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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Creative Performance Based On Ancient Sculptural History and Bas-Reliefs: "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel)

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Abstract

This study explores the primary objectives were to explore the choreographic patterns and creative components of the performance "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel), drawing upon civilizational footprints that embody the cultural identity found in the lintels of Phimai Historical Park. And to analyze the conceptual insights gained from the artistic creation of the "Phadae Preah Yatra" dance set, synthesized from the civilizational traces and cultural identity inherent in the Phimai Stone Castle lintels. Utilizing a mixed-methods research approach, the project integrated qualitative fieldwork, in-depth interviews with multidisciplinary experts, and a systematic creative process encompassing eight fundamental elements of performing arts.

The research findings indicate that Phimai Historical Park's Mahayana identity, where 11th-12th-century lintels inspired "Art Historical Dance." By synthesizing Isan folk and Thai classical movements, this creative work decodes local craftsmanship and symbolizes Buddhist veneration, specifically the concept of divine protection epitomized by the Naga-sheltered Buddha. This cultural innovation is categorized into eight core components of dance composition: 1) Performance Design, structured into three acts: Act I: The Prologue of Faith, Act II: Lithic Animation and the Grand Procession, and Act III: Somphot Phuttha Barami, 2) Casting, 3) Choreography, 4) Prop Design, 5) Sound and Music Design, 6) Costume Design, 7) Lighting Design; and 8) Performance Space Design. Furthermore, the researcher integrated three conceptual pillars into the creative process: 1) Creative Innovation in Performing Arts, 2) The Application of Symbolism, and 3) Theoretical Integration of Dance, Music, and Visual Arts. This study represents an academic advancement by synthesizing performing arts with interdisciplinary knowledge, providing a robust framework for the preservation and future development of cultural heritage performances.

Keywords: Phadae Preah Yatra, Phimai historical park, Bas-reliefs, Creative performance, Cultural capital, Experience-based tourism

Introduction

Global development and the forces of globalization have catalyzed an awakening across various sectors, most notably within the burgeoning field of cultural tourism. As the demand for cultural experiences intensifies at both national and international levels, this form of tourism has emerged as a pivotal asset for national economic development. Consequently, contemporary society has become increasingly cognizant of the intrinsic value of cultural heritage and local folklore. Cultural identities are now strategically leveraged to bolster tourism-related entrepreneurship. While abstract cultural elements and belief systems may not constitute tangible tourism resources in the same manner as archaeological sites or

historical artifacts, their transformation into concrete manifestations such as fine arts, architecture, traditional craftsmanship, festivals, and performing arts creates compelling attractions for visitors. These tangible expressions serve as distinctive resources that establish unique regional identities and competitive advantages, thereby enhancing tourism appeal and fostering sustainable economic growth (National Economic and Social Development Board, 2023).

In alignment with the prioritization of Thai culture and the strategic objective to position Thailand as a high- quality and sustainable tourism destination, the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) establishes developmental goals and strategies centered on the "Happy Model" concept. Correspondingly, the revised National Economic Reform Plan advocates for the systematic consolidation of knowledge and data regarding geographical, biological, and cultural diversity. This includes local ways of life characterized by unique identities, which can be leveraged to generate added value for high-quality tourism products and services. Such initiatives are designed to yield commercial benefits and enhance entrepreneurial competitiveness, while simultaneously fostering enriching experiences and an improved quality of life for both tourists and local residents. These national policies facilitate value creation derived from human ingenuity within production sectors evolving toward a Creative Economy. This manifests as Creative Industries (CI) , defined as a group of economic activities inherently reliant on creativity as their primary input (UNCTAD, 2008) . UNCTAD categorizes these creative industries into four primary groups: 1) Heritage or Cultural Heritage, 2) Arts, 3) Media and 4) Functional Creation

The creative industries (CI) encompass a spectrum of professional sectors that leverage intellectual capital and creative innovation as primary drivers for the production of goods and services. In the contemporary global landscape, nations have increasingly prioritized the advancement of creative industries to catalyze economic growth, prompted by intensifying international competition. In Thailand, the strategic development of the creative industries is recognized as a pivotal mechanism for economic transformation under the National Economic and Social Development Plan. Furthermore, this framework fosters cultural-based tourism by integrating artistic production with tangible cultural outputs. To maximize economic impact, these creative endeavors must possess the potential to generate both direct and indirect revenue, thereby augmenting economic value through cultural capital while preserving and highlighting distinct regional identities. Cultural assets, in this context, refer to the inherent societal virtues and inheritances passed down through generations. These assets are categorized into tangible heritage such as temples and archaeological sites and intangible heritage, which includes traditions, beliefs, local wisdom, traditional crafts, architecture, performing arts, and gastronomy. These assets constitute a nation·s unique heritage, synthesized and preserved by ancestors, communities, and various public and private institutions. Such a foundation reflects a rich cultural diversity characterized by the harmonious coexistence of various ethnic groups within Thai society. Consequently, the strategic mobilization of cultural capital aims to create tangible social value and economic returns. This includes the development of cultural spaces as tourism destinations to bolster local economies, promote community engagement, and ensure the resilient and sustainable development of communities (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2020).

Prasat Phimai is a preeminent archaeological site located in the Nai Mueang Sub-district, Phimai District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, situated approximately 60 kilometers northeast of the provincial capital. Positioned within the alluvial plains of the Mun, Chakkarat, and Khem Rivers, this sanctuary was established as a Mahayana Buddhist site, specifically of the Vajrayana sect, dating back to the 11th- 12th centuries CE (the 16^{th}- 17^{th} centuries of the Buddhist Era). The principal sanctuary, constructed from sandstone, stands 28 meters tall and is enclosed by a rectangular gallery measuring 220x277.50 meters. This layout corresponds precisely with the urban planning of the ancient city of Phimai, which forms a rectangle of 565x1,030 meters (Manavit & Saengwan, 2011) . Recognized as the largest stone temple complex in Thailand, Prasat Phimai served as the epicenter of Phimai a city distinguished by its advanced scientific and administrative sophistication within the ancient Khmer cultural network. Despite its location 250

kilometers from Angkor, the capital of the Khmer Empire, Prasat Phimai exhibits several distinct characteristics that diverge from other contemporary temples in both modern-day Cambodia and Thailand. These unique attributes are evident in its architecture, site planning, religious iconography, and intricate decorative carvings. A defining feature of the site is its "lintels," which possess at least six stylistic motifs and three specialized characteristics that constitute the "Phimai Lintel Identity." This identity serves as a stylistic "DNA" for categorizing and verifying "Authentic Phimai" lintels versus those of the "Phimai Kinship" style. The monumental scale of Prasat Phimai underscores the historical significance of the Phimai community as a regional powerhouse with profound influence over the economic, social, political, and religious spheres. While the site shares a cultural foundation with the Khmer Empire, its artistic craftsmanship evolved into a unique local identity. This innovation was so significant that certain stylistic developments pioneered at Phimai were later transmitted back to the Khmer heartland, influencing subsequent architectural projects within the empire (Sukhsawat, 1994).

