picture twice)
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- practicing vocabulary</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T. divides the class into groups</li> <li>2. Each group receives a stack of pictures cards with pairs.</li> <li>3. S. randomly put the cards on the ground. The side with the picture faces the ground.</li> <li>4. S1 turns around a picture and says the vocabulary. Then S1 turns around another picture and says the vocabulary.</li> <li>5. In case, the two pictures match S1 can take them aside and gets one point.</li> <li>6. Every S. has a turn until all the pairs are revealed.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- variable topics</li> <li>- students can also integrate the vocabulary into a phrase</li> <li>- level adaptable</li> </ul>

<b>What's missing?<sup>401</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on the ground in circle, T in the middle of the students		<b>Time:</b> about 5 minutes <b>Media:</b> realia
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to consolidate vocabulary</li> <li>- to train the memory</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. T puts realia on the ground.</li> <li>2. T. repeats all the vocabulary on more time.</li> <li>3. T. asks students to close their eyes and removes on object.</li> <li>4. S. are asked to open their eyes.</li> <li>5. T. asks "What's missing?"</li> <li>6. S. names the missing object.</li> <li>7. Afterwards S. takes over the role of the teacher and asks the other S. to close their eye.</li> <li>8. Over and over again.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- variable topics</li> <li>- playing the game with flashcards which are placed on the blackboard.</li> </ul>

<sup>400</sup> own illustration based on Wright 2007, p. 26.

<sup>401</sup> own illustration based on Brecht, p. 2.

<b>Simon says<sup>402</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner to elementary <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. stand in circle		<b>Time:</b> about 5 min <b>Media:</b> teacher
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations:
- practicing listening skills -	1. T. repeats vocabulary and phrases with additional gestures. 2. S. repeat the gestures 3. T. says: (e.g.) Simon says: I wash my hands. 4. S. do the gesture to "I wash my hands". 5. T. says other phrases with "Simon says". 6. S. do the gestures. 7. T. says: (e.g.) I wash my hands. 8. S. are not allowed to do the gesture since "Simon says" is missing. 9. S. who do the gesture have to sit down.	-

### 11.2.9.2 During the story

During the story it is important not to destroy the magic of the story by interrupting it too many times or overloading the young learners with too many tasks. Therefore, merely integrating simple questions is a good way to make them reflect on what has been heard. For example, teachers can ask children to give predictions what happens next or can ask them about their feelings. Furthermore, the children can add more information to the story to raise the feeling of participation. If the focus lies on the speaking and pronunciation aspect, teachers can also encourage students to repeat sentences in a chorus or in a chanting way. In this context, "[c]hanting is an extension of chorusing in which repetition is used together with rhythm and stress. The children chant in groups and other groups respond."<sup>403</sup> Other examples of tasks which can be done during the story are as followed.

<sup>402</sup> own illustration based on Brecht, p. 24.

<sup>403</sup> Wright 2007, p. 39.

<b>Jump up word card<sup>404</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on their seats, T. at the blackboard		<b>Time:</b> depends on the story length <b>Media:</b> storybook, word cards
<b>Activity objectives</b>	<b>Course of the activity</b>	<b>Variations:</b>
- Enhancing attention and concentration skills	1. Before starting with the story, T. gives each child a word card. 2. S. have to jump up every time they hear their word.	- After S. listened to the story they choose their own word. The neighbor must guess which word it was.

<b>Using each sense<sup>405</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on their seats, T. at the blackboard		<b>Time:</b> about 5 minutes <b>Media:</b> storybook
<b>Activity objectives</b>	<b>Course of the activity</b>	<b>Variations:</b>
- practicing vocabulary - multi-sensory approach	1. After telling or reading out the story the first time, it is read out another time. 2. The second time S. must concentrate on what they see. 3. The third time on what they hear. 4. The fourth time on what the smell.	-

### 11.2.9.3 After the story

After reading out the narration multiple times, the children should get the possibility to independently work on the language structures or are given a task while listening to the

<sup>404</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 36.

<sup>405</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 38.

story another time.<sup>406</sup> Slattery and Willis claim that time to practice should be given in all fields: Listening, speaking, reading and writing.<sup>407</sup>

### 11.2.9.3.1 Listening

With regards to practice listening after the story, teacher have assorted options.

<b>Listen and point<sup>408</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on their seats		<b>Time:</b> depends on story length <b>Media:</b> storybook
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations:
- practicing listening skills	1. T. places pictures of the story at the blackboard 2. T. begins to read or tell the story. 3. While reading out, S. point on the picture with the situation which is just read out.	- not only pointing but also explaining the situation - S. have to say what comes next before reading out the next passage.

<b>True or false?<sup>409</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner to elementary <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. on their seats		<b>Time:</b> depends on story length <b>Media:</b> storybook
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations:
- practicing listening skills	1. T. begins to read or tell the story. 2. T. includes content mistakes. 3. When T. makes a mistake, S. have to yell "stop". 4. Together with T. they reconstruct the story.	-

<sup>406</sup> cf. Büning and Kummerow 2011, p. 19.

<sup>407</sup> cf. Slattery and Willis 2001, pp. 108–109.

<sup>408</sup> own illustration based on Wright 2007, p. 36.

<sup>409</sup> own illustration based on Wright 2007, p. 39.

### 11.2.9.3.2 Speaking

Practicing speaking skills can either be done by reading passages aloud or retelling the story in cooperation with the students. Reading aloud forms a good base to practice general pronunciation and may take away the fear of speaking alone when read out in a chorus. However, it is possible to enhance the pronunciation skills by letting students speak individually. In contrast, retelling the story which is an appropriate task for an elementary level, promotes speaking skills of students and tests their understanding of the story.<sup>410</sup> There are a variety of games which can help to practice the speaking skills, for example:

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<b>Jump on pictures<sup>411</sup></b>		
<b>Target group:</b> all primary classes <b>Level:</b> beginner to elementary <b>Social form:</b> plenary <b>Classroom arrangement:</b> S. in a circle		<b>Time:</b> depends on story length <b>Media:</b> storybook + flash cards
Activity objectives	Course of the activity	Variations:
- practicing listening skills	1. The pictures of the story are arranged on the floor in a circle 2. S1 jumps onto a picture and says something about it. 3. S. take turns	- focus variations: ➔ word ➔ sentence

### 11.2.9.3.3 Reading

To practice the reading skills, children can independently read out the story to themselves which enables them to read in their individual pace. Additionally, teachers can ask students to look for particular information by giving them questions which they have to respond to.<sup>412</sup>

### 11.2.9.3.4 Writing

Writing is a significant part as it interconnects the vocabulary with the grammar and “[...] allows the student to experiment with active communication while reflecting on various linguistic options. Linked to the power of storytelling, it can also be highly enjoyable.”<sup>413</sup>

<sup>410</sup> cf. Slattery and Willis 2001, pp. 108–109.

<sup>411</sup> own illustration based on Wright 2007, p. 45.

<sup>412</sup> cf. Slattery and Willis 2001, p. 109.

<sup>413</sup> Martin n.d., n.p.

There are various activities which will help students starting to write or spell. For example developing head titles for pictures of the story will help students to deal with spelling and promotes their ability to think and write in English.<sup>414</sup> Teachers can also ask students to finish comments, but this involves better writing skills and thus should be performed with elementary students.<sup>415</sup>

#### *11.2.9.3.5 Other options*

There is a variety of other options to work with a story during the post-telling stage. To check general understanding of the story, teachers can place pictures in an incorrect order at the blackboard, students are then required to bring the pictures into the chronological order.<sup>416</sup>

In addition, children enjoy making handicrafts as well as drawing or coloring pictures and often find pleasure in singing songs which cover the topic of the story.<sup>417</sup> Handicrafts such as making a storybook, are an effective way to promote the children's creativity. The book making activities can either be done as individual craft, which puts the child in charge of all pages and pictures, or it can be done as a class activity in which each child is responsible for a certain page. Beginners should be given sentences to copy whereas higher level can draft sentences by themselves which are corrected by the teacher and later be written into the storybook.<sup>418</sup>

Furthermore, a story can be acted out in form of a role play.<sup>419</sup> In this way students learn how to put themselves into a different perspective and have the opportunity to use the foreign language in a real-life situation.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> cf. Büning and Kummerow 2011, p. 19.

<sup>415</sup> cf. Slattery and Willis 2001, p. 109.

<sup>416</sup> cf. Büning and Kummerow 2011, p. 19.

<sup>417</sup> cf. Brewster et al. 2012, p. 202.

<sup>418</sup> cf. Wright 2007, p. 55.

