

The Development of the Nang Songkran Dance Performance From Cultural Capital to Enhance Values in the Context of Contemporary Thai Society

การพัฒนาการแสดงระบำนางสงกรานต์จากทุนทางวัฒนธรรม เพื่อเสริมสร้างคุณค่าในบริบทสังคมไทยร่วมสมัย

Pravit Rittibul

ประวิทย์ ฤทธิบุลย์

Artitaya Ngerndang*

อาทิตยา นินแดง

Kanya Toopichit

กัญญา ตูพิจิตร

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand

Corresponding author*

e-mail: artitaya_n@rmutt.ac.th

Received 16-12-2025

Revised 19-05-2026

Accepted 21-05-2026

Doi: 10.69598/artssu.2026.6114.

How to Cite:

Rittibul, P., Ngerndang, A., & Toopichit, K. (2026). The Development of the Nang Songkran Dance Performance From Cultural Capital to Enhance Values in the Context of Contemporary Thai Society. *Journal of Arts and Thai Studies*, 48(2), E6114 (1-15).

Keywords: Rabam Nang Songkran Dance, cultural capital, Songkran beliefs and morals, performance components

คำสำคัญ: ระบำนางสงกรานต์, ทุนทางวัฒนธรรม, ความเชื่อและคตินิยมวันสงกรานต์, องค์ประกอบการแสดง

Abstract

Background and Objectives: The Songkran legend and tradition represent a vital cultural capital of Thailand. However, their profound meanings and moral principles have gradually diminished due to changing social contexts. This research aims to analyze cultural capital, beliefs, and moral values to develop the “Rabam Nang Songkran” dance performance as a cultural medium for preserving identity and promoting the value of Thai performing arts to international and contemporary audiences.

Methods: This research employed a mixed-methods research design. The qualitative research involved document analysis, fieldwork, and in-depth interviews with experts in Thai classical dance and Rabam Nang Songkran performances. Quantitative research was conducted through quality and appropriateness assessments of the developed performance by six Thai performing arts experts, using mean and standard deviation for data analysis.

Results: The evaluation results indicated that the performance quality was at the highest level ($\bar{X}$ = 4.60, S.D. = 0.52). The study found that the performance structure was redesigned to align with contemporary cultural contexts to enhance audience accessibility while maintaining core cultural capital from the Songkran legend. This integrates beliefs regarding time, cosmology, and the virtue of gratitude. The creative process involved synthesizing eight elements of performing arts: performance format, script, performers, music and lyrics, costumes, props and scenery, lighting techniques, and stage utilization.

Application of this study: This performance serves as an effective cultural medium to transmit traditional wisdom and beliefs to modern audiences. Furthermore, it provides a guideline for leveraging cultural capital to create value-added contributions to the creative economy while preserving the original identity and meaning of the work.

Conclusions: This research demonstrates that the cultural capital embedded in the Songkran legend and tradition can be effectively reinterpreted and transmitted through contemporary performing arts. The development of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance integrates traditional beliefs, moral values, and cultural knowledge related to time, cosmology, and gratitude within a performance structure that is accessible to contemporary audiences. The findings reflect that performing arts serve not only as a means of cultural preservation but also as an important mechanism for communicating meaning, fostering learning, and connecting younger generations with the cultural foundations of Thai society. The development of the Nang Songkran Dance performance thus serves as an example of applying cultural capital to generate social value and contribute to the creative economy, while preserving the identity and continuity of Thai arts and culture in contemporary and international contexts.

บทคัดย่อ

ที่มาและวัตถุประสงค์: ตำนานและประเพณีสงกรานต์ถือเป็นทุนทางวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญของไทย แต่ในปัจจุบันความหมายเชิงลึกและคตินิยมเริ่มเลือนหายไปตามบริบทสังคมที่เปลี่ยนแปลง การวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์ทุนทางวัฒนธรรม ความเชื่อ และคตินิยม เพื่อนำมาพัฒนาการแสดง “ระบำนางสงกรานต์” ให้เป็นสื่อกลางในการสืบสานอัตลักษณ์และส่งเสริมคุณค่าศิลปะการแสดงไทยสู่ผู้ชมในระดับสากลและร่วมสมัย

วิธีการศึกษา: งานวิจัยนี้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน (mixed-methods research) งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพดำเนินการผ่านการสัมภาษณ์ การลงพื้นที่ภาคสนาม และการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านนาฏศิลป์และการแสดงระบำนางสงกรานต์ ส่วนงานวิจัยเชิงปริมาณดำเนินการโดยการประเมินคุณภาพและความเหมาะสมของการแสดงที่พัฒนาขึ้น

โดยผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านศิลปะการแสดงไทยจำนวน 6 ท่าน โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยค่าเฉลี่ย (mean) และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน (S.D.)

ผลการศึกษา: ผลการประเมินพบว่าการแสดงมีคุณภาพอยู่ในระดับมากที่สุด ($\bar{X}$ = 4.60, S.D. = 0.52) การศึกษาพบว่า การแสดงได้รับการปรับปรุงโครงสร้างใหม่ให้สอดคล้องกับบริบททางวัฒนธรรมร่วมสมัยเพื่อเพิ่มการเข้าถึงของผู้ชม โดยยังคงรักษาทุนทางวัฒนธรรมหลักจากตำนานสงกรานต์ที่ผสมผสานความเชื่อเรื่องกาลเวลา จักรวาลวิทยา และคติธรรม เรื่องความกตัญญูต่อบุคคลที่ กระบวนการสร้างสรรค์ประกอบด้วยการสังเคราะห์องค์ประกอบนาฏศิลป์ 8 ประการ ได้แก่ รูปแบบการแสดง บทการแสดง ผู้แสดง ดนตรีและบทร้อง เครื่องแต่งกาย อุปกรณ์และฉาก เทคนิคแสงสี และการใช้พื้นที่ การแสดง

