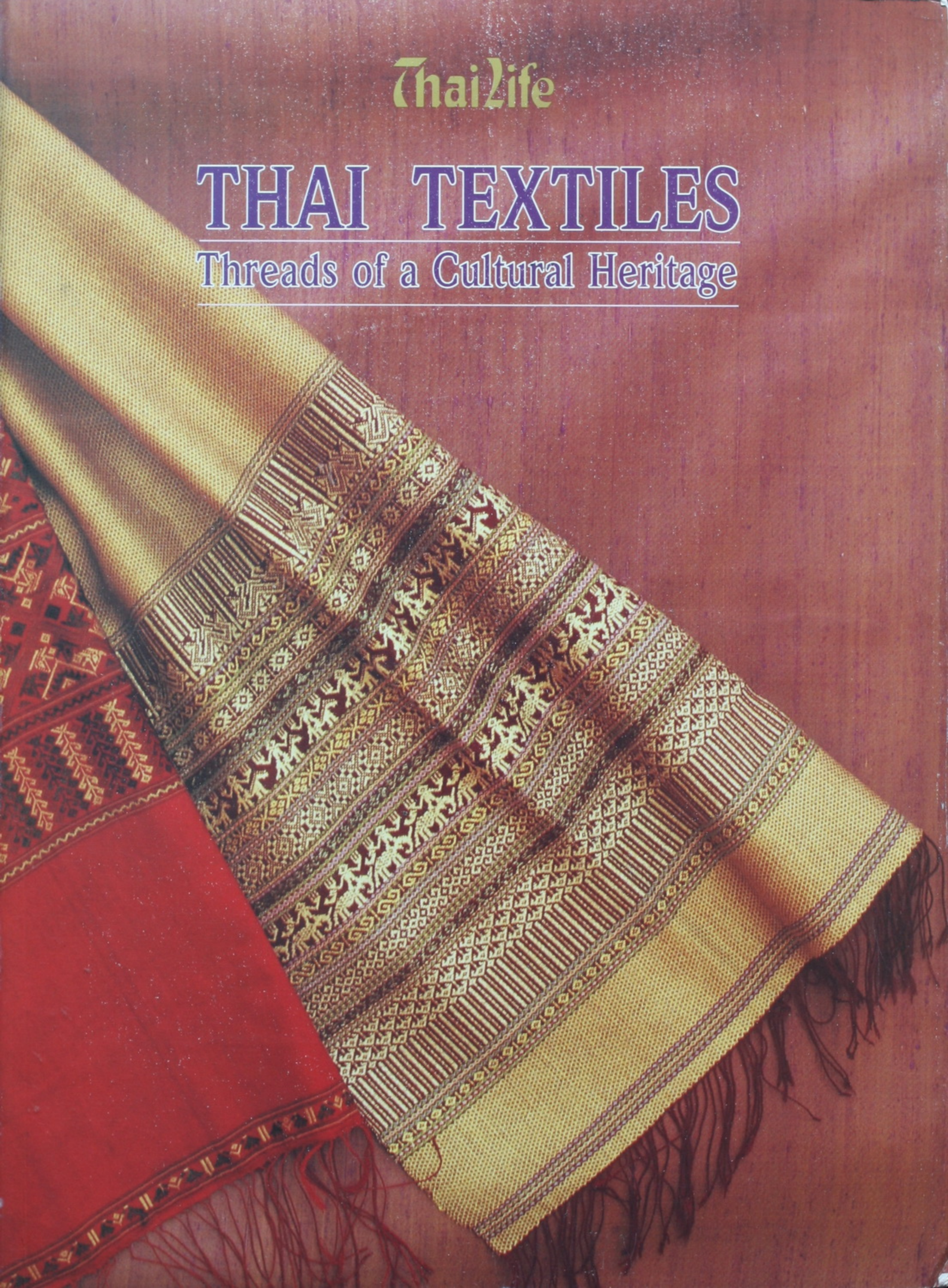


ThaiLife

THAI TEXTILES

Threads of a Cultural Heritage



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PREFACE

“Thai Textiles: Threads of a Cultural Heritage” has been produced by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Production of the Book **“Thai Textiles: Threads of a Cultural Heritage”** under the National Identity Board to commemorate the auspicious occasion of the 5th Birthday Cycle of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on 12 August, 1992, and to publicize the work which Her Majesty is doing in promoting and propagating traditional Thai textiles.

This book provides information on the traditional textiles produced as a handicraft by villagers in the central, northern, northeastern and southern regions of Thailand and includes details of the styles, designs, colours and weaving techniques unique to each region. It also contains information on the cultural beliefs concerning textiles, the use of textiles for personal attire and household purposes, and their use in rituals and ceremonies, thus reflecting the background, relationships and lifestyles of those who weave and use the textiles, as well as the preservation and promotion of textiles in the present day.

It is sincerely hoped that this book will be of benefit to all who are interested in Thai textiles and that it will help in publicizing information on Thai textiles, as well as encouraging further deeper and wider studies of Thai textiles in the future.

National Identity Board
March, 1994

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INTRODUCTION

by Vithi Phanichphant and Patricia Naenna

The art of weaving silk and cotton fibres into textiles has long been known to mankind. Archaeological evidence uncovered in Thailand shows that the people of this region were weaving textiles more than 3,000 years ago. Ancient spindles used for spinning cotton have been found in the province of Kanchanaburi while other weaving apparatus has been discovered in the provinces of Lop Buri, Uthai Thani and Udon Thani.

Historical evidence taken from stone carvings, mural paintings and sacred manuscripts show a dress culture incorporating woven textiles as a form of attire, as body accessories, and for household purposes as well as for other purposes including rituals and ceremonies.

These textiles have long been established in the form of rectangular cloths wrapped around the lower part of the body to form a skirt or loincloth, and for the upper part of the body in the form of a shawl. The rectangular shape enabled them to be sewn together to form various shapes depending on use. Ancient sculptures and mural paintings show that ankle-length skirts were popularly worn by women. Occasionally they wore shoulder cloths and breast cloths or shawls and during evening hours and cool weather they wrapped themselves in blankets. They did not wear shirts or blouses. Men wore short or long pieces of cloth which they would wrap around their body, tie at the waist and fold or roll the excess fabric to pass between their legs and fold in at the waist at the back in the **thok khamen** or **chong-kraben** style. They also wore shoulder cloths and shawls in the same manner as women. There was no definite fashion style for children who generally went naked or wrapped themselves in a piece of cloth similar to the adults. High ranking people, such as royalty and nobility, wore large pieces of cloth which were gathered, pleated and tucked to look exotic. The fabric was mostly imported or woven with gold or silver to show status and wealth. They also adorned their body with headdresses, bracelets and anklets. The women's skirt was worn in **na nang** style.



In addition to using textiles as a form of clothing, wraps were also used as blankets or for carrying possessions during journeys. Cloth shoulder bags were another item commonly used for carrying daily necessities and for travel. Household textiles included blankets, bed sheets, mattress and pillow covers, and room dividers.

It was the woman's responsibility to weave textiles. These textiles can be divided into two categories: those woven for daily use which were generally plain and more durable, and those woven for use in rituals and ceremonies which tended to be more finely woven with greater attention paid to detail and beauty.

During the various phases of her life, a woman would weave items that were appropriate to her marital status, financial and social standing and within her capacity according to her health. For example, an unmarried woman would weave very elaborate cloths with large, detailed discontinuous weft patterns using numerous colours which required



good eyesight and a great deal of weaving time. These items were for her own decoration prior to marriage when she would show off her weaving skills to attract a suitable husband and items she needed to prepare for her wedding. After marriage, her time would be taken up looking after her family and weaving for her husband and children. This would include garments for the family as well as household items such as blankets and mattresses. An important group of textiles woven by a mother were the pieces for her son's ordination. After her children had grown up and married, her time would be spent with the other women of her age in the weaving of textiles for the temple. These pieces were often woven as a communal effort and evenings were spent in the preparation of these offerings. At the same time, her own costume would become simplified, with fewer patterns in her tubeskirt and a plain white cloth for her shoulder cloth. The weaving of these textiles did not require such clear eyesight and suited the lifestyle of the older generation.





Expression of gratitude, especially towards elders and ancestors, is a very important aspect of Thai culture. Examples of this can be seen in major festivals such as **songkran**, the traditional Thai New Year, when people pour lustral water on the elders. Cloths play an important role in this ceremony and are presented as gifts to elder members of the family and to teachers. The ceremony to appease the spirits is probably the oldest form of offering known. During this ceremony, one or more cloths incorporating white, red and indigo were symbolically offered, along with other items, by the spirit medium or shaman. These three colours are the most classic and archaic known in Thai textiles, their hues having been taken from the most common natural dyes. In the ceremony to pay respect to teachers and in propitiation ceremonies, white and red cloths are used. Cloth is also used in rituals to pay homage to Buddha images and monuments. These rituals are probably the origins of merit making ceremonies which have become an indispensable part of Buddhist practice and include such ceremonies as the **kathin** ceremony, conducted at the end of the annual rains retreat when special robes are offered to monks, **pha ba** ceremonies, when robes and requisites are communally offered to monasteries between rainy seasons, and **pha bang sukun** ceremonies performed at the time of funerals and cremations. Other ceremonies performed to establish unity and bondage also incorporate the use of cotton threads and cloth. Clothing items are presented as a symbol of loyalty when establishing relationships between elders and subordinates. These traditional practices reflect the important role which textiles have to play in the life of each and every Thai.







Culturally, Thailand is a matriarchal society, particularly in the upper regions, that is the northern and northeastern regions and the upper central region, as women are more settled than men. Consequently, clothing worn by women reflect styles and designs unique to each region making it possible to identify from which region the wearer hails. On the other hand, it is not possible to tell a man's origins by the clothes he is wearing as his clothing does not bear any patterns, designs or styles specific to any one region. This is because men tend to change their locale more often in search of work or a wife. Consequently, their style of dress is more universal and more prone to change.



In former times, natural pigments were used to create a spectrum of colours for use in dyeing the textiles. Plain indigo was used by the villagers for cotton work clothes and red was kept for ceremonial wear. The *indigofera tinctoria* plant was used in the dryer areas to dye cotton indigo while the wetter rain forest areas supported the *persicaria tinctoria* or *baphicacathus cusia* for dyeing cotton a dark indigo and silk a light or dark blue. To achieve red, cotton was dyed with sappan wood and silk dyed red with stick lac. Silk was used sparingly and in the north,

restricted to the use of high ranking families. Other colours were used only for supplementary decoration or as part of a pattern, although in the north, yellow was popular in bands on the tubeskirt which was striped with black. Plain yellow was restricted to monks' robes. Purple was the hardest colour to maintain in the natural dye palette as the sources were mainly berries that gave a purple which faded quickly. Gold and silver were too rare and expensive for ordinary people but were available to the court and thus signified status

and rank. Certain gold patterns were restricted to the king and the royal family. Villagers would try to emulate the court on two particular occasions in their lives. These were the marriage and the ordination ceremonies. It would not be uncommon to see the main participants dressed like royalty for these occasions although the materials they used were inferior.

The woman's tubeskirt called **pha sin** is the most easily identifiable from area to area. However, **pha sin**



worn by Thai women irrespective of region tend to follow a standard pattern in that they comprise a waistband, the body and a hem piece, and are decorated in the **khit**, **yok**, **chok** and **mudmee** styles. In the north the pattern was oriented in the warp, thus the skirt had horizontal stripes when wrapped around the body. These were called **sin ta** and were worn with a white petticoat. This style is very different to the **pha sin** of the northeast that has the pattern in the weft, resulting in the vertical pattern orientation of the

tubeskirt. The technique used in the northeast was weft ikat using indigo and white in cotton and red, yellow and green in silk.

The Tai Lue in the north had their own **pha sin** structure which was made up of different stripes which fell horizontally in the skirt, but in fact had been woven in the weft, thus requiring two side seams in the construction of the skirt. The Tai Lue textiles from Nan Province show influences from both the Lanna court and the central court in their use of silver yarns and pattern of even stripes. Tubeskiirts of Uttaradit and lower Nan Provinces are unusual, with the combination of tapestry weave, which is essentially a technique associated with the Tai Lue, and a hem which has a band of supplementary weft patterns a small distance from the hem.

The central and southern lower garment followed the style of the court being either **pha chongkraben** or **pha na nang**, except for those textiles woven by the Lao and northern Thai groups that were settled into the area. Tubeskiirts worn by the Lao groups in the central area followed the traditional styles of their specific ethnic group. The fabric used for the **pha chongkraben** was plain or printed low quality cotton for the ordinary people, while those that could afford to, used silk and brocade. The court favoured imported textiles and ordered special designs from India, China, Cambodia and Persia. These were mainly gold or silver brocades, silks and satins. Two areas where the use of gold yarns was prolific and exceptional to the other styles of their areas are Nan in the north and Ubol Ratchathani in the lower northeast.

Hem pieces for tube skirts were called **tin chok** or **tin sin** depending on the local dialect. The **tin chok** of the Tai Yuan in the north was made with two main sections of design. The upper part was black and decorated with supplementary weft patterns while the lower part was plain red. This was very different to the narrow hem pieces

called **tin sin** of the northeast. The techniques used in the northeast included supplementary weft and warp faced compound tabby patterns. The **tin chok** of the Tai Yuan groups living in the central part of Thailand was different again, being a wide, densely decorated cloth using supplementary weft designs similar to those seen in Sukhothai Province. The use of a separate hem piece disappeared from the central and southern Thai and court textiles as soon as the fabric was wide enough not to require this piece for length in the skirt. Often these textiles included a decorative hem design as part of the main skirt length. A similar development occurred in the northeast when wider loom equipment was introduced into the silk industry by King Rama V.

The Tai Lue did not add a decorative hem piece to their tube skirts, but added a plain indigo cotton or a green satin band at the hem. An interesting combination of the Lanna **tin chok** styles and Tai Lue tubeskirt was made in the lower areas of Nan. Also the hem pieces of the Lao Khrang groups in Pichit and Uthai Thani are unusual, being woven with a plain lower red section, not dissimilar to the Tai Yuan style and yet more similar to the **pha sin** textiles from Nam Pat District in Uttaradit Province due to the designs used.

The shoulder cloth, called **pha sabai**, is an important textile, which has many styles in Thailand. The Tai Yuan of the north of Thailand and the Lao Phuan groups of Sukhothai do not seem to have woven their own **pha sabai** for about a century, but rather used very fine Chinese satin in the past or modern towels today. The Phutai in the northeast wove a supplementary weft decorated textile called **pha phrae wa** which was used by both men and women. These were either cotton with silk supplementary threads or all silk using continuous and discontinuous wefts. The Lao groups in the northeast wove shoulder cloths that were decorated with bands of supplementary weave



and thus called **pha hom lai khit**. The colours used by the Phutai and the Lao were similar but the Khmer groups in the lower northeast used plain white or black **pha sabai** woven in a twill weave for women and silk check **pha sabai** for men.

The central and southern areas used imported fabric for their **pha sabai** cloths from very early on, probably before the 16th century. The cloths were elaborately decorated with gold or silver brocade and worn over one shoulder with one end hanging low down the back. Some brocade fabrics were woven in the south along the lines of the imported designs.



Textiles worn by men in the Thai society were much more uniform than those of the women. The **pha chongkraben** was adopted into the Thai court since the Sukhothai period (1238-1377 A.D.) and is essentially an influence of Indian dress. Early on, the men in the court were not allowed to wear shirts, but decorated their bodies with tattoos and carried swords and amulets. The king wore a shirt which was made from imported textiles from Persia and looked like a coat.

The ordinary people wore **pha chongkraben** made of low quality cotton with no shirts. In the central area the **pha chongkraben** were quite wide while in the north they were much narrower, like loincloths and were called **pha toi**. At the turn of the 20th century a style of clothing for the men that became popular were Chinese pants called **tiao sado** and short sleeved shirts called **sua mo hom**. White shirts of the same design were worn to show respect, while indigo was worn for work. Today this is now seen as the traditional official wear in many provincial towns in Thailand. In the north a small shoulder cloth called **pha chet** was used by the men to place on one shoulder. These are no longer made and have been replaced by a black and white checkered cloth call **pha khao ma** which is used in all areas today as a general purpose cloth.



In the northeast the men wore a silk or cotton **sarong** for leisure and on special occasions, wearing them with a white round necked shirt. For work they used a short checked loincloth called **pha khao ma** worn in the **thok khamen** style with no shirt. Later the **sua mo hom** became popular and short and long sleeved indigo shirts were made for work with indigo **tieo sado** while the **sarong** was degraded to sleeping wear and western trousers and shirts used for special occasions.

The introduction of western styles was quick to become fashionable and shirts, ties and overcoats were adopted by those who could afford them in all regions of Thailand. After the period of the modernization of Thailand by Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram western dress was expected for all men and imported fabrics became more readily available. The use of the **sarong**, Chinese satin trousers, **pha chongkraben**, **tieo sado**, **pha khao ma** and **pha toi** has virtually disappeared.

Even though traditional Thai costumes evolved in the form of tube skirts, loincloths and wraps, locally made hand woven textiles are now being adapted for use in western-style fashions based on universally accepted standards. Efforts are being made, however, to revive an interest in and preserve traditional textiles as cultural heritage. Production and sales are being promoted while, at the same time, traditional designs and styles are being developed and quality upgraded so that they are more suited to present social conditions and can be used for various purposes, such as costumes, accessories and household furnishing, as needed in domestic and foreign markets. As a result, Thai textiles are today becoming better known and winning wider acclaim not only amongst Thais, but also internationally.

In this regard, Her Majesty the Queen has graciously established the **SUPPORT** Foundation which promotes supplementary occupations, such as



textile weaving, among rural dwellers to ensure that they are provided for in times of natural calamities and hardship. The Foundation also supports the preservation of traditional handicrafts, which are in danger of being lost, as a cultural heritage for future generations. Such activities have been greatly instrumental in reviving ancient handicraft traditions and developing them into an industry which has become a major source of revenue for people in rural areas. Handicrafts produced are winning more and more acceptance in both Thai and foreign communities. This has instilled in the people of Thailand a great sense of pride and inspires them to preserve and develop their traditional textiles even more so that they can be passed on to future generations as a priceless cultural treasure.







HER MAJESTY QUEEN SIRIKIT AND THAI TEXTILES



"I initiated handicraft activities primarily to find supplementary occupations for poor farmers so that they can sustain themselves. From decades of accompanying His Majesty the King to visit rural people, I have found that the majority of the people are farmers who have to work very hard and face numerous natural disasters such as droughts, floods and outbreak of pests. As a result, a large number of these farming families are reduced to a life of poverty. Assisting them with supplies in times of difficulties is merely a short term alleviation of their plight. His Majesty the King has told me that we should try to find a more lasting solution by making it possible for them to stand on their own feet. When I remember that the world, according to experts, has a grain shortage while Thailand has adequate supplies of food and is even able to export enough to qualify as a major rice exporter, I feel very grateful to our farmers and think that they deserve more care and attention from all of us. His Majesty the King has devoted himself to this task by concentrating on improving water supplies and soil conditions which are the main ingredients of farming. At the same time he asked me to look after the welfare of the farming families.