<sup>419</sup> cf. Becker et al. 2008, p. 6.

<sup>420</sup> cf. Legutke et al. 2012, p. 55.

## 11.3 The project in relation to the Bildungsplan 2016 of Baden-Württemberg

In the following, the learning content of the project will be put into relation to the Bildungsplan 2016 of Baden Württemberg. The process-based and content-based competences, which are realized in the project, are displayed with the help of models. The models are designed and created by Ariane Kummetz however any content of these models originates of the Bildungsplan 2016

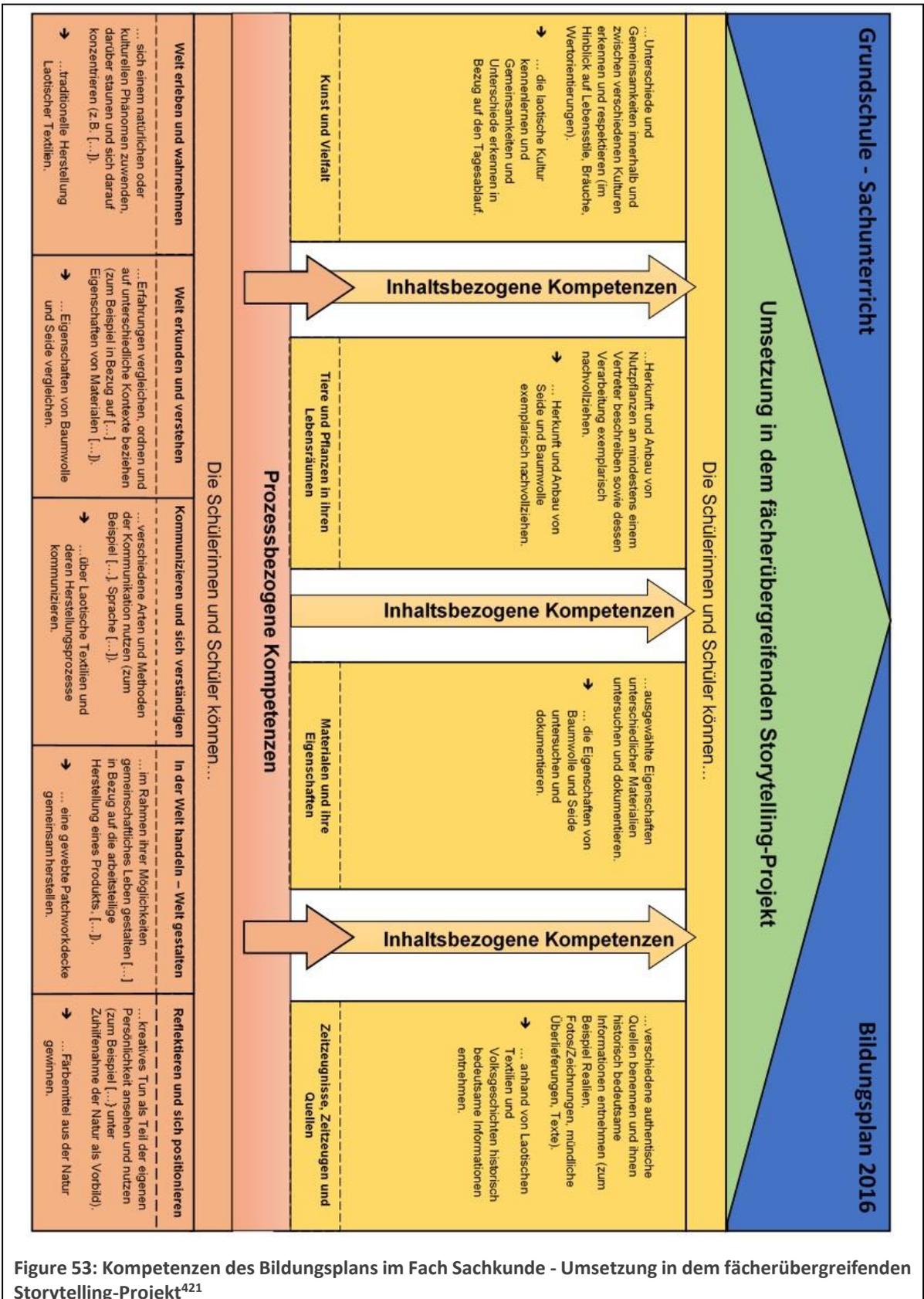


Figure 53: Kompetenzen des Bildungsplans im Fach Sachkunde - Umsetzung in dem fächerübergreifenden Storytelling-Projekt<sup>421</sup>

<sup>421</sup> own illustration based on Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg 2016c, 9-12, 31-55.

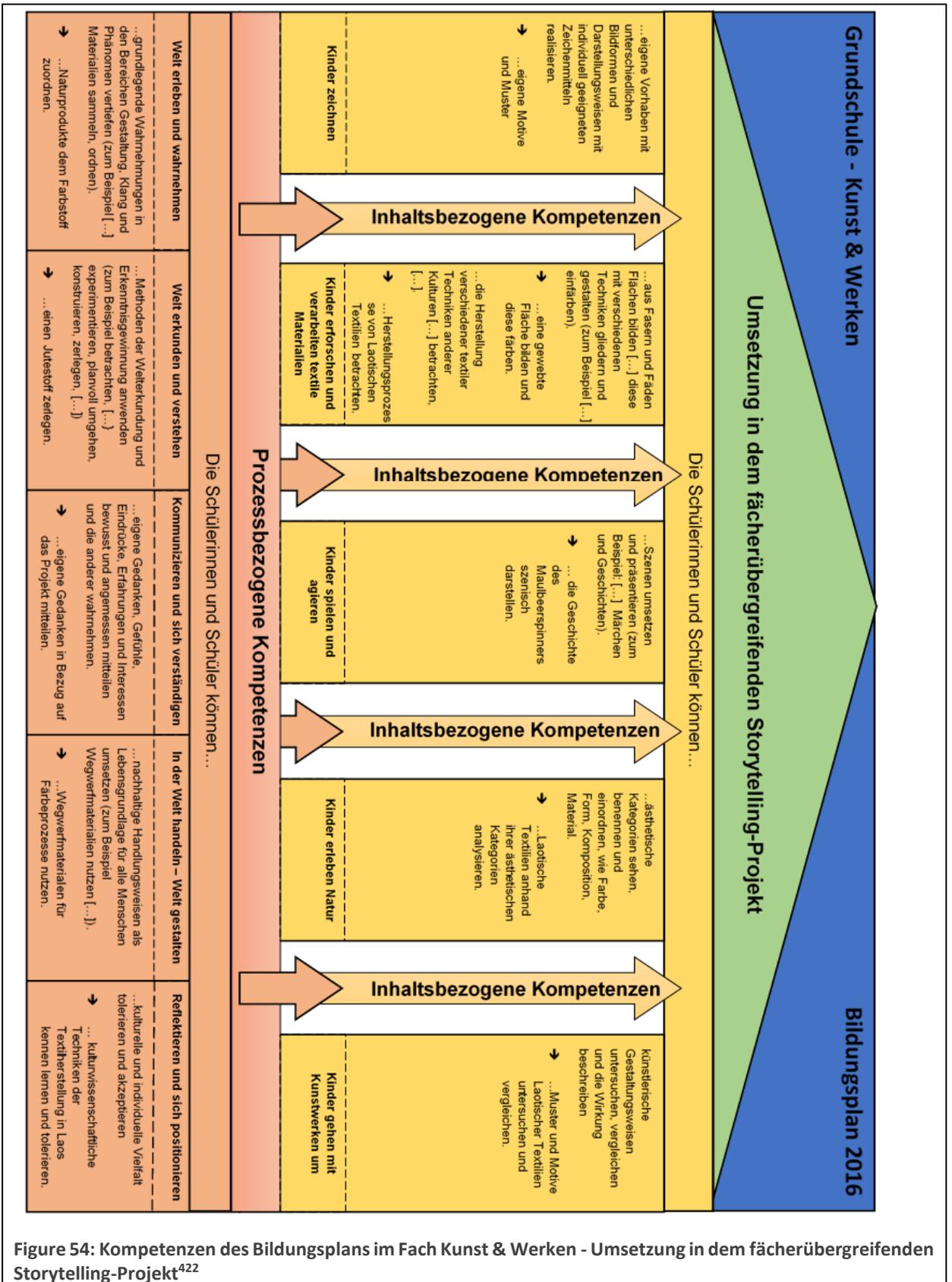


Figure 54: Kompetenzen des Bildungsplans im Fach Kunst & Werken - Umsetzung in dem fächerübergreifenden Storytelling-Projekt<sup>422</sup>

<sup>422</sup> own illustration based on Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg 2016b, 10-12, 25-37.