การประยุกต์ใช้: การแสดงชุดนี้สามารถใช้เป็นสื่อกลางทางวัฒนธรรมในการถ่ายทอดภูมิปัญญาและความเชื่อดั้งเดิม สู่ผู้ชมยุคปัจจุบันได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ นอกจากนี้ยังเป็นแนวทางในการนำทุนทางวัฒนธรรมมาพัฒนาต่อยอดเพื่อสร้างมูลค่าเพิ่มในระบบเศรษฐกิจสร้างสรรค์ โดยยังคงรักษาอัตลักษณ์และความหมายดั้งเดิมของผลงานไว้

บทสรุป: การวิจัยนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่าทุนทางวัฒนธรรมที่ปรากฏในตำนานและประเพณีสงกรานต์สามารถนำมาสร้างสรรค์ และถ่ายทอดใหม่ผ่านศิลปะการแสดงร่วมสมัยได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ โดยการพัฒนาระบบนางสงกรานต์ได้ผสมผสาน ความเชื่อ คติธรรม และองค์ความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมเกี่ยวกับกาลเวลา จักรวาลวิทยา และความกตัญญูไว้ภายในโครงสร้าง การแสดงที่สอดคล้องกับบริบทของผู้ชมในปัจจุบัน ผลการศึกษาสະท้อนว่าศิลปะการแสดงมิได้ทำหน้าที่เพียงอนุรักษ์ มรดกทางวัฒนธรรม แต่ยังเป็นกลไกสำคัญในการสื่อสารความหมาย สร้างการเรียนรู้ และเชื่อมโยงคนรุ่นใหม่กับรากฐาน ทางวัฒนธรรมของสังคมไทย การพัฒนาระบบนางสงกรานต์จึงเป็นตัวอย่างของการประยุกต์ใช้ทุนทางวัฒนธรรมเพื่อสร้าง คุณค่าทางสังคมและเศรษฐกิจสร้างสรรค์ คำนึงไปกับการธำรงอัตลักษณ์และความต่อเนื่องของศิลปวัฒนธรรมไทยใน บริบทร่วมสมัยและระดับสากล

Introduction

In Thai society, numerous legends have been transmitted across generations, each embedding beliefs, moral teachings, and cultural meanings. However, as social contexts change, these meanings may become less visible, while traditional practices are often maintained primarily as ceremonial activities rather than as vehicles for transmitting their deeper cultural essence. The Songkran legend is one such cultural narrative that remains significant and worthy of reinterpretation. According to various sources, including the inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Ratchaworamahawihan (Wat Pho Tha Tien), the Songkran tradition reflects the historical, religious, and moral dimensions of Thai society (Prakobphol & Sungmek, 2019). As one of Thailand's most important festivals, Songkran has long been associated with the Thai New Year and Buddhist values, particularly gratitude, compassion, and moral conduct (Khemabhirato, 2018; Auttalo, 2019; Chinnalayu et al., 2022).

The Songkran festival can be understood as a form of cultural capital, as conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). It comprises accumulated wisdom, beliefs, values, and cultural practices transmitted through generations. When creatively developed, such cultural capital can generate social, cultural, and economic value. In this regard, the “Rabam Nang Songkran Dance” represents an attempt to transform traditional wisdom and moral allegories into a contemporary performing arts form. The creative process draws upon cultural knowledge and performance elements to enhance public awareness of the Songkran myth and its cultural value, while also contributing to the creative economy through the development of cultural capital (Aneksuk & Panyavuttrakul, 2016; Boontonglek et al., 2024; Rittibul et al., 2025a). This approach aligns with the creative economy framework, in which knowledge, creativity, and intellectual property are integrated with cultural foundations and local heritage to create sustainable value (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2008).

Performing arts are part of the creative industries and function as cultural capital that reflects beliefs, ways of life, and local identities. Nevertheless, some traditional performances have gradually lost continuity among younger generations due to changing lifestyles, limited community interaction, and the perception that traditional arts are less relevant to contemporary life. This situation does not necessarily indicate the disappearance of culture; rather, it suggests that certain forms of art and culture have not been sufficiently adapted to contemporary social contexts. Since culture is

a way of life, art and culture must remain fluid and responsive to the lifestyles of people in each era. Therefore, the development of performing arts should not be limited to preservation alone but should also involve creative adaptation that enables traditional meanings to communicate effectively with modern audiences (Boonserm, 2022; Boontonglek et al., 2024; Rittibul et al., 2025b).

Based on this research gap, the present study is grounded in the assumption that the cultural meanings, beliefs, and moral principles embedded in the Songkran legend can be revitalized through the creative development of performing arts. The researchers therefore aim to make the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance more responsive to contemporary cultural consumption while retaining its essential symbolic and moral values. This study expects that the creative reinterpretation of the performance will enhance audience understanding of the Songkran legend, strengthen awareness of Thai cultural heritage, and demonstrate how traditional performing arts can be developed as a contemporary cultural medium without losing their original essence.

The Rabam Nang Songkran represents a unique choreographic synthesis, characterized by distinctive movement patterns and a performance structure that conveys the significance of the Songkran goddesses within Thai tradition. As part of the Songkran festival, the performance serves as a cultural and ritual medium that connects traditional beliefs, cosmology, seasonal transition, and the religious meaning of the New Year. It symbolizes the relationship among human beings, time, nature, and spiritual balance. Recognizing the significance of Songkran, which was inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as “Songkran in Thailand, traditional Thai New Year festival” on December 6, 2023, the researchers seek to utilize existing cultural capital to revitalize and reconfigure the performance elements for contemporary audiences.

Ultimately, this study positions the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance not merely as a performance for entertainment, but as a cultural medium linking the past, present, and future. It transmits ancestral wisdom to younger generations through a contemporary artistic form and inspires the continued conservation and development of Thai performing arts. For this reason, the research focuses on collecting and analyzing cultural capital, belief systems, and moral principles in order to develop the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance as a cultural medium that fosters social awareness and supports heritage sustainability.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the cultural capital, beliefs and morals in the development of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance.
2. To create the form and components of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance.