Thailand's cultural capital, particularly its archaeological sites, constitutes a prominent and tangible resource for the tourism industry. These sites have been effectively developed to create concrete attractions that captivate both local citizens and international tourists. Within the "Arts" cluster of the creative industries, performing arts and traditional dance serve as vital cultural capital, reflecting the long-standing beliefs and ways of life of local communities. These elements represent an "archaeology of civilization" that manifests the unique cultural identities of various regions, passed down through generations. The Challenges of Cultural Continuity in the contemporary era, while some local performances persist due to their deep integration into cultural traditions and their evolution into community-based economic drivers, others are gradually facing extinction. This decline is largely attributed to a lack of succession among the younger generation, driven by societal shifts that have altered traditional lifestyles. The resulting "new way of life" often lacks a connection to ancestral heritage, leading to a breakdown in communal interaction. Consequently, performing arts must be recalibrated to achieve a balance with modern living. A primary factor behind the scarcity of successors is the perception among the youth that these traditions are uninteresting or lack utility. This disconnect threatens the loss of multifaceted intellectual heritage, which integrates various disciplines including dance, music, and literature. Culture as a dynamic way of life critical analysis reveals that cultural heritage has not disappeared; rather, it has often failed to adapt to the modern world because it was historically categorized as a static entity strictly for "conservation." This perspective hinders its alignment with an ever-evolving global context. It is essential to foster a new understanding that "Culture is a way of life." This implies that cultural arts must remain fluid and adaptive to the context of each era to ensure their continued development and innovation. To advance the field of performing arts, it is imperative to modernize works in accordance with current social contexts. This creative process should utilize art and culture as media to reflect the socio-cultural evolution of different eras, conveyed through the customs and traditions that have governed social practice (Rittibul, 2015; Ministry of Culture, 2023). Framework for creative development the conceptual framework for modernizing performing arts, derived from ancestral learning patterns, consists of four primary pillars: 1) Tradition and Culture, 2) Way of Life, 3) Imagination and 4) Belief Systems (Wisutthiphan, 2021). The critical challenge lies in ensuring that this adaptation maintains a harmonious balance between tradition and innovation. By generating both intrinsic and economic value, local artists can sustain their livelihoods while continuing to contribute to society (Boonserm, 2022). Economic integration and tourism marketing utilizing local cultural arts as a medium for cultural tourism has become a significant strategy within the broader tourism industry. Modern travelers increasingly seek to understand diverse cultures through the immersive experience of various artistic forms (Academic Resource Development Center, Mahasarakham University, 2014). Research by Jaiwisuthansa (2009) underscores that Thai performing arts function as a "product" that plays a pivotal role in projecting identity, promoting conservation, and providing entertainment. These factors significantly influence tourist decision-making and increase

engagement with cultural and historical sites. This aligns with tourism marketing theories that emphasize the importance of consumer demand analysis to manage products effectively, maximize satisfaction, and ensure repeat engagement. conceptualizing cultural capital in economic terms as society evolves, performing arts must adapt to meet the communicative needs of both the audience and the creators. The development of cultural capital can be analyzed through the lens of economic theory, where "Capital" is defined as a factor of production or a human-made resource used in conjunction with other inputs to produce goods and services. In this context, cultural capital serves as the Input, which undergoes a Process of creative thinking and collaborative investment. The resulting Output manifests as cultural products and services that generate income for the community, ultimately leading to broader social and economic Outcomes (Aneksuk & Panyavuttrakul, 2016).

This creative project explores the profound aesthetics of ancient Khmer art, drawing primary inspiration from the "Procession of the Buddha Sheltered by the Naga's Hood" lintel located at the Phimai Historical Park in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. As the largest Khmer sanctuary in Thailand, Phimai serves as a vital historical landmark and a cultural epicenter, deeply intertwined with the heritage and livelihoods of the Isan people from antiquity to the present. By selecting this specific lintel as the conceptual foundation, the creative team aims to articulate the core concepts of ancient Buddhism and the devout faith of previous generations through a contemporary creative dance performance. The project strategically employs the "THAI-THAI" framework to leverage cultural "Soft Power," aiming to enhance community capacity, foster creative innovation, and generate local revenue. Furthermore, it focuses on the preservation, restoration, and modern adaptation of local wisdom to create added value through "Unseen" historical perspectives. By transforming traditional site visits into "Experience-Based Tourism," the project seeks to breathe life into the past, allowing audiences to engage with ancient aesthetics through the lens of performance art during cultural festivals. Ultimately, this initiative serves as a catalyst for economic stimulation and sustainable community-based tourism. By utilizing knowledge, education, and creativity rooted in cultural heritage, the performance aims to shift public paradigms and influence behavioral change. This approach underscores the potential of Soft Power to elevate cultural assets into significant socio-economic drivers, ensuring the resilience and continued relevance of regional artistic traditions in the global context.

Previous studies regarding Phimai Historical Park have primarily focused on archaeology, art history, conservation, or cultural tourism. However, baseline research systematically exploring the transformation of Khmer lintel iconography into contemporary dance creation remains virtually non-existent. Therefore, this study aims to address this critical research gap and present a novel academic contribution to the field of performing arts.

Research objectives

1. To explore the choreographic patterns and creative components of the performance "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel), drawing upon civilizational footprints that embody the cultural identity found in the lintels of Phimai Historical Park.