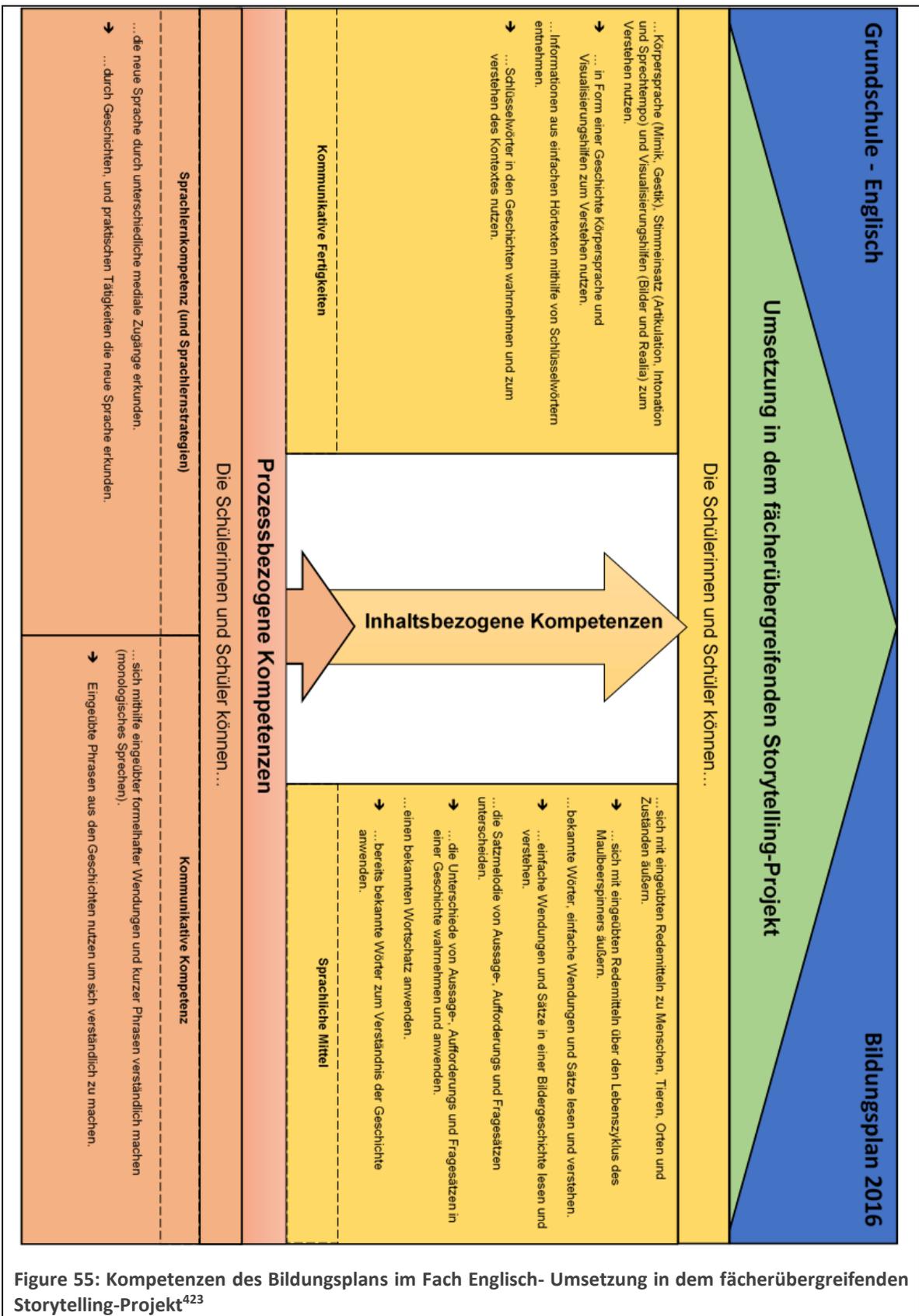


Figure 55: Kompetenzen des Bildungsplans im Fach Englisch- Umsetzung in dem fächerübergreifenden Storytelling-Projekt<sup>423</sup>

<sup>423</sup> own illustration based on Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg 2016a, 10-11, 17-21.

## 12. CONCLUSION

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Throughout history, ethnic minorities managed to preserve intangible heritage despite the national pressure and the driven ideologies for change. The ancient techniques with regards to the harvest of raw material and the fiber production, as well as to the dyeing and weaving executed by Lao women, still belongs to the daily context of various tribes. Furthermore, the representative role of textiles and the variety of patterns and motifs with a plethora of distinct meanings emphasize the significance of textiles and underlines the importance of safeguarding this unique weaving culture, a living art, an intangible cultural heritage of Laos.

However, increased development, tourism and new technology displays a hazard for the weaving culture of Laos since many young women do not see the importance of maintaining the time-consuming work but rather tend to change to synthetic fibers and less strenuous working routines. With the help of various handicrafts stores and museums, Laos' aims to raise awareness and helps to preserve the living art. Additionally, it becomes clear that weaving in Laos means much more than merely producing a textile, it rather means producing a mirror of the individual's soul which consist of the beliefs, dreams, cultural background and status of the weaver. Ethnic groups begin to share patterns and motifs in order to conserve the heritage and to create new forms with incorporated features.

Through textiles ethnic groups are interwoven and the shared origin of textiles enables tribes to develop a national identity which is represented with the national symbol of Laos the *sinh*.

With regards to the implementation of the topic in a non-English primary school, it is clear that the Lao weaving is a subject which offers a broad spectrum for teachers to provide cultural input and practical knowledge within the framework of a project. Due to opportunities for illustration and verbalization, working with a cultural technique provides ideal conditions for teaching cross-curricular in English. Additionally, storytelling may function as a technique through which children gain cultural knowledge in a meaningful and authentic context.

The lesson about daily routines in Laos which was implemented in a third grade at the Albert-Schweitzer-Schule, give rise to the assumption that the topic may provide a broad cultural input since children were able to recognize differences by giving expressions to their astonishment. With the help of a story of Lao girl which was in the same age as the students, it was possible for the children to identify themselves with children in the story and to draw conclusions. However, due to the heat, the limited time and the moment of when

the lesson took place, students showed indications for being hyper which made it difficult to analyze the actual impacts with regards to an extended cultural knowledge or interest. Eventually, students were able to reconstruct the story with the help of flashcards and were able to use many of the new phrases.

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## 14. APPENDIX

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### 14.1 Textile Glossary

#### 14.1.1 Definitions of weaving terms

**back-strap loom:**

A back-strap loom is a type of loom, which consists of two sticks and five beaters. The loom is strapped around the weavers back inducing its name. By stretching the legs and pushing the beam forwards, the weaver can tighten the warp and causes the shed to close. In contrast, by pulling back the legs, the weaver will achieve to loosen the warp and to open the shed again.<sup>424</sup>

**beater:**

The beater is a tool which hangs down from the top of the loom and holds the reed in a frame. It is used to push the weft yarn into place and is usually made from bamboo.<sup>425</sup>

**binding system:**

The weaving method to connect the warp and weft yarns. There are various weaving methods like plain weave, twill or satin weave.<sup>426</sup>

**bobbin:**

A bobbin is a spindle holding reeled up yarn.<sup>427</sup>

**continuous supplementary:**

It is a weaving technique where the supplementary threads are continuously passed through the full width of the textile to create a constant pattern or motif.<sup>428</sup>

**discontinuous supplementary:**

It is a weaving technique where the supplementary threads are merely passed through a particular area to create an individual pattern.<sup>429</sup>

**embroidery:**

Embroidery is the application of yarn onto a textile with the help of a needle. There is a variety of stiches which create different decorative patterns.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 175.

<sup>425</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>426</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 175.

<sup>427</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>428</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 182.

<sup>429</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 182.

<sup>430</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 177.

**heddle:**

Each warp thread goes through the eye of a heddle which can be lifted or lowered to create a shed. The heddles are connected to a shaft.<sup>431</sup>

**loom:**

A loom is a device used for weaving processes. The warp yarns are stretched on it and hold under tension. Weft is inserted by passing under and over the warp threads.<sup>432</sup>

**reed:**

The reed is the part of the beater where the warp threads pass through and are hold separate from each other. A reed is necessary to keep every single warp yarn untangled and in place. (see beater)<sup>433</sup>

**shaft:**

The shaft contains a set of heddles which are lifted and lowered to modify the altitude of the warp.<sup>434</sup>

**shed:**

The weft passes through a gap between the upper and lower warp yarns while weaving. This opening is called shed.<sup>435</sup>

**shuttle:**

A shuttle contains the bobbin of threads and is passed through the shed to interlace the weft and warp.<sup>436</sup>

**spindle:**

→ See bobbin

**spinning:**

It describes the process of twisting newly gained fiber into one solid thread.<sup>437</sup>

**supplementary warp:**

The supplementary warp is a decorative weaving technique in which additional warp yarns are woven into the textile to create a pattern.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>432</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 178.