I started by looking into the health, education and general living conditions of the farmers and their families. I was glad to observe that these farmers have been handed down great handicraft skills from their ancestors. Most of the

products are associated with their daily lives such as the growing of mulberry trees to raise silk worms in order to produce silk in the Northeast of Thailand. This gave me the inspiration to start promoting silk weaving so that the farmers could utilize their native capabilities to improve their standard of living while at the same time achieving a sense of dignity and pride in their work. This finally led to the establishment of the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques (SUPPORT).

It is clear to me that these people are born-artists. For instance, they can weave mudmee silk in ancient designs of exquisite beauty or they can invent new patterns in a combination of attractive colours. I merely give them moral encouragement and support while at the same time finding ways to show their beauty to the world. This is how I have had the pleasure of playing a role in conserving and developing the arts and crafts in Thailand.

It is heartening that handicrafts have become increasingly popular among Thais and foreigners, especially hand-woven textiles. If all of us cooperate to study, conserve and develop our textiles, these handicrafts will surely provide us with a cultural heritage of great beauty for our future generations."

The above address, given by Her Majesty the Queen at the opening of the meeting and exhibition **"Asian Textile Heritage: Craft and Industry"** held at Sala Tham, Chiang Mai University on January 30, 1992, shows Her Majesty's interest in promoting local textiles and her mission in preserving and developing Thai textiles as a cultural heritage.

1. On 30 January, 1992, UNESCO presented Her Majesty Queen Sirikit with the Borobodur Gold Medal in recognition of Her Majesty's contribution towards the preservation and development of Asian folk art and culture. The presentation was made at the opening of the meeting and exhibition of "Asian Textile Heritage: Craft and Industry" at Chiang Mai University.



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2-3. Her Majesty's love for fashions made of silk *mudmee* textiles has been evident since her engagement to His Majesty the King.

4-5. Her Majesty has accompanied His Majesty the King on his extended visits to his subjects in rural areas since 1955.



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Her Majesty's interest in^a and commitment to Thai silk has been evident to the people of Thailand ever since her engagement to His Majesty the King. Later, in the year 1955, His Majesty, accompanied by Her Majesty, began his visits to his subjects in all regions of the country. On those occasions, Her Majesty had the opportunity to see the people in rural areas dressed in colourful and intricately patterned silk fabrics which they had woven themselves. Each eye-catching piece bore its own unique style. At the same time, Her Majesty took the opportunity to talk with the people and ask them about their families and their means of livelihood. She came to know that the life of these people depended largely on nature. In times of severe rains, floods and monsoons their life suffered and they were forced to live in poverty-stricken conditions. Unable to carry on with their professions, they would lose their source of income and have no means of support for their families. Her Majesty felt that a supplementary means of livelihood by which they could support themselves would help them in times of hardships. Her Majesty thought the weaving skills already possessed by the people should be promoted to bring them maximum benefits. She encouraged the people to increase the amount of textiles woven so that they could be sold to supplement the family income and to pay off outstanding debts. Thus, through her compassion and firm resolve to help the people in remote areas, along with her keen eye for beautiful handicrafts, the revival of handwoven textiles was begun.

Initially, in the year 1972, Her Majesty instructed Than Phu Ying Suprapada Kasemsant, Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen, to lead a group of people to visit the people in rural areas so that they could observe the villagers standard of living and study the silk textiles which they had woven for their own household use and to purchase them so that Her Majesty could inspect them. Her Majesty personally inspected each piece of fabric regard-



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less of whether it was from the provinces of Nakhon Phanom, Roi Et, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, Buriram, Surin, Sakon Nakhon, Udon Thani, or elsewhere. Furthermore, Her Majesty encouraged the people to weave silk textiles as a supplementary occupation. These she purchased with funds from her own privy purse and from the Crown Property Bureau. At the same time she gave advice and encouraged the people to weave cloth of a higher quality and a better standard. Because their textiles could be sold, the people thus joined together and formed groups to grow mulberry trees, raise silkworms, spin silk and weave textiles. As a result their standard of living has improved and they have been able to expand and develop their silk weaving activities. It also resulted in home woven silk textiles receiving wide acceptance both in Thailand and abroad.



6-7. Her Majesty graciously inspects textiles woven by villagers in every region of the country and offers advice on upgrading the quality and standard.

8-9. Through Her Majesty's initiative, silk textiles woven by members of the Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centres are submitted in competitions and judged for excellency.

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In July, 1976, Her Majesty established the **SUPPORT** Foundation, initially with her own funds, to provide farmers and their families with opportunities to supplement their incomes on a regular basis without having to worry too much about climatic conditions, as well as to preserve and ensure the continuity of Thai arts and crafts which were in danger of dying out. In the following period Her Majesty established Arts and Craft Centres in every region of the country, such as the Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centre in Bangsai District of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, and the Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centre in Ban Kutnakham, Charoen Sin Sub-District, Sakon Nakhon Province. The Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Training Centre was set up within the grounds of Chitralada Palace to serve as a centre for training artisans and promoting rare and magnificent Thai art and handicrafts.

In the weaving section, different methods of silk weaving are being taught. Her Majesty chooses impoverished and unemployed people from every region of the country to be members of the Centre so they can be trained in all aspects of textile production until they have perfected their skills and are able to weave different types of silk fabric. After completing their training, the members return to their homes where they are able to take up occupations that enable them to earn an income and support their families. In this way, the craft of weaving is also preserved. The Foundation purchases textiles woven by the members of the Centre and also helps to find retail outlets for them.

Her Majesty sets herself as an example of how fabrics woven by villagers can be used. Regardless of whether the fabrics are woven in the **mudmee**, **phrae wa**, or the **chok** style, Her Majesty has them fashioned into both international and traditional Thai style costumes which she wears on all occasions, such as when visiting the people in rural areas, attending Royal Ceremonies, receiving royal guests or when trav-



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10. Photographed during a visit to the silk weaving section at Bang Sai Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centre in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province.
11. Handicraft items produced by members of the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques (SUPPORT).
12. Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn giving explanations to Royal Guests during a visit to the Chitralada SUPPORT Foundation Training Centre.
13. Textiles woven by members of the SUPPORT Foundation are put on display and offered for sale in the SUPPORT Foundation shop in the grounds of Chitralada Villa.
14. Her Majesty the Queen, together with the princesses of the Thai Royal Family in national dress, prior to a dinner in honour of their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain at the Chakri Throne Hall.
15. Her Majesty chooses a contemporary outfit made of Thai silk to receive visiting foreign dignitaries.
16. Most of Her Majesty's outfits are made by Thai designers. However, on her travels abroad, Her Majesty wears contemporary outfits made of Thai silk and designed by leading French couturier, Pierre Balmain.
17. Her Majesty dressed in **phra phusa chong** made of woven Thai silk.
18. This Royal Outfit is presently on display in the Union Des Francaise des Arts du Costume, Louvre Museum.

elling abroad. Their Royal Highnesses Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn, along with their entourages always dress in traditional woven textiles when accompanying Her Majesty on her various visits. Today Thai women are turning more and more to using Thai textiles. This helps to publicize the beauty of textiles woven by the hands of Thai rural dwellers and make them better known among foreigners. It also helps to preserve and develop the textile industry giving it greater value.

To give greater recognition to Thai textiles, Her Majesty has also, on several occasions, organized exhibitions, both at home and abroad, of Thai textiles and clothing designed by Thai designers from woven fabrics so that the products of members of the Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centres can be propagated. Her Majesty has



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19. Their Majesties the King and Queen take the lead in wearing Thai silk.

20. Her Majesty the Queen has regularly arranged exhibitions of Thai textiles.

21. Together with Their Majesties the King and Queen, Their Royal Highnesses Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn wear outfits made of Thai silk whenever the occasion allows.



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22-23. The SUPPORT Foundation exhibited *mudmee* silk in Japan in 1981.

24. Her Majesty the Queen presented Mrs. Helen Brown, wife of the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, with *mudmee* textiles prior to her return to the United States at the completion of her husband's term.

25. Wives of foreign ambassadors to Thailand dressed in their national dress made of Thai silk during an audience with Her Majesty the Queen.



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also travelled abroad on several occasions to promote Thai textiles and woven products. As a result, Thai woven products have become better known among foreigners who admire them for their beauty.

Through the grace and compassion of Her Majesty the Queen, Thai textiles have been revived from a local handicraft, once in danger of dying out, to become a principal industry and a product capable of bringing an income to many people in rural areas. It is an art and craft that is widely known amongst both Thais and foreigners and brings pride to the people of Thailand and inspires the people of Thailand to join together in preserving and promoting woven textiles so that they are of greater value, and so that they can be passed down as a cultural heritage for future Thai generations.





Mural painting at Wat Phrachetuphon Wimon-
mangkhalaram (Wat Pho), Bangkok, showing the
daily life and dress culture of the people in the
Central Region.

CENTRAL THAI TEXTILES

by Songsak Prangwatthanakun and Patricia Naenna

The Central Region of Thailand covers the Chao Phraya River Basin area and extends from Prachuap Khiri Khan Province in the south to Nakhon Sawan Province in the north. Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is situated in this area and is the seat of the Royal House of Chakri which was established by King Rama I at the commencement of the Ratanakosin period in 1782 A.D.

During the early reigns of the Royal House of Chakri, the difference between court and village textiles was extreme. The court imported their textiles from China, India and Persia. Special textiles were also ordered from the various tributary states which were required to pay tribute to the Siamese monarch. These included Cambodia, Laos, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Pattani. During the reigns of King Rama I - IV (1782-1868 A.D.), various Tai groups were relocated from different areas into the Central Region. Among them were the Tai Yuan from Chiang Saen in the Upper Northern Region, and the Tai Phuan, Lao Khrang and Lao Song from northern and central Laos. These groups were settled in villages and continued their tradition of weaving techniques and patterns. However, apart from the plain and checked

cottons that still exist today, nothing is known of the types of textiles made by the Siamese during that period.

During the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910 A.D.), many important changes in social structures were made. Slavery was abolished and weaving, among other local industries and handicrafts, was developed. It was during this period that Cambodia was taken over by the French after having been under Siamese suzerainty since 1431 A.D. This, together with the growing importance of Britain and other colonising powers in Asia, brought changes of influence from Indian/Khmer to Western standards in law, education and dress. Trade between European countries and Thailand was given more freedom, bringing to the Thai market a great variety of western fabrics which were made available to the general public. The trade in all imported items was controlled by the King and was a source of high revenue.

In 1932 A.D., during the reign of King Rama VII (1925-1935 A.D.) the monarchy changed to a constitutional monarchy. Development of textiles and western tastes accelerated with the new standards in dress set by Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram between 1938-1944 A.D. Traditional

costumes, which were regarded as uncivilized, were discouraged and western role models were adopted as a sign of civilization. This led to a decline in the use of traditional textiles in the central area and to the growth of an attitude that traditional textiles were outdated and were to be used only by the poor.

This attitude changed with the promotion of traditional Thai textiles by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. Through her gracious patronage the weavers of Thailand can create their careful labours of love which are their national heritage and continue the traditions without scorn. The raising of social consciousness to the rescue of Thai textiles has resulted in a cultural revival in many villages which has in turn put an international focus on the history and roots of Thai culture.

1. Textiles for the court.
2. Textiles woven by villagers.





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Textiles for the Court

Indian, Persian, Khmer, Japanese and Chinese textiles were imported for use by the Siamese court during the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767 A.D.). Historical evidence dates from the 17th century, but it is likely that trade had started before that time. Very fine quality cotton prints, batiks and hand painted cloths known as **pha lai yang** were made in India to Siamese designs. These were restricted to court use. The King and his direct descendents wore ornately decorated **pha lai yang** which was multi-coloured or, on some occasions, had a white background, and gold painted fabric called **pha khian thong**, while plain white fabric known as **pha lai yang thong lian** was worn by the court Brahmins. A similar cloth in red was worn by high ranking courtiers.

Designs used in these textiles include images of garudas, celestial beings such as **Thep Phanom** and **Thep Pharam**, and mythical creatures usually arranged in a lattice-work of **naga** figures. This lattice-work design was repeated in the **ikats** made in Cambodia and the embroideries made in the Siamese court itself. Other popular designs were the **lai phum khao bin**, which is based on the form of rice sheafs, **lai kanok**, a flame-like motif often seen in wood carvings, the vegetal **lai dok chok** and **lai kan khot** motifs, and an Indian inspired design called **lai yo mum mai sib song** which was a stepped square with twelve corners. The British colonization of India (1805-1947 A.D.) brought an end to the supply of high quality export Indian fabrics and started a new era of Western fabrics and styles which the Siamese court imported together with low quality Indian prints for the general public. These prints often copied the designs of the **pha lai yang** but because of the poor technique incorporated and the low quality of the fabric were called **pha lai nok yang**.

Other fabrics restricted to court use were gold brocades and included

densely patterned cloths that were mainly used for furnishings as they were impractical for garments. Among them was the **pha tat** or **pha ta takataen** from India which was used for cushion covers, table cloths, wrappings for swords, or for food and water containers and the King's crown. Often the fabric was further embroidered with gold metallic threads by the court embroiderers. Other furnishing fabrics included carpets and seat covers in Indian styles which were further decorated with Thai embroidery. Persian brocades included an open patterned gold brocade on a silk ground called **pha atalat** and a striped brocade called **pha khem khab**, both of which were used for **pha chongkraben**, **pha na nang**, shoulder cloths, coats and blouses together with a brocade from India called **pha yiarabab**. The names of these textiles have Indian and Persian origins and as the influence of these brocades spread throughout the Kingdom, local copies were made by village weavers for provincial dignitaries and the names further colloquialized. Some tie-dye cottons called **pha lai nam khanun** were imported for use by the court from India but they were used only as belts.

Chinese fabrics imported for use by the court since the Ayutthaya period included silk satins called **pha phrae** and brocades, **pha yok thong**, usually in floral or dragon patterns. It was common for these fabrics to be embroidered by the court embroiderers to further accentuate the motifs and patterns. These were used for shoulder cloths, blouses, **pha chongkraben**, **pha na nang**, jackets, blouses, and some furnishings. They were also seen in the courts of the surrounding principalities. Later, in the period of King Rama VI (1910-1925 A.D.), cotton satins were used for trousers and sold to the general public.

Khmer textiles used in the Siamese court were mainly silk **ikat** some of which incorporated gold brocade or gold embroidery on the borders at each end to show when



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worn in the **chongkraben** and **na nang** styles. These textiles were known as **pha pum** or **pha som pak pum**, names which have been adopted by some Central Thais to describe all **pha chongkraben**. The number of **kruai choeng** designs at the ends of the **pha chongkraben**, along with the design of the **ikat** indicated rank. Three rows of designs were restricted to the King while the Queen had two. At the same time, the Royal Family had specific designs made for their

exclusive use. The Queen's family, for example, wore designs called **pha som pak Rachanikun**. Other Khmer textiles were given by the King to government officials in the provinces to wear at official occasions. This annual custom still exists today. During the reign of King Rama V, Khmer **ikat pha chongkraben** textiles were replaced by plain and two-coloured twisted silk textiles called **pha muang** which were woven in the northeast of Thailand.

3. His Majesty King Rama IV dressed in traditional attire during his coronation ceremony.
4. Somdet Phra Sri Phatcharinthra, Queen to His Majesty King Rama V, dressed in the **khaen mu haem** style blouse and brocade **pha phusa chong**.
5. Somdet Phra Nang Chao Sunantha Kumari Ratana, Queen to His Majesty King Rama V, dressed in **pha phusa chip na nang** woven in **pha yok** style and wearing a **pha tat** shoulder cloth.
6. A prince of the reign of King Rama III wearing a long sleeved shirt made of **pha yiarabab** under an outer embroidered robe with a gold brocade **chongkraben**.
7. During the reign of King Rama IV, noble women wore silk brocade **chongkraben** with a silk satin shoulder cloth.
8. Princesses during the reigns of King Rama II and King Rama III dressed in **pha phusa chip na nang** made of **pha khian thong** and wearing shoulder cloths over long sleeved blouses.

9. *Pha lai yang.*
10. *Pha lai nok yang.*
11. *Pha khian thong.*
12. *Pha atalat.*
13. *Pha khem khab.*
14. *Pha yok thong.*
15. *Pha som pak pum.*