Research Methods

The researcher employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The research process was executed through a sequential procedure as follows:

1. Qualitative Process

1.1 Study and Data Collection Stage

Information was studied from books, academic documents, textbooks, research, articles, journals, and other information media related to cultural capital, beliefs and traditions of Songkran, performance styles and components of Rabam Nang Songkran dance costumes. The data collection phase involved conducting interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders and experts across multiple disciplines. This included academics specializing in cultural capital, religious

beliefs, and the moral philosophies underlying the Songkran festival, as well as practitioners knowledgeable in the performance styles and constituent elements of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance. Data were gathered through both individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, categorized into two key thematic areas: 1) information regarding the cultural capital, beliefs, morals, and traditions of Songkran, according to Pierre Bourdieu's concept, and 2) information on the performance format and components of each aspect of the Rabam Nang Songkran dance costume.

2. Data Analysis and Synthesis Stage

This was achieved by studying and collecting documentary data, field data from interviews, and data in the form of presentations. The data were analyzed and synthesized to be used as a guideline for the presentations.

3. Quantitative Process

Development of work in the form of performance and publication of work, with the creative process divided into 3 processes:

3.1 Experimentation and practice were conducted by experimenting and practicing thinking to find forms and develop performances according to 8 performance elements: 1) script, 2) choreography, 3) performers, 4) costume design, 5) music design, 6) stage design, 7) lighting design, and 8) props design.

3.2 For the performance review, the performance format was presented to a panel of six distinguished experts and specialists in the field of Thai Performing Arts to solicit professional consultation and constructive feedback. The experts were selected through a purposive sampling method, based on the criteria of having more than 10 years of extensive experience in both performance and the creative choreography of Thai dance. This collaborative process aimed to further refine and enhance the performance development. Furthermore, the experts conducted an evaluation and provided qualitative insights across three key dimensions: theoretical knowledge, the creative development process, and the rigor of the supporting documentation. The evaluation utilized a 5-point Rating scale to quantify the assessment. This session took place on October 17, 2025, at the Songthanaphitak Meeting Room, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi.

3.3 Public display of works was achieved through online media channels on YouTube, specifically RMUTT Channel, using the keyword search "Innovative Development of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance Performances" or through the link <https://youtu.be/leN9b5Nnm44?si=wym4PwlwGPKfRCV8>

Research Results

1. Analysis of Cultural Capital, Beliefs, and Moral Principles in the Development of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance

The analysis of cultural capital, beliefs, and moral principles in the development of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance was conducted through documentary study, fieldwork, and expert interviews. The findings revealed that the Songkran tradition constitutes a significant form of Thai cultural capital because it embodies accumulated knowledge, beliefs, ritual practices, moral values, and artistic expressions transmitted across generations. According to the inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Ratchaworamahawihan, the legend of Nang Songkran is associated with the story of Thao Kabil Phrom, Dharmapala Kumara, and the seven daughters who take turns carrying their father's head

around Mount Sumeru each year (Prakobphol & Sungmek, 2019). This narrative has become a cultural foundation for the creation of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance.

When analyzed through the concept of cultural capital, the Songkran legend can be understood as an inherited cultural resource comprising symbolic meanings, religious beliefs, moral teachings, and aesthetic forms. These elements were transformed into a performing arts work through the creative process of dance composition, music, costume design, props, and spatial arrangement. Therefore, the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance does not merely reproduce the legend but converts cultural capital into a contemporary cultural medium that communicates inherited wisdom to present-day audiences.

The study found that the beliefs and moral principles embedded in the performance are organized into three major parts. The first part presents the procession of the seven Nang Songkran, symbolizing the movement of time. The 60-minute procession represents one hour, the seven goddesses correspond to the seven days of the week, and the 365-day cycle signifies one year. This reflects the moral principle that time is valuable and irreversible. The symbolic movement of time also relates to Buddhist concepts of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, suggesting that all things change according to natural law.

The second part presents the characteristics of each Nang Songkran according to the lyrics and associated vehicles. The use of clockwise circumambulation reflects an auspicious ritual movement similar to the circumambulation of sacred spaces. This part was retained because it carries both ritual meaning and choreographic significance. It allows the performance to preserve traditional symbolic movement while presenting each goddess as a distinct character within the structure of the dance.

The third part presents the collective dance of the seven Nang Songkran and their riding animal. This section emphasizes the moral principle of gratitude, as the daughters of Thao Kabil Phrom carry their father's head around Mount Sumeru every year. The act symbolizes filial piety and the virtue of gratitude toward parents. This moral value was maintained as a central theme because it is one of the most important ethical teachings embedded in the Songkran legend.

From this analysis, the cultural capital of Songkran was not treated as static heritage but as a resource for creative transformation. The researchers retained the core beliefs, moral principles, character identities, and symbolic movements that preserve the essence of the original tradition. At the same time, certain performance elements were reorganized and developed to make the work more accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences.

2. Creation of the Form and Components of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance

The creation of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance was developed from the analysis of cultural capital, beliefs, and moral principles. The findings revealed eight key components of the performance: 1) performance format, 2) performance script, 3) performers, 4) music and lyrics, 5) costumes, 6) props, 7) lighting, color, and set design, and 8) dance movements and spatial patterns.

2.1 Performance Format

The performance was divided into two acts.

Act 1 presents the legend of Nang Songkran through multimedia, including animated images, narration, sound, music, and text. This part was developed to provide background knowledge for audiences and to make the legend easier to understand before entering the dance performance.

Act 2 presents the characteristics of the Nang Songkran through stage performance with lighting, color, sound, and choreographic movement. This act retains the traditional structure of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance created by Seri Wangnaitam, consisting of three sections: the entrance of the seven Nang Songkran, the individual presentation of each goddess according to the lyrics, and the final collective dance. This structure was retained because it preserves the original choreographic identity while allowing the performance to be enhanced through contemporary presentation techniques.

2.2 Performance script

The performance script uses Sepha verse to narrate the legend of Songkran in Act 1. This form was selected because Sepha verse is flexible in rhythm and word length, making it suitable for storytelling and musical narration. The use of Sepha also supports the transmission of literary and oral tradition within a contemporary performance context. Therefore, this component was retained and adapted as a narrative device to connect the audience with the background of the legend.