<sup>433</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>434</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>435</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>436</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>437</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 180.

<sup>438</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 182.

**supplementary weft:**

The supplementary weft is a decorative weaving technique in which additional weft yarns are added between regular weft threads to create a pattern.<sup>439</sup>

**sword:**

The wooden blade which is used to open a shed for weft to pass through.<sup>440</sup>

**treadle:**

A pedal which is pushed by the weaver's foot to heighten or lower the shaft.<sup>441</sup>

**warp:**

The warp is a set of long yarns which run vertically away from the weaver (on the loom). The warp threads need to be set up on the loom and hold in tension before the weft threads are interlaced with the warp.<sup>442</sup>

**weft:**

The weft is a set of yarns which run horizontally to the weaver (on the loom). The weft threads are interlaced with the warp by inserting them under and over the warp to produce a fabric.<sup>443</sup>

## 14.1.2 Definitions of dyeing terms

**Dye:**

A colored liquid which is used to chemically bond color to the fibers.<sup>444</sup>

**Dyeing:**

The process of coloring textile products by adding dye.<sup>445</sup>

**Dyestuff:**

→ see dye

**Mordant:**

A substance which is added during the dyeing process in order to fix the dye permanently or to change the color.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 182.

<sup>440</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>441</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>442</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>443</sup> cf. Hirschstein and Beck 2017, p. 172.

<sup>444</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 176.

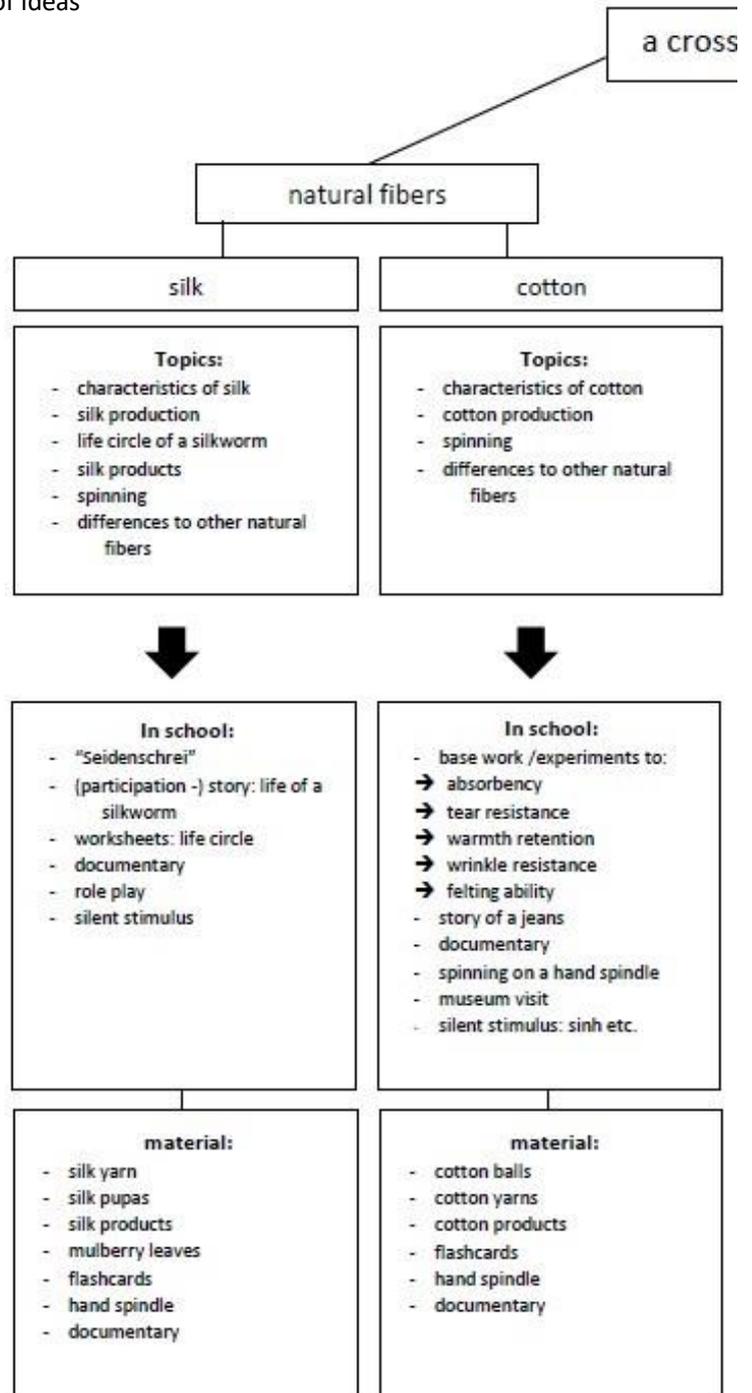
<sup>445</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 176.

<sup>446</sup> cf. Tagwerker 2012, p. 176.

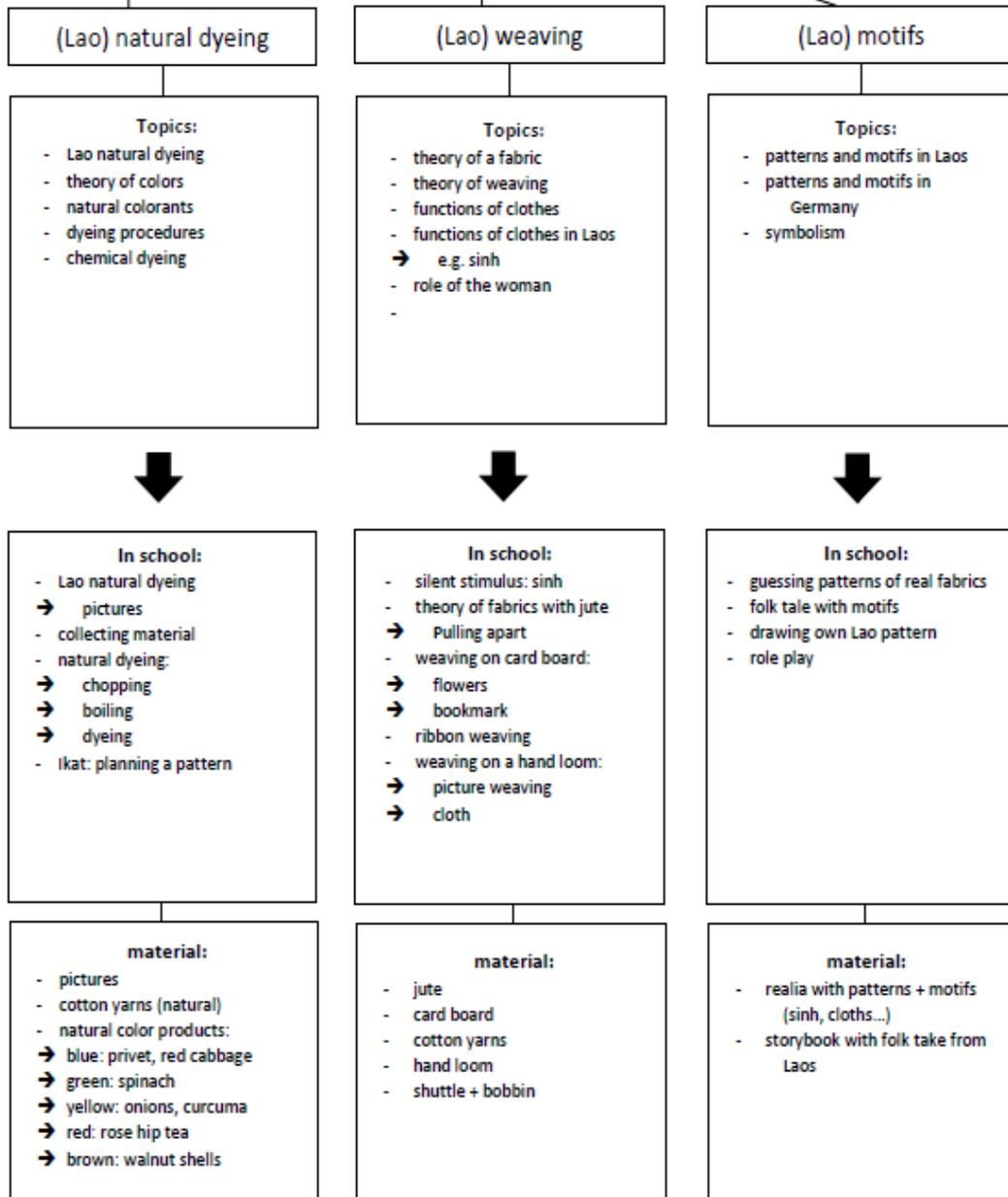
## 14.2 Didactic Material

### 1.1.1 Content ideas for the project

The given mind map displays as collection of ideas which can be integrated into the project.