2. To analyze the conceptual insights gained from the artistic creation of the "Phadae Preah Yatra" dance set, synthesized from the civilizational traces and cultural identity inherent in the Phimai Stone Castle lintels.

Research methods

Scope of creative work

Content, conceptual framework, and form

This performance focuses on the transmission of historical narratives through artistic imagination and choreographic imagery. Inspired by the intricate bas-relief lintels of the Phimai Stone Sanctuary, the work integrates the solemnity of ancient rituals with contemporary performance aesthetics. The narrative structure is divided into three acts, simulating a progression from the meticulous preparation of the exquisite ceremony and a vibrant procession wherein stone inscriptions appear to come to life to a grand, spectacular celebration. This creative endeavor serves to preserve and honor the enduring faith in Buddhism. The artistic form is established through the application of specific conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The creative process and post-performance conceptual

analysis are evaluated based on the Eight Elements of Performance Creation: 1) Script/ Narrative, 2) Choreography, 3) Performers, 4) Costume Design, 5) Musical Composition, 6) Stage and Space Design, 7) Lighting Design and 8) Prop Design

Performance space and design

The creator conducted field research at Phimai Historical Park and Phimai National Museum in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Archaeological data and traces reflecting the distinctive cultural identity of the Phimai lintels were compiled and synthesized to determine the creative components of the performance titled "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel). This creative work will be staged at the Songthanapitak Assembly Hall, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi.

Personnel, informants, and practitioners

The study, lesson learning, and knowledge management concerning the intangible cultural heritage of Phimai Historical Park were conducted through a rigorous creative research methodology. The scope of personnel and research participants was categorized into three distinct groups as follows:

1) Key Informants: For the field research phase, a purposive sample of 9 multidisciplinary experts, each possessing no less than 3 years of professional experience, was selected. This group comprised 3 cultural historians, 3 local Isan sages, and 3 performing arts specialists.

2) Expert Evaluation Committee: A panel of 5 experts in the fields of performing arts and cultural resource management, each with a minimum of 3 years of experience, was convened to evaluate, validate, and certify the artistic and academic integrity of the creative outputs.

3) The Cast and Production Team: The performance ensemble consisted of 16 purposively selected performers, including 1 leading actor, 12 supporting actresses, and 3 supporting actors. This cast collaborated closely with a professional production team, which included choreographers, musicians, costume designers, and production technicians.

Methodology of the creative research process

This study employs a creative research methodology, integrating qualitative research with practice-based creative processes in the performing arts to transform archaeological data into a contemporary dance production. The research procedure is structured into four distinct phases as follows:

Phase 1: Literature review and historical contextualization

This phase involved the comprehensive collection and analysis of secondary data from relevant literature and existing research. The focus was placed on the cultural context of Phimai Historical Park, Mahayana Buddhist iconography (specifically the concept of the Buddha Mucalinda or the Buddha sheltered by the naga's hood), the semiotics of choreographic gestures, and established methodologies for developing dance performances derived from historical data.

Phase 2: Fieldwork and multidisciplinary expert interviews

Fieldwork was conducted at Phimai Historical Park and Phimai National Museum in Nai Mueang Sub-district, Phimai District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions guided by semi-structured interview schedules. A purposive sampling method was utilized to select nine key informants. The inclusion criteria required experts to have a minimum of three years of professional experience in their respective fields. The sample was categorized into three groups:

1) Three cultural historians specializing in ancient Khmer architecture;

2) Three local sages with expertise in Southern Isan culture; and

3) Three performing arts experts, comprising higher education faculty members and contemporary artists.

To ensure validity, the collected data underwent data triangulation and content analysis, which subsequently established the conceptual framework for the creative performance.



Figure 1 Conceptual framework for creative work
Source: Rittibul et al. (2026)

Phase 3: Creative production, experimentation, and praxis

The empirical data obtained from the fieldwork were applied to develop the contemporary dance production based on eight core theatrical components:

1) script/narrative development,
2) choreography (featuring a cast of 16 dancers),
3) performance execution,
4) costume design,
5) musical composition,
6) scenography and spatial design,
7) lighting design, and
8) prop design.

Visual motifs derived from bas- relief carvings were experimentally translated and rehearsed through rigorous dance praxis to formulate the performance's movement vocabulary.

Phase 4: Evaluation, verification, and public dissemination

The final phase focused on evaluating the authenticity, quality, and artistic merit of the creative output. A panel of five experts in performing arts and cultural management each possessing at least three years

of academic or professional experience assessed the production. The evaluation tool was a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure design coherence, artistic originality, and historical accuracy. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). The feedback obtained was utilized for final refinements of the production prior to its public premiere and dissemination at the Songthanapitak Assembly Hall, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi.

Research results

1. To explore the choreographic patterns and creative components of the performance "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel), drawing upon civilizational footprints that embody the cultural identity found in the lintels of Phimai Historical Park.

This study explores the creative process of the performance titled "Phae Dae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel), a work rooted in sculptural history and ancient iconography. The project utilizes historical interpretation to facilitate narrative transmission through a synthesis of artistic imagination and choreographic imagery. Inspired by the intricate bas-relief lintels of the Phimai Stone Castle (Prasat Hin Phimai), the performance features a specialized movement vocabulary that harmonizes the sanctity of ancient rituals with contemporary performing arts aesthetics. The primary objective is to design a choreographic framework and identify key creative elements that enable the performance to function as a socio-cultural medium. This medium bridges traditional belief systems with the perspectives of contemporary society. The creative methodology and design components are categorized into the following eight fundamental elements of performing arts creation:

1.1 This performance seeks to articulate historical narratives through the synthesis of artistic imagination and choreographic imagery. Drawing profound inspiration from the bas-relief lintels of the Phimai Stone Sanctuary, the production integrates the ritualistic sanctity of ancient traditions with contemporary performance aesthetics. The narrative structure is meticulously divided into three acts: the exquisite preparations of the rite, the "living tableau" of a procession that animates stone inscriptions, and the culminating grand consecration ceremony. This work serves as both a preservation of cultural heritage and a veneration of Buddhist faith for future generations.