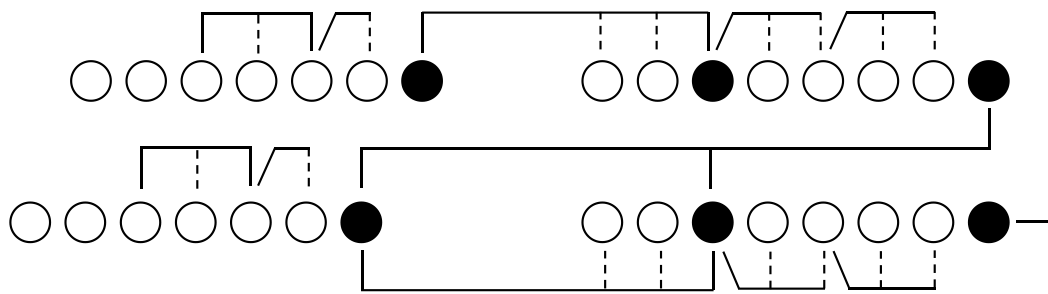


Figure 1 Diagram of the Sepha Poem

(Source: Rittibul, 2025c)

– The Sepha Poem in Legend of Songkran –

Maha Kap Chapkhwam Tam Phra Wet
 Song Nimit Pritsana Tha Doemphan
 Phlang Putcha Thueng Rasi Khong Manut
 Set Damrat Trat Kham Thammaban
 Fai Burut Thammaban Kuman Noi
 Chuan Wara Mana Sin Chak Thin Chon
 Lu Daen Tan Dan Don Chon Withi
 Wisatchana Prarom Nguean Pom Khlai
 Phe la Chao MongkhonChai Yu Baina
 Phe la Bai Yai Yu Suang Duang Ruedi
 Phe la Kham Pracham YuYang Khu Thao
 Cha Banchoet Loet Rasi Thi Klao Ma
 Chaturaphak Ning Ong Song Sadap
 Sang Thida Ma Rap Sian Biturong

Ubatthet Kabil Phrom Borom Sawan
 Mai Kamnan Duai Sian Klao Chao Kuman
 PrasotSut Chao Bai Kham Nam Wohan
 Ko Thayan Ho Lap Klap Amphon
 Nom Rap Thoi Yai Ying Dang Singkhon
 Kho Raemron Klai Hang Maen Wangwai
 Waeo Song Nok Insi Mi Khwammai
 Chueng Banyai Thithuan Muan Khadi
 Lup Khongkha Krachae Choem Soem Rasi
 Prung Mali Chalom Ram Cham Ura
 Chamra Lang Kon Kao Khao Kheha
 Sam Phlao Luan Thalaeng Chaeng Chamnong
 Chamnon Rap Tam Sat Trat Prasong
 Wian Banchop Khrop Chet Ong Yam Songkran

Written by Sawattha Senamonthri

Revised by Chawalit Suntharanon

Reviewed by Chamaiporn Bangkombang (National Artist)

(Rittibul et al., 2025c)

2.3 Performers

The performance uses 14 performers: seven representing the Nang Songkran and seven representing their vehicles. The selection of performers considered physical suitability, dancing ability, expressive quality, discipline, responsibility, and capacity for collaborative rehearsal and performance. This component was designed to ensure harmony between character representation and choreographic quality. The division between the goddesses and their vehicles also reflects the symbolic structure of the original legend, in which each Nang Songkran possesses specific attributes, ornaments, weapons, food, and vehicles. Each of the daughters of Thao Kabil Phrom has a name and a prophecy for each day, as follows:

1) Nang Thungsa Devi. If Sunday is Maha Songkran Day, Nang Songkran named Thungsa Devi wears a pomegranate flower headdress, is dressed in Padma Raja glass, eats figs, holds a wheel in her right hand, holds a conch in her left hand, and rides on the back of a Garuda.

Prediction: If Maha Songkran Day is on Sunday, that year's crops will not grow well. If Nao Day is on Sunday, the rice will die. Many foreigners will enter the city. Lords will be worried. If New Year's Day is on Sunday, the King will have great power and be able to defeat enemies from all directions.

2) Nang Korakha Devi. If Maha Songkran is on Monday, Lady Songkran named Nang Korakha Devi, wears a crown of jasmine flowers, pearl jewelry, eats oil, holds a sword in her right hand, and a staff in her left hand, riding on the back of a tiger.

Prediction: If Maha Songkran Day is on Monday, high-ranking government officials, as well as ladies and gentlemen, will rise in power. If Nao Day is on Monday, various illnesses will often occur and salt will be expensive. The Queen will be worried. If New Year's Day is on Monday, the Queen and the ladies of the royal household will be happy and content.

3) Nang Rakshasa Devi. If Maha Songkran Day is on Tuesday, Lady Songkran's name is Rakshasa Devi, wearing a lotus flower garland, wearing sapphire jewelry, eating blood, holding a trident in her right hand, holding an arrow in her left hand, riding on the back of a varaha (pig). But in Lanna, there is a belief that on Tuesday, the name is Lady Rakshasa Devi.

Prediction: If Songkran is on Tuesday, there will be a lot of thieves and robbers and serious illnesses. But if day of Nao is on Tuesday, fruits, roots and wood will be expensive. If New Year's Day is on Tuesday, all government officials will be happy and victorious over their enemies.

4) Nang Montha Devi. If Maha Songkran Day is on Wednesday, Nang Songkran named Montha Devi wears a crown of champaka flowers, sapphire jewelry, eats milk and butter, holds a needle in her right hand, and a cane in her left hand, and comes on the back of a donkey.

Prediction: If Maha Songkran Day is on Wednesday, high-ranking government officials will be honored by foreign countries. If Nao Day is on Wednesday, food will be expensive. Widows will be separated from their homes. If New Year's Day is on Wednesday, scholars and royal scholars will be happy and content.

5) Nang Kirini Devi. If Maha Songkran Day is on Thursday, Nang Songkran named Kirini Devi wears a crown of flowers, emerald jewelry, eats sesame beans, holds an elephant hook in her right hand, and a gun in her left hand, riding on the back of an elephant.