-curricular Lao weaving - storytelling project



## 14.2.1 Ideas for a weekly schedule of the project

part	time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
core hours	7:45-8:30	1. introducing the project 2. introducing rituals for the week 3. map of the world → Laos	1. repetition of daily routines 2. natural fibers → cotton/silk 3. characteristics of cotton/silk 4. short documentary to cotton	1. motifs of Laos 2. folk tale of Laos with motifs 8. role play 9. sketch of own lao pattern	1. pen pal cooperation with the "Teaching English in Laos program" 2. repetition daily routines in Laos with the story 3. comparing daily routines/food Laos/Germany 4. differences Laos/Germany 5. how to write a letter. 6. writing a letter to a Lao child.	1. reading out letters 2. repetition of content of the week 3. presenting Lao pattern 4. feedback/evaluation
	8:30-9:15	4. story of a lao girl → daily routines in Laos 5. natural dyeing theory 6. natural dyeing in Laos	5. story of a silk worm: → life circle 6. base work- experiments: → absorbency → tear resistance → warmth retention → wrinkle resistance → felting ability			
	9:15-10:00					
practical hours	10:30-11:15	7. natural dyeing in the school kitchen 8. forming teams 9. instructions 10. team work (each team 2 - 3 colors): → yellow: turmeric/curcuma → brown: onions → blue: red cabbage → red: rose hip tea → green: spinach	Continue base work	10. fabric 11. theory of weaving	introduction to weaving on a hand loom <i>practical work: patch work blanket for storytelling sessions in the classroom.</i>	weaving on a hand loom
	11:15-12:00		7. dyeing cotton yarns	12. card board weaving	weaving on a hand loom	weaving on a hand loom
	12:15-13:00		8. batik dyeing of cotton t-shirts	continue card board weaving	weaving on a hand loom	combining little woven pieces to create a patchwork blanket

## 14.2.2 Lesson plan

<b>name:</b> Ariane Kummetz		<b>subject:</b> English <b>topic of the lesson:</b> daily routines of a Lao girl		<b>vocabulary:</b> new: -> structures old: -> structures		
<b>class:</b> 3		<b>objectives:</b> <i>Students get to know the daily routines of a child from Laos</i>		<b>structure:</b> What do you do?  → I wake up.                      → I go home. → I have breakfast.            → I dye yarns. → I go to school.                → I weave. → I study.                         → I go to the market → I have lunch.                 → I have dinner → I play with my friends.      → I go to bed.		
<b>date:</b> 13.07.2018		<i>Students can ask "What do you do?" and answer with a daily routine and a movement.</i>				
<b>time frame:</b> 45 min, 12:15-13:00		<i>Students can retell the story together with the teacher.</i>				
<b>material:</b> pp, flashcards, rice, yarns, sinh, wireless pointer, beamer, pillows, map, picture cards						
<b>time</b>		<b>phase</b>	<b>student &lt;-&gt; teacher</b>	<b>Social forms</b>	<b>material &amp; media</b>	<b>notes</b>
12:15	3 min	greeting	Ritual "shake your fingers, bend your knees". T greets every child.	Plenary, S. at their seats	sinh	
12:18	17 min	presentation + practice	T. asks S. to come to the front and form a circle on the ground on pillows. T-> map T. presents a story of a Lao girl on a power-point presentation. 1. It's ___ o'clock. -> Noy! What do you do? 2. Daily routine of Noy S. speak along the narrative repetitions and repeat the daily routines in a chorus and independently. T. includes many repetitions. T. gives questions to S.	S. in a half circle on pillows	map, PP, beamer, wireless pointer, rice, yarns	
12:35	10 min	performance	T. puts the flashcards with the daily routines of the story on the ground. T. starts telling the story again by saying the time and asking students what happened. S. have to point on the picture and say the daily routine. While T. tells the story, S. bring the flashcards into the correct order.	S. in a half circle on pillows	flashcards	
12:45	7 min	consolidation	Game: Pantomime game What do you do? → movement	group work	picture cards	
12:52	8 min	goodbye	Practicing "If you happy "- song for school enrolment festivity + Goodbye ritual with S.	circle	CD	
		buffer	Game: Simon says 1. T. says: „Simon says: I go to school -> S. do the movement	circle		

### 14.2.3 Pictures of the lesson on daily routines in Laos



Figure 56: Where is Laos?<sup>447</sup>



Figure 57: What do you do?<sup>448</sup>



Figure 58: Students practicing the phrases.<sup>449</sup>



Figure 59: Students reconstructing the story.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>448</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>449</sup> Kummetz 2017.

<sup>450</sup> Kummetz 2017.

## 14.3 Transcripts of Interviews

### 14.3.1 Transcript of the Interview with Carol Cassidy [excerpt]

<b>Interviewee:</b>	Carol Cassidy
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Ariane Kummetz, Prof. Dr. Isabel Martin
<b>Date and Time:</b>	12/10/17 01:30 pm – 03:00 pm
<b>Location:</b>	The Lao Textiles weaving studio of Carol Cassidy, Vientiane
<b>Transcription rules</b>	The interview is transcribed as a verbatim record of conversation  <b>C:</b> Carol Cassidy

**C:** I think that there is some... degree or percent that could be attributed to a kind of a Buddhist philosophy, but i don't think that that is what is the main factor. I think that weaving ... ahm... is... it comes... it's so fundamental to humanity and it comes from the origin of human be...of human life. And it comes from a society that... I guess you'd call it slow today, when you harvested your raw material, if it was linen, or silk, or hemp or cotton and then you made it. So, it comes more not out of religion, I don't think, but out of a time and the necessity, where... you know the creation where you were in a relationship with your environment and you went with the rhythm of the seasons and you dye a color that was available, you harvested a crop that was... it was time. That's not linked to religion, it's linked to nature and the fundamental relationship between a human being and nature. I think there is a degree of... most of what we weave is actually animist, so it's pre-Buddhist. And Buddhism might play some role today, as you say, but I think what I'm practicing, these techniques, etc... are much older than Buddhism and they're much more fundamental than... kind of a current concept of meditation and the slow movement, it's much deeper than that and more ancient than that, so I [laughs]... But I know what you mean.

### 14.3.2 Transcript of the Interview with Viengkham Nanthavondouangsy

<b>Interviewee:</b>	Viengkham Nanthavondouangsy
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Ariane Kummetz
<b>Date and Time:</b>	12/17/17 02:00 pm – 03:30 pm
<b>Location:</b>	Phaeng Mai Gallery, Vientiane
<b>Transcription rules</b>	The interview is transcribed as a verbatim record of conversation  <b>V:</b> Viengkham Nanthavondouangsy <b>A:</b> Ariane Kummetz

- 1 **A:** Okay so first of all thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you. That's really  
2 really nice
- 3 **V:** You're welcome [laughs]
- 4 **A:** yeah first I actually wanted to know. How did you become a weaver? Were you born in  
5 the field of weaving? Or how did it happen?
- 6 **V:** Actually I ... I was born into the ehm famous ... I can say famous ehm weaving family
- 7 **A:**[Okay]
- 8 **V:** cause it is from generation .. we do weaving and ah the original of the family is from the  
9 north of Laos
- 10 **A:** [Okay]
- 11 **A:** So where exactly?
- 12 **V:** Houaphan province
- 13 **A:** Ah okay..... I take a look at my other questions. So you are from the north?
- 14 **V:** Yeah Luang Prabang Xieng Khouang and ehh Xam Neua. Sam nuai province is like  
15 border to Vietnam.
- 16 **A:** And eh Is there like a particular very special area for weaving?
- 17 **V:** Yeah we have very many different techniques and design and I think because we are  
18 animists... Tai Daeng like aeh animist we believe in eh spirits that's why it's related to the  
19 pattern as well the the the clothes every pieces of clothes is produced to ohh serve in the  
20 certain ceremony from born to die.