Act I: The Prologue of Faith This act portrays the vibrancy and collective synergy of court attendants and ladies-in-waiting as they meticulously prepare the royal regalia and ceremonial accouterments in anticipation of the procession of the Phra Phuttha Rup Nak Prok (the Buddha image under the Naga canopy). The scene serves as a profound reflection of the social dynamism and communal solidarity inherent in ancient societies.

Act II: Lithic Animation and the Grand Procession. Act II focuses on the revitalization of Khmer-style relief artistry through performance. By utilizing a fade-transition from a monumental lintel backdrop to live tableaux vivants, the scene replicates the iconography of the Buddha under the Naga procession. This static imagery evolves into a choreographed procession toward the Phimai Sanctuary, meticulously designed to evoke a sense of divine sanctity and classical elegance.

Act III: Somphot Phuttha Barami (The Grand Celebration of the Buddha's Spiritual Merits) This act features a ritualistic dance of propitiation and celebration, commemorating the formal enshrinement of the Buddha image within the Phimai Sanctuary. The choreography encapsulates a sense of profound jubilation and aesthetic grace, serving as a meritorious offering to pay homage to the Buddha.

The design of this performance aligns with the conceptual framework of Natayakul (2022), who posits that the creative process in any artistic discipline is ignited by both external environments and internal stimuli. These sources of inspiration may manifest tangibly, such as through architecture and visual arts, or intangibly, through social deterioration, human lifestyles, empathy, suffering, or the artist's internal psychological conflicts. Through the analysis and interpretation of these inspirations, artists translate their thoughts, emotions, and communicative intent into a medium for the audience. Furthermore, Natayakul emphasizes that in the choreographic process, the creator must prioritize the "Design Concept" as the foundational stage. This involves defining the performance's direction and orchestrating various elements including the script, costumes, music,

performers, scenography, lighting, sound, props, and multimedia to materialize the creator's vision with maximum clarity. This approach also resonates with the work of Charassri (2007), who suggests that performances should be concise and introduce novel perspectives while meticulously preserving the core essence of the original subject. Communicating through contemporary dance requires a focus on objectives that resonate with the younger generation and remain socially acceptable within the Thai context. Additionally, this is consistent with Chantanasaro (2014), who characterizes creativity as a process of seeking new methodologies and paradigms within all fields of art and science. Creativity should ideally yield benefits for society, the community, and human culture. While the outcomes of creative thought may result in entirely original innovations or iterations of existing works, the preservation of past creative achievements is essential to provide a foundation for future creative development.

1.2 Performer Selection the creative team conducted a purposive selection of performers based on their professional experience, physical attributes, and technical proficiency in the performing arts to ensure alignment with the production's objectives. Significant emphasis was placed on the performers' ability to comprehend the underlying creative concepts and their capacity to execute dance movements with aesthetic grace. The ensemble comprised a total of 16 performers: 13 females (consisting of one lead dancer and 12 supporting dancers) and three males. These individuals demonstrated foundational excellence in dance, rigorous discipline, and a high level of cooperation. Crucially, their ability to convey profound emotional depth was a key criterion for selection. This selection process adheres to the principles established by Natayakul (2022), who asserts that casting is a pivotal factor in the success of a production; it requires an evaluation of whether a performer's capabilities and personality resonate with the creator's vision to effectively communicate the work to the public. Furthermore, the criteria align with Saitongkum (2018), who emphasizes that performers must possess expressive clarity and emotional engagement, alongside perseverance, discipline, punctuality, and strong interpersonal skills. This is also consistent with Iamsakul (2011), who suggests that choreographers must meticulously consider the physical appearance and facial structures of performers to ensure they remain faithful to historical or conceptual evidence. Ultimately, performers must possess high-quality skills, a suitable persona, and the ability to authentically inhabit their respective roles.

1.3 Choreographic Design the creative team designed the dance movements and choreography by employing semiotics in gestural language and natural human postures. These movements were interpreted from the iconic bas-reliefs and sculptures of the Phimai Stone Castle, utilizing imaginative imitation to establish a unique identity for the performance. The choreography integrates Thai classical dance with Southern Isan folk dance, blending emotional expression with contemporary movement techniques to ensure a clear presentation of form and meaning. Furthermore, the performance achieves a visual balance between static postures (Post) used as communicative symbols and continuous movement (Simulator). This process involves transforming static sculptural imagery into fluid choreography, synchronized with the rhythmic and melodic components of the musical score. This choreographic approach aligns with the concepts of Charassri (as cited in Wisedsing, 2014), who posits that the creation of Thai dance movements involves innovating upon a traditional foundation specifically the Mae Bot (master patterns). Such creations foster multicultural aesthetics that enhance the prominence of Thai performing arts through the integration of modern dance elements. Additionally, this methodology resonates with Sensai (2003), who defines dance creativity as an individualized process resulting in diverse presentation styles. Sensai categorizes the scope of choreographic creation into four distinct approaches: 1) Reconstruction of antiquity: Reviving ancient styles, 2) Traditional synthesis: Blending multiple dance traditions, 3) Applied tradition: Extracting unique traditional identities or specialized techniques and innovating new movements to convey specific intended meanings, and Modern innovation: Creating entirely new works driven by internal emotions and free movement, where the physical body serves as the primary medium of expression, independent of external conventions.

1.4 Sound and Music Design the creative team meticulously composed the lyrics and melodies to align

with the communicative objectives and to evoke distinct emotional responses throughout the various stages of the performance. The primary aim was to stimulate the audience's imagination and provide a profound sensory experience. For the production titled "Phadae Preah Yatra (The Divine Procession Lintel)," the soundscape commences with a rhythmic chant featuring varied tempos that narrate the unfolding events. This opening sequence depicts the preparation of high- ranking ceremonial regalia (Krueang Sung) in anticipation of the Buddha Mucalinda (Naga-shrouded Buddha) procession. Utilizing traditional instruments from Southern Isan (Northeastern Thailand), the music serves as an atmospheric catalyst, immersing both performers and spectators into the imaginative realm of the performance. The composition then transitions into an accelerated tempo, symbolizing the "reanimation" of static artistic motifs, bringing the stone lintels to life through movement. This segment expresses profound joy, grace, and aesthetic beauty as an act of Buddha-puja (devotional offering). To establish a unique contemporary identity, the musical style integrates the traditional folk essence of Southern Isan with international electronic elements. This design approach aligns with the theories of Deekham (2019, as cited in Tunthong, 2020), who posits that sound design must prioritize emotional congruence with the narrative. The manipulation of melody, rhythm, and timbre is essential in fostering realism and enhancing audience engagement. Furthermore, the work resonates with the creative framework of Saitongkum (2018), which emphasizes the use of music to evoke a sense of sacredness and grandeur. This is achieved through a structural progression from slow to rapid tempos, concluding with an abrupt silence to instill a state of tranquility. The fusion of traditional Thai instruments and electronic synthesis creates a novel yet culturally grounded auditory experience. Finally, as noted by Panomrak (as cited in Poonpakdee, 2019), sound design serves as a vital communicative tool that harmonizes with the script and cultivates a sense of wonder and transcendence for the audience.