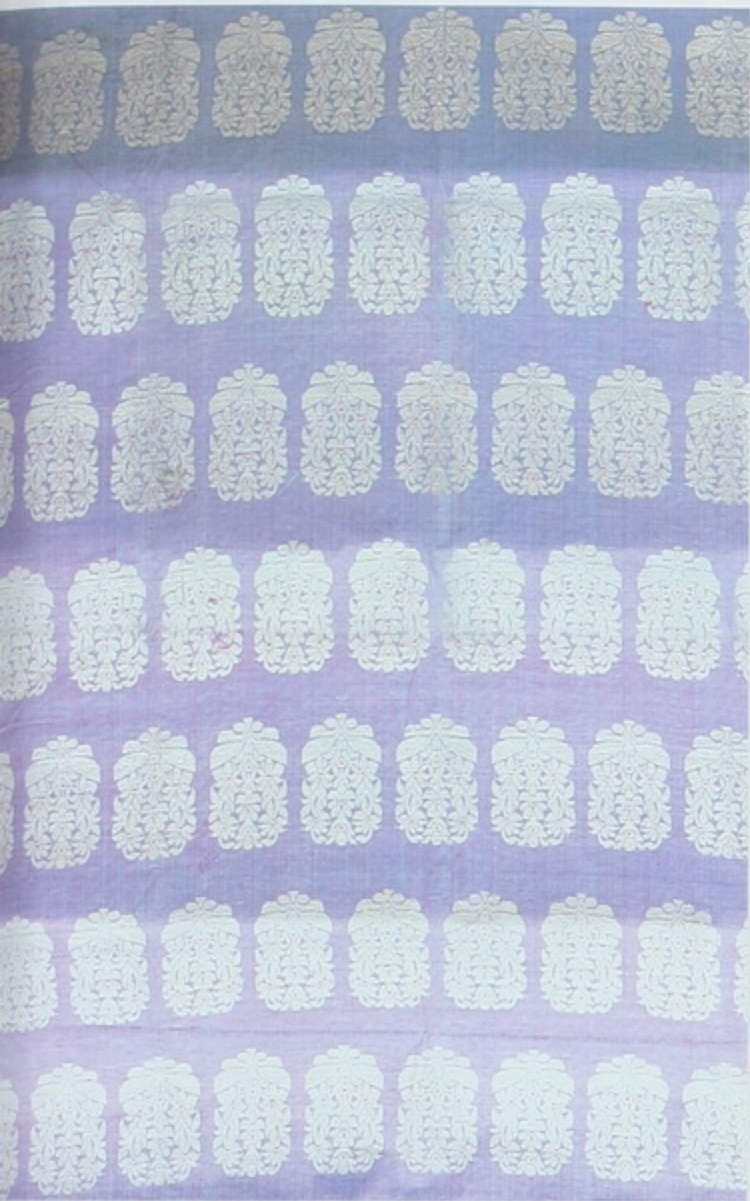
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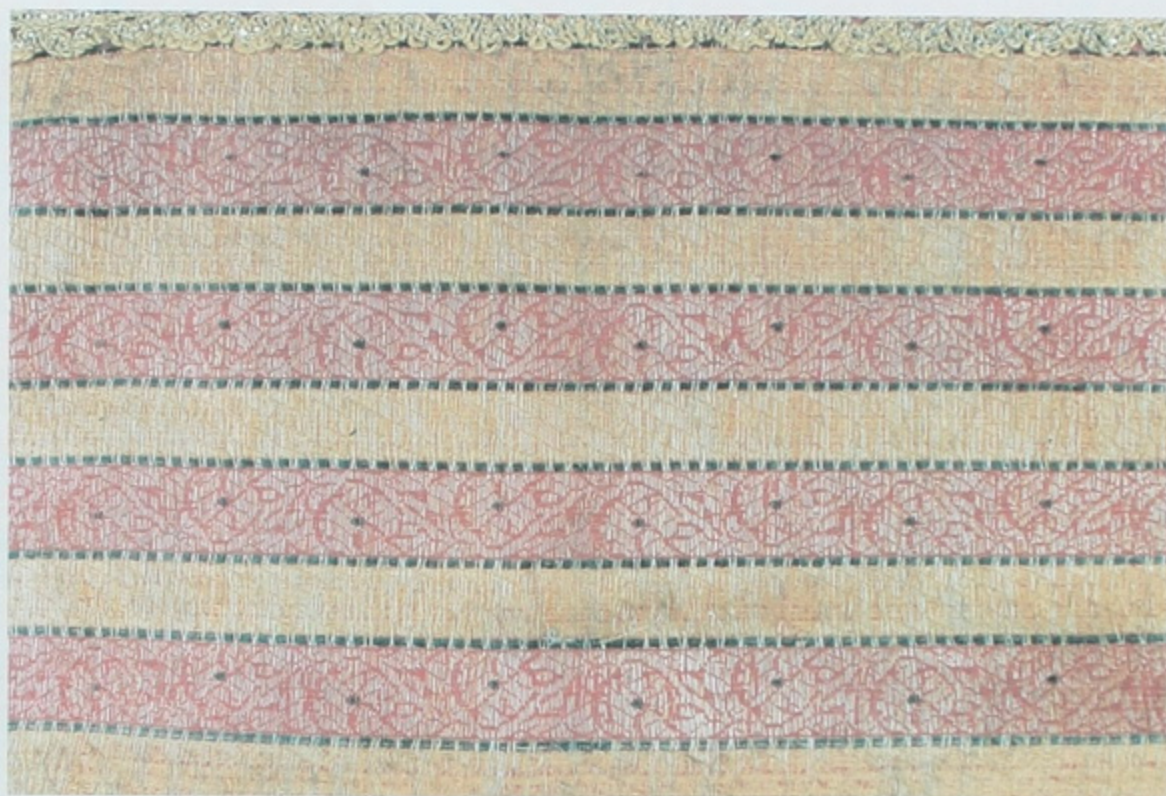
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16. During the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910 A.D.) men wore a printed **chongkraben** with a **pha khao ma** as a shoulder cloth.
17. Women, during the reign of King Rama V wore a plain **chongkraben** with a breast cloth.
18. Mural painting showing the different styles of dress worn by villagers in their daily life namely the **chongkraben** style and the **thok khamen** style lower garments.
19. His Majesty King Rama V dressed informally in the casual style with the edges of the cloth left-hanging (**loi chai**) in the manner favoured by the ordinary people for daily wear.
20. The **tabaengman** style of dress worn by women for work.





Textiles for the Village

Textiles woven for village use were restricted by the court since the Ayutthaya period to simple designs made from cotton. These textiles were woven by the villagers and exchanged in a barter system. The men's lower garments were plain or small checked cotton worn in the **loi chai** style for everyday use, or in the **chongkraben** style for special occasions and **thok khamen** for work. A general purpose cloth called **pha khao ma** was used for head cloths, belts, shoulder cloths, handkerchiefs, and **thok khamen**. The women wore **pha sin** or **chongkraben** in plain cotton with a plain breast cloth or shoulder cloth. For work the breast cloth would cross over at the front and be tied at the back of the neck in the style known as **tabaeng-man**.

The more wealthy people were able to purchase imported textiles from the market, such as Chinese

satins and low quality Indian cotton prints called **pha lai nok yang**, the best quality being reserved for the court.

Apart from the plain fabrics woven by the Central Thai villagers, there was a group of fabrics woven by the various Tai groups from outlying provinces and principalities who were relocated during the period of King Taksin (1767-1782 A.D.) through to the King Rama III period (1824-1851 A.D.). The **Tai Yuan** were relocated from Chiang Saen in northern Thailand, the **Tai Phuan** or **Lao Phuan** and **Lao Khrang** from northern Laos, the **Lao Song** or **Tai Dam** from Muang Thaen, Muang Than and Muang Moy in Sipsong Chao Thai which is in the border area of Laos and Vietnam. These groups were settled in various villages in the central area and later started weaving cultures in those areas which distinctly reflected their ethnic origins. Many of their weaving traditions have survived to this day.

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Illustration by Nit Jaingewkome





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21. Loom for weaving **tin chok** textiles at Tambon Don Rae, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province.
22. Elderly Tai Yuan women from Tambon Don Rae, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province, dressed in **sin ta mu**.
23. A comparative study of **pha sin** of the Tai Yuan from Ratchaburi Province. (L to R) **sin lae** or **sin luan**; **sin siu**; **sin ta mu** or **sin ta dok**.
- 24.-27. **Pha sin tin chok** of the Tai Yuan from Tambon Don Rae and Tambon Khu Bua, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province.





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Tai Yuan

The villages settled by the Tai Yuan include Tambon Khu Bua and Don Rae in Muang District; Tambon Nong Pho, Bang Kado and Nong Or in Photharam District of Ratchaburi Province; and a small group that moved from Ratchaburi Province to Ban Tha Sao, Tambon Huay Muang, Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province.

Pha Sin Styles

The main structure of the **pha sin** of the Tai Yuan was horizontal stripes maintaining the original names from northern Thailand, using very fine cotton yarns with some use of silk for supplementaries but interestingly woven with weft stripes and sewn with two side seams, with the exception of the **sin lae** or the **sin luan** which sometimes had warp stripes as seen in the north of Thailand today.

1. Sin Lae or Sin Luan

A black **pha sin** cloth with two wide bands of red near the hem and waistband. The main body sometimes had warp stripes of indigo.

2. Sin Siu

A green cloth with black stripes and two wide bands of red near the hem and waistband which had tiny supplementary designs within.

3. Sin Ta Mu or Sin Ta Dok

A multi-coloured striped cloth which was woven with a cotton warp, but the weft incorporated cotton and silk to emphasize red with green, blue, purple, black, and some supplementary bands of **khit** technique.

4. Sin Tin Chok

The structure of these **pha sin** added a decorative hem piece to a **sin siu**, **sin lae** or a supplementary decorated main body which was woven in the same colours of **sin siu** and **sin lae**. The hem pieces were



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28-31. Unique *sin tin chok* with *chok* pattern covering the entire body.

32. This *sin ta mu* is unique in its exquisite design detail and beauty which differs from the usual *pha sin*.

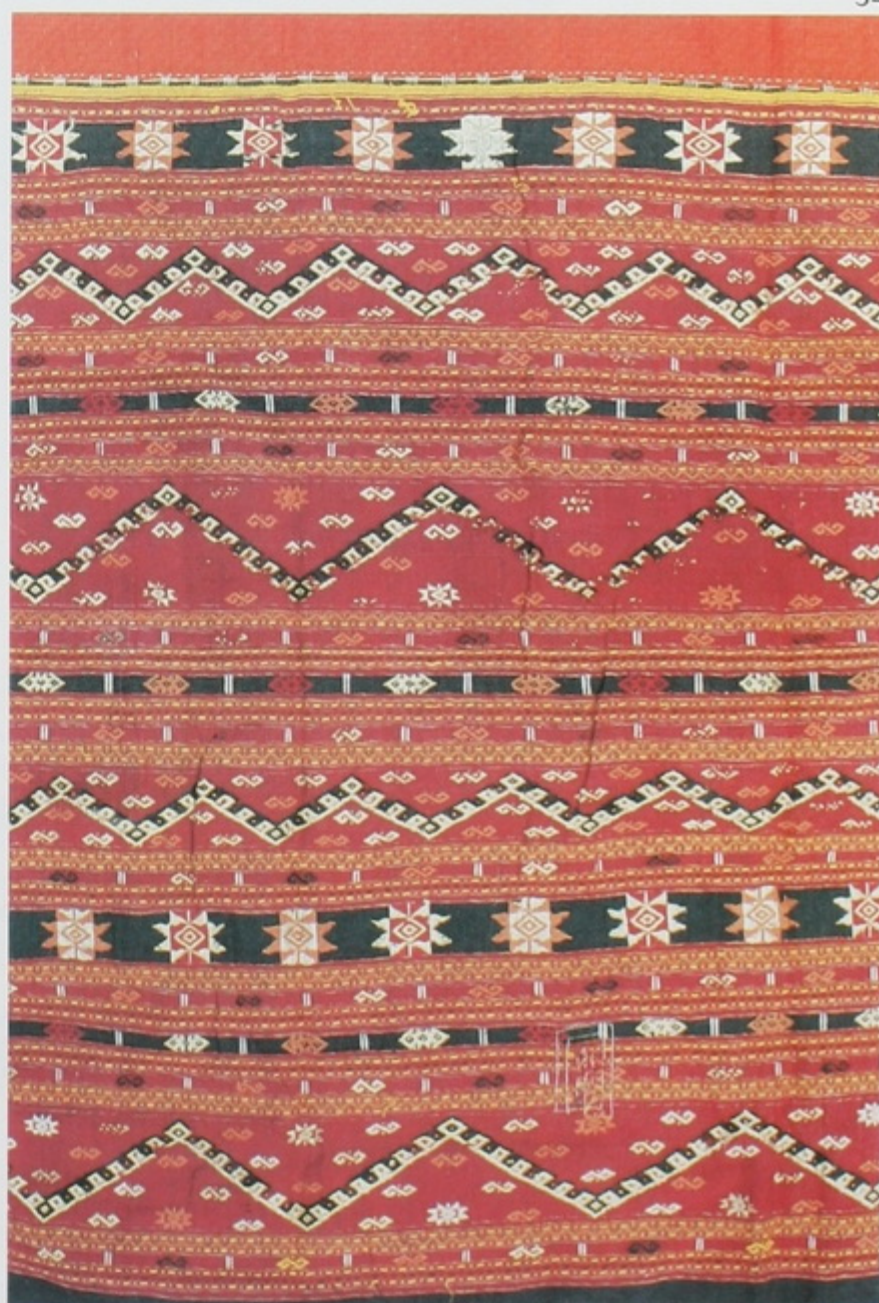
33-34. Detail of *sin ta mu* uniquely decorated with zig zags, hooks and *dok kaew* motifs.



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35. *Pha khao ma chok* or *pha hua* from Tambon Don Rae, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province.
- 36-37. *Pha pok hua nag* of the Tai Yuan from Tambon Don Rae, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province.
38. *Pha pok hua nag* of the Lao Khrang from Chai Nat Province.
- 39-41. Tai Yuan shoulder bags from Tambon Khu Bua and Tambon Don Rae, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province.
42. Lao Khrang shoulder bag from Uthai Thani Province used for holding areca nut.
43. Tai Yuan money belts from Ratchaburi Province.



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in discontinuous supplementary weft (**chok**) of geometric designs and the classic northern Thai motif of a pair of birds drinking from a water cooler. The main colour was red. One structure of hem piece had dense supplementary yarns covering the whole area while another structure was more openly woven showing the red ground colour and patterns covering only part of the hem piece, leaving the lower part plain as seen in northern Thailand.

5. Special Pha Sin

Some **pha sin** had supplementary designs throughout the main body and some had a **tin chok** added. Ikat and sometimes tapestry techniques have also been incorporated in some of these special **pha sin**. The **sin ta mu** structure was sometimes woven with supplementary designs within each band but still showing the ground colour. Popular motifs were large zig-zags, hooks and eight pointed stars called **dok kaew**.

Other Textiles

Other textiles of the Tai Yuan groups included **pha khao ma chok** or **pha hua** in red cotton with tiny **chok** designs scattered throughout; **pha pok hua nag**, a headcloth for ordination made in dense red or orange supplementary designs leaving a white square in the centre; red or red and black shoulder bags decorated with supplementary designs and decorative money belts. The latter were made from white cotton and embroidered. Men's clothes have not been recorded but it is expected that these were similar to those of the northern region of Thailand discussed in a later passage.

Lao Khrang

The Lao Khrang settled in villages in the provinces of Uthai Thani, Chai Nat and Suphan Buri in Central Thailand, as well as several provinces in northern Thailand. Their **pha sin** were made in silk in the main body with a cotton or silk hem piece. The upper part of the hem piece was decorated with yellow supplementary patterns like that of the Tai Yuan **chok** but there were no **hang sapao**. The classic style was a three-sectioned design with bold zig-zags, called **lai khlun**, or diamond squares, called **lai nuai**, in the central band bordered by smaller motifs. The plain red band at the bottom was particularly wide and was finished with an edging of yellow supplementary patterns. In the past a striped waistband was added when the **pha sin** was worn around the breast but was later discarded when the **pha sin** was worn around the waist.

Main Pha Sin Types

1. Sin Mi Lot

These were large weft ikat patterns in red silk with green, yellow and cream designs. Favorite motifs were the **naga** and large diamonds.

2. Sin Mi Ta

These were striped cloths alternating red ikat with yellow or white supplementary designs and in some cases including bands of indigo cotton ikat stripes. Being sewn with one side seam, these stripes were vertical.

3. Sin Mi Noi

In these **pha sin** the ikat bands were separated by plain bands of colour and sewn in one side seam so the bands were vertical.

4. Sin Kan or Khan

A horizontally striped tubeskirt sewn with two side seams made in

black cotton with supplementary designs, sometimes including ikat designs as well. The designs used were either geometric or animal figures, such as horses, covering part or all of the main body of the **pha sin**. When green stripes were incorporated, it was called **sin khan siu** or **sin sib siu**.

The traditional red hem piece with supplementary designs was then added to complete the tubeskirt, although occasionally replaced with an indigo or black hem piece with the same colourful designs.

Men's Textiles

For everyday wear the Lao Khrang men wore the usual Tai man's costume but for ceremonial occasions a long cloth was worn in the **chongkraben** style. This was made in silk weft ikat dyed principally red using the **patola** style structure.



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44-45. *Sin mi lot* of the Lao Khrang from Chai Nat Province.

46-47. *Sin mi ta* of the Lao Khrang from Uthai Thani Province.

48. *Sin mi noi* of the Lao Khrang from Chai Nat Province.

49-50. *Sin kan* or *sin khan* from Suphan Buri Province.



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Lao Song or Tai Dam

The villages settled by the Lao Song were Tha Yang, Ban Lat and Khao Yoi Districts in Petchaburi Province; Chom Bung, Damnoen Saduak and Pak Tho Districts in Ratchaburi Province; U Thong and Muang Districts in Suphan Buri Province; and Bang Len, Kamphaeng Saen and Don Tum Districts in Nakhon Pathom Province.

The main characteristic of the Lao Song textiles was the ground colour of indigo for cotton which was made into shirts, pants, all purpose cloths and woven into a silk warp for their **pha sin**.

Textiles for Everyday Use

The men wore Chinese style pants that tucked in at the waist and a long sleeve shirt called **sua tai** which was indigo cotton with a front opening closed by 10-12 silver buttons. The buttons were a lotus bud shape.

The blouse for women was called **sua kom**. It was fitted in shape, long sleeved and short with numerous silver buttons at the front opening. The everyday **pha sin** was dark indigo woven on a red silk warp and had thin white stripes in the weft which were unevenly spaced. A black waist band and a black and white compound weave hempiece were added.



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Textiles for Special Occasions

At the annual ceremony of respecting ancestors, called **phithi sen huan**, and at the wedding and funeral ceremonies, both men and women would wear **sua hi** shirts. These were knee or mid-thigh length with side slits on both sides. The men's shirt had a side opening down the full length of the shirt. The collar, sleeves and hems were decorated with woven silk cloth strips or embroidered in red, orange, green and white silk. The inside was decorated and was more beautiful with some mirror decorations added to the embroidery. It was customary to place this cloth over the coffin at the time of a funeral ceremony so that the inside was visible and could be admired. The women's shirt, on the other hand, was short sleeved with a deep 'V'-shaped neck and the colour and decoration used was similar to those of the men's.

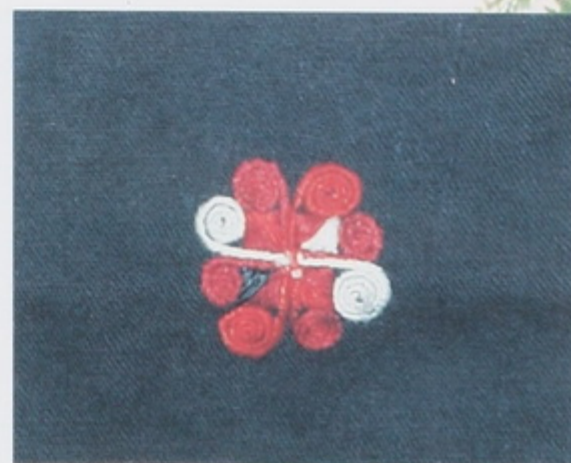
A multi-purpose cloth called **pha pieo** was used by the old women. This was a long narrow indigo cloth approximately 50 x 200 cms. embroidered with silk in hook designs called **kho kut** which were similar to the designs set on the **sua hi**. These cloths were used as breast cloths, handkerchiefs, and head cloths. A money belt was made for men from black or white cotton, embroidered and decorated with mirrors and in some cases decorated with strips of woven silk cloth.

51. Lao Song costumes from Khao Yoi District, Petchaburi Province. Men wear Chinese style pants with **sua tai** and a money belt. Women wear a silk-cotton tubeskirt with **sua kom**.
52. Lao Song costumes for special occasions. Both men and women wear the **sua hi** shirt.
53. The inside of the **sua hi** for women is beautifully decorated with embroidery. The inside is seen when the shirt is turned inside out and placed on the coffin at the owner's funeral.
54. Lao Song money belt from Petchaburi Province.

55. Traditional Lao Song house at Khao Yoi District, Petchaburi Province decorated with the **kho kut** design on the uppermost part of the roof.

56. **Kho kut** motifs in **pha pieo**, a general purpose cloth used by Lao Song women as a breast wrap or as a headcloth.

57-58. **Kho kut** and **dok kaew** motifs are traditionally embroidered on the **sua hi** shirt worn by Lao Song men.



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Lao Phuan or Tai Phuan

The Lao Phuan people were relocated in many provinces of Thailand, particularly in the northern, northeastern and central regions. However, many of these people no longer weave and have lost their Lao Phuan identity. The Lao Phuan women in Ban Mi District, Lop Buri Province, in the central area of Thailand, still maintain their weaving activities and produce silk and cotton items made in traditional Phuan styles.

The main **pha sin** types were weft **ikat** technique similar to those seen in the northeast of Thailand. The names for the structures varied according to local dialect such as:

1. Mi lot

A solid **ikat** pattern throughout the **pha sin**.

2. Mi piang

A striped **ikat** pattern with plain bands alternating with **ikat**.

3. Mi lai or Mi ta

A striped **ikat** pattern with small bands of coloured yarns and twisted two-coloured yarns or tiny **ikat** dot stripes alternating with the main **ikat** bands.