21 **A:** Ahhh so the child already gets a particular pattern when its born? And does everyone  
22 get their individual pattern? Or what's the meaning?

23 **V:** Yeah ... aehh I mean ah ... own or ethnic I think ethnic group like ehh when first born  
24 people will do like a protection for the child ahh they carry a baby carry like this have certain  
25 pattern to protect from the bad and evil.

26 **A:** Ahh that's really interesting. So and that varies from ethnic group to ethnic group?

27 **V:** Yeahh

28 **A:** So which ethnic group do you belong to again?

29 **V:** Tai Daeng

30 **A:** Is that one of the biggest groups or?..

31 **V:** Yeahh actually they call Lao tai Tai ka dai.. aehh right aehh and that's mean how many  
32 tai daeng tai dam tai kao tai kuan tai maen tai lue something like this all of us...

33 **A:** Tai means people?

34 **V:** Yees not Thailand haha

35 **V:** Aand ehm these group is very good at the weaving.

36 **A:** Ah so... so do they.. these ethnic groups do they only... Are they spread throughout  
37 Laos or do they have like a heart in Laos?

38 **V:** Actually, like ahh in history 1000 years ago. Come down from the south of China and  
39 then stopped at the north of Vietnam and then come down to Laos like ahhh centuries to  
40 settle in Laos.

41 **A:** Okay so you're actually from China? Does this also have an influence on the type of  
42 weaving or?

43 **V:** I think some of the how to produce silk material and yeahh and some pattern are similar.

44 **A:** Some patterns are similar?

45 **V:** Yeah

46 **A:** That's so interesting because ah I ethnic groups that's something which is completely  
47 different to Germany which makes it even more interesting to learn something about it  
48 because I also want to understand the difference between these ethnic groups and how do  
49 you see the difference in terms of patterns... because ... also Carol told me that she is now

50 as good that she can read a pattern and there are so many influences... the age of the  
51 woman and everything influences the pattern... What are some other aspects?

52 **V:** Yeahh actually like ah I mention tai ethnic groups tai Kao tai daeng tai dam something  
53 tai maen something like that... sometimes they share the pattern like ikat or or naga design  
54 or something like this but I can read the the ethnic group by the color use because this kind  
55 this kind of people have certain ahh ahh respect like ahhm Tai Dam they don't wear red  
56 when eh when.... Certain ahhh occasion

57 **A:** For a wedding... Do they wear red for a wedding?

58 **V:** Yeah they they wear ...

59 **A:** But not In school for instance?

60 **V:** But not when when they... hhahaha

61 **A:** Don't worry! Hahaha

62 **V:** hahaha

63 **A:** So so it depends also...because when I went to Luang Prabang I saw a lot of blue color  
64 everywhere. Is that because that area is... I don't know the particular ethnic group.. ehmm  
65 is connected to that colour or what would you say?

66 **V:** Yeah the blue is can read by tapestry technique right the the textile and they are more  
67 or buddhist

68 **A:** Okay

69 **V:** Yeahh that's why that the the ahh the pattern is quite ahh simpler than Tai Daeng people  
70 who believe in animist many... because ahh in animist ceremony sometime we have to do  
71 like very complicated...ahh striking pattern..yeah to to fight with the bad evil when we do  
72 ceremony... yeah sometime we have to wear many layer of the the clothes to to add more  
73 to the eyes of the evil

74 **A:** ahhh okay. I also wanted to know.. maybe you know.. How did Lao weaving become  
75 traditional in Laos itself? So how so is it... the roots.. where are the roots of Lao weaving?

76 **V:** You will be surprised because up to now we don't have a school of weaving but every  
77 woman know how to weave almost everyone I mean...it's ehmm family hand out from mother  
78 to daughter yeah because traditional to be woman have to learn how to weave... they were  
79 very young... like myself I weave when I was six years old... and ahh. Before I think before  
80 because before woman cannot study at school ahh is not only traditional but the school

81 have certain place in the area if you like to go to study .. ehm higher you leave the village  
82 to study far away right. That's why it limited the educati education of the woman that's why  
83 they they show the inner or quality by weaving... mhh.. yeahh until my age my mother teach  
84 me how to weave same as her mother teach her. If you cannot weave you cannot get  
85 married or something like that because the man will recognize the quality of woman from  
86 the piece that she weaves.

87 **A:** Wow ahh so you grew up with that like that ideology?

88 **V:** yeahh ... like ahh they cannot choose the color of indigo dyeing... ahh... is deep blue or  
89 not.. if you cannot dye in deep blue that's mean you are not skilled in it... and also red black  
90 to make a color. That's a two colour can tell everything about woman hahahaha

91 **A:** hahaha blue and red So when have good skills in those two colors you're a good wife?

92 **V:** Yeahh

93 **A:** interesting hahaha

94 **V:** The color and also design. How complicated how...show the patience, show the skill of  
95 the woman

96 **A:** you have to be very patient! Isn't it true that it's more difficult... not the actual weaving  
97 but to prepare everything... is a huge work? So to plan everything? Is that the actual work  
98 of the weaving itself?

99 **V:** Ahh all the and also the quality of the fabric. Because ahh you can look at the quality  
100 back and front have to be quite similar you can use both

101 **A:** Okay Ehm what would you say makes Lao weaving special. What makes it different  
102 different to maybe Chinese weaving?

103 **V:** I think the the technique itself and also the motif

104 **A:** mhhm

105 **V:** And also the material

106 **A:** the material?

107 **V:** Jaa Lao have ahh sss certain ahh unique ahh variety of silk and the way how to produce.  
108 We still us our hand\_\_\_ some sometime. That's ahh create more texture of of the piece.

109 **A:** Okay and is it true that ehm the government doesn't involve itself into the weaving even  
110 though Lao weaving is actually for my opinion it's the actual tradition of Laos cause when I

111 arrived here we saw weaving everywhere. We saw the sinhs. I think it makes it makes the  
112 tradition. it makes probably the society here. And why doesn't involve the government itself?

113 **V:** Noo is not true. Jaa. Jaa government actually ahhhm promote a lot of Lao weaving. Even  
114 now if you go to ahh temple ohh sss office if you can if you don't wear sinh you cannot go  
115 in.

116 **A:** Jaa that's true.

117 **V:** Jaaa and also they always always ahh promote what to do ahh to preserve or promote  
118 to learn to train they have policy to bring in the ahhh NGO ohh ahh what foreign organization  
119 to support, to improve the the technique. But maybe people understand that they don't give  
120 money to to producer thas is not promote. That's true they don't have financial but the policy  
121 they do. Because ahh in Lao if you export no tax for export ah for handicraft it's a priority  
122 actually.

123 **A:** Okay. So that's good for weavers when there is no tax. But for foreign weavers, they  
124 have to pay a lot of taxes. Is that right?

125 **V:** Yeah actually this ahh is cultural product have to preserve for Lao people... mhhh

126 **A:** Ahhh

127 **V:** Because foreign ahh foreign investor... they worry that sometimes they misunderstand  
128 mis ahh mistranslate about the design or something like that.

129 **A:** And then it's not the actual cultural product anymore.

130 **V:** Yeahh and then they can interpret in different way that's why the government try to  
131 protect.

132 **A:** Ahhh. That's really interesting, because there is a huge difference to Carol... What she  
133 also said about the meaning of Lao weaving for her and probably for Lao people themselves  
134 the government wants to try to push or to ss take eh out point out the benefits for the  
135 weavers, so the tradition doesn't get lost.

136 **V:** Yeah yeahh It's a cultural products I think. That's that why they try to give a gift for Lao  
137 people. Jaa because from the ahh from the culture from the have understand that eh motif  
138 or culture the way to use it rather than foreigner who come and see the benefit of to make  
139 business or something like that. Very different. Different of thinking.

140 **A:** Perspective probably. Yes that's true that's a total different perspective. That's really  
141 interesting. There's ... might be also a different perspective but ehhm I heard that the  
142 government or I don't if it's the government but in terms of silk a lot of silk is not given to the

143 weavers anymore eh-hm and used for their own benefits. I don't if that's true or not or if it's  
144 just a rumour....hahaha... Do you know anything about this issue?

145 **V:** Actually, now we don't have enough silk.

146 **A:** Yeahh that's what I heard.

147 **V:** Eh-hm to make silk from is ha need a lot of investment. Need a lot of financial. And our  
148 government don't have enough money to do that. But they open to any project can invite  
149 investors to come mhhh.

150 **A:** Ahh ok thank you interesting. Eh-hm now a completely different question. Eh-hm I read  
151 a lot about muang. What is the actual meaning of muang? Is it the ethnic group?