1.5 Costume Design the creative team developed the costume designs based on an extensive study of the sculptural lintels at Phimai Historical Park. These artifacts, which reflect Khmer artistic influences dating back to the 18th Buddhist century (12^{th} century CE), served as the primary iconographic source. The design process synthesized historical aesthetics specifically from the Baphuon and Angkor Wat styles with contemporary applications. This was achieved by integrating local indigenous fabrics into the traditional motifs observed in the sculptures. During the initial trial phase, adjustments were made to the female costumes to rectify design elements that impeded the performers' mobility. Furthermore, imaginative elements were incorporated to enhance visual elegance and stage presence while ensuring ergonomic functionality for the dancers. The design strategy also employed color theory and semiotic symbolism to create dynamic light and shadow effects under stage lighting, thereby elevating the performance's aesthetic impact. This approach aligns with the design principles proposed by Nopudomphan (2014), who asserts that dance costume design must integrate four interrelated pillars: conceptual framework, performance genre, costume style, and compositional elements. Such a process requires an interdisciplinary synthesis of performing arts and creative arts. Moreover, this methodology corresponds with the theories of Wannamahin (2019, as cited in Tunthong, 2020), who posits that costumes serve as a medium to convey a character's personality, social status, and background. Therefore, design must emerge from a logical interpretation of the character to authentically project their identity through the performer, while maintaining harmony with scenography and lighting. Similarly, Phatthanakunphisan (as cited in Poonpakdee, 2019) emphasizes that designers must prioritize the alignment of attire with the script, utilizing color palettes as communicative tools, and ensuring that the garments do not obstruct the performers' physical execution.

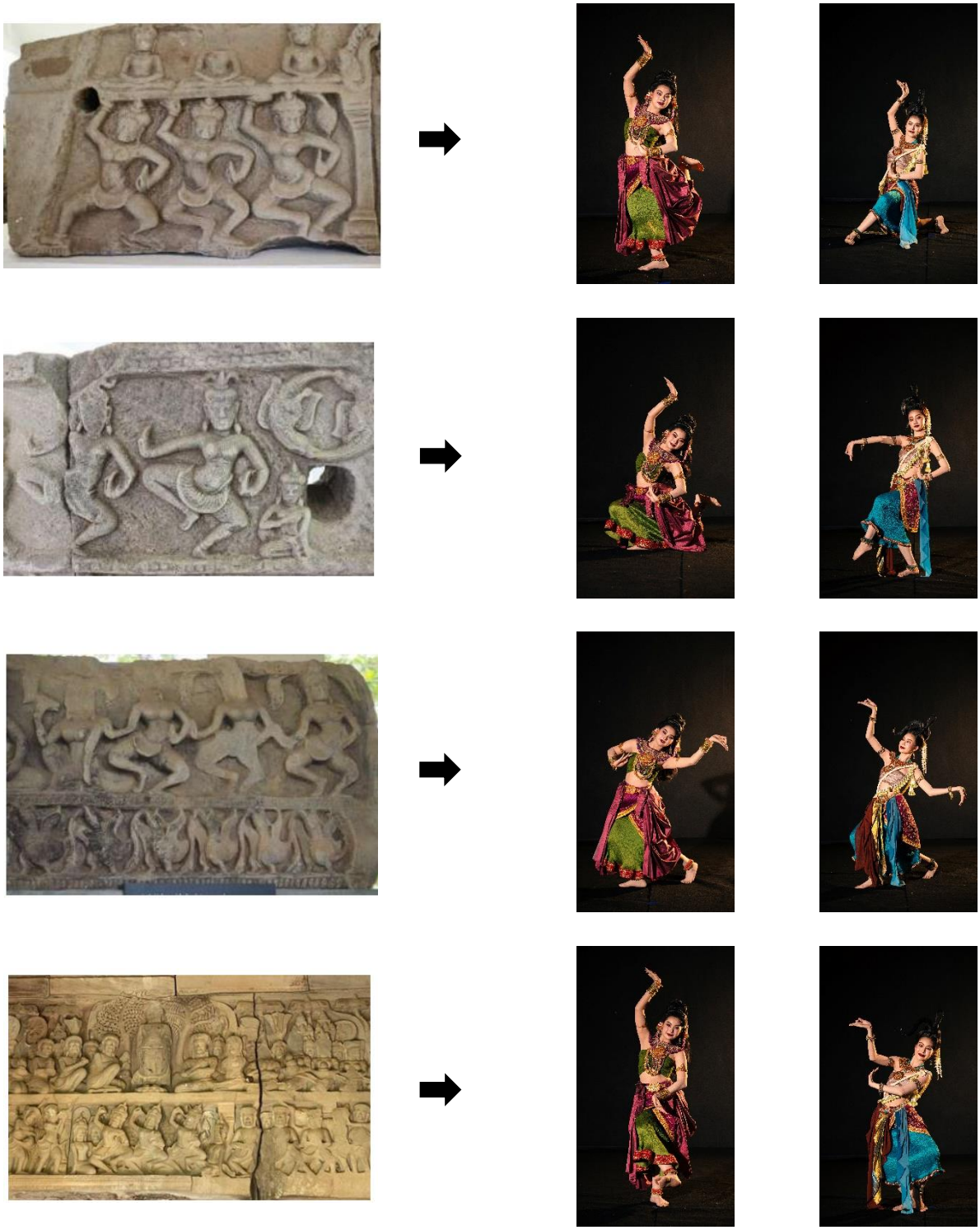


Figure 2 A Comparative study of choreographic design and carved lintels at Phimai Prasat
Source Rittibul et al. (2026)