Prediction: If Maha Songkran is on Thursday, the lesser ones will lose to the superiors and the lords. If the day of Nao is on Thursday, fruits will be expensive, and the royal family will be worried. If New Year's Day is on Thursday, the monks and Brahmins will perform good deeds.

6) Nang Kimitha Devi. If Maha Songkran Day is on Friday, Queen Songkran named Kimitha Devi wears a crown of flowers, is dressed in sapphire, eats bananas, holds a sword in her right hand and a lute in her left hand, and rides on the back of a buffalo.

Prediction: If Maha Songkran Day is on Friday, crops will be plentiful, rain will be abundant, and storms will blow hard. People will suffer from eye diseases and illnesses. If Nao Day is on Friday is, chilies will be expensive, vultures will get sick, wild animals will be in danger, and widows will have good fortune. If New Year's Day is on Friday, merchants and wealthy people will have successful businesses and great profits.

7) Nang Mahothra Devi. If Maha Songkran Day is on Saturday, Nang Songkran's name is Mahothra Devi, wearing a headdress adorned with three-tiered flowers, wearing sapphire jewelry, eating sand meat, holding a wheel in her right hand and a trident in her left hand, riding on the back of a peacock.

Prediction: If Maha Songkran Day is on Saturday, there will be a lot of thieves and robbers. There will be serious illnesses. If Nao Day is on Saturday, rice and fish will be expensive. There will be less rice, fruit will be expensive, water will be scarce, there will be a fire in the city, and nobles will be punished. If New Year's Day is on Saturday, all soldiers will be victorious over their enemies.

2.4 Music and Lyrics

The music was developed through a combination of Thai and Western musical elements while retaining the identity of Thai music. The traditional lyrics were preserved, with minor adjustments to the singing style to suit the contemporary orchestral arrangement. This decision reflects the researchers' intention to maintain the original literary and musical identity while creating a soundscape that corresponds to contemporary performance contexts.

The use of different songs for each Nang Songkran was retained because each melody supports the distinct character, emotion, and symbolic meaning of each goddess. For example, the "Pathom" song conveys the procession of deities, the "Vessukarma" song expresses auspicious blessing, and the "Trabong Kan" song functions as a powerful closing piece. Thus, music serves not only as accompaniment but also as a symbolic tool for communicating character, ritual meaning, and auspiciousness.

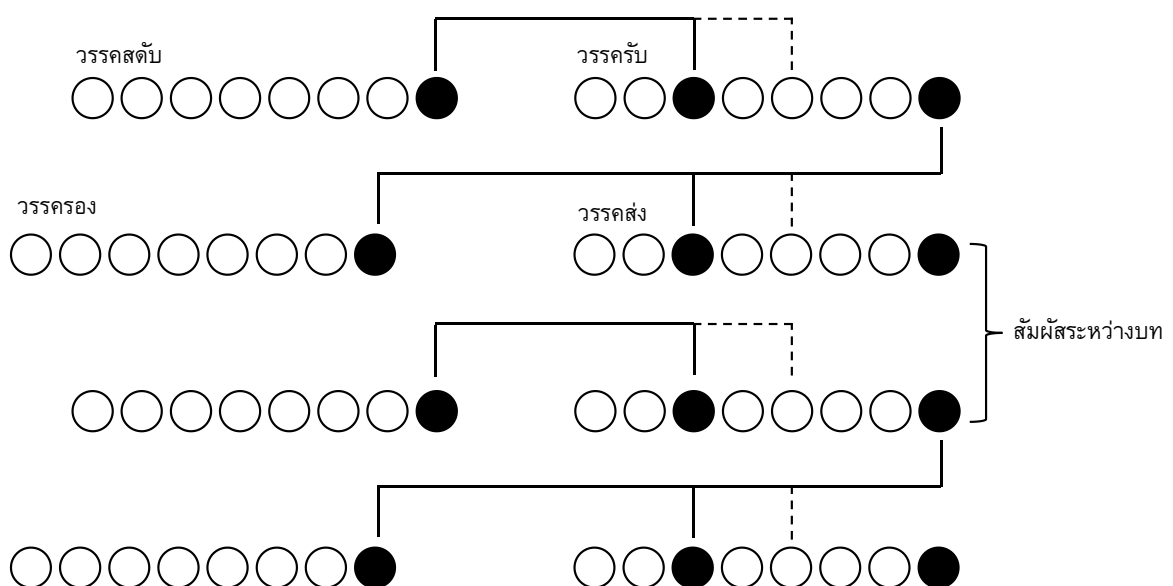


Figure 2 Diagram of the Suphap Poem (Eight-Line Poetry)

(Source: Rittibul, 2025c)

The Rabam Nang Songkran Dance

- Pi Phat Band Performs Two-Tiered Pathom Song -

- Singing the Vessukarma Song -

Satta Ta PhraThida Loet Na Rin	Haeng Kabin Phrom Met Det Phaisan
Mi Nathi Anchoen Sian Wian Chakkrawan	Nakkhattaroek Songkran Pracham Pi

- Singing the Hoh Song -

Wan Athit Chue Thung Sa Si Sawat	Song Phahurat That Dok Thapthim Si
Khruangpradap Pat Ma Rak RueangMani	Phaksahan Phruet Si Uthumphon
Mue Thue Sang Chak Ra Pen Awut	Phaya Khrut Pen Phaha Praphatson
Nakkhattaroek Songkran Wan Bawon	Ko KheChon Choen Sian Wongwian Ma (Rab)

- Singing the Seenuan Nok Song -

WanChan Chue Kho Rak Nari Rat	Banchong That Dok Peep Wi Lekha
Pra Dap khruang Mukdahan Trakan Ta	Song Phaksa Namman An Mongkhon
Song PhraKhan Maithao Pen Awut	Rit Thi Rut] Lert Fa Weha Hon
Prathap Nuea Phayakkha Rat Rit ThiRon	Choradon Dai Rop Khop Chak Wan (Rab)