152 **V:** Muang?

153 **A:** Muang? Muang.

154 **V:** Muang is a city right?

155 **A:** Yeah I read it a very often. Do you know the eh-hm Lao-Tai textiles book from eh-hm  
156 Patricia Cheesman? And she was mentioning it everywhere and I was like what is the actual  
157 meaning of it?

158 **V:** Muang is a like city like

159 **A:** Okay. So it's it's not about one ethnic group so it's just a city...

160 **V:** Maybe she mention muang is a from Vietnam... Muang eh-hm is a Tai Daem ethnic group  
161 in Vietnam.

162 **A:** Ahh in Vietnam.

163 **V:** Muang Taem. Muang. There ethnic but in Lao it's district. They mention people in that  
164 area like geography.

165 **A:** So it's not really like ah-h particular eh-hm word for anything.

166 **V:** Noo but Tai Muang maybe they mention in Tai Daem in certain area.

167 **A:** That could be possible. Aeh-hm then I also wanted to say what kind of weaving are you  
168 specialist in? So are you.. Do you rather do very complex weaving structures or...

169 **V:** Ahh Now come to business I have to know almost everything hahaha yeahh not only  
170 traditional technique but now we keep developing.

171 **A:** So contemporary as well?

172 **V:** yeahh.

173 **A:** So would you say that you look or that a lot of people rather focus now on contemporary  
174 weaving or on the traditional?

175 **V:** mhhh many still continuing ahhh traditional way jaa. Yeah eh ehmm because lately the  
176 domestic market quite strong for ohh wedding or official ahh dress right seem so Lao coming  
177 up with the high quality aii high aehm capacity of buying that's why many people ahh before  
178 they concentrate on export but lately after the Lao have oh buying capacity they turn to do  
179 oh domestic market that's mean that the design also develop for domestic. It's more  
180 traditional.

181 **A:** Ahh okay. haha

182 **V:** I think this one also depend on the market.

183 **A:** Jaa probably. Is there also a difference for instance when you walk through the night  
184 market. There are a lot of textiles everywhere. Are these also traditional ones or rather  
185 produced for the market. You know for people like also ehmm maybe tourists who want to  
186 buy something.

187 **V:** aehhh I think..

188 **A:** Oh the morning market not the night market hahaha

189 **V:** Morning market?

190 **A:** Jaa

191 **V:** Morning market have a different quality. Different price right that people can have more  
192 selection.

193 **A:** Jaa because I went there and there you have textiles for, I don't know 100,000 kip and I  
194 was like wow that's not a big price... probably because weaving means so much work and  
195 this one is so cheap. So what's the difference of the quality to one... when I went to another  
196 one there it was 1.000,000 for one piece because it was 100% of silk and there.. it varies  
197 a lot.

198 **V:** Yeahh in Morning market you can find like less than 100,000 kip at ehmm from less than  
199 10 Dollars to 1000 Dollars or like that...

200 **A:** Is it then hand-woven or...

201 **V:** Yeah hand-woven

202 **A:** Everything is hand-woven?

203 **V:** Unless some you have to have good size than they import from few import from Thailand  
204 or China.

205 **A:** I also have one question with regards to my sinh because I do also have a sinh and I  
206 would be very interested if you could also tell me what's the meaning behind this pattern or  
207 is there a meaning?

208 (Taking out Sinh to show it Viengkham)

209 **V:** This generally we call a flower right.

210 **A:** Okay.

211 **V:** mhhh a flower.

212 **A:** So this is the flower? And what's what are these lines? Are they just...

213 **V:** Ahh the line?

214 **A:** aha

215 **V:** Ehhhm I don't this... but actually in my ethnic group the line is mean ahh something like  
216 this more like rainbow right. Rainbow is more it mean connection. In in Lao we believe that  
217 ahh we have a two world yeah earth and sky right. And earth and sky have spirit connecting  
218 each other and this rainbow is..

219 **A:** connects the two worlds

220 **V:** Yes connects. Yeahh

221 **A:** Ahhh okay. That's really interesting. So once again this means the flower and that's also  
222 a rainbow in combininit combination.

223 **V:** Ah probably mostly yeah represents the happiness and wealth.

224 **A:** Ahhh okay. The flower is happiness and wealth and what do this mean?

225 **V:** This a ahh ahh decoration Yeahh the sinh have to have this. Jaa like a complete the  
226 piece.

227 **A:** Okay and in terms of the colors. Aehhm well for me ...I really ..I was... when I chose the  
228 color I was like I really like this color but do you think that it also has a meaning for some  
229 ethnic groups?

230 **V:** mhhh

231 **A:** Like the combination maybe of the colors?

232 **V:** Ahhh for for Tai Daeng we have like ehmm the the main color is like earth fire river and  
233 wood or something like that. Four color four ahhh element right. Ahh in Tai Dam some for  
234 example they they believe ehmm you will see more orange like ehmm the symbol of wealth.  
235 Jaaa sometime like Chinese they they pray with orange right. The color is orange.

236 **A:** so orange means wealth. The Orange color.

237 **V:** jaaa

238 **A:** And you have a lot of green and blue as well. What's the meaning behind green and  
239 blue?

240 **V:** Green ahh represent the nature.

241 **A:** The nation like lao nation?

242 **V:** No no no nature!

243 **A:** Nature the nature ahh okay the nature!... and blue?

244 **V:** blue ehmm like water mhh.

245 **A:** So the river, something fluid.

246 **V:** Jaaa

247 **A:** Thank you very much! So now I know I have flowers on my on my sinh. Do you also  
248 know why for instance at our school people are not allowed to wear very very not crazy but  
249 very noticeably colors like red and orange in school. Do you know why people are not  
250 allowed to wear it in school but on a wedding.

251 **V:** Ahhh I think ehmm a school have a regulation right have to be in like peace peaceful not  
252 a attract disturbing color hahaha

253 **A:** Ahh ok so red means something like an attractive color which you can wear when you  
254 want to be pretty but not in school?! Ookay!

255 **A:** Oho I wear that in school. But they told me I am a falang so that's okay! Hahaha

256 **A:** Ehmm I also wanted to know because people were saying that behind every pattern like  
257 you said there is a story. Ehm do you have maybe one story which I could also take and  
258 give it to my future students.

259 **V:** Oh yeah you should have my book.

260 **A:** Oh the story book?

261 **V:** Jaa

262 **A:** Which one is it?

263 **V:** Naga

264 **A:** I have to write it down. I have to get that book.

265 **V:** I have upstairs. You can have.

266 **A:** Is it the one ehm... because I saw....

267 **V:** Weaving clothes weaving Naga. The black, small one.

268 **A:** Ok because I saw one other book of you.

269 (break)

270 **A:** In terms of school.. ehm.. of course it's also important for me to think of what I could  
271 teach my future students about the Lao weaving what I want to give something cultural from  
272 Laos to children in Germany so they have like a wider, broader...ehm.. mindset. What  
273 would you say is one really important thought.. or thing... to give to the future generation?

274 **V:** I think that important is..ehm.. weaving is.. hard to say... is cultural. it's big, because  
275 every woman have to learn how to weave from they was very young, something like that.  
276 It's handed it's heritage like old treasure of the country that can keep.. ehm... can be like  
277 certificate of person yeah to show your...ehh..personality to show your..ehm.. society  
278 status and also in the past, in the history it can be the key of your country when ehm we  
279 being colonized by... ah... some terrorists ej, theory , not terrorism [laughs]

280 **A:** not terrorism [laughs] theory

281 **V:** ja, and we have to ask too (?) he's also one of the key to ehm his people

282 **A:** Okay

283 **V:** It's heritage and ehm also now a day weaving is like ehm can help woman, what was  
284 the word, now.. woman empower

285 **A:** Ah okay

286 **V:** [laughs]

287 **A:** Jaja, I know.. to get a strong woman to get like acknowledgement

288 **V:** Jaja, and also is the ring ehmm of woman to be equal to the men in term of economy,  
289 because woman can earn the income for living and ah this why we like equal. And also  
290 weaving can keep ah income standard of living and also keep education. Yeah, helping  
291 education to the young people like myself. I learned how to weave when I was very young  
292 and I helped myself in education since eh primary school until I finished eh university. And  
293 until I go study over sea. Every money is come from weaving, after I have business. And I  
294 thought oh my business can help the young people to have education like me and that's  
295 why ehmm in my business I keep the space for student. They can come here and stay with  
296 me and with a part time job and they can go to school like a half day or something like that.  
297 And they continue here to weave and to study. After they graduate they can choose...

