# LANNA DANCES PERFORMANCE PROP

Pimmada SIRIRATCHATAWONG[1] and Manissa VASINAROM[1]
1 Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand;
s66126613027@ssru.ac.th (P. S.); manissa.va@ssru.ac.th (M. V.)

## ABSTRACT
This research aims to study the role of props in Lanna dance performances, focusing on performances using learning materials from the Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, which have been passed down from the royal court of Princess Dara Rasmi. The research methodology is documentary, presented through descriptive analysis. The findings indicate that Lanna dance props can be categorized into two types based on their use: 1) Material objects, including swords, oil lamps, staffs, peacock feathers, and fans; and 2) Costume accessories, including fingernails and neck scarves. These props play three roles: the status of the character, the conveyance of meaning in rituals and ceremonies, and cultural identity. These roles can be used in creating and performing these props on important social occasions.
**Keywords:** Lanna Performing Arts, Performance Props, Role in the Use of Equipment

**CITATION INFORMATION:** Siriratchatawong, P., & Vasinarom, M. (2026). Lanna Dances Performance Prop. *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research, 4*(11), 14.

# INTRODUCTION

The term "equipment" refers to tools, implements, aids, or components (Royal Institute Dictionary, 2011). Therefore, performance props refer to objects or tools used by performers to enhance the beauty, meaning, and emotion of a Lanna dance performance. For Lanna dance, performance props are not merely ornaments or decorations, but are an integral part of a deeply rooted cultural symbolic system embedded in the lifestyle, beliefs, and rituals of the Lanna people. Each piece of equipment has its own origin, context, and meaning.

Lanna dance has a long history of development alongside the civilization of the Lanna Kingdom. It includes performances inherited from the daily lives of villagers and religious ceremonies, as well as performances developed in the royal court during the time of Princess Dara Rasmi (Chavalit Suntaranon, 2007). This study examines eight performances: Fon Lep (traditional style), Fon Dab, Fon Phuang, Fon Yogi Thawai Fai and Fon Man Mae Le. The props used in Lanna dance performances, such as the Muan Mui Siang Ta dance, the Peacock Tail dance and the Wee dance, reflect different social and cultural contexts across different eras. These props range from those originating from everyday life of villagers to those invented in the royal court.

Lanna dance props are a crucial element, playing a role beyond simply accompanying the performance. Each type of prop serves as evidence documenting the historical development of Lanna dance in each era, from those originating from everyday life to those invented in the royal court. Furthermore, they reflect the philosophy of life of the Lanna people in terms of beliefs, way of life, and cultural values passed down through generations.

Although Lanna dance has garnered attention from scholars in various fields, studies focusing specifically on the role of performance props are limited and lack in-depth analysis of their true meaning and significance. Moreover, while performances are traditionally passed down orally, the documentation of their roles is unclear, resulting in a lack of systematic and written knowledge for academic reference.

Therefore, this researcher is interested in systematically studying the props used in Lanna dance performances. This study examined eight dance performances: Fon Lep (traditional style), Fon Dab, Fon Phuang, Fon Yogi Thawai Fai, Fon Man Mae Le, Fon Man Mui Siang Ta, Fon Hang Nok Yung and Fon Wee. The research employed a qualitative approach, analyzing documents, video clips, and observations.

# LITERATURE REVIEWS

## Lanna Dance

Lanna dance is a performing art that reflects the lifestyle, beliefs, traditions, and wisdom of the people in northern Thailand. It has diverse performance styles, with key elements including dance movements, music, costumes, and props, all working together to create beauty and communicate cultural identity.

Ta Paeng et al. (2023) studied Lanna dance movements and found that dance movements are related to the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, as well as the adaptation of performance styles to suit the social context. This reflects that Lanna dance is a body of knowledge that has been continuously inherited and developed.

## Props

Props refer to objects or items used in a performance to support movement, create beauty, and convey meaning according to the performance's concept. In the context of Lanna dance, props may originate from everyday objects, objects related to tradition, or items specifically designed for performance. For example, the Wee dance uses a fan as a prop, adapting the everyday use of a fan into the dance movements (Chiang Mai University Library, n.d.). This demonstrates that props can transform from utilitarian objects into artistic elements related to dance movements and the performance's identity.

**The Role of Props**

The role of props in performance can be considered in four aspects:

1) Movement: Props determine the characteristics and direction of dance movements, as well as the coordination of movement between the body and the object.

2) Meaning: Props help convey stories, beliefs, and cultural meanings through their appearance and methods of use.

3) Aesthetics and Identity: Props help create unique characteristics of the performance and enhance visual elements.