4. Mi wong or Mi yoi

Ikat pattern woven with two or four sheds of plain colour dispersed throughout the design after each four yarns of **ikat** to give the pattern a scattered structure.

Other Pha Sin Styles

Young women wore a tubeskirt called **sin nuan** which had a green main body with yellow horizontal stripes and a black hem piece. A large double band of red separated the hem and main body section. This structure is similar to those of the Lao Phuan from Sukhothai Province.

59. *Mi lot.*

60. *Mi piang.*

61. *Mi lai.*

62. *Mi wong.*

Household Textiles

1. Blankets, Mosquito nets and Sheets

Cotton twill weave blankets made in white and red, or white and black check designs were used by most groups as blankets for sleeping and as warm shoulder wraps.

The Lao Khrang had a special warm shoulder wrap made in supplementary weft patterns. Two pieces of cloth were sewn together to make a wide blanket with a central field of **khít** in white and indigo, or white and red, with elaborate borders at each end of the **khít** section in **chok** using yellow, red and green silk. Today colourful synthetic wool is used making these pieces very bright. In former times, this cloth was also woven for use as a curtain to hang in the doorways. In the case of curtain cloths, the design was arranged up-right throughout whereas the blankets had inverted designs. Two small **chok** decorated cloths were woven as decorations in front of the mosquito net in wedding ceremonies. These two cloths were sewn together and stitched to the mosquito net which was black cotton.

The Lao Song, customarily used a black cotton mosquito net which was decorated along the upper border with different designs similar to the **sua hi**. This was made especially for the privacy of the newly weds as rooms were not divided.

A cloth used as sheet to cover the mattress called a **pha lo** was made by the Lao Khrang in white cotton twill weave with red binding around the edges. A **khít** and **chok** band was placed at each end with a wider design at the head end.



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63. A comparative study of blanket (L) and door curtain (R) of the Lao Khrang from Uthai Thani Province.



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64. Lao Khrang blanket from Suphan Buri Province.

65. **Pha na muang** - two small **chok** decorated cloths woven to adorn the front of the mosquito net used in the wedding ceremonies of the Lao Khrang from Suphan Buri Province.



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66. Black cotton mosquito net of the Lao Song decorated along the upper border with different designs similar to the **sua hi**.

2. Pillows

Rectangular pillows made in six sections with decorated ends were used by the Lao Song and Tai Yuan. The Lao Song designs were mostly embroidered with mirror applique work where-as the Tai Yuan pillows had **chok** designs. The Lao Khrang also had rectangular pillows but these were decorated on the main sides with **chok** and had plain red at each end. These pillows were called **mon hok**.

A large triangular pillow made by the Lao Khrang was called **mon khwan** due to its axe-like shape. The sides were decorated with **chok** designs and the ends plain red or blue and red.



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67. Tai Yuan **mon hok** decorated at both ends with **chok** designs.

68. Lao Song **mon hok** embroidered at both ends with mirror applique.

69. Lao Khrang **mon hok** decorated with **chok** designs on the main sides of the pillow.

70. Lao Khrang **mon khwan** decorated with **chok** designs on the main sides of the pillow.



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Textiles for Rituals and offerings

Tais in every region of the country customarily wove various types of household textiles for use as temple offerings. Consequently, it is common to see finely woven pillows, blankets, meditation mats and shoulder bags, etc. stored in temples everywhere. These items are produced from a deep faith in Buddhism and also include scripture binders which in Central Thailand were mostly brocades and different types of textiles imported from India and China.

Traditional colours and techniques common to each area were incorporated into locally woven offerings. In addition to their **mon khwan** and **mon hok** pillows, the Lao Khrang also made flat meditation cushions called **asana** which were decorated on the main side with their traditional **chok** designs.

The Lao Khrang also wove special textiles for use as scripture covers, known as **pha ho khamphi**, as well as large curtains as offerings for the temple. Woven **khit** and **chok** patterns decorated these textiles while the curtains also included ikat designs. A small square cloth used to cover the head of the candidate during the ordination ceremony was also woven. The border of this cloth, known as **pha pok hua nag**, was decorated with **chok** patterns while the centre was a plain white or yellow square.



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71. **Pha pok hua nag** from Suphan Buri used for covering the head of the **nag** (ordination candidate) during ordination.

72. Lao Khrang scripture cover from Uthai Thani Province.

73. Scripture binders made of imported Chinese or Indian textiles.

74. Large curtain woven by the Lao Khrang from Uthai Thani Province as a temple offering.

75-76. **Asana** (cloth meditation mats) woven by the Lao Khrang from Uthai Thani Province as an offering to Buddhist monks for ceremonial use.



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Mural at Wat Phu Min, Muang District, Nan Province, showing the weaving traditions and lifestyle of the people of the Northern Region at the end of the 19th century A.D.

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NORTHERN THAI TEXTILES

by Songsak Prangwatthanakun

The northern region of Thailand can be divided geographically and culturally into two distinct areas:

1. **The Upper Northern Region**, which comprises the former Lanna Kingdom and includes the provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, Nan and Mae Hong Son.

2. **The Lower Northern Region**, which comprises the area between the northern region and the central plains and includes the provinces of Uttaradit, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Phichit, Kamphaeng Phet and Tak. In former times, these provinces marked the border area of the Lanna Kingdom, which had its centre in Chiang Mai, or the Upper Ping River Basin, and the Kingdom of Ayutthaya, which was in the area of the Chao Phaya River Basin.





Detail of reliefs at Wat Chedi Jet Yot, Muang District, Chiang Mai, built during the reign of King Tilokaracha which was the golden age of the Lanna Kingdom.



Tai Yuan women from Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai Province, dressed in *pha sin tin chok*.

Historical Background

Lanna was first established as a Kingdom by King Mangrai in 1296 after conquering Haripunjaya, but had its roots in the many small principalities of the region, the largest of which was the legendary **Yonok**. The **Tai Yuan** people derive their name from this legendary Kingdom, being called **Tai Yonok**, **Tai Yon** or **Tai Yuan**. Many chronicles speak of the **Lawa Changkarat Dynasty** leading up to the legendary **Khun Chuang**, the hero-king of Yonok who was said to have extended his borders north into Sipsong Pan Na and northeast into Muang Phuan, the Lao province of Xieng Khouang today. The capital of Yonok is thought to have been in the Chiang Saen area or on the opposite bank of the Mekhong River to present-day Chiang Saen. The modern areas of northern Laos, Sipsong Pan Na, Lanna and eastern Burma were occupied by Lawa, Khom, Mon and Tai groups and it was not

until the 13th century that the Tai established themselves as the ruling class in Lanna. King Mangrai, after establishing his dynasty in Chiang Mai, allied himself with King Ngam Muang of the Phayao Kingdom and King Ramkhamhaeng of the Sukhothai Kingdom. This alliance established the Tai as a cultural and military force which saw the ebb of Lawa, Khom and Mon influence in the north of Thailand.

Lanna, at the beginning of the Mangrai Dynasty, controlled the provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chiang Saen, Lamphun and Lampang and was allied with Phayao, and later in the reign of King Tilokaracha (1441-1487 A.D.), which was the golden age of Lanna, it expanded to include Phrae and Nan.

Contemporary to the Lanna Period, other kingdoms of power and influence included the Lan Xang Kingdom, on the east bank of the Mekhong River and Sipsong Pan Na





Young Tai Lue man and woman dressed in their traditional costume at Ban Hat Bai, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai.



Lao Khrang woman dressed in silk *mudmee* tubeskirt woven with cotton *tin chok*.

which was the Tai Lue stronghold at the source of the Mekhong River. These kingdoms had ties in their Buddhist religion and trade. In periodic wars, the people migrated across the borders bringing exchange of ideas and cultural aspects.

The features of woven textiles found in the northern region of Thailand have a cultural relationship with three main groups, namely:

1 Tai Yuan Nowadays known as "**Khon Muang**", the Tai Yuan are a large group who established Lanna culture in eight provinces in the Upper Northern Region. This group of people also migrated to the provinces of Uttaradit and Tak as well as to Tambon Khu Bua and Tambon Don Rae in Muang District of Ratchaburi Province in the central region. Consequently, woven textiles from these areas also bear Tai Yuan characteristics.

2. Tai Lue The Tai Lue migrated from Sipsong Pan Na into the Lanna region through many periods and generations. Today Tai Lue weaving areas situated in the Lanna region can be found in the districts of Tha Wang Pha, Pua, Chiang Klang and Thung Chang in the province of Nan, Chiang Kham and Chiang Muan Districts in the province of Phayao, and Chiang Khong District in Chiang Rai Province.

3. Lao This group migrated from the former Lan Xang Kingdom. Of this group, the **Tai Phuan** or the **Lao Phuan**, who can be found in the villages of Hat Sieo and Hat Sung in Si Satchanalai District, Sukhothai Province, the **Lao** group living in the vicinity of Nam Pat and Fak Tha Districts in Uttaradit Province, and the **Lao Khrang**, who can be found scattered throughout the provinces of Uttaradit, Phichit, Kamphaeng Phet (and as far as the provinces of Uthai Thani and Chai Nat in the central

region), are particularly renowned for their weaving skills.

Even though these three groups have today influenced each other in their weaving styles, a careful study reveals the individual characteristics of each group.

In former times, weaving was an important task for women. Materials included cotton and silk. The Lao bred silkworms for their own weaving purposes and for sale to the Tai Yuan and the Tai Lue. Silkworm breeding was not popular among the Tai Yuan and the Tai Lue possibly because of their Buddhist beliefs. It was believed that it was wrong to boil the cocoons because to do so would kill the insect. Consequently, most textiles woven by the Tai Yuan and the Tai Lue were of cotton. However, cotton and silk combinations can be found, particularly in textiles woven with special decorative techniques.



Mural in the Viharn Lai Kham, Wat Phra Singh, Chiang Mai, showing the manner of dress of Tai Yuan woman who wears a horizontal striped tubeskirt and a shoulder cloth.



Comparative study of the **pha sin** of the three Tai groups living in Lanna. (L) Lao Phuan **pha sin** from Hat Sieo village showing the fully decorated **tin chok** typical of the Lao; (M) Tai Yuan **pha sin** from Mae Chaem District showing the typical **tin chok** of the Tai Yuan leaving half of the hem plain red; (R) Tai Lue **pha sin** from Chiang Kham District showing their typical style for the hem in dark indigo.

Textiles for Women

An important apparel of clothing worn by women is the tube skirt, **pha sin**, which is made up of three pieces 1) the waistband known as **hua sin**, 2) the main body known as **tua sin** and 3) the hem piece known as **tin sin**. These three pieces are sewn together to form a tube skirt of suitable length. The main categories are those of one sideseam or of two sideseams.

Everyday **pha sin** worn by women in the north, known as **sin ta**, are patterned with horizontal stripes of alternating colours, the favoured colours being yellow, green and red. If the **pha sin** is sewn with one seam, the horizontal stripes are in the warp, but if it is sewn with two seams, then the horizontal stripes are woven in the weft. The waistband and the hem are made from plain black or red fabric. Sometimes, the waistband is sewn with two pieces of cloth, a red or dark brown piece and another white piece.

Pha sin worn on special occasions such as rituals or temple merit making ceremonies are more elaborately decorated than usual. **Pha sin** worn by the Tai Lue on such occasions have a very decorative main body whereas the Tai Yuan and the Tai Phuan favour a special decoration at the hem of the **pha sin**. The decorative piece is woven in discontinuous supplementary weft technique known as **tin chok**.

The standard **tin chok** of the Tai Yuan has a ground colour which is half black and half red. The discontinuous supplementary weft is woven with the black ground on the upper section, while the lower portion is plain red. An outstanding feature of these **tin chok** is the diamond motifs in a row known as **lai khom**. There are tiny designs in rows of two or four bordering the diamonds on both sides. The lower part of the supplementary design where the black and red ground colours meet is finished with small supplementary

patterns in short stripes pointing down. These are known as **hang sapao** or **soi sa**. The **hang sapao** is popular in black, white, yellow or two alternating colours. There are many different **chok** designs but the materials used, the choice of colours and the design combinations tell of the place of origin even though they are of the same basic structure and mostly woven in cotton. The **pha sin** of the ruling and upper classes were woven in silk with silver and gold brocade using a similar structure.

The **sin tin chok** of the Tai Yuan in Nan Province is different from that found in other provinces in that it is sewn with two seams. The body of the **pha sin** is woven with continuous supplementary weft in silver and gold yarns which are also preferred for the **tin chok**. In some the hem is decorated with coloured silk **chok** to enhance the colour. These **pha sin** are known as **sin kham khoeb** or **sin mai kham**.

The **sin tin chok** of the Tai Yuan in Nam Ang Village, Tron District and in Laplae District, Uttaradit Province are similar in appearance to the **sin tin chok** found among the Tai Phuan in Hat Sieo Village, Si Satchanalai District, Sukhothai Province. Green is the favoured colour for the body of the **pha sin** while the waistband is in either red or white, or both red and white on the same textile. The **tin chok** is made on a red ground with the entire hem decorated. The supplementary yarns used in Laplae and Nam Ang are of a golden yellow, while in Hat Sieo more colours are used. There are nine basic designs found in Hat Sieo. These are:

1. Lai Si Kho - 4 hooks motif
2. Lai Paet Kho - 8 hooks motif
3. Lai Sip - 12 hooks motif
Song Kho
4. Lai Dok Mon - 16 hooks motif
Sip Hok
5. Lai Khrua Noi - small fences
design
6. Lai Khrua Klang - middle fences
design

7. Lai Khrua Yai - large fences
design
8. Lai Nam Ang - Nam Ang design
9. Lai Song Thong - two centre-field
design

The **pha sin** of the Lao Khrang people have distinct features. The body of the **pha sin** is silk ikat, the favoured colour being red. There is a striped waistband and red silk or cotton hem piece. The upper part of the hem piece is decorated with yellow supplementary patterns like that of the Tai Yuan **chok** but there are no **hang sapao**. The plain red band at the bottom is particularly wide.

The **pha sin** of the Lao groups in Nam Pat and Fak Tha Districts of Uttaradit Province is similar in appearance to the **pha sin** of the Lao Khrang. It differs only in that it is sewn with two side seams and, consequently, the body and the hem of the **pha sin** are one piece. The main body of the **pha sin** comes in both weft ikat and tapestry weave with a one row supplementary weft

(**chok**) design above the wide plain hem piece. The hem piece is generally red with a black or green horizontal stripe. The black shows it is from Nam Pat and the green from Fak Tha. The main body part of some of those **pha sin** has been replaced by Chinese silk in which case the waistband and **chok** hem piece have been added separately.

A style of **pha sin tin chok** found in the area between Na Noi District, Nan Province and Tha Pla District, Uttaradit Province bears unique characteristics. Woven with a mixture of silk and cotton, the body part of the **pha sin** has been heavily decorated in horizontal bands incorporating a wide variety of weaving techniques and designs and joined to a **tin chok**, generally on a red base and in an open design. These pieces often have three side seams.

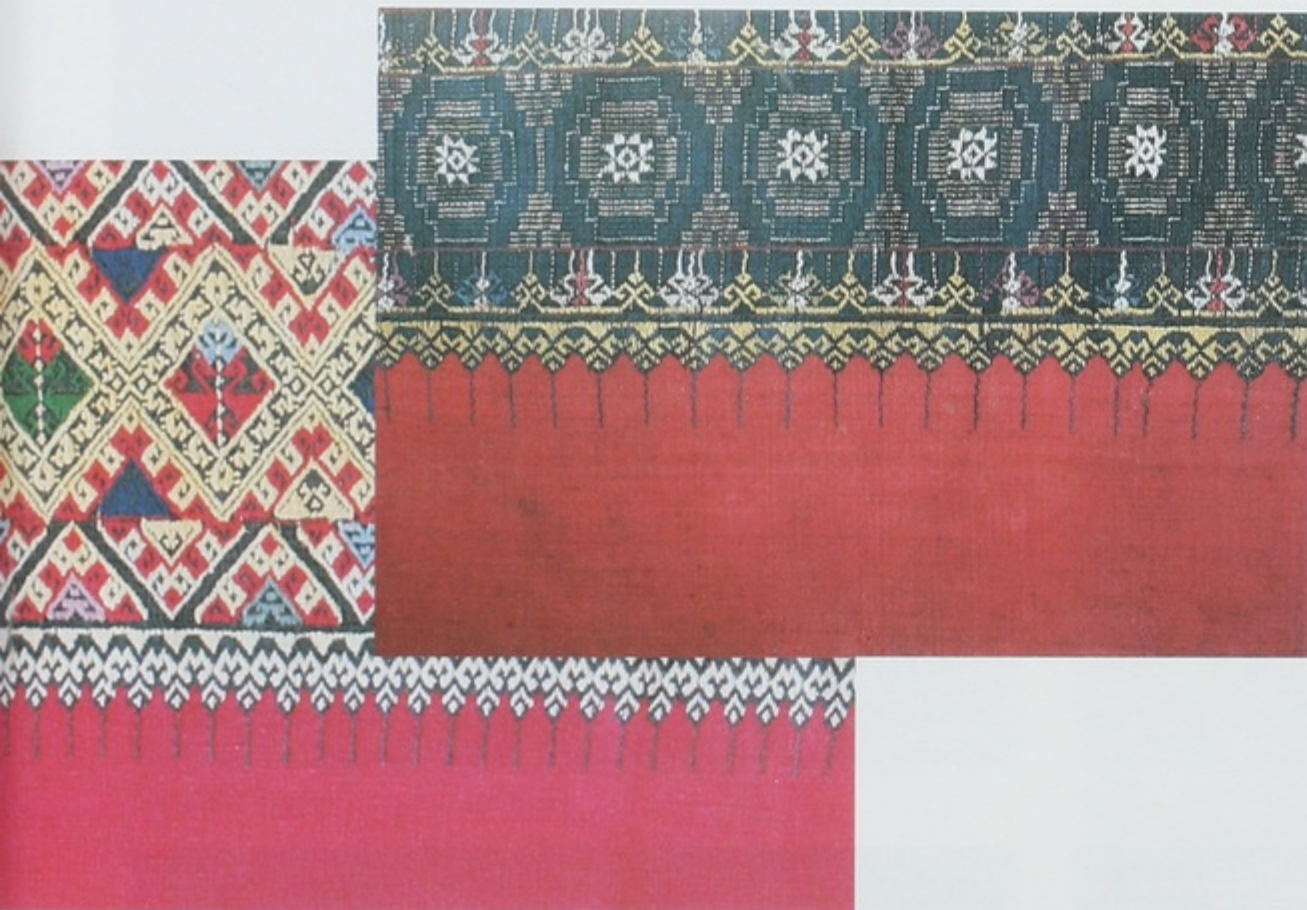


Different styles of **pha sin tin chok** of the Tai Yuan in Chiang Mai Province. (L to R) Mae Chaem District, San Pa Tong District, the style of the upper classes, Doi Tao District, and Chom Thong District.