298 **A:** ...what they want to do

299 **V:** Yeah, and many of them they go to do what they learned.

300 **A:** Yeah

301 **V:** Yes.. meaning a lot weaving in Laos.

302 **A:** Ja, it has a huge meaning. Definitely.. Ehmm.. Would you also say that when you were  
303 talking about the role of the woman, ehmm, that the role of the woman becomes ..or it... the  
304 woman, the women who are weaving have a different role in the society than.. let's  
305 say..ordinary woman? What would you say? Or how would you describe the role of the  
306 woman also in terms of weaving?

307 **V:** Eh noo, in Laos is more than economy we have different career, different ehmm, but eh  
308 weaving before is just like woman have nothing to do eh, have nothing to do but ehmm is  
309 like hobby or something people low educated to do this job, but now weaving is a represent  
310 the culture of the country. One of the business that represent SMI of the country that helping  
311 from crossroad, yeah to international market.. yeah they have.. right.. meaning of culture  
312 and economy and quite impressed.

313 **A:** Definitely. So, what would you say, how many people ehmm do have like occupations  
314 due to weaving? Is it like the main job or business ehmm people are into in Laos?

315 **V:** Yeah, it seems the last five years more and more people who are educated who finished  
316 ah university or even the from..ehmm.. the.. government family are set up the weaving studio  
317 ja is become popular

318 **A:** That's great. That's really great. Ehmm, because you were saying you were studying over  
319 sea, ehmm, what were you studying and where?

320 **V:** Yeah, I eh finished university her dumdum (?) university. Yeah and after that I have eh  
321 business study in Australia, Sydney.

322 **A:** Ahhh, okay. That's great. [laughs]

323 **V:** [laughs]

324 **A:** Ehhm, I also wanted to know again in terms of school eh because when I go back I  
325 also want to give them some practical input. Is there a way how I can easily teach them Lao  
326 weaving? Like an easy pattern or something which children can also learn, because you  
327 were also saying you learned it when you were six years old. So what was the first thing  
328 you learned?

329 **V:** ahhh

330 **A:** Which is, might be easier to get into the weaving and good to transfer it into school.

331 **V:** Yeah, it's not to learn by supplementary technique

332 **A:** okay

333 **V:** Ja, because to create pattern to eh supplementary technique, this way is supplementary  
334 way. You can count from one to ten, that know how to do the pattern.

335 **A:** Ahhh

336 **V:** Ja, because pick up the pattern by counting the yarn.

337 **A:** Okay

338 **V:** Mhm

339 **A:** So you, you count..

340 **V:** the reed (?)

341 **A:** Ahhh, okay. And do you think like which technique would be the easiest to learn?

342 **V:** I think supplementary

343 **A:** Supplementary also?

344 **V:** Supplementary aback.

345 **A:** okay. Good to know. So Ikat would be too difficult?

346 **V:** Yeah, quite difficult.

347 **A:** Okay. Ehhm, as you were saying that it gets more and more popular ehhm that people  
348 open their own business in terms of weaving or in a studio, so would you say that weaving  
349 is actually thriving or is it in danger? Because of course also because of our media and the  
350 society, maybe more and more younger people are not that interested anymore to focus on  
351 something really traditional but rather want to go online and chat and I don't know. Ehhm,  
352 what would you say.

353 **V:** I think, in the next ten year I still not, not worry about ehhm what to say, artists the skill  
354 of weavers, but after that I start to worry, because new technology, jaaa, comfort.

355 **A:** Yeah.

356 **V:** Yeah [laughs]

357 **A:** Rather relaxing than actual working, ja.

358 **V:** Ja, and many office ehhm choice for new generation, maybe we have to think about how  
359 to ehhm encourage them, how to educate them. Not only ehhm thing they don't like or  
360 something like that. We ehhm we the senior we have to know how to attract them, how to  
361 encourage them to come to this subject I think.

362 **A:** And how would you think can you achieve something like this?

363 **V:** Ah, we have to keep awareness and ehhm like to make them feel like this ehhm work is  
364 alright. Artist not labour, that it is important job. Not only labor job. Make them feel important  
365 like artists

366 **A:** Like that is something unique. Is it also thought in school? As a topic?

367 **V:** Yeah, in the near future we have in school.

368 **A:** Ja? So what kind of teaching is it? Do you have it like, because in Germany we have  
369 one subject where you have art and paints and draw and do arts and some crafts ehhm so  
370 is it some kind of like subject or is there also history input and stuff like that?

371 **V:** hmmm... newly I think about a subject, more practical

372 **A:** practical input

373 **V:** jaa and all together at the same time you slowly in search the theory of background  
374 history. Because it should go together. It is to sorrow and not to the heart of the student.

375 **A:** Okay, let's see if my ehhm questions ehhm, yes, one thing ehhm again about like in  
376 terms of the ethnic group. Ehhm, would you say like there is one city that come to your mind  
377 right away when you think Lao weaving? Or is it just entire Laos?

378 **V:** One city?

379 **A:** One city or one village, which come to your mind when you think of like this is the heart  
380 of the weaving, maybe.

381 **V:** hmmm, for me I think about Pattern. Because Pattern can tell geography, ethnic group  
382 and the way to use it. How to use it.

383 **A:** So, it's not.. you wouldn't say there is one village

384 **V:** No, no because I don't have weaving of every location of every ehm province and village  
385 or certain unique inside our technique. Yeah, if you mention about Xieng Khouang I will  
386 think about ikat. Or to the south about Champasak

387 **A:** Ahh I will go to Champasak soon...maybe I have to look at it

388 **V:** But even they have Ikat the same technique, but I think also different technique Phutai  
389 or something like that.

390 **A:** So do they have an actual different technique like the...

391 **V:** The technique is the same but the design

392 **A:** the design and colour is different. So, what patterns do you usually use?

393 **V:** Ahhh, I use..

394 **A:** Do you have a favorite one?

395 **V:** mostly is a Tai Daeng design and Lue sign

396 **A:** What is it? Lue?

397 **V:** Thai lue is tapestry with certain design.

398 **A:** okay

399 **V:** I Think Cassidy also produce a lot of Lue

400 **A:** Okay, ahh I.. I saw ehm a lot of diamonds which she was using like the diamond  
401 pattern. Is there also a meaning behind the diamond?

402 **V:** Hmm... diamond is a mostly protection of family relation because in diamond they have  
403 designed around it.

404 **A:** And you were saying that when you were a kid you get something which protects you.  
405 What do you get when you're old? What kind of design?

406 **V:** When the people get old, the people the sinh to were when they die.

407 **A:** Oh, really? Wow hahaha. Okay, well I didn't expect that hahaha One more thing

408 **V:** Like in my book of sinh, I have book, writing about sinh. The people that sinh that one to  
409 wear when they die, because when you wear that sinh you can go to the eh sky

410 **A:** To the other side of the world

411 **V:** Yeah, and then you can pick up mango fruit in symbol and go. That mean you can afford  
412 to pick up that mango you can wish for your family who are alive to be healthy and wealthy.

413 **A:** Okay.

414 **V:** That's why they try to do something for the family who leave behind. They prepare the  
415 fruit.

416 **A:** Ahh. Wow. Okay, there are a lot of thoughts in their, in their minds. Yeah I think, these  
417 were so , so many much information. Thank you so much. I now have to settle everything,  
418 and I think I also have to read still a lot about it to understand also the ethnic groups and  
419 ehmm the variations between each of them. But I think probably you actually only get the  
420 real inside when your Lao, probably, because you grew up like that. It means a lot of history  
421 ehmm so it might be still hard for me to fully understand everything ehmm

422 **V:** Even me hahaha I don't understand all, all

423 **A:** Yeah, but I think you understand your own culture probably the best, the tradition ehmm  
424 but would you say that maybe there are some ethnic groups which are more similar and  
425 some which are more different?

426 **V:** Ja

427 **A:** Ja? So which are more silimar? Which ethnic groups?

428 **V:** Ehmm... like Thai ethnic group, tai dam, tai daeng something like that

429 **A:** Are more similar. Okay. And..

430 **V:** I think ehmm, ehmm, some ethnic groups they are more Buddhish. It will be quite different  
431 from the design of the animism

432 **A:** Ehmm the Hmong, do they also have like a completely different style?

433 **V:** Hmong is similar to a Tai dam

434 **A:** Is a Tai dam.Ah, okay. I still have to learn a lot hahah Okay, thank you so much. Ehhm I  
435 think now I would like to take a look in your book and ehhm this one here. Thank you very  
436 much for your time ehhm and all your valuable information.

437 **V:** [laughs] yes you're welcome

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