4) Transmission of Wisdom: Props reflect knowledge about materials, craftsmanship, and methods of use passed down from teacher to student.

Jantharattana et al. (2025) studied the creation of performances related to the Yi Peng tradition of the Lanna people, incorporating cultural elements and props related to the tradition into the performance design. This reflects the role of props in conveying meaning and creating a connection between performing arts and local culture.

**Related Theories**

The study of the role of props in Lanna dance performances can be applied using the following related concepts:

The concept of using props in performances is used to explain the customs of using performance props based on how they are used, which is based on royal court traditions and Thai dance customs (Supawadee Pothivechakul, 1996). It classifies Lanna performance props into two types: objects and costumes, and analyzes the role of props in character status, ritual and ceremonial meanings, and cultural identity.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a documentary study, examining data from documents and media related to Lanna dance. Sources include books, research papers, and eight video clips of Northern Thai dance performances related to Lanna: Fon Lep (traditional style), Fon Dab, Fon Phang, Fon Yokhi Thawai Fai, Fon Man Mae Le, Fon Man Mui Siang Ta, Fon Hang Nok Yung, and Fon Wee. Performances from the Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts were selected because of their lineage from the royal court of Princess Dara Rasmi and their inclusion in the curriculum. The chosen performances were studied using props. The researcher categorized props into two groups based on their function: 1) Object props: items held or used by performers according to their function, such as swords, lanterns, walking sticks, peacock feathers, and fans/wind instruments. 2) Costume props: items worn on the body to enhance beauty and indicate the identity of the performance, such as fingernails and neck scarves. The analysis was conducted separately for each performance. The research findings are presented through descriptive analysis, including the characteristics of the props, their use, and their roles in the performance.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

A study on Lanna dance performance equipment found key points from examining the performance props in all 8 sample dance sets. These props can be classified by their usage into two types: objects and costumes. Each type of equipment has a detailed analysis of its role in the performance as follows.

**1) Object-Based Props**

Object-based props refer to items or objects used in the performance that the performer must hold, carry, twirl, or dance with. They can be held with one hand, two hands, or even the feet. Examples of such props include:

**1.1 Swords**

Characteristics of the prop and method of use in performance: These are metal weapons with a single sharp edge, adapted for use in dance performances. They are of a suitable size for

handling and dancing. The performer holds the sword with one or both hands depending on the dance movements.
Role of the prop: The sword is a weapon used in performances to showcase skill or combat. It represents a martial art practiced by Lanna men in the past for self-defense, and is often displayed during welcoming ceremonies.



**Figure 1** Swords Props used in sword dance performances.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create an image of a metal sword with a wooden handle, placed on a white fabric background' by Google, Gemini (Auto mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) October 27, 2026

**1.2 Phang Prateep**
Characteristics of the device and method of use in performance: Phang Prateep is a small, shallow, round earthenware vessel used to hold oil and light a fire for worship. Its size is suitable for holding, with the palm supporting the base of the lamp. Performers can hold it with one or two hands. During dance, the performer must move in a rhythmic manner while keeping the lit lamp burning, ensuring the flame does not go out.
The role of the performance prop: Phang Prateep creates beauty through its light during movement and also symbolizes the worship of sacred things in Lanna culture. The performer's skill in maintaining or controlling the flame during the dance reflects their abilities. Furthermore, Phang Prateep is also used in welcoming ceremonies or auspicious events, thus playing a role both in aesthetics and in the ritualistic meaning of the Lanna people.



**Figure 2** Phang Prateep an accessory for the Phang dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create an image of a pottery pan or a clay stove, with two fire spots placed side by side, against a white fabric background' by Google, Gemini (automatic mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) on October 27, 2026

**1.3 Walking stick (Cane)**
Characteristics of the prop and how it is used in performance: The walking stick is a long, straight stick, simple in design and without much decoration. Performers hold, twirl, and grip it with their feet to accompany the movements of the dance.

The role of the prop in the performance: The walking stick serves as a symbol indicating the character's characteristics, representing a yogi according to Burmese beliefs. This allows the audience to identify the type of character and serves as a tool to enhance the unique characteristics of the dance movements through the way it is held, twirls, and grips with the feet. It is also used in rituals or funerals.