- Singing the Chang Prasan Nga Song -

WanAngkhan Nangngam Nam Raksot	That Bua Luang Bongkot Klip Phisan
Khruangpradap Mora Prapha Praphan	Phaksahan Lohit Nit Ni Ran
Thue Trisun Lae Thanu Khu Hattha	Pen Maha Awut Sut Khaengkhan
Song Phraya Wara Ha Rit Chakan	Choncharan Charot Rop Khop Lo Ki (Rab)

- Singing the Bao Lut Chan Diao Song -

WanPhut Nut Nan Chue Man Tha	Phahurat That Champa Sa nga Si
Pra Dapkhruang Phaithun PhunThawi	Mi Maithao Lek Laem Pen Awut
Song Phaksa Ahan An Niyom	Noei Lae Nom Pen Loet PrasotSut
Pra Thabla Kaiyasit Rit Thi Rut	Pracham Wen WanPhut Muea Songkran (Rab)

- Singing the Sarathi Song -

WanPharuehatsabodi Thephi Pracham	Chue Kirini LoetLam Dang Ram Khan
Songkhruang Khiao Morakot Mot Phai Phan	Su Ma Man Prot That Dok Montha
Kho Lae Puen Pen Awut Sut Chamnan	Phana Khotchasan Saen Han Kla
Prot Sawoei Phaksahan Khue Thua Nga	Sadet Ma Wan Pharue Hat KhachatPhai (Rab)

- Singing the Singto Song -

WanSuk Thephi Chue Kimitha	That Mala Chongkonlani Si Sotsai
Pra Dapkhruang Butsarakham PhongAmphai	Orathai Song PhraKhan Lae Khan Phin
Phaksahan Kluai Nam Ammarit	Sadet Pai Thuk Thit Lae Thuk Thin
Song Mahing Kamyam Dam Thamin	Ngam Sin ThuaThang Wo Ra Kai (Rab)

- Singing the Borathet Song -

WanSao Yaowaret Ket Bang on	Chuewa Maho Thon Ngam Choetchai
Pra Dapkhruang Ninrat Pra Phat Phrai	Mali Rai DokSamhao Phrao Insi
Thue Trisun Lae Chak Pracham Kai	Phaksahan Nueasai Nai Phrai Si
Phahana NokyungThong Phong Sophi	PhunThawi Suppha Mongkhon Don ChokChai (Rab)

- Singing the Trabong Kan Song -

Pramuan Chet NuanAnong Nang Songkran Luan Phisan Si Sawat Nirattisai
Ma Prathan PhonPhiphat KhachatPhai Amnuai Hai Pen Suk Sawatdi

- Pi Phat band plays a “Trabong Kan” Song -

- Pi Phat band plays a “Rua” Song -

Written by Seri Wangnaitham

Composed by Montree Tramoeth

(Rittibul et al., 2025c)

The meaning of the songs used for playing in performances and dances according to the lyrics can be explained as follows:

The “Pathom” song is one of NaaPhat songs in the set of the evening overture songs used for the military inspection. It has meaning in the procession of the deities arranged by the great deities. The two-tiered first song is used to open the performance because it symbolizes the procession of the deities. As Nang Songkran is a goddess, the song represents her ceremonial procession before she joins the collective dance performed to the Vessukarma song.

The “Vessukarma” song is a two-beat rhythm song, often played as accompaniment to Khon and Lakhon performances. It is performed as a traditional song called the Hong Thong song, which has a meaning of being a song used to bestow blessings, symbolizing auspiciousness, comparable to Nang Songkran who comes down to bestow auspiciousness upon humans on Earth.

The “Hoh” song is a Naa Phat song for accompanying the characters' aerial movements. It is a two-part song that can be sung by male and female characters, the giants, and the monkeys. It is used in the teacher worship ceremony. This song is played to invite the angels who fly through the air. Since Nang Songkran is a goddess, the “Hoh” song is used, which is a song that shows the angels' aerial movements.

The “Seenuan Nok” is an old melody from the Ayutthaya period, using the Naa Thap Mai rhythm. It is commonly used to accompany dance movements and the gestures of women, as Nang Songkran is a woman. The song's meaning refers to the movements of women, thus describing the actions of Nang Korakha Devi, the Nang Songkran associated with Monday.

The “Chang Prasan Nga” (Elephant Tusks Clashing) is a two-beat rhythm song commonly used to accompany Khon and Lakhon performances. It conveys a sense of power. In ancient times, Tuesdays were considered strong days for horoscopes. The lyrics mention blood as a sustenance, signifying ferocity. “Chang Prasan Nga” was chosen because it reflects power and strength.

The “Bao Lut Chan Diao” is an old melody from the Ayutthaya period. It is the second song in the “Rabam Si Bot” (Four-Part Dance) sequence. Its mood conveys a narrative, expressing the emotions of the donkey, the animal that carries Nang Songkran of Wednesday. Because the donkey is a restless animal, the fast paced “Bao Lut Chan Diao” melody is chosen for this piece.

The “Sarathi” (Charioteer) is an old Ayutthaya period song in two-beat rhythm. It's a three-part piece included in the slow song genre, “Sarathi,” also known as Sarathi Chak Rot. It's commonly used in Khon and Lakhon (Thai masked dance-drama) performances. The song carries meanings of happiness and love. In ancient times, Thursday was considered a sacred day, and thus it was regarded as Teacher's Day. Therefore, the song is likened to receiving protection

from teachers and mentors from danger and sorrow. The use of “Sarathi,” a song conveying meanings of happiness and love, is analogous to Nang Songkran who descends to bestow happiness and love upon humanity.

The “Singto” song is a traditional Thai song in a two-beat rhythm song, used in theatrical performances. It conveys a sense of strength and greatness, thus representing the strength of the buffalo, the mount of Nang Songkran associated with Friday. The buffalo's strong character makes this song a fitting choice.

The “Borathet” song is a type of classical Thai instrumental music used for general blessings. It's a blessing offered to the Songkran goddess on Saturday. The vehicle used is the peacock, an auspicious animal symbolizing the warding off of evil and the bestowal of victory and good fortune. This meaning is similar to the general blessings given by the “Borathet” song itself.