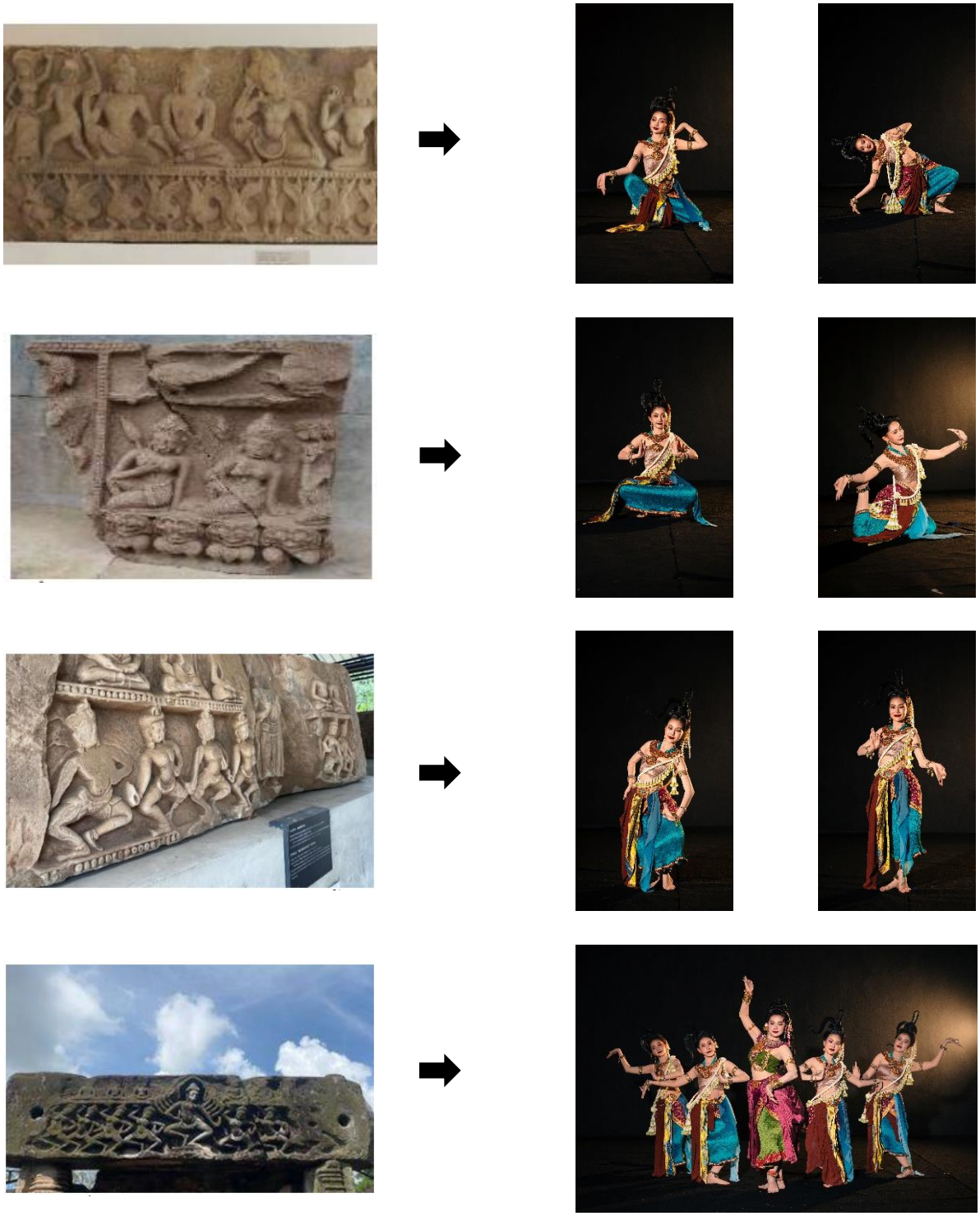


Figure 2 A Comparative study of choreographic design and carved lintels at Phimai Prasat (Cont.)
Source Rittibul et al. (2026)

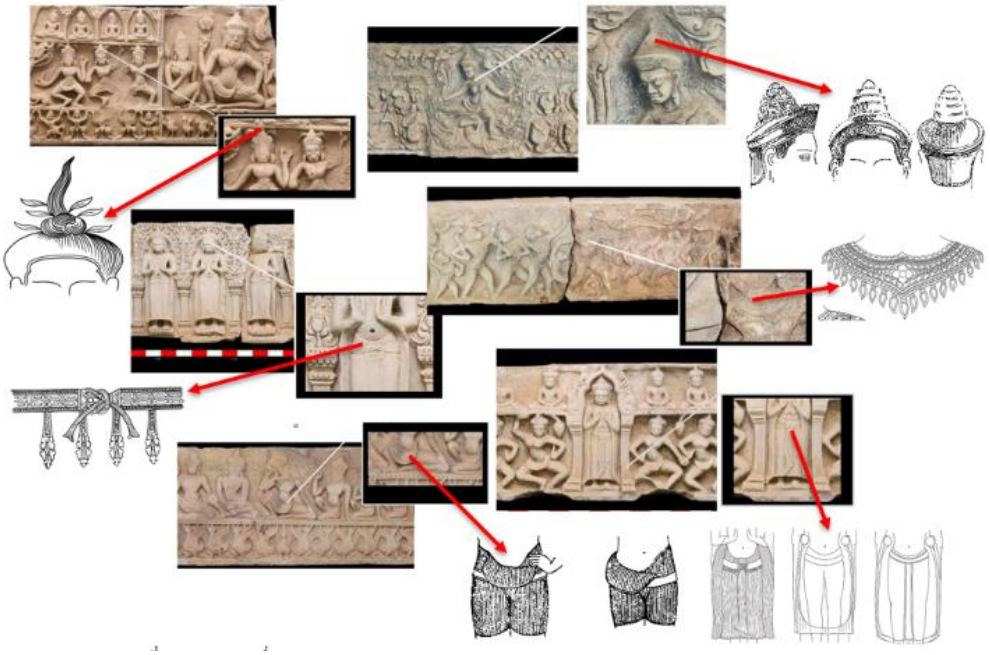


Figure 3 An analysis and conceptual sketching of attire depicted in the lintel carvings of Prasat Hin Phimai
Source: Sukhsawat (1994)