**Figure 3** Walking stick (cane) is a prop used in the Yogi Fire Offering Dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'create an image of a cane or club with a white handle, a stand for display, and a white cloth background' by Google, Gemini (automatic mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) on October 27, 2026

**1.4 Peacock Tails**

Characteristics of the prop and how they are used in performances: Peacock tails are large, fan-like decorative elements that mimic the shape of a peacock's tail. In performances, peacock tails are bundled together with rope or cloth wrapped around the base to form a handle. Each performer holds a bundle in each hand (Anukool Rojanasuksomboon, 2006). They are graceful, have vibrant colors, and their ends spread out in beautiful curves. This prop is suitable for flicking, lifting, or spreading out to create beautiful shapes during the performance.
The role of the prop: Peacock tails are used to ward off evil and misfortune. In performances, performers flick, lift, or sweep the peacock tails according to dance movements that symbolize sweeping away negativity. This is based on the belief that the peacock is a symbol of royalty and the upper class; therefore, using them in performances is a high form of respect. They are used in welcoming ceremonies, auspicious events, or rituals.



**Figure 4** Peacock tail, a prop used in the Peacock Tail Dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create two peacock tails placed side by side with a plain white background' by Google, Gemini (Auto Mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) on October 27, 2026

**1.5 The Palm Leaf Fan (Vee or Wai)**
Characteristics of the prop and how it is used in performance: The Vee or palm leaf fan is round or shaped like a Bodhi leaf. During the performance, the performer holds the Vee in their right hand and waves, fans, or sweeps the fan in rhythm with the dance movements.
The role of the prop in the performance: The Vee or palm leaf fan has many uses, such as providing relief from heat and repelling mosquitoes or insects. In the performance, the performer uses the gestures of waving, fanning, or sweeping the fan to convey the methods of use and benefits of the Vee through movement.



**Figure 5** The 'wi' or palm leaf fan, an accessory used in the 'wi' dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create an image of two areca palm leaf fans crossed beautifully, with a white cloth background' by Google, Gemini (automatic mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) on October 27, 2026

**2) Costume Accessories**
Costume accessories refer to items or props that performers wear or attach to their bodies during dance performances to enhance the beauty and unique identity of the performance. These include the following performance accessories.
**2.1 Fingernails**
Characteristics of the prop and how to use it in performance: Fingernails are lightweight brass props with a long, curved shape. Performers wear them over the tips of four fingers on each hand, totaling eight fingers, excluding the thumbs. During the performance, the performers wear the fingernails and move according to the dance movements.
The role of the prop in the performance: Fingernails enhance the appearance or personality of the performer. The slenderness of the nails makes the hands appear long and graceful, like candles. In women, long, slender fingers are considered beautiful, and for those with short fingers, wearing fingernails makes them appear longer and more beautiful. In performances, fingernails make the dance movements graceful and delicate, reflecting the refinement of the royal court and representing the identity of Lanna dance, which was developed during the time of Princess Dara Rasmi. The fingernail dance is often performed at various auspicious events.



**Figure 6** Nails Props used in the fingernail dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create gold-colored nails with 4 pieces arranged nicely and another 4 pieces worn on all fingers except the thumbs, with a white fabric

background' by Google, Gemini (automatic mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) on October 27, 2026

**2.2 Neck Scarf (Mae Le Dance)**

Characteristics of the accessory and how it is used in the performance: The neck scarf is worn around the neck with the ends hanging down in front. The Mae Le dance uses a thin, lightweight fabric of standard size and length for a sash. It is typically solid-colored and decorated with gold trim at the edges for added beauty.

The role of the prop in the performance: The neck scarf is a prominent part of the costume, clearly visible to the audience with its color and gold trim. It enhances the overall beauty of the performer beyond the dance movements. Furthermore, wearing the neck scarf is linked to Burmese and Mon cultural influences, consistent with the word "Maan" (Myanmar), a Lanna dialect word meaning "Burma" (Sittiporn Netniyom, 2019). It also contributes to an image of grace and politeness.



**Figure 7** Neck scarf: An accessory used in the Mae Le curtain dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create an image of a yellow neck scarf with golden threads at the ends, draped around the neck to show both ends on a white mannequin, with a plain white background' by Google, Gemini (automatic mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) October 27, 2026

**2.3 Neck Scarf (Fhon Man Mui Siang Ta Dance)**

Characteristics of the prop and how it is used in the performance: The neck scarf in the Fhon Man Mui Siang Ta dance is made of solid-colored silk, has a certain weight, and is decorated with gold thread at the edges. The performer drapes the scarf around their neck and lets the ends hang down in front. During the dance, the performer holds the scarf by inserting it between their index and middle fingers, letting the ends hang down about one hand's width.