The “Trabong Kan” song is a high-class Naa Phat song, one of the songs in the daytime overture suite. It accompanies the transformation of high-ranking characters and can be used for kings, queens, and giants. Its auspicious meaning makes it popularly played at the end of important dance sequences. The reason for using “Trabong Kan” is that it serves as the closing piece for performances, symbolizing the seven Nang Songkran descending to bestow blessings and protect humanity from all dangers.

The reason for using different songs with similar meanings is that the composers believed the songs used in the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance should convey auspiciousness, blessings, and good wishes, as well as being easy to sing and pleasing to the ear.

2.5 Costumes

The costumes of the seven Nang Songkran were designed based on literary descriptions, including costume color, jewelry, gemstones, flower ornaments, and symbolic attributes. The researchers retained these traditional details because they identify each goddess and connect the performance to the Songkran legend. However, materials and costume construction were adapted to appear more contemporary and suitable for stage presentation. The costumes of the vehicles were designed to correspond with each animal while remaining visually harmonious with the Nang Songkran costumes.



Figure 3 Attire of Nang Songkran and Her Animal Mount.

(Source: Rittibul, 2025c)

2.6 Equipment

The props consist of weapons and symbolic objects associated with each Nang Songkran, such as the chakra, conch shell, staff, sword, trident, bow, sharp iron rod, hook, gun, and lute. These props were retained because they are part of the characters' identities described in the legend and literary sources. In performance, the props function as visual symbols that help audiences recognize the distinctive attributes of each goddess.

2.7 Lighting, Color, and Set Design Techniques

Lighting, color, and multimedia scenes were developed to enhance atmosphere, emotion, and audience imagination. The use of focused lighting emphasizes important moments and character appearances, while multimedia scenes create the impression of a celestial realm. These elements were adapted to support contemporary visual communication and to make the mythological dimension of the performance more accessible to modern audiences.

2.8 Dance Movements and Patterns of Space Utilization

The performance uses two main spatial formations: the straight-line formation and the V-shaped formation. The straight-line formation is used in the opening section to present orderliness and introduce the performers. The V-shaped formation is used when each Nang Songkran performs according to the lyrics, allowing the audience to focus on one goddess at a time while maintaining group balance on stage.

The V-shaped formation was retained because it supports both symbolic and visual functions. It allows each goddess and vehicle to be presented clearly while preserving the collective identity of the seven Nang Songkran. The movement pattern also reinforces the ritual concept of procession and cyclical time, which is central to the Songkran legend.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study demonstrates that the development of the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance is not merely a process of reconstructing a traditional performance, but rather a transformation of cultural capital into a contemporary performing arts medium. The Songkran legend, including the narrative of Nang Songkran, ritual procession, cosmological symbolism, and embedded moral teachings such as gratitude and moral conduct, constitutes a significant body of cultural capital that has been accumulated and transmitted across generations (Prakobphol & Sungmek, 2019; Auttalo, 2019). When interpreted through the theoretical framework of cultural capital proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, these elements function not only as inherited cultural knowledge but also as symbolic resources that can be recontextualized, reinterpreted, and reproduced through creative practices.

The findings reveal that the transformation of cultural capital in this study occurs through a structured creative process that integrates eight key performance components: performance format, script, performers, music and lyrics, costumes, props, lighting and visual design, and spatial arrangement. This process reflects the principle that artistic creation emerges from the reinterpretation of existing cultural knowledge in response to contemporary social conditions (Natayakul, 2022; Charassri, 2007). In particular, the researchers strategically retained essential cultural elements, including the identities of the seven Nang Songkran, the symbolic representation of cyclical time, and the moral principle of *katanyu-kataweti* (gratitude), as these elements function as core cultural signifiers that sustain the authenticity and continuity of the tradition.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that the adaptation of selected performance elements plays a crucial role in enhancing the communicative potential of the work. The integration of multimedia storytelling, contemporary musical

arrangements, lighting techniques, and visual effects reflects an intentional response to contemporary modes of audience engagement and cultural consumption (Tunthong, 2020; Poonpakdee, 2019). This aligns with the argument that performing arts must remain dynamic and adaptable in order to sustain relevance within rapidly changing social contexts (Boonserm, 2022). Therefore, the innovation of this study lies in the reorganization and reinterpretation of traditional elements rather than their replacement, enabling the performance to function simultaneously as a medium of preservation and innovation.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the concept that cultural capital can be transformed into cultural and creative value through artistic production. The Songkran tradition, which originally exists in the forms of ritual, myth, and moral instruction, has been translated into a performative language that communicates meaning through movement, sound, imagery, and spatial design. This transformation corresponds with the framework of the creative economy as proposed by UNCTAD (2008), which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, creativity, and cultural heritage in generating sustainable socio-cultural and economic value. In this context, the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance can be understood as a cultural product that not only preserves heritage but also contributes to the broader system of cultural production and creative industries.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary integration observed in this study highlights the significance of combining multiple artistic domains to enhance the expressive capacity of performing arts. The synthesis of dance, music, literary narrative, visual design, and stage technology demonstrates that contemporary performing arts are no longer confined to a single discipline but operate as a complex system of interrelated artistic practices (Rittibul et al., 2024; Rittibul et al., 2025a). This integration allows the performance to communicate on multiple levels, including symbolic, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions, thereby enriching audience engagement and interpretative depth.

The evaluation results, which indicate the highest level of quality and appropriateness ($\bar{X} = 4.60$, $SD = 0.52$), further support the effectiveness of this creative approach. From an analytical standpoint, these results suggest that the balance between preservation and adaptation was successfully achieved. The experts' assessment reflects that the performance retains its cultural authenticity while enhancing its visual and communicative clarity. This finding implies that the strategic transformation of cultural capital into a contemporary format can increase both the aesthetic appeal and interpretative accessibility of traditional performing arts.

In comparison with previous studies on creative performing arts, this research aligns with established perspectives that emphasize the importance of integrating performance elements such as concept, script, performers, music, costume, and stage design (Natayakul, 2022; Saitongkum, 2018). However, the distinctive contribution of this study lies in its explicit and systematic application of cultural capital as both an analytical framework and a creative foundation. Rather than treating the Songkran legend as contextual background information, this research positions it as the primary source of meaning that shapes the structure, symbolism, and aesthetic direction of the performance. This approach contributes to the academic discourse by demonstrating how traditional knowledge systems can be operationalized within contemporary creative processes.

Moreover, the findings suggest that the reinterpretation of cultural capital through performing arts has implications beyond artistic production. It contributes to cultural transmission by enabling younger generations to engage with traditional knowledge in forms that are more accessible and meaningful within their contemporary context. This reflects the role of performing arts as a cultural medium that mediates between historical knowledge and present-day experience. At the same time, the integration of contemporary elements ensures that the performance does not become a static representation of the past but remains a living and evolving cultural expression.

Despite these contributions, the study has certain limitations. The evaluation of the performance was conducted by a limited group of experts in Thai performing arts, which may not fully represent the perspectives of broader audiences. Future research should expand the scope of evaluation to include audience reception studies, particularly among younger generations and international audiences, in order to assess the cross-cultural communicative effectiveness of the performance. Additionally, further studies may investigate the long-term impact of such creative works on cultural awareness, identity formation, and community participation.

In conclusion, the Rabam Nang Songkran Dance developed in this study exemplifies the dynamic relationship between cultural preservation and innovation. By transforming cultural capital into a contemporary performing arts form, the work functions as a cultural bridge that connects the past, present, and future. It preserves the symbolic and moral essence of the Songkran tradition while expanding its communicative potential and relevance in a globalized cultural landscape. This study therefore contributes to both theoretical and practical understandings of how traditional performing arts can be sustained, revitalized, and reimagined in the 21st century.

Acknowledgments

The researchers would like to express their sincere gratitude to the administrators of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts and the Department of Preservation of Arts and Culture at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand, for their support and for providing the opportunity to conduct their academic work to the best of their ability. This funding, part of the Department of Dance Education's fiscal year 2025 budget, was crucial in the successful completion of this study, facilitating extensive fieldwork and the provision of necessary resources. The authors used Grammarly AI tools for language editing and grammar checking. The authors reviewed and take full responsibility for all content in the manuscript.

References

- Aneksuk, B., & Panyavuttrakul, W. (2016). *Kan Phatthana Rupbaep Lae Phalitphan Thang Kan Thongthiao Nai Changwat Phitsanulok Phuea Rongrap Nakhongthiao Chao Thai Lae Nakhongthiao Nai Klum ASEAN* [Development of Tourism Formats and Products in Phitsanulok Province to Support Thai Tourists and Tourists in ASEAN]. Phitsanulok: Naresuan University (In Thai)
- Auttalo, A. (2019). Analyze the Philosophical Values in the Songkran Festival. *Journal of Dhammasuksa Research*, 2(2), 8-17. (In Thai)
- Boonserm, P. (2022). Developing Local Dance to Promote Ethnic Group Identity in Kanchanburi for the Thai Tourism Industry. *Journal of Communication Arts*, 40(2), 24-40. (In Thai)
- Boontonglek, M., & Others. (2024). Creating Performing Arts to Promote Community Products That Reflects the Local Identity Pathum Thani Province. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(7), 5218-5229. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i7.4629>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The Forms of Capital*. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Charassri, N. (2007). *Narai Avatara, Performing the Thai Ramayana in the Modern World*. Bangkok: Amarin. (In Thai)

- Chinnalayu, S., & Others. (2022). *A Study of Beliefs and Buddhist Doctrine in the Songkran Festival of People in Ban Khok Subdistrict, Ban Khok District, Uttaradit Province*, (pp. 206-217), The 3rd National and International Buddhist Conference, January 17, 2026. Nakhon Ratchasims, Thailand. (In Thai)
- Cooper, S. (2016). *Staging Dance*. London: A&C Black (Publishers) Limited.
- Khemabhirato, S. (2018). *The Valuable Study of Songkran Festival for Community: A Case Study of Ban-Maisukasem, Kong Krailat, Sukhothai*. Master's thesis, M.A. in Arts. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand. (In Thai)
- Natayakul, S. (2022). *The Creation of Dance*. Mahasarakham: Mahasarakham University. (In Thai)
- Poonpakdee, N. (2019). *The Creation of a Dance from Magic Tricks*. Doctoral Dissertation, Ph.D. in Fine and Applied Arts in Common, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. (In Thai)
- Prakobphol, P., & Sungmek, J. (2019). Songkran Festival: Dharma Puzzle of the Legend. *Valaya Alongkorn Review (Humanities and Social Science)*, 9(1), 164-178. (In Thai)
- Rittibul, P., & Others. (2024). Creation of Dance According to Beliefs from the Namu Coin Sign. *Asian Journal of Arts and Culture*. 24(2), e261684(1-16). <https://doi.org/10.48048/ajac.2024.261684>
- Rittibul, P., & Others. (2025a). Nawat Phusa: Promoting Innovation of Natural Banana Fibers Into Product Design to Enhance Cultural Creative Economy Products Through Performing Arts Dimension. *Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology*, 9(3), 2311-2323. <https://doi.org/10.55214/25768484.v9i3.5785>
- Rittibul, P., & Others. (2025b). Promoting Elderly Health Through Community-Based Cultural Capital Performing Arts Activities. *Scientific Culture*, 11(3), 273-283.
- Rittibul, P., & Others. (2025c). *Kan Phatthana Nawattakam Sinlapa Kan Sadang Rabam Nang Songkran* [Development of Innovation Performing Arts Rabam Nang Songkran]. Pathum Thani: Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi. (In Thai)
- Saitongkum, J. (2018). The Creative Process of Thai Dramatic Art-Sakkaratwarat Dance. *Research and Development Journal Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University*, 10(1), 103-117. (In Thai)
- Tunthong, K. (2020). *The Study of Nhae Ane Lho Bong Rite Identity, Morgan Lifestyle, To Create The Project Through the Performance Aspect*. Pathum Thani: Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi. (In Thai)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2008). *Creative Economy Report 2008*. Retrieved 16 December 2025, from <http://www.unctad.org/creative-economy>.