Figure 4 The stylistic forms and characteristics of performers' attire
Source: Rittibul et al. (2026)



Figure 5 Theatrical properties
Source: Rittibul, et al (2026)

1.6 Design of Performance Properties the creative team utilized performance properties (props) as a primary medium to convey the essential themes of worship and veneration. This approach aligns with the definitions provided by Jirakanon (2014) , who characterizes "properties" or " props" as essential elements employed by performers to bridge the narrative connection between scenes and events. Any movable materials within the performance space contribute to the overall visual composition of the stage. Furthermore, these properties play a critical role in manifesting the "world" of the performance, fostering audience immersion, and communicating vital information regarding the production's context. This perspective is further supported by Cooper (2016), who posits that grouped properties can serve as symbolic representations of the scenery. Beyond their physical presence, these objects function semiotically to indicate specific temporal and spatial nuances, allowing the audience to discern the setting and period of the performance through the arrangement of the props themselves.

1.7 Lighting and Color Design the creative team designed the lighting to facilitate narrative communication and enhance the atmospheric integrity of the performance, establishing a profound connection with the audience's emotions, sensibilities, and imagination. The lighting design is divided into three distinct phases:

Phase 1: The performance commences in total darkness, illuminated only by the flickering light of candles. The illumination gradually increases in intensity to simulate the break of dawn, representing the sun rising in the east. This transition evokes the ambiance of a bright morning dedicated to the preparation of offerings for the Phra Phuttha Rup Nak Prok (Buddha under the Naga) procession.



Figure 6 Lighting and color design techniques in performance phase I
Source: Rittibul et al. (2026)



Figure 7 Lighting and color design techniques in performance phase II
Source: Rittibul, et al (2026)



Figure 8 Lighting and color design techniques in performance phase III
Source: Rittibul, et al (2026)

Phase 2: Transitioning seamlessly from the first phase, the lighting initially focuses on a static representation of a lintel depicting the procession. The light then shifts to "animate" the scene, transforming the static image into a living, breathing procession. Full brightness is maintained throughout this segment to foster an atmosphere of reverence and sacred worship.

Phase 3: Building upon the previous phase, this section features a ritualistic dance performed as an act of propitiation and an expression of faith toward the Phra Phuttha Rup Nak Prok, the presiding Buddha image of the Phimai Stone Sanctuary.

The lighting is characterized by vibrant, warm tones that evoke a sense of joy and celebration befitting an auspicious ceremony. Theoretically, this design aligns with the concepts of Charassri (as cited in Wisedsing, 2014), who posits that the application of cross- cultural lighting techniques significantly augments Thai performing arts. By emphasizing specific roles within the performance, lighting serves as a bridge to engage modern audiences accustomed to globalized culture. It not only intensifies the emotional experience but also broadens the audience's imaginative scope. Furthermore, this approach corresponds with the findings of Kosolhemani (2013), who discusses the innovation of "Light and Sound" presentations. This format transcends traditional theatrical boundaries by integrating diverse artistic disciplines into an imagery-based spectacle.

1.8 Performance Space Design in the design of the performance space, the creative team meticulously considered the interrelationship between choreography, spatial formations, and the application of lighting and color. Principles of artistic composition were employed as a framework for determining performer positioning, transitions, and onstage movements. This approach emphasizes the distinction between the focal point and the background, guiding the audience to perceive the primary narrative highlights versus the secondary supporting elements that enhance the overall clarity and completeness of the story. This methodology aligns with the theories of Iamsakul (2011), who emphasized the significance of stage dimensions whether in a traditional theater or an outdoor setting noting that the number of performers must be proportionally balanced with the available space. Following the completion of the creative process, the creative dance performance underwent a rigorous quality assessment by a panel of experts and specialists prior to its public dissemination. Furthermore, the formation process adheres to the concepts proposed by Saitongkum (2018) regarding the strategic use of stage space through both symmetrical and asymmetrical balance. By utilizing various areas, such as the center and the corners of the stage, and employing identical formations for the opening and closing sequences, the performance evokes a specific emotional resonance within the audience. This is also consistent with Natayakul (2006), who discussed the division of the performance area into distinct "Acting Areas." In large-scale or realistic theatrical productions, the stage is categorized into sub- zones based on the performer's perspective while facing the audience. Finally, the design incorporates the principles of Rungthanapirom (2017), which focus on achieving balance, establishing focal points, and conveying conceptual depth through the relationship between visual elements. These elements include points, lines, planes, shapes, forms, sizes, colors, textures, and the interplay of light and shadow.

2. To analyze the conceptual insights gained from the artistic creation of the "Phadae Preah Yatra" dance set, synthesized from the civilizational traces and cultural identity inherent in the Phimai Stone Castle lintels.

2.1 The integration of creative ingenuity in Thai performing arts is exemplified through the conceptual design of performance scripts that synthesize the cultural heritage of Phimai Historical Park. This creative process bridges historical wisdom with contemporary performance design, encompassing choreography, sartorial elements, and ornamentation. Furthermore, the spatial arrangement of the performance is meticulously aligned with visual arts theories specifically shape, form, and motif to ensure artistic novelty and a distinctive identity that transcends traditional paradigms.

2.2 Considerations of Symbolism in Choreographic Creation the application of symbolism in dance creation is evidenced through works inspired by the bas- relief sculptures of the Phimai Stone Castle lintels and other architectural components. The

choreography integrates traditional dance vocabulary, naturalistic gestures, and imaginative forms to facilitate communication and expression, utilizing directional movement as a symbolic tool for meaning- making. Furthermore, costume design incorporates symbolic motifs and color palettes to convey specific meanings and emotional nuances. This symbolic approach is prominently articulated through various production elements including stage props, lighting, and costume design to enhance the aesthetic appeal and ensure a novel, unique artistic expression that distinguishes the work from conventional precursors.

2.3 Integration of Performing Arts, Musicology, and Visual Arts Theories the theoretical frameworks of dance, music, and visual arts are fundamentally integrated into the creative process of the performance, particularly in the choreographical design which maintains a structural synergy with each individual act. The production utilizes three distinct styles of choreographic movement to convey its narrative. In terms of musical and sound design, original compositions and lyrics were developed by synthesizing the regional identity of Southern Isan folk music with international contemporary elements and electronic arrangements. This fusion establishes a unique sonic identity that evokes emotional resonance and synchronicity with the physical movements. Furthermore, spatial design and blocking were meticulously planned and executed at the Songthanaphitak Hall, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, to facilitate the pilot testing and quality assessment of the creative work titled "Phadae Priaya Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel). The performance is structured into nine segments, with a specific focus on the trajectories of entrances and exits to ensure a cohesive alignment with visual arts principles. Ultimately, the synthesis of these three artistic theories is vividly articulated through the holistic design of choreography, musical accompaniment, and spatial arrangement, thereby enhancing the artistic complexity and aesthetic appeal of the performance.

Summary and discussion of the study

The creator conceptualized this creative dance performance with a primary focus on enhancing the intrinsic value, cultural identity, and intangible heritage of the Phimai Historical Park in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The creative process involved the synthesis and development of a unique choreographic language, drawing inspiration from the sculptural iconography of the Phimai Stone Castle. This was integrated with the traditional orthography of Thai classical dance and the rhythmic nuances of Southern Isan folk dance. By incorporating postmodern emotive expressions and contemporary movement vocabularies, the creator aimed to achieve aesthetic innovation and contribute to the discourse of artistic research through the medium of performance.

The methodology for this creation was structured around eight fundamental elements of performance design: 1) Performance Design, 2) Performer Selection, 3) Choreographic Design, 4) Sound and Musical Composition, 5) Costume Design, 6) Prop Design, 7) Lighting Design, and 8) Performance Space Design. Through rigorous experimental practice and artistic exploration based on these frameworks, the creative work emerged as a performance titled "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel). In accordance with established research and creative endeavors concerning the theoretical frameworks of performance aesthetics, this study draws upon the contemporary Thai dance production "Narai Avatara" by Charassri (as cited in Wisedsing, 2014). The research indicates that Charassri's approach to enhancing the aesthetic "flavor" (Rasa) of contemporary Thai dance prioritizes innovative choreography, cultural hybridization, and the engagement of modern audiences, all of which align with fundamental theories of performance aesthetics. Furthermore, this creative research serves as a conceptual roadmap and inspiration for other dance productions centered on religious beliefs and semiotic interpretations. Key scholarly precedents include the work of Nopudomphan (2011) on the symbolism of the lotus in Buddhism; Chantamala (2015) on the beliefs and identities manifested in the Champasri dance of Northeastern Thailand; Katekeaw and Charassri (2020) on the creative interpretation of the "Om" symbol in Brahman- Hinduism; and Wichasawat (2020), whose production "Nattaya Sattabut" functions as a cultural medium for educational documentation. Collectively, these works aim to promote the utilization of cultural capital to generate economic value and enhance the commercial potential of cultural products. The

presentation of this performance is grounded in a methodology that integrates qualitative research with creative-led research (Rittibul, 2017). In this dual-process framework, the creator must simultaneously produce artistic work and conduct rigorous academic inquiry. This requires a systematic articulation of the origins, conceptual underpinnings, and logical progression of the work at every stage, supported by credible primary sources. Consequently, the creator is prepared to ensure that the final output achieves excellence in both academic rigor and artistic aesthetics. This approach aligns with the definitions provided by Virulrak (2004), who characterizes choreography (Nataprachit) as the conceptualization, design, and systematic creation of ideas, forms, and techniques for a performance, whether performed by a soloist or an ensemble. This process also encompasses the adaptation and refinement of historical works. Therefore, choreography is a holistic endeavor that integrates philosophy, narrative content, semiotics, movement vocabulary, spatial formations, and aesthetic groupings. Furthermore, this perspective is consistent with Iamsakul (2011), who defines creative dance as the invention and design of choreography, which may include the development of original musical compositions and costume designs. These creative works may either maintain traditional frameworks such as the stylistic nuances of Thai classical dance or synthesize movements influenced by diverse linguistic and musical accents as deemed appropriate for the performance. In this creative process, the practitioner must address three fundamental pillars: 1) the application of creativity in performing arts, 2) the strategic use of symbolism, and 3) the theoretical integration of dance, music, and visual arts. The creative production titled "Phadae Preah Yatra" (The Divine Procession Lintel) serves as a synthesis of choreographic expertise and multidisciplinary integration. This work represents an academic advancement in the field of dance creation and establishes a framework for the further evolution and sustainable development of performing arts in the future. In the creation of this performance, the creator offers the following recommendations: 1) Recommendations for the Application of the Creative Work the creative performance titled "Phadae Preah Yatra: The Procession of the Stone Lintels" derives its core inspiration from the cultural identity and intangible heritage of the Phimai Historical Park, located in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. This work serves as a contemporary choreographic medium that reflects socio-cultural dimensions while establishing a body of knowledge to serve as a framework for future creative endeavors in the performing arts. and 2) Recommendations for Future Creative Research to advance the field of performing arts, it is imperative that creators possess comprehensive expertise across multiple disciplines, including choreography, musicology, costume design, and the nuances of emotional expression and aesthetics. A fundamental principle in creative practice is the recognition that dance is a dynamic art form; it should remain adaptable and not be confined to rigid traditional structures. Furthermore, the creative process must be driven by clear objectives and a systematic conceptual framework. This project exemplifies Creative Research, which integrates qualitative research with practice-based creative methodologies. Consequently, creators must be prepared to articulate the rationale, methodology, and evolutionary stages of their work through rigorous documentation. This process relies heavily on evidence-based inquiry and the utilization of primary sources. By adhering to these standards, the resulting work will achieve both academic rigor and aesthetic excellence, ultimately fostering the creative potential of scholars, practitioners, and those interested in multidisciplinary artistic studies.

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Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

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CRediT author statement

Pravit Rittibul: methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing original draft preparation, project administration. **Riswan Orachun:** methodology, formal analysis, data curation, supervision. **Kanya Toopichit:** validation, resources, project administration. **Manoch Boontonglek:** software, resources, visualization, writing review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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