The role of the prop in the performance: The neck scarf is a prominent part of the costume, both the solid-colored and the gold-threaded versions. The performer holds and flicks the scarf to create graceful dance movements, and it is also used to create an arch during transitions between movements. Fhon Man Mui Siang Ta is a dance created at the behest of Princess Dara Rasmi, who intended to invent a new dance that would be unique and different from existing dances. Therefore, she ordered that Burmese dancers be brought to perform for her, believing that if the Burmese dance movements were beautiful and appropriate, it would be suitable for the dance. It will be adapted and combined with Thai dance movements (Phurada Thirawit, Sukhsanti Waengwan, and Chintana Saithongkam, 2023).



**Figure 8** Neck scarf, an accessory used in the Muan Mui Siang Ta dance performance.
Source: AI-generated image from the prompt 'Create an image of a scarf that is red with gold-threaded edges, draped around the neck to show both ends on a white mannequin, with a plain white background' by Google, Gemini (automatic mode, Gemini 3 model) (Google, 2026) October 27, 2026

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

A study of the role of props in Lanna dance performances reveals that props are not merely supplementary elements of the performance, but rather crucial components that connect the beauty, meaning, and cultural context of the performance. This aligns with the concept of Supawadee Photiwechkul (1996), who studied the tradition of using props in theatrical performances and found that props played a more significant role in conveying cultural meaning than simply being stage props. Furthermore, the roles of props have three aspects: the status of the character, the conveyance of ritual and ceremonial meanings, and cultural identity. Specifically, swords symbolize the martial arts skills of Lanna men in the past, which they learned for self-defense; lanterns represent faith and sacredness in rituals; walking sticks symbolize yogis in Burmese beliefs and serve as tools to enhance the unique characteristics of dance movements; peacock feathers symbolize royalty and the upper class, and also represent the warding off of evil; palm-leaf fans reflect the practical uses of villagers' lives; fingernails reflect the sophistication of the royal court; and neck scarves connect beauty with the blended cultures of Lanna and Burma. These are consistent with what Saisawan Khayanying (2000) pointed out regarding the role of Princess Dara Rasmi in the development of Lanna dance. Furthermore, the research indicates that props originating from village life and rituals differ significantly from those invented in the royal court, particularly in their roles in performance.

## REFERENCES

Bunchanphet, P. (2015). *History of Thai dramatic arts: Northern region*. Odeon Store.

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022a). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Dap, Lai Pho Khru Manop Yarana (National Artist)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kJazBqlQ0E

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022b). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Hang Nok Yung* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q34ytFEEaaA

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022c). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Man Mae Le* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK18WEYjeqw

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022d). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Man Mui Chiang Ta, male-female version* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMAVwQaWRjc

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022e). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Phang* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaswjdbD0Qw

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022f). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Wi* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXSI-N_rbBI

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022g). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Fon Yokhi Thawai Fai* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZukBcjf3GU4

Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts. (2022h). *Teaching and learning media on northern folk performances: Full Fon Mueang, Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnLt-4XFM8A

Chiang Mai University Library. (2024). *Lanna dance*. https://lannainfo.library.cmu.ac.th

Fine Arts Department. (n.d.). Princess Dara Rasmi, the Royal Consort – Fon Man Mui Chiang Ta. https://www.finearts.go.th/promotion/view/22624-

Google. (2026). *Gemini* (Automatic Mode, Gemini 3 Model) [AI image generation model]. https://gemini.google.com

Khayanying, S. (2000). *Princess Dara Rasmi and Lanna dance arts* [Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University.

Netniyom, S. (2019). Man Mui Zienta dance: The influence of Burmese dramatic art in Thai society, an analysis of the title, lyrics and melodic structure. *Journal of Thai Khadi Studies, 16*(1), 50-90.

Phothiwetchakun, S. (1996). *Conventions in the use of performance props in the drama "Inao"* Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University.

Rojanasuksomboon, A. (2006). *New concepts and theories of Lanna dance* Doctoral dissertation, Chulalongkorn University.

Royal Society of Thailand. (2011). Equipment [Upakon]. In *Royal Institute Dictionary B.E. 2554*. https://dictionary.orst.go.th/

Sriranda, E. (2022). Chiang Mai College of Dramatic Arts and the conservation and development of Lanna dramatic arts. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, 14*(2), 67-81.

Suntharanon, C. (Ed.). (2007). *Data registry: Wiphit Thatsana, series of Rabam, Ram, and Fon* (1st ed., Vol. 2). Thaiphum Publishing Co., Ltd.

Teeravit, P., Wangwan, S., & Saitongkum, J. (2023). Fon Man Mui Chiang Ta. *Journal of MCU Ubon Review, 8*(1), 577-590.

**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the

editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

**Copyright:** © 2026 by the authors. This is a fully open-access article distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).