*Details of the hem pieces of **sin tin chok** displaying various designs of the Tai Yuan in the Northern Region.*







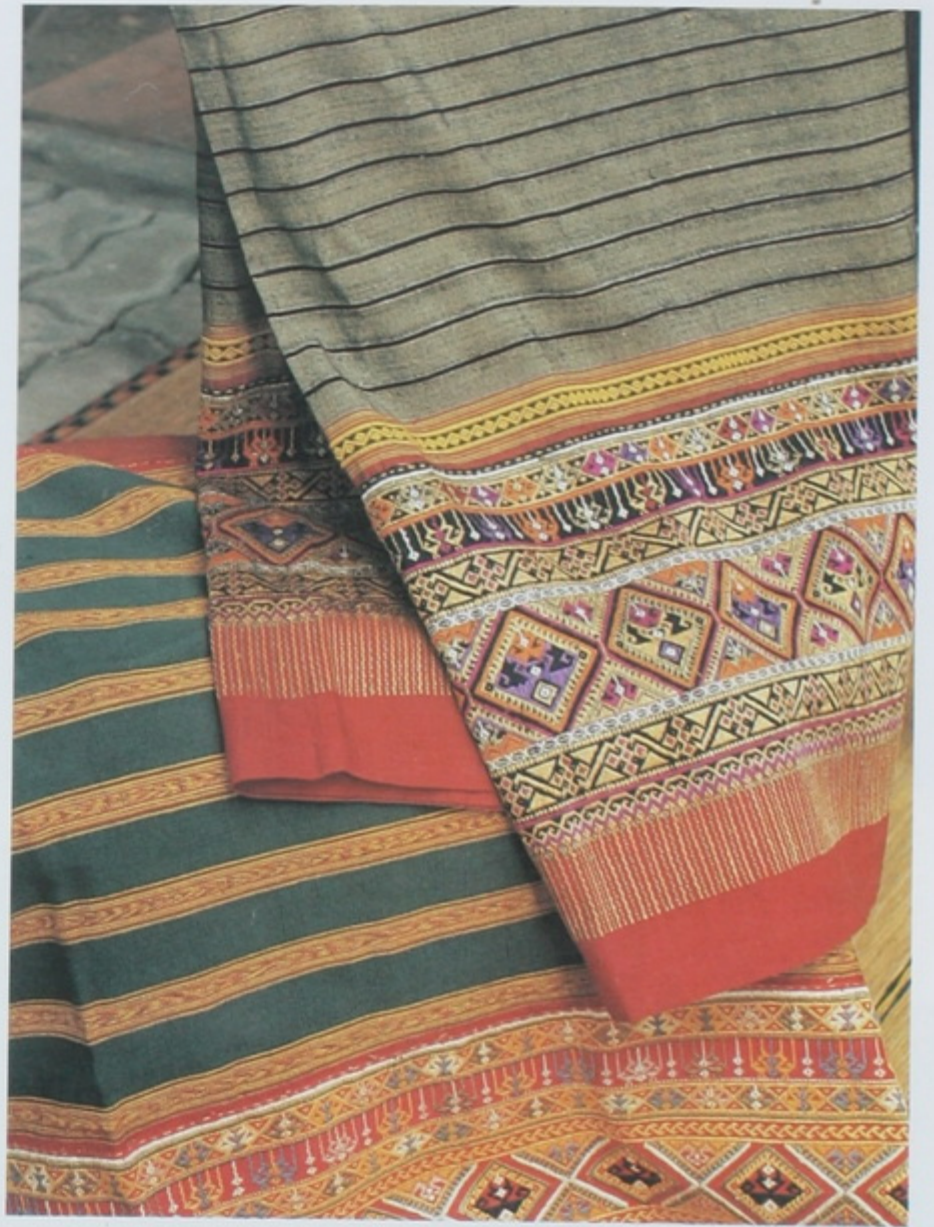
The Tai Phuan at Hat Sieo Village, Si Satchanalai District, Sukhothai Province, weave their **tin chok** with the right side facing up which is unusual as in most other areas the weaving is done in the reverse.



Lai Si Kho



Lai Paet Kho



Pha sin tin chok from Hat Sieo Village. The body of the **pha sin** has warp stripes with a separate **tin chok** design on a red background.

The nine basic designs of the **sin tin chok** of the Tai Phuan in Hat Sieo Village, Si Satchanalai District, Sukhothai Province:



Lai Sip Song Kho



Lai Dok Mon Sip Hok



Lai Khrua Noi



Lai Khrua Klang



Lai Khrua Yai



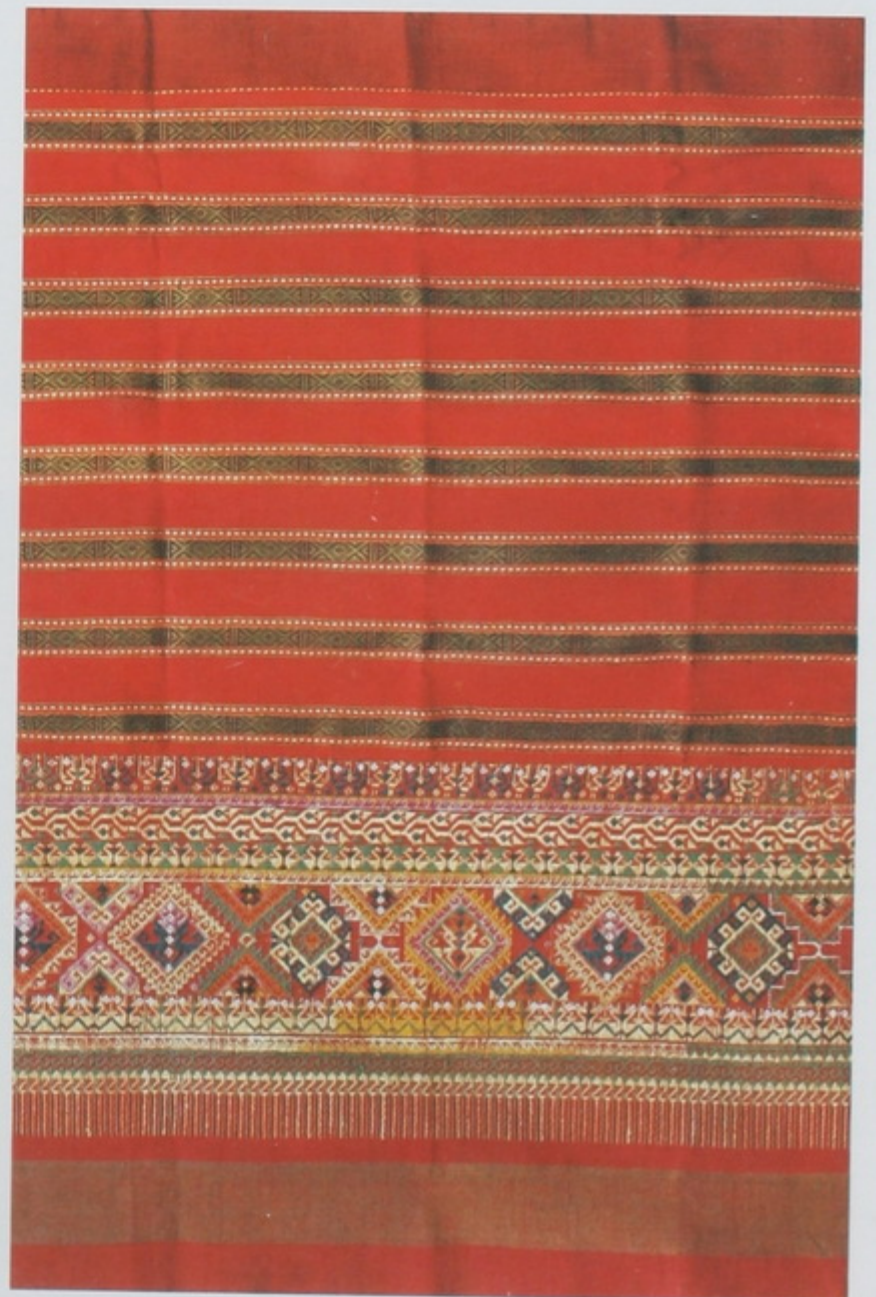
Lai Nam Ang



Lai Song Thong (This design is different from others at Hat Sieo in that the background is half black and half red.)



Pha sin tin chok of the Tai Yuan from Laplae District and Tron District, Uttaradit Province. (L) The body of the **pha sin** is woven in the supplementary warp technique. (R) The body of the **pha sin** is woven in the supplementary weft technique.



Pha sin tin chok of the Tai Yuan from Tha Pla District, Uttaradit Province.



Special **pha sin tin chok** from Nan Province. The **chok** design is on the body of the **pha sin** and it is woven with three side seams.



Pha sin of the Lao groups from Fak Tha District, Uttaradit Province.



Pha sin tin chok of the Lao Khrang from Phichit Province.



Woman's blouse from Nam Pat District, Uttaradit Province.



Tai Lue costume from Ban Hat Bai.



*Tai Lue tubeskirts from Tha Wang Pha District, Nan Province, woven in weft **ikat** alternating with continuous supplementary weft.*

The **pha sin** of the Tai Lue is sewn with two seams and tends to have the decorative design on the main body section. The hem piece is a piece of plain cloth in either black indigo or green. The Tai Lue living in Chiang Kham and Chiang Muan Districts of Phayao Province weave one row of tapestry weave into the body of the **pha sin**. The **pha sin** of the Tai Lue living in Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, however, have 3-5 rows of tapestry weave or discontinuous supplementary weft decorating the main body. The **pha sin** of the Tai Lue residing in the province of Nan is more unusual than that of the Tai Lue found in other areas. It is woven in horizontal bands of weft **ikat** alternating with continuous supplementary weft. When made in cotton, it will be indigo in colour, but if it is silk **ikat** the most

favoured colours are pink and purple in alternating stripes using cotton as the warp.

Evidence from mural paintings, such as those in Wat Phu Min and Wat Nong Bua in the province of Nan, and Wat Phra Singh and Wat Buak Khrok Luang in Chiang Mai Province, painted around the end of the 19th century A.D., show that the Lanna women of that time wore horizontally striped tubeskirts and went bare breasted with only a light coloured shoulder cloth which might have been used to wrap around the neck like a scarf or around the breasts. The custom of wearing blouses came to the north around the end of the reign of King Rama V as a result of western influence.

The Tai Lue have always worn blouses as they have their origins in

Yunnan Province in southern China where it is cold and they have received influence from China. The Tai Lue blouse, known as **sua pat**, is either black or indigo with long sleeves cut to fit tightly to the body. The front of the blouse has a cross-breast fastening with cloth knots or small strips of cloth for tying the shirt. The front of the blouse is worn short and the edges are trimmed with different coloured fabric or **chok** patterned cloth. If the blouse is for the cold season it is lined with a piece of red cloth.

Blouses used by the Lao groups found in the districts of Nam Pat and Fak Tha in Uttaradit Province are similar in style to the **sua pat** blouses worn by the Tai Lue. The only difference is that they prefer to use Chinese silk decorated with gold yarns.



(L to R) Tai Lue **pha sin** from Ban Phat, Chiang Kham District, Phayao Province, Ban Si Don Chai, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province; Ban Hat Bai, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province.

Detail of mural painting at Wat Phu Min, Nan Province, showing noblemen of the late 19th century dressed in *pha toi* and wearing shirts with the high Chinese collar.



Mural in the Viharn Lai Kham, Wat Phra Singh, Chiang Mai, showing tattoos on young men and the *khet mam* method of wearing the *pha toi*.

Textiles for Men

Ancient murals on temple walls show that it was fashionable among men in the upper northern part of Thailand to tattoo their bodies in black ink from the waist down to the knees or just a little below. They wore a plain cotton loincloth known as **pha toi**. This cloth, which was sometimes of a checkered or printed design, was of two lengths, long and short. The cloth was worn by tying it at the waist and rolling the two ends of the cloth together, passing them between the legs and tucking the ends in at the waist at the back. The short type of cloth would have been short enough so that the tattoos on the legs could be seen. This method of wearing is called **khet mam** in the northern dialect or **thok khamen** in Central Thai. The long length of cloth was worn in the **chongkraben** style, wrapped in the same way but covering the tattoos. Cloths worn by the upper classes were woven with twisted silk of two colours called **hang krarok**. The favoured colour was a darkish red.

It was the custom in former times for men to leave their chest uncovered, as with women, except on special occasions and when in the company of nobility and upper classes. On such occasions they wore a shirt with a high collar in the Chinese style. Tai Lue men wore a long sleeved indigo shirt with a loose waist. This shirt was decorated with stripes of various colours or with a strip of **chok** cloth in the same manner as that of the Tai Lue women.

Men began to wear shirts everyday during the reign of King Rama V. The shirts were round necked and fastened with cords or buttons. When going to the temple, they would wear a white shirt, but for working in the fields they would wear indigo known as **sua mo hom**. The trousers were gusseted and loose fitting sewn with five seams and known as **tio sado** or **tio sam duk** when sewn with three seams. The Lao Phuan village of Thung Hong in Phrae Province is today renowned for its production of



Shirt made from **pha yiarabab** for northern aristocratic men. National Museum, Chiang Mai.



In former times it was fashionable among men in the Northern Region to have tattoos from the waist to the top of the knees.



Man from Mae Chaem District wearing **sua mo hom** (indigo shirt) and **tio sado** (trousers). He has a **pha chet** on his shoulder.



An old woman wrapped in pha tum.

this style of clothing. Both shirt and trousers are presently promoted as traditional wear for local festivals and have become symbolic of northern Thai dress, even though it is generally regarded as a casual form of dress throughout Southeast Asia.

Cloths worn by men in former times as a scarf or shoulder piece were generally plain in colour or checkered and known as **pha tong**. It was actually a general purpose piece of cloth of the same type that Thais in every region of the country today know as **pha khao ma**.

During the cold season, both men and women wrapped themselves in a large piece of cloth known as **pha tum**. It measured about 120 cms.

x 200 cms. in size and was woven in thick cotton with a continuous supplementary weft or **khit** design at one end of the cloth or made in a checkered pattern in red, black and white throughout.

In former times the young men and women often spent their evening hours socializing. The young women would sit spinning cotton in the middle of the yard, a custom known as **long khuang**, while the young men would come to court them. If the young woman liked the young man, she would lend him her shawl to wrap around himself when he left, knowing that he would have to come back the following evening to return it to her. In this way relationships were established.



Pha chet (shoulder cloths) from San Pa Tong and Chom Thong Districts, Chiang Mai Province.



Pha chet from Long District, Phrae Province.



Tai Lue pha chet in Muang Ngoen style from Thung Chang District, Nan Province.

Another type of cloth which communicated fondness between young men and women and which young women wove to present to young men they loved was known as **pha chet**. This was a shoulder cloth woven in twill weave called **yok dok** in white cotton with a **khit** or continuous supplementary weft design in black and dark red decorating both sides. The **pha chet** from some areas bore special features, such as that of the Tai Lue of Muang Ngoen who reside in the district of Thung Chang of Nan Province. This cloth had the **chok** design tightly woven throughout and was woven in a mixture of cotton and silk in the geometric design style in red, yellow, pink, green, black and purple. The prominent colour was red. Young Tai Lue men used this cloth on their shoulders on special occasions such as going to the temple or taking part in various ceremonies.



Northern villager with pha chet over his shoulder.



Northern Thai household textiles.



Pha lop from Nan Province.



Tai Lue pha laep from Tha Wang Pha and Pua Districts, Nan Province.



Household Textiles

There were certain items that women had to prepare at the time of marriage to prepare them for their new life. Also northern Thais, regardless of locale, would prepare many mattresses, pillows, mattress covers and blankets and keep them as a token of hospitality for guests or relatives who might come to sleep over. It is still a practise to make these items of bedding and offer them to temples as a form of merit making so that monks may use them for the benefit of laity at times of temple ceremonies.

Mattresses, known in the northern Thai dialect as **salee**, were made from indigo or black cotton and measured 60 cm. x 180 cms. in size. The edging was made from the same cloth and was approximately 5 – 10 cm. deep. These were stuffed with kapok. The Tai Yuan mattress was made in three parts to facilitate storage when not in use. The Tai Lue mattress was made in one whole piece. In some places, such as Chiang Kham District in Phayao Province, the back of the mattress was decorated with a piece of continuous supplementary weft (**khit**) fabric of geometric design in black and red.

When folded for storage, this design would be visible on the top.

The **pha lop**, or bed sheet, was a plain white sheet using a narrow loom only 40 cm. – 60 cm. wide, and thus two pieces were sewn together to make a wide enough piece of cloth. The **pha lop** was generally designed with a **khit** design in black, red and decorated with geometric motifs, flowers and different types of animals. These designs help to identify the origin of the **pha lop**. In some places, the design was of only one or two rows while in other places the design covered the entire piece of cloth, such as the **pha lop** of the Tai Lue in Pua District, Nan Province.

Another fabric used as a mat when sleeping on the floor is the **pha laep**. The cloth, which measures approximately 50 cm. x 150 cm., is traditionally white in colour with the **khit** and **chok** designs covering the entire area and a red binding all around. Some pieces are backed with a black indigo cloth and stuffed with cotton. The **pha laep** was used in former times on the back of an elephant or, because of their compact light weight, as a sleeping cloth during travels.

1.-3. *Pha lo* from Nam Pat and Fak Tha Districts, Uttaradit Province.



Tai Yuan **mon hok** decorated with **chok** design from Tron and Laplae Districts, Uttaradit Province.



Mon pha and **Mon hok** in Tai Lue (Muang Ngoen) style from Ban Lai Thung, Thung Chang District, Nan Province embroidered with brocade.



Mon khwan in Lao Khrang style.



(L) A square-shaped pillow of the Lao in Nam Pat District, Uttaradit Province.

(R) **Mon hok** of the Tai Yuan decorated with **din ngoen** from Chiang Mai Province.



Blanket in Lao Khrang style.



(L) *Pha hom hua keb* from Nam Ang Village, Tron District, Uttaradit Province. (R) *Pha hom hua keb* from Laplae District, Uttaradit Province.



Zoomorphic *khit* patterns seen in blankets in Tai Yuan style from Long District, Phrae Province.



Details of a twill weave patterns of blankets.

Pha Lo are found in the region of Nam Pat and Fak Tha Districts, Uttaradit Province and bear the **yok dok**, **khit** and **chok** patterns in beautiful alternating colours. Nowadays, this cloth is used to present to elder relatives at the time of marriage and it displays the handiwork of the bride.

Mon (pillows) found in the northern region are square shaped and known as **mon hok**. The front piece of the pillow is decorated with the **khit** or **chok** design, (this is the opposite of the pillows of the northeastern region where the **khit** design is on the sides). Another type of pillow is the large three-sided triangular reclining pillow known as **mon pha**. This is used in ceremonies only or is made for presentation to monasteries. Most pillows of this type found in the northern region are

decorated with embroidery on the front of the pillow.

Triangular pillows of the Lao Khrang have a **chok** design on the sides of the pillows similar to the designs on the square-shaped pillows of the Lao in Nam Pat District which are about 30 cm. x 30 cm. in size and are used in marriage ceremonies.

Pha Hom (blankets) used throughout the northern region are two pieces of cotton fabric woven in the **yok dok** (twill weave) pattern and sewn together lengthwise to create a textile 120 cm. x 200 cm., a size large enough to wrap around the body during the cool season. Blankets used for sleeping are woven to double the size, 400 cm., folded over and joined together giving the cloth a double thickness for extra warmth.

