

Zinme Longgyi and Luntaya Acheik: Textile Trade and Culture Across Thai-Myanmar Border

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Abstract

The textile trade in Northern Thailand has been linked to cloth markets in Myanmar since the nineteenth century. Both Myanmar and Northern Thai women wore woven cotton and silk cloth forming a kind of tubular long skirt. Chiang Mai became a major market for luntaya acheik and zinme longgyi in Thailand from the mid-nineteenth century. This was not only because there was a culturally Myanmar community based in Chiang Mai but also because local northern Thai Lanna women adopted the fashion of wearing Luntaya as well. Northern Thai Lanna women wore zinme ('Chiang Mai' in Burmese) longyi (skirt-cloth). Zinme longgyi decorated in the Zinme (Chiang Mai) pattern was recognized in Myanmar markets. Luntay zcheik was a traditional form of clothing in Myanmar that was also popular to wear among northern Thai Lanna women as well. This paper aims to explore how the textile trade in zinme longgyi and luntaya acheik, not only stimulated cross-border trade but also reflected the nature of the transnational and transcultural relationship between inhabitants of Northern Thailand and Myanmar.