The **pha hom** of the Tai Yuan found in Nam Ang Village, Tron District, and in the vicinity of Laplae District, Uttaradit Province is known as **pha hom hua keb** and is of two types, namely a red and white. They are woven in twill weave and have a **khit** design in a reddish yellow along one side. It is fashionable to decorate them with sequins. This very attractive wrap around blanket is unique to this area.

Another unique blanket design is that of the Lao Khrang which is woven with white cotton and decorated with the **chok** and **khit** designs using silk and cotton in bright alternating colours. The pattern, which appears on almost all the cloth, is of geometric designs in either indigo or red **khit** in the centre panel with **chok** patterns mainly in yellow tones at each end.



1

Thung Yam (shoulder bags) used throughout the northern region within the Tai and hilltribe groups. Each group uses techniques, decorative motifs and colours typical of their group. The most common bag is made from a white cotton cloth with thin black stripes. This bag is used by the Tai Yuan, Tai Lue and Lao groups.

While the Tai Lue shoulder bag is typically red, those made by the Tai Yuan in Nan Province can be found in a variety of different colours and are occasionally decorated with a supplementary weft pattern using a range of colours.



2



3

1.-3. Tai Lue and Tai Yuan shoulder bags from Nan Province.

4. Tai Yuan shoulder bags from Laplae District, Uttaradit Province.

5. Lao Phuan shoulder bag from Hat Sieo Village, Sukhothai Province.



4



5



Painting depicting the Visakha Puja festival, by Sompetch Manorin, showing how **tung** are used by Northern Thais in their merit making ceremonies.



Tung hanging in the main sanctuary at Wat Ban So, Chiang Klang District, Nan Province.

Textiles for Rituals and Offerings

Textiles have always been an important part of the offerings made in the various Buddhist ceremonies and cultural rituals performed by the people in northern Thailand. Women prepared these textiles for their own family and as a way of making merit.

During the Songkran festival, celebrated to mark the beginning of the Thai New Year, textiles were traditionally offered to local temples as well as to elder family members. Textiles for the temple included woven banners known as **tung** and **pha chet luang**. The **tung** were long narrow white (or red in Nan Province) cotton cloths with a **prasat** monument design at one end woven in the **khiti** or **chok** technique. Some carried additional decorations made of paper, bamboo, palm leaf or tassels made from cloth remnants. The **pha chet luang**, on the other hand, were white cotton with **khiti** designs of animals and geometric patterns at both ends. The main colours were

black and red for the supplementary yarns. In addition to the **tung** and **pha chet luang**, smaller banners known as **pha chiwon** were woven for use as altar decorations. Among the Tai Lue communities, they were woven using the **khiti** technique.

Textiles offered to elder family members comprised various traditional cloths for use as personal costume. Designs varied according to locale.

At the ordination ceremony for Buddhist novices, called **buat luk kaeo** in northern Thailand, a complete set of textiles was required for use by the newly ordained novice. These were decorated more elaborately than textiles used by daily and incorporated the use of silver yarns, denser embroidery and design weaving. The costume traditionally worn by the **nag**, or candidate for ordination, was made especially for this occasion. The textiles used varied according to area, but in general were particularly colourful and elaborate as the style of the **nag** was meant to emulate that



Pha chiwon was woven for use as altar decorations.

of Prince Siddhattha before he renounced his worldly pleasures to seek the homeless life and eventually become the Buddha. The saffron robes worn by the novice after completing the ordination ceremony were prepared in advance by the mother.

Another Buddhist ceremony celebrated in the north is the **tan kuai salak** when people present a variety of offerings to temples in their community. Offerings used in this ceremony traditionally included **pha ho khamphi** and **pha chet noi**. The **pha ho khamphi** were palm leaf book binders made with bamboo and cotton. The Tai Lue decorated their binders with **khit** designs of animals, birds and geometric patterns, and a wrapping technique producing bold stepped square designs, zig zags and diamonds. Another style seen in the north were bamboo slats wrapped in an open netting design and corded designs with cloth backings.

The **pha chet noi** are small cotton textiles, approximately 15 – 20 cms. wide and 20 – 30 cms. long. They are mostly plain white in colour with a simple supplementary weft pattern at each end. They are traditionally used as handkerchiefs or napkins, and were sometimes used to wrap offerings presented to monks.



The **prasat** motif woven in the **khit** technique is an important part of the tail of the **tung**.



Tung in the Tai Lue style.



Tung in Tai Lue style from Mae Sai District, Chiang Rai Province.

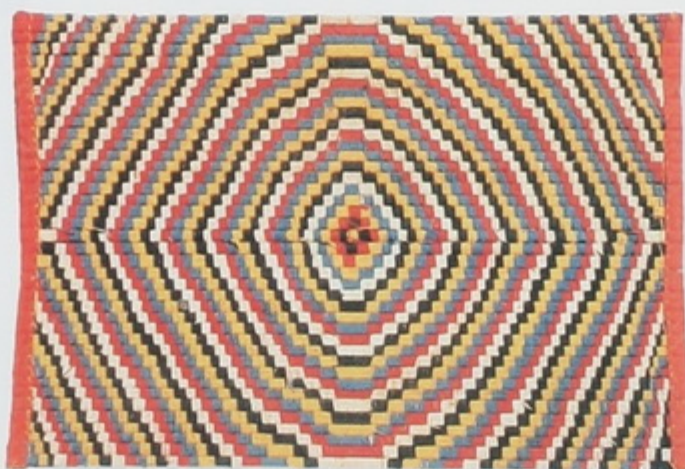
(L to R) Tai Lue *pha chet luang* from Chiang Kham District; *pha chet luang* from Chiang Khong District; two *pha chet* from Chiang Khong District.



The ordination ceremony for novices (*buat luk kaeo*) in Mae Hong Son.



Offerings used in the *tan kuai salak* ceremony in Lamphun.



Scripture covers made by weaving different coloured cottons alternating with bamboo strips to produce a variety of designs.



Part of the "Boon Phra Wase" festival, by Teerawat Kanama, depicting of the Northeastern Thais in carrying the Phra Wase scroll during the Boon Phra Wase Festival.



ISAN TEXTILES

by Patricia Naenna

'Isan', meaning the 'northeast' in Thai language, is an area comprising seventeen provinces and situated on the Khorat plateau. The Mekhong River borders the whole region on its eastern and northern frontiers with the Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic while the western and southern frontiers are marked by the mountains that rim the plateau. The region is more easily discussed if divided into three main areas: upper, lower and central Isan, the latter comprising an area south of Khon Kaen to Buri Ram in an east-west band and including the Mekhong River Basin.

Isan has a very long record of human habitation and was not always the arid area that it is today. Forty years ago forests abounded and natural resources for dyes were plentiful. Today the only natural dyes that are commonly found are indigo (*indigofera tinctoria*) which is planted annually, and lac which is created by an insect, neither of which require much water. The oldest known inhabitants (in the upper part) belonged to the Ban Chiang culture which is known to have existed around 3600 B.C. There is evidence of advanced cultural developments such as bronze making since 2700 B.C. and fabrication of cotton and hemp since 700 B.C. Pottery rollers have been found with traces of colour pigment still attached to their carved surfaces, suggesting possible use as a textile printing mechanism. It is possible then that the prehistoric people of Ban Chiang were wearing or using printed textiles and that their culture had made contact with island southeast Asia, as seen in the exchange of design elements. The Ban Chiang culture had disappeared by the third century A.D. and little evidence of further cultures exists until the stone-carving people of the Dvaravadi period after the eighth century. These people made carved boundary stones, some with Buddhist iconography, but none showing evidence of textile or garment use of the ordinary



1



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people. Costumes that appear in these carvings are of deities and characters from the stories of the lives of the Buddha who are dressed in Indian styles. It is likely that the Indianized states of Funan and Chenla had significant influence on their cultures since the first century A.D. but indigenous styles of textiles prevailed for the general population, the Indian styles being kept for the people of rank and status.

The three main styles that exist in Isan today are the Lao, the Phutai and the Khmer. These styles used to be designated by the ethnic group and it was possible not only to tell the ethnic origin of the costumes, but also distinguish financial and marriage status, and possibly village origin. The upper and central areas of Isan were once governed by the Lao of the Lan Xang Kingdom (1353-1707 A.D.) while the southern area was governed by the Khmer empire of Angkor (1050-1431 A.D.) and by the Siamese of Ayutthaya after that.

Family ties still exist between the Lao on the west side of the Mekhong and the Isan people on the east banks. The Phutai groups settled in the central Isan area from Muang Sae Phon and other large towns (called Muang) in southern Laos.

The textiles of the upper area are mainly cotton with patterns in weft ikat (**mudmee**) and supplementary weft techniques. They are made by the Tai Lao and Lao Phuan who migrated from the Vientiane area and some minority Tai ethnic groups called Nyor, Yui, Kaleung and Sak and Mon Khmer groups called Kui, Brew and So who today weave textiles similar to the majority Lao groups and no evidence of their own styles remains. The people who migrated into the central and Mekhong River Basin area of Isan were Lao who came from Pakse and Savannakhet where a long tradition of silk weaving existed. They brought their skills of silk ikat and supplementary weft (**khit**) weaving with them and it is in this area that

King Rama V introduced advanced technology in the late 19th century and today the finest silks for export are produced. Phutai people also came from Laos into the Kalasin, Mukdahan and Chanuman areas bringing with them their skills in silk supplementary warp weaving, weft ikat and their own styles of supplementary weft (**khit**). The lower area is populated by ethnic Khmer groups, specializing in silk weaving in twill weaves and three heddle weft ikats. Even though this is one of the poorest areas of Thailand today, the people wear silk to till the fields because the area is too dry to grow cotton and thus the silks are more economical, requiring only the leaves of the mulberry trees that are grown at home to feed the silk worms. The women weave on Khmer style looms which are different from the Lao standing looms seen in the upper and central Isan region. Lao people who live in this area live along the Mekhong River and weave silk textiles typical of the central Lao.



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The types of textiles used in Isan in the past fall into the main categories of costume, household and ritual use. The costumes were specific to the ethnic groups and often indicated status as well as showing off the weavers' skills. Women's costumes were more elaborate than men's and the ceremonial garments were particularly beautiful. Everyday dress was practical and often quite plain. Textiles made for ceremonial wear, however, were woven without giving consideration to expense or time, thus the resulting fabrics were of spectacular quality and complex in technique and design. Such ceremonies include weddings, temple ceremonies, funerals, formal occasions to meet high ranking officials, spirit appeasing ceremonies and the various Tai festivals that occur during the year. In the past, these were occasions on which the young women could display their weaving skills, particularly to possible suitors, as this was an important criteria of a good wife.



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1. Ban Chiang bronze musical instruments.

Metal Age textile imprints on a bronze bracelet at Ban Chiang, Udon Thani Province.

2. Naga image on a cotton **pha sin** from upper Isan.

3. Naga image on a silk **pha sin** from Central Isan.

4. **Mi hol** pattern from lower Isan.

5. Banner from the northeastern part of Thailand displaying different decorative motifs in the **khit** technique which reflect the soul of Isan.

Textiles for Women

Pha Sin or Tubeskirt

The traditional dress of the women in Isan was a tubeskirt called a **pha sin**. The textiles for these differed in the three main areas of Isan, the upper area making cotton ikat in indigo and white for daily wear, to which a strong, narrow compound weave hem piece was added and a plain or striped cotton waistband. Villages famous for these include Ban Chiang, Ban San Sa and Ban Huai Som in Udon Thani and Nong Khai Provinces. For ceremonial use, elaborate hem pieces in supplementary weft (**chok**) were added to the indigenous cotton pieces or silk textiles that were purchased from the Lao side of the Mekhong River or from central Isan. The upper Isan tubeskirt was worn at calf length as their looms were narrow and this was the Lao style of their ancestors. The textile was woven with weft ikat designs, placing stripes in the vertical position when worn, showing patterns of diamonds, serpents, eight-pointed stars, water chestnuts, ferns, trees and hooks. These motifs recur in the textiles of the Lao in many regions and are used for the **khit** and ikat fabrics. They are thus associated with the Tai ethnic group and are referred to as classic Tai or Lao motifs.



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6. Cotton bundles dyed in natural indigo.

7. Indigo dyeing at Ban Sang Sa, Phen District, Udon Thani Province. Up to eight dips in the indigo vats are necessary to create the darkest indigo.

8. Indigo blouses are still worn by the elder members of the northern Isan community.

9. Cotton spinning by hand at Ban Sang Sa, Phen District, Udon Thani Province.

10. Cotton bowing, Ban Sang Sa, Phen District, Udon Thani Province.



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11. Upper Isan ikat design showing large hooks *lai kho yai*.



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12. Upper Isan ikat design with serpents, large hooks in a lattice design.

13. Upper Isan ikat design with large serpents (*nag*) and trees.

14. Upper Isan ikat design called *kok ma*.



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The **pha sin** of the central and Mekhong River Basin area are of the Lao and the Phutai styles. The every day **pha sin** of both these groups is a cotton ikat similar to that found in the upper area but the ceremonial tube skirt is silk, woven in a weft ikat stripe or showing designs very similar to those in the cotton tube skirts but using a different palette of colours suitable for silk which in the past were dyed with natural dyes. The looms of the Lao are wider since the development received in the period of King Rama V, thus not requiring the use of a hem piece, but usually only a plain or striped cotton or silk waistband. Before the use of wider looms, decorative hem pieces were made in discontinuous supplementary weft (**chok**) to be added to the silk **pha sin**. Typical colours used in the Lao silk ikat tubeskirt called **sin mi** were a single ground colour of purple, green, orange, brown or red with yellow or orange ikat patterns. A **pha sin** commonly worn by elderly women is the **sin thiu**. This is a dark indigo cotton textile with a fine red horizontal stripe in the warp. The warp was traditionally silk with a cotton weft. Another textile worn by elderly women is called **sin mai kom** or **pha mai khaen** which has small vertical stripes in a two-tone twisted yarn made of silk.

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15. Phutai **sin mi** in silk ikat with a narrow compound weave hem piece and red waistband decorated with **khut** from Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.

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17. **Sin thiu** tubeskirt made by Phutai weavers in Ban Phu, Nong Sung District, Mukdahan Province.

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16. **Pha sin** from Ban Um Yang, Phana District, Ubon Ratchathani Province. The top two are cotton **mi kho noi** design ikat, the red piece is silk weft ikat **sin mi** and the lower two are **pha mai khaen** or **sin mai kom** made in twisted silk with a red supplementary weft waistband.



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The tubeskirts of the Phutai women from the Kalasin, Mukdahan and Chanuman areas are typical of their ethnic origin. These are made in silk ikat on narrow looms with the ikat patterns in the main body of the **pha sin** spaced with two to four sheds of plain yarns giving the design a striped, open effect in multi-colours. The traditional colours were dark purple or brown ground colours with yellow, red and green designs. Patterns were of large and small diamonds, hooks, serpents, water chestnuts, and eight-pointed stars. A cotton or silk hem piece is added to the **pha sin** which is woven with alternating weft colours of red, yellow and white in a compound weave. A striped waistband which is often red with supplementary weft (**khit**) designs similar to those seen on their shoulder cloths is added. The everyday tube skirts of the Phutai, made in cotton ikats dyed in indigo with white patterns and using a similar hem piece and waistband, are the same as those of the upper Isan Lao. Well known Phutai villages include Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province and Ban Phu, Nong Sung District, Mukdahan Province.



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18. Phutai tubeskirt from Ban Phu, Nong Sung District, Mukdahan Province. This is silk ikat with **tin tam lae** compound weave hem piece.

19. Phutai women from Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.

20. Phutai silk ikat design with hooks.

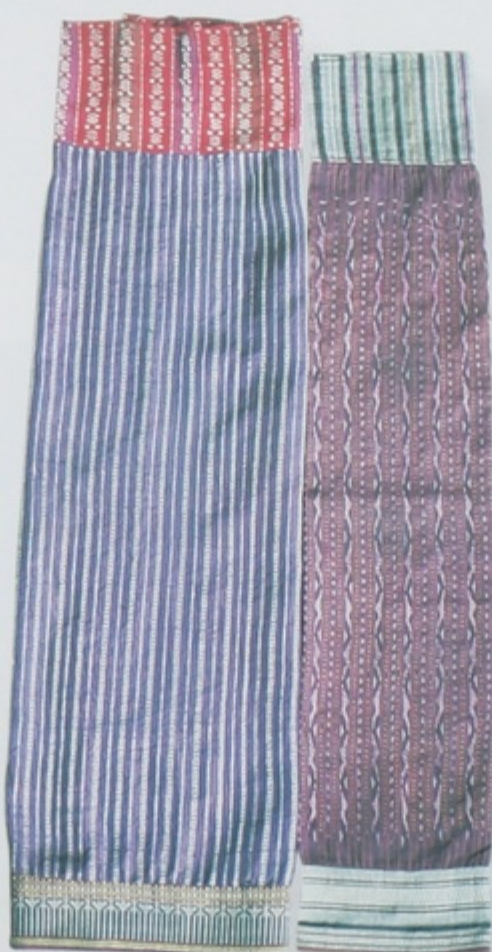
21. Weaving discontinuous supplementary weft of a Phutai, Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.

22. Elderly women's everyday costume of Phutai peoples, Mukdahan Province.

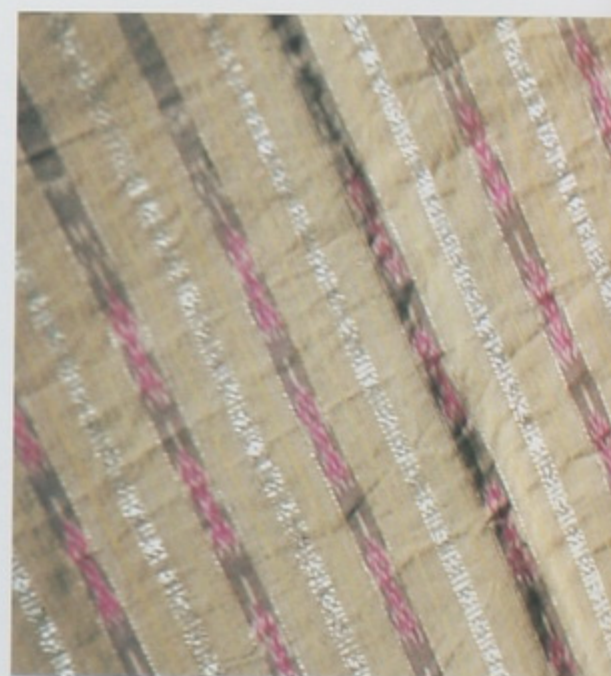
The style of **pha sin** of the Lao seen in Ubon Ratchathani is similar to the central Isan style mentioned but special **pha sin** styles, called **sin long**, were also woven in gold or silver yarns in vertical stripes alternating with silk ikat. The waistband for these was usually red, green and purple stripes with silver diamond shapes placed in the weave. These were called **hua chok dao**. The hem pieces for these **pha sin** were made in brocade twill weaves or supplementary weft designs. For the most high ranking women, a **pha sin** was made in the Indian style “**yarabab**” which was supplementary motifs, such as diamonds, openly spaced on plain silks. The hem pieces were woven separately in brocade. Designs in the hem pieces included water chestnuts, **naga** (serpents), horses and geometric designs. Villages renowned for their weaving are Ban Pa Ao, Muang District, Ban Puai Hua Dong, Amnat Charoen District, Ban Um Yang, Phana District and Ban Song Yang, Muang Samsip District, all located in the province of Ubon Ratchathani.



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23. The waistband of *sin thiu* called *hua chok dao*.

24. (L) *Sin long* and (R) *Sin mi* from Ubon Ratchathani Province decorated with alternating mongoose and serpent motifs popularly worn by noblewomen in former times.

25.-26. *Sin long* tubeskirts worn by high ranking ladies. These designs were influenced by Indian and Persian brocades. Ubon Ratchathani became well known in the period of King Rama V for its brocade weaving.

27. Detail of tubeskirt with brocade technique from Ubon Ratchathani National Museum.

28. Elderly woman from Phana District wearing traditional white cotton breast cloth and dark tubeskirt of indigo cotton ikat.

29. Weaver from Ban Puai Hua Dong, Amnat Charoen District wearing a silk ikat tubeskirt.

30. Weaver from Ban Puai Hua Dong, Amnat Charoen District with silk cocoons she has reared herself.

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The textiles of the lower Isan are Khmer in style. A traditional cloth for both men and women is the **pha chongkraben** which is a long cloth made in ikat or plain silk. This cloth is worn by tying the ends in the front at the waist, rolled or folded and passed through the legs and tucked in at the waist at the back. This method of wearing a textile remains as a sign of Indian Influence and the structural layout of the patterns in their ikats show influence from the **patola** textiles of India that were used by the court. This style of wearing the **pha chongkraben** was considered old fashioned and discouraged in Thailand during the development period after the Second World War when tube skirts of the Thai were adopted but woven in the Khmer style designs, being silk woven in a three shaft twill on Khmer looms and wide enough that hem pieces and waistbands did not have to be added like in former times when a plain white cotton waistband was added. The classic ikat design today is called **mi hol** and is a delicate silk stripe made in yellow, green and black ikat patterns on a red ground. These were woven for ceremonial and everyday **pha sin**, but old pieces and pieces made in lower quality silk were worn everyday. In the pre-World War II period, a tubeskirt with a separate ikat hem-piece reflecting the hem designs of the **pha**



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31. ***Pha chongkraben** from lower Isan made in a twill weave silk weft ikat dyed with natural dyes.*

32. *Various **mi hol** tubeskirt from Surin Province.*

33. *Detail of **mi hol** ikat pattern from Surin Province. The ikat is very detailed and small. It was woven with three shafts to give a weft faced fabric.*





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34. *Mi hol phabol* tubeskirt with a separate hem piece added in weft ikat silk. These cloths were used for dancing performances.

35. *Am prom* design made in silk in a tiny warp and weft ikat (double ikat) from Surin Province. These were used as a tubeskirt for women.

36. *Samo* design silk checked women's tubeskirt from Surin Province.

37. Various twill weave tubeskirts from Surin Province in *rabeu* design.

38. Various modern tubeskirts from Surin Province using traditional *pha chongkraben* designs and Lao ikat designs.



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39. Various silk tubeskirts from Surin Province.

40. Dyed silk hanks at Ban Sawai, Surin Province, lower Isan.

41. Winding silk at Ban Khwao Sikharin, Surin Province, lower Isan.

42. Khmer style loom seen here in Ban Kun Kahal, Surin Province.

43. Weaving of the **phabol** hem piece for the **mi hol phabol** tubeskirt has virtually died out. Here an old lady demonstrates the side weaving technique used in Ban Khwao Sikharin, Surin Province.



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chongkraben was made especially for dance and theatrical use. These were called **mi hol phabol**. An interesting design made by the Khmer weavers for a woman's tube skirt is **am prom**, a delicate double ikat dot design in white on a red and green check ground. Other designs are **samo**, which has a tiny check in green and yellow with a red border, and **sakhu**, which is green and purple checks on a red ground. Famous weaving villages near Surin include Ban Khwao, Ban Sawai and Ban Chan Rom. Weavers in many of these villages still use natural pigments to dye silk threads spun from home reared cocoons.

In central Isan there is a group of villages surrounding Chonnabot, a town just south of Khon Kaen, where Khmer style textiles are being woven today. These were inspired by antique **pha pum** and **pha na nang** from the royal collection in the National Museum in Bangkok. The looms used to weave these textiles are

Khmer style, using a flat warp beam onto which the warp is wound and stretched on the loom. The weave is a three heddle twill with the fabric woven upside down. The designs are multi-coloured ikats of complex patterns woven at a forty inch width using aniline dyes and imported silk. Many of the weavers are men and the women admit that they cannot achieve the precision and tight-tying techniques of the men. Many of these pieces have become collectors items and prize-winning exhibits in national textile competitions.

There is a unique style tube skirt seen in the Buri Ram district which is called the **sin tin daeng** which means "red hem tube skirt". This style is woven in a tabby weave like the Lao pieces, but is wide and incorporates a strip of red warp at each selvedge giving the textile its name. The patterns are large in weft ikat using red, yellow and green on a black or dark maroon ground.

Blouses and Shoulder Cloths

Blouses were not worn traditionally by the Isan peoples, but were introduced at the turn of the 20th century. An exception to this are the blouses of the Phutai people which were made from plain indigo cotton with a short standing collar, long sleeves and a front fastening system. The neck, sleeve-ends and front fastening were decorated with supplementary weft applique or embroidered designs. Instead of blouses, the Lao and Khmer women wore a shoulder cloth around their breasts which was plain indigo or white cotton for every day use. For formal wear a decorative cloth was woven which was worn around the torso with one end draped over one shoulder. These shoulder cloths are called **pha biang** or **pha hom lai khit** and today are worn over blouses. The classic style of the upper and central Isan peoples was a red cloth made in cotton or silk using supplementary weft geometric designs in bands. These cloths did not have a fringe but left both ends plain red. Sometimes two of these cloths were joined together lengthwise to make a shawl called **pha hom lai khit**. The men would also wear them as head cloths for dancing, as belts or wrapped loosely around their neck for special occasions. These textiles are rarely worn today as commercially woven towels are now commonly used in all parts of Isan as a popular replacement for these traditional cloths. It is likely that the people of upper Isan used the same cloths as the Lao of central Isan in the past, but no evidence remains today.

The Phutai, on the other hand, have maintained their weaving of their shoulder cloths which are called **pha phrae wa**, meaning silk of one wa length (1 wa = 2ms.). These are traditionally red with yellow, green, orange, pale blue, pink, purple and black designs in bands of classic Tai symbols such as hooks, serpents, birds and angular meanders. A more complex design is made in discontinuous supplementary technique (**chok**) creating flower-like designs



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44. Phutai woman's blouse from Kalasin Province.



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45. Phutai costume, Mukdahan Province. Cotton ikat tubeskirt, blouse and **pha biang** shoulder cloth.



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46. Phutai costume from Mukdahan Province for special occasions: silk ikat tubeskirt, blouse and **pha biang** shoulder cloth.

all over the cloths which today are made in multi-colours using aniline dyes and very fine silk in the village of Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province. These cloths are worn crossed over at the breast with one end over one shoulder. They are shorter than the **pha biang** of the Lao and usually have decorative tassels. The young men might wear one or more of these to ceremonies to show off, but usually they are worn at ceremonial occasions by the women. An interesting textile of the Phutai is a small square shaped silk cloth called **pha mon**. The actual use of this textile in the past is not clear although it is similar to the **pha mon** of the Tai Phuan in Laos which was woven as a love-gift for the young weaver's boyfriend. The Phutai women today sometimes use these textiles as head covers during marriage or other ceremonies.



47. *Pha hom lai khit* for shoulder cloths and shoulder wraps made from silk *khit* technique from Ubon Ratchathani National Museum collection.
48. Shoulder cloths from central Isan. On the right and underneath are *pha hom lai khit* and on the left a *pha phrae wa* of the Phutai people with zoomorphic patterns.
49. Antique *pha phrae wa* from Kalasin Province.
50. Various modern *pha phrae wa* from Kalasin Province.
51. Phutai costumes from Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.
52. *Pha mon* of the Phutai from Kalasin Province.



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The shoulder cloth of the lower Isan people is white or cream coloured silk made in a diamond twill. It was originally worn to cover the breasts on formal occasions, but today is worn over a blouse as a loose shoulder cloth. There is a black version of this cloth which today is worn for funerals but in the past was used by some women as an alternative to the white.





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Textiles for Men

The men in Isan always tend to dress similarly throughout the whole region, giving rise to standard textile forms. For working, a loincloth was worn made from plain or checkered cotton called **pha khao ma** and worn without a shirt. Tattoos were not as common as in the north, although some Phutai men were tattooed from the waist to their knees. For upper class men and for ceremonial wear the Indian influenced **sarong** and **pha chongkraben** were worn with a white round-necked shirt, or no shirt as was the fashion prior to the period of King Rama V. The **sarongs** were made of silk woven in large checks, often using twisted yarns of contrasting colours called **pha mai khaen**. The favourite colours of the lower Isan areas were green and pink, whereas blue and red were more popular in the upper areas. The **sarong** went out of fashion with the introduction of western clothing and is only used for sleeping attire today, being made of cotton or synthetic yarns.

Pha chongkraben were either weft ikat or made from two coloured, twisted silk. For the ordinary village man, these were worn on two oc-

casions only, his wedding and his ordination. The same cloth would have been kept as a funeral cloth to cover his coffin and possible used for other members of his family. The ikat **pha chongkraben** went out of fashion during the period of King Rama V when plain dark blue silk called **pha muang** was introduced for official wear and the twisted silk, which was then called **pha hang krarok** by the central Thai, was used for ceremonial occasions. Nakhon Ratchasima was famous for the twisted silk cloth which stayed popular until after World War II when **chongkraben** was discouraged by the government in its modernization schemes.

Plain indigo short-sleeved shirts called **sua mo hom** and trousers made with a low seat and a large waist that tucks in, became standard working clothes early this century through the influence of Chinese merchant and land owners. This has become the traditional working man's outfit for all occasions today, worn with a black and white or red and white checkered **pha khao ma** as a belt sash.

Shoulder cloths were traditional to all parts of the northeast. The

53. Men's traditional costumes on parade in central Isan. A checked **sarong** with indigo cotton shirt called **sua mo hom** and a **pha khao ma** head cloth.

54. **Sarong** were worn by men for ceremonial wear and everyday use as seen here, but today they rarely wear them out of the house. This man also has a cotton **pha khao ma** cloth as a money belt.

55. Phutai men's costumes from Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.

56. Phutai men's tattoos from Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.



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central Isan men in the past would wear the **pha hom lai khit** of the women's style, particularly for dancing, either as a shoulder cloth or as a head cloth. The unmarried Phutai men sometimes wore more than one of the women's **pha phrae wa** at ceremonies to show off that they had more than one loved one. In upper Isan, silk shoulder cloths made in check and plaids were used for ceremonies while the cotton **pha khao ma** were used as general purpose cloths. The Khmer men in lower Isan also used silk checkered cloths for shoulder cloths, worn without a shirt. Shirts were made with a standing collar and waisted shape from imported fabrics and were worn only by people of rank. These were short following the style called **sua rat pataen** but some were more like coats, being long like Persian jackets made of sumptuous brocades. Since the modernization of Thai dress, western styles have been quickly adopted by men for working, official and ceremonial wear, reflecting the fashion of the time which is quickly effective due to modern communications.

Household Textiles

In the past all household textile needs were woven by hand. Today commercial items are available and thus home produced pillows and mattresses are not common. The traditional style of pillow of Isan is a small rectangular pillow which is decorated on the main part and not on the ends as seen in the north of Thailand. These are made in cotton **khit** (continuous supplementary weft) and are usually red and black patterns on a white ground. Triangular shaped pillows are made for the temples and decorated similarly. Motifs used in **khit** are similar to those made in ikat textiles. Today cotton ikat is sometimes used to make pillows.

Curtains were also made in **khit**, using several panels of patterned fabric joined together with plain white, red or black cotton strips. These were made to hang in doorways as well as room dividers, particularly during wedding ceremonies whereby a part of the house was partitioned off for the privacy of the newly weds.

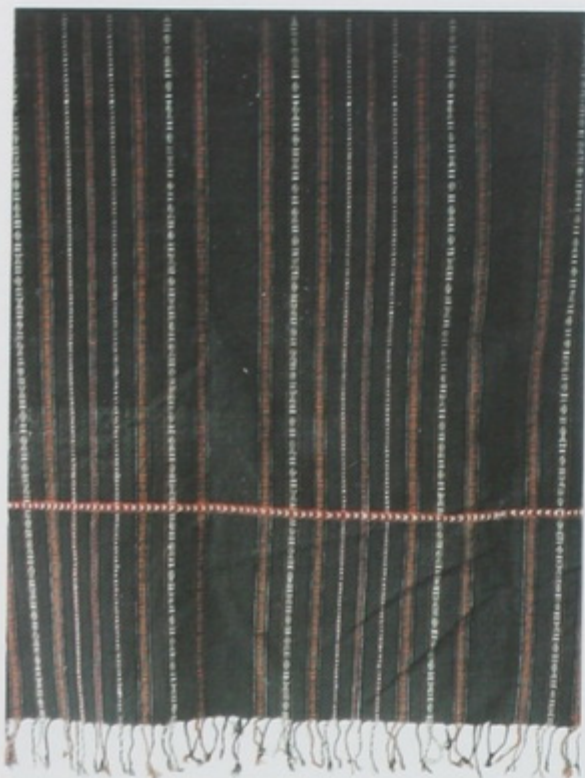


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57. Cotton pillow and blankets from Ban Puai Hua Dong, Amnat Charoen District, Ubon Ratchathani Province in central Isan.

58. Cotton pillows and blankets from Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.

59. Room divider made for the wedding ceremony in upper Isan using cotton **khit** technique.



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60. Detail of the Phutai *pha chong* blanket from Mukdahan Province.

61. Phutai costume from Mukdahan Province for cold weather. A *pha chong* is being worn as a warm shoulder wrap.



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Blankets were made in various twill weaves in plain colours or checked patterns and used in a single piece or two pieces joined down the centre. Some blankets were made into sack shapes and stuffed with kapok. In the past, it is likely that mattresses were made in the same way at home using indigo cotton and a simple *khit* design on one end. The Phutai had a special blanket called *pha chong* made with supplementary warp patterns. These were usually black or red with white, orange and black patterns. These blankets were used as warm wraps and also as coffin covers.

Textiles for Rituals and Offerings

Textile offerings to temples in the form of plain small handkerchiefs and *khit* binders for the palm leaf scripts were mainly made by the elderly women in the community. Long banners were woven and not usually reinforced with bamboo in the northeastern style. These were red or white with *khit* patterns in orange, red, indigo, and white spaced out in bands along the length of the fabric either in cotton or silk. The silk used was usually the rough grade which gave the cloth a strong texture. Patterns included monuments (*prasat*), human figures, animals such as elephants, mythical creatures, birds, geometric patterns and boat-like forms



often displaying serpent heads. Another form of temple banner was made from cotton using bamboo slats to form a pattern in the weft. Bolts of plain white cotton and silk were also given to temples for monks' robes or for use as general purpose cloths. Monks would dye the fabric themselves. The white cotton was also used for **pha phra wet** which was a long cloth of approximately 20 meters in length on which paintings of the life of past and future Buddhas were made using various pigments. An antique textile no longer woven today was a square shaped, fringed meditation mat woven in silk in a discontinuous supplementary weft (**chok**) for presentation to high ranking monks.

Ritual cloths included coffin covers which were woven by the daughter-in-law prior marriage, in the case of the Phutai people, and by the mothers for their sons in the case of the Lao people. The Phutai made a funeral blanket in silk supplementary weft similar to the designs of the **pha phrae wa** but the funeral pieces were usually much longer. In some cases three pieces of **pha chong** were used to decorate a tent-like bamboo structure that was built over the body. The Lao used the **pha chongkraben** which were either ikat or made from twisted silk for their coffin covers. Beautiful pieces were handed down in the family, but some pieces were burnt in the cremation.



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62. Phutai **pha chong** blanket from Kalasin Province.

63. Book binders for palm leaf scripts in the temple made in **khit** technique, cotton from Ban Chiang made by Lao Puan weavers.

64. Detail of a cotton temple banner from upper Isan made in **khit** technique.

65. Painted cotton banners are used for the **Phra Wetsandon** ceremony to depict the lives of the Buddha and the coming of the future Buddha.





SOUTHERN THAI TEXTILES

by Songsak Prangwatthanakun and Patricia Naenna

The southern part of Thailand is a narrow peninsula extending from Chumphon Province on the east down the Gulf of Siam to the borders of Malaysia. On the west, the peninsula from Ranong Province stretches southwards along the coastline of the Andaman Sea also to the border of Malaysia. Geographically the Southern peoples are greatly distanced from the capitals of Ayutthaya and later Bangkok. Prior to the British colonization of the Malay Sultanates, the states of Kedah (Sai Buri), Kelantan, Trengganu and Perlis were areas under Siamese suzerainty.

Because of its unique topography, the Southern Region has been the site of many major ports for trade with other countries. The art and culture found in the region today, particularly the culture of weaving, is thus predominantly a mixture of Malay, Indonesian, Chinese, Indian and Persian influences. **Pha yok** the name used in the south for brocades, were probably introduced during the Ayutthaya period when skilled weav-

ers were sent to the south to train the southern weavers to weave for the court. Indonesian master weavers were also employed to weave and train local weavers in the south. **Pha yok** were woven mainly in the province of Nakhon Si Thammarat and were known by the name **pha yok Muang Nakhon**. It is believed that the design was introduced by villagers who were taken as prisoner during the revolution at Muang Sai Buri in 1891 A.D. Original **pha yok Muang Nakhon** came in a variety of different designs, each portraying its own unique characteristics and beauty. The design known as **pha ta**, for example, was woven with a decorative border on each end with gold and silver thread and was popularly worn by both men and women in the **chongkraben** style. This intricately and beautifully woven cloth was used only by nobility and officials of high rank. The governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat presented this textile as a tribute to His Majesty the King and officials in the capital.

Mural at Wat Matchimawas in Songkhla Province portrays the lifestyle of the people in Southern Thailand.



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1. *Pha yok Muang Nakhon* preserved and displayed in the National Museum, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
2. Ancient textiles on display in the National Museum, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
3. *Pha yok* on display in the National Museum, Chaiya District, Surat Thani Province.
4. *Pha yok* preserved at Wat Boromathat Maha Worawihan, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
- 5-6. *Pha yok* preserved at Wat Matchimawas, Muang District, Songkhla Province.
7. Traditional Muslim dress in Southern Thailand comprises a batik sarong and a Malaysian or Indonesian style blouse for women.



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Textiles for Men and Women

The dress culture of the inhabitants of the southern region in the vicinity of Nakhon Si Thammarat was similar to that practised by the Central Thais during the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767 A.D.). The ordinary people dressed in clothing which they wove themselves according to locale, while the nobility and officials of rank wore high quality fabrics and silver and gold brocades. Many of the **pha yok** or brocades were also woven to be sent as tribute to the capital. Malaysian style brocades were woven in the province of Pattani for ceremonial use as well as for use as tributes in the same manner as in the province of Nakhon Si Thammarat. Batik sarongs were also used along with Chinese taffeta which was tailored into clothing worn by the southern Moslems. Blouses worn by the women were more than likely based on Malaysian and Indonesian clothing styles. There are also several locally produced textiles which display their own unique characteristics, some of which have historical origins and have been passed down through generations. Many communities still exist which are important sources of woven textiles. Textiles from these communities have been promoted and have today won wide acclaim for their delicacy and beauty. Included among them are the **pha tho Ko Yo**, **pha tho Phum Riang** and **pha tho Na Mun Sri**.



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8. Traditional costume worn by Muslim men in Southern Thailand.
9. A loom from Tambon Ko Yo, Songkhla Province.
- 10-11. Lifestyle of the Ko Yo community, Songkhla Province.
12. Combination cotton-silk **chongkraben** cloth for men.
13. Checkered sarong woven at Ko Yo and worn by men.
14. **Pha lai rachawat** textiles from Ko Yo and Ban Na Mun Sri which can be used by men as an all purpose cloth (**pha khao ma**) or by women as a shoulder cloth (**pha sabai**).



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Pha tho Ko Yo is a traditional textile delicately woven by the skilled hands of the people of Tambon Ko Yo, Muang Songkhla District, Songkhla Province. It comes in a variety of colours and designs which display the uniqueness of this textile. Designs popularly found today in-

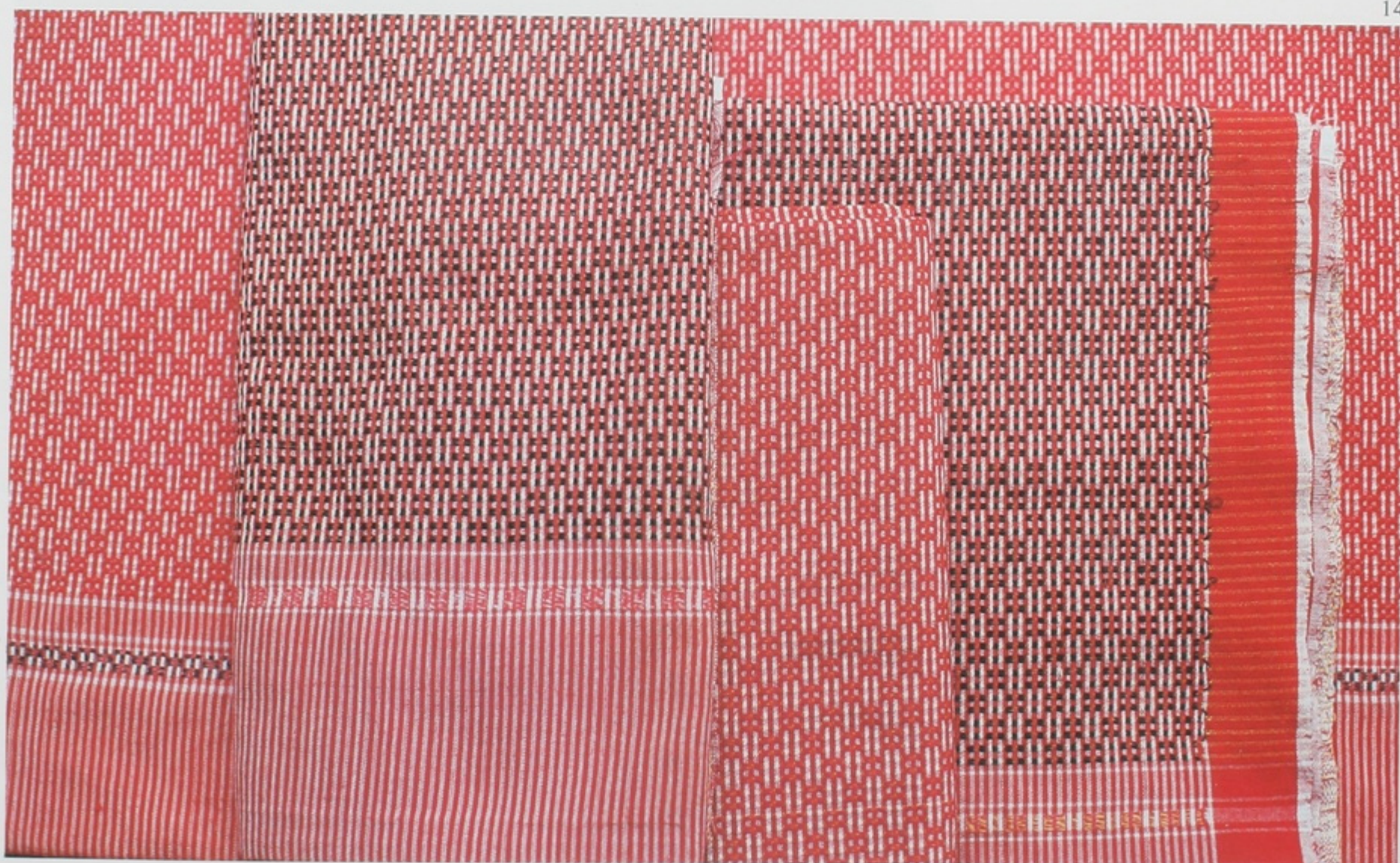
clude the rachawat design which is held to be the principle design of the pha tho Ko Yo textiles, and such designs as lai dok rak, lai bu nga, lai luk kaew, lai phrik thai, lai ta makruk, lai samuk, lai khao lam tat, and lai si liam.



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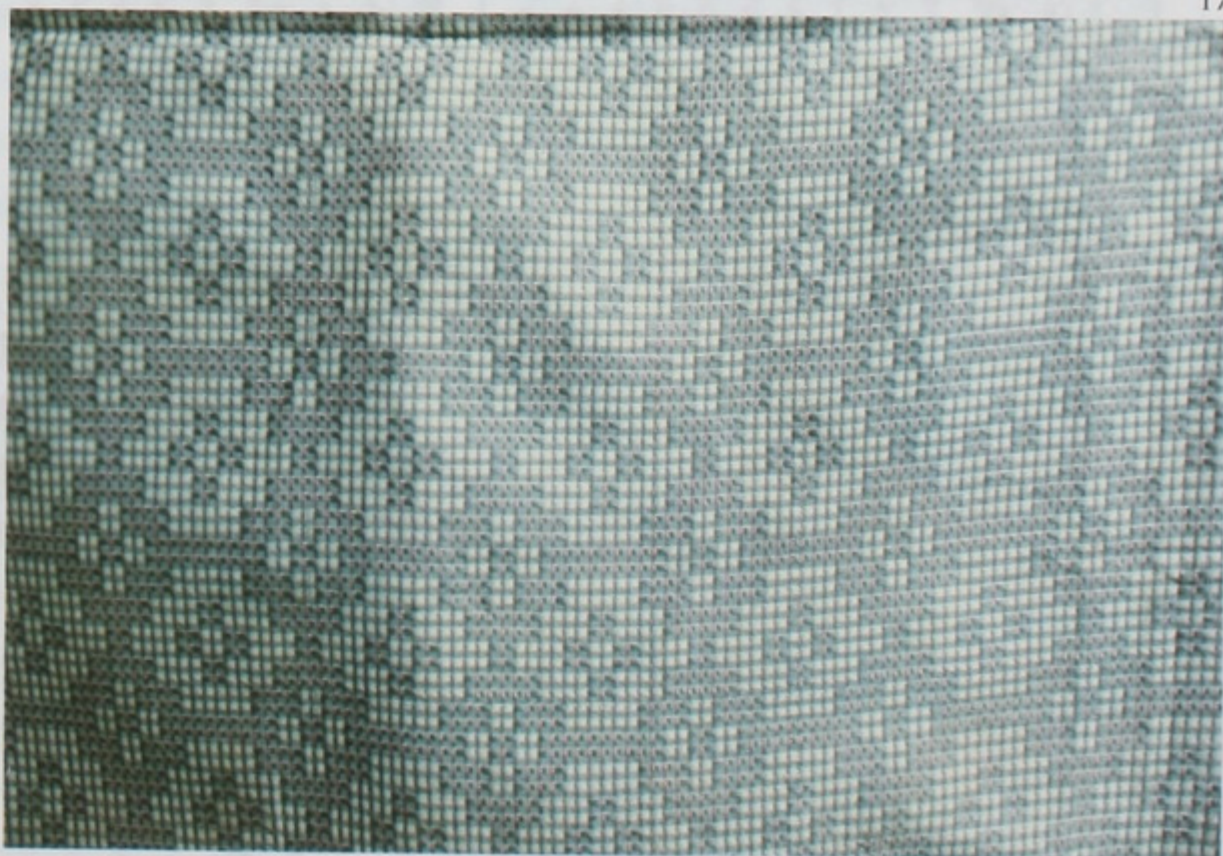
15-19. *Pha tho Phum Riang* from Chaiya District, Surat Thani Province.



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The **pha tho Phum Riang** is woven in a mixture of silk and brocade by the Moslem population at Tambon Phum Riang, Chaiya District, Surat Thani Province for **pha sin**, **pha khao ma** and **sarong** cloths. A feature unique to the **pha sin** of this locale is the blending of cotton with silk in the **lai rachawat khom** and **lai dok phikun** designs. Although styles for the **pha tho Phum Riang** have evolved to meet modern fashion trends, designs generally remain the same and include the **lai rachawat khom**, **lai dok phikun**, **lai dok bua**, **lai dok mali**, **lai kan yaeng**, and **lai dok bu nga** designs.





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20-23. Weaving at Ban Na Mun Sri, Muang District, Trang Province.



Villagers of Ban Na Mun Sri, Muang District, Trang Province weave textiles in accordance with traditions which have been passed down through generations. These intricately woven textiles display their own unique features and are prepared for general household use as well as for use in ceremonies and rituals. They include the **hang krarok** and **ta samuk** textiles which are used as **pha sin**, blankets, shoulder cloths or shawls. Originally, they were woven with cotton and dyed with natural dyes to produce a variety of colours. Popular designs still favoured today include the **lai luk kaew**, **lai rachawat**, **lai ta makruk**, **lai dok phikun**, as well as different animal motifs. The best known textile from Ban Na Mun Sri is the shoulder cloth which is traditionally woven by the bride for the groom to wear across his shoulder during the wedding ceremony. It is also used by the elderly to drape across the shoulder during merit making ceremonies and in various rituals. Elderly women also place it on the floor in front of them when prostrating themselves before Buddhist monks. The shoulder cloth is a narrow piece of cloth. The edges are a plain colour while



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the centre is popularly woven in supplementary weft in the **luk kaew** design. Another textile is the **pha khao ma** which is finely woven and displays features unique to the area. The **pha khao ma** is not only used as an all purpose cloth, but is also used as a blanket or draped across the shoulder by the elderly when taking part in ceremonies. The outstanding feature of this cloth from the south is that the middle part is woven with alternating colours in the

lachawat design and it has the **lai yok** interwoven before reaching the edge of the cloth which is woven in ordinary stripes.

24. *Pha Na Mun Sri in dok phikun and luk kaew designs.*

25-26. *Woven textiles from Ban Na Mun Sri received promotion and support.*

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Textiles for Rituals and Ceremonies

As with other regions of the country, textiles have a traditional role in the various religious, official, and village rituals and ceremonies performed in the southern part of Thailand. Although virtually no evidence remains these days as to which textiles were woven for which ceremonies and in which places, the custom of draping stupas and chedis with textiles still exists as one of the most important festivals celebrated in provinces in the south. An example of this custom can be seen in the province of Nakhon Si Thammarat where textiles are carried annually in procession as an offering to the sacred and historical chedi in that province. Apart from this, villagers from Ban Na Mun Sri in Trang Province weave a special cloth known as **pha phan chang** which is used to cover the coffin prior to cremation. This cloth, which has a similar purpose as the **pha bang sukun**, measures

approximately 50 cm. in width and approximately two metres in length. A characteristic unique to this cloth is that it is woven in supplementary weft and designed with verses extolling the life of the deceased and the virtues of wholesome living. Sometimes it also carries **luk kaew** or **garuda** motifs. After the cremation has taken place, the cloth is cut into smaller pieces and presented to monks for use as table pieces, napkins, handkerchiefs, etc.

Another interesting textile of ancient origins has been found stored in the folklore museum at the Southern Studies Institute, Sri Nakharinwirot University in Songkhla Province. This particular textile, which is believed to have been used to decorate the seat of a pulpit, was woven by local weavers in supplementary weft and carries designs of script, people, horses and people on horseback. Other museum pieces include woven shoulder bags and scripture covers which were popularly woven in brocade.



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27. Textiles carried in procession as a religious offering at Wat Boromathat Maha Worawihan, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

28. **Pha phan chang** woven in continuous supplementary weft and decorated for use as a meditation mat, Wat Khuan Sawan, Ban Na Mun Sri, Trang Province.

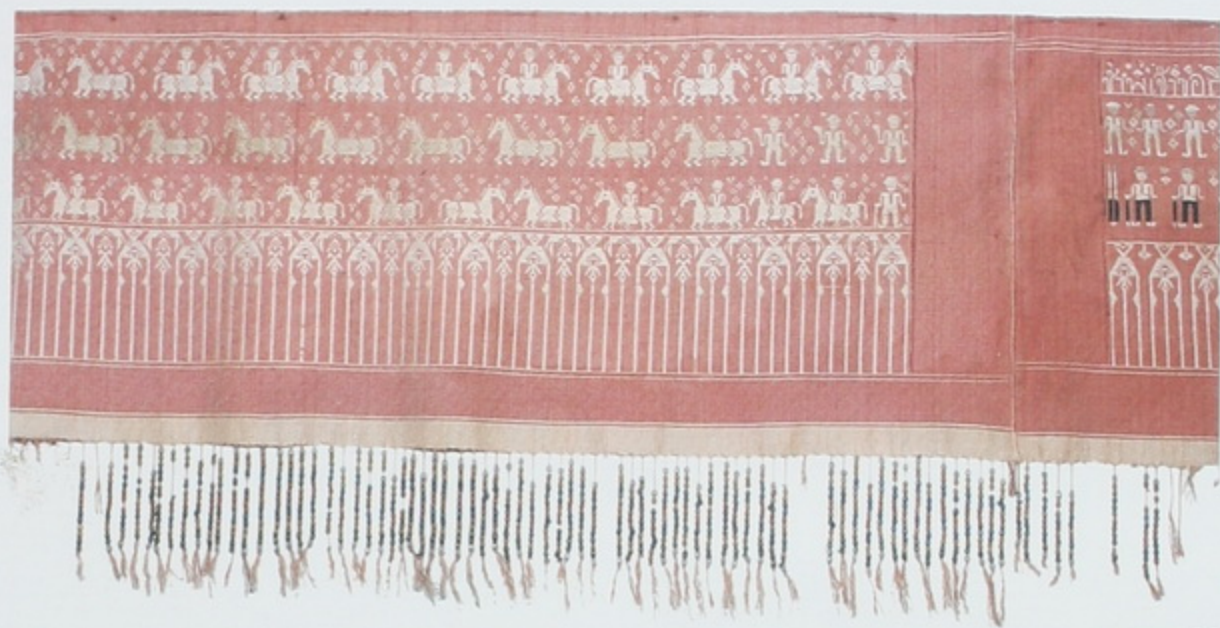
29. **Pha phan chang** with script design.

30-31. Pulpit cover stored at the Southern Studies Institute, Sri Nakharinwirot University, Songkhla Province.

32. Scripture cover from Ban Na Mun Sri stored at the Southern Studies Institute, Sri Nakharinwirot University, Songkhla Province.

33. Brocade scripture covers, Wat Matchimawas, Songkhla Province.

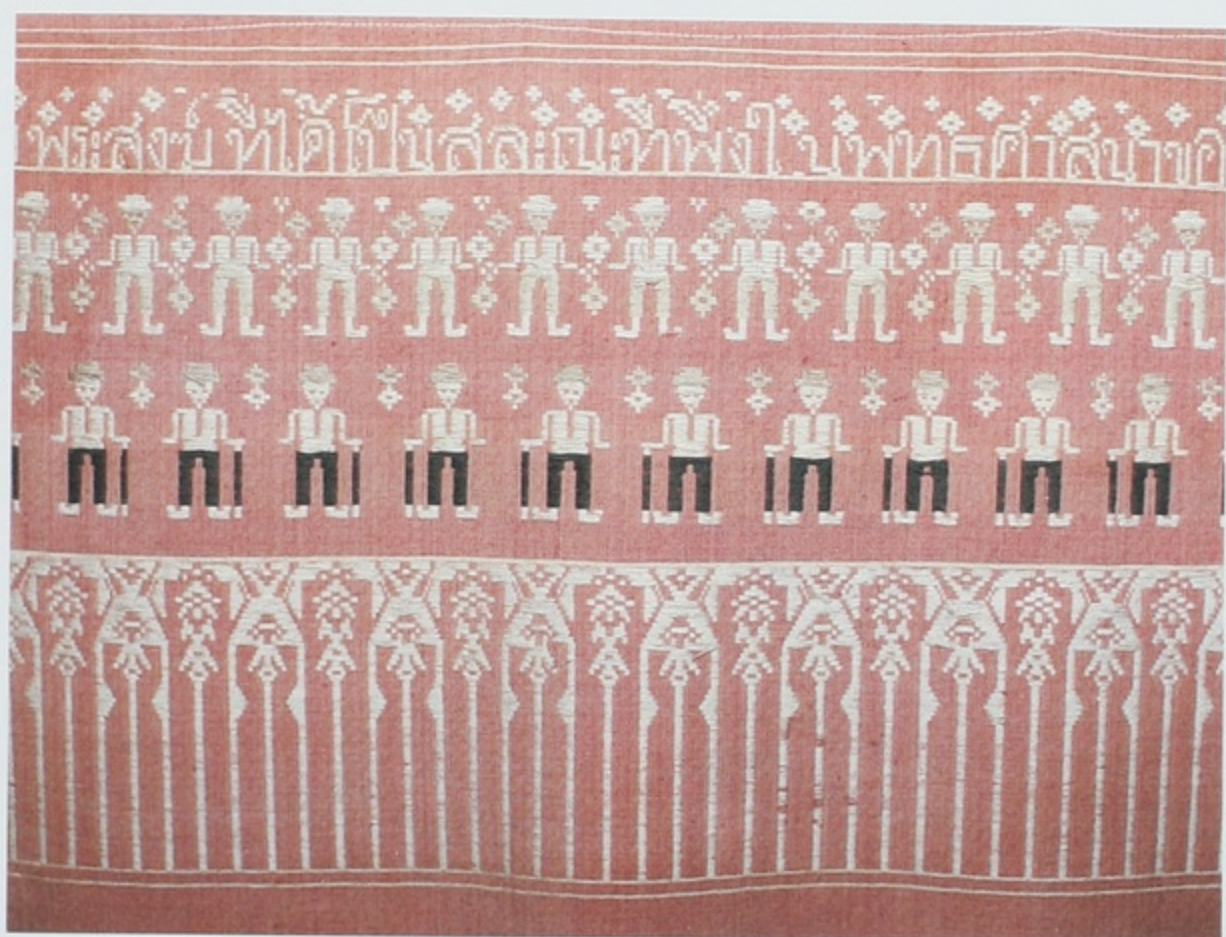
34.-35. Brocade shoulder bags, Wat Matchimawas, Songkhla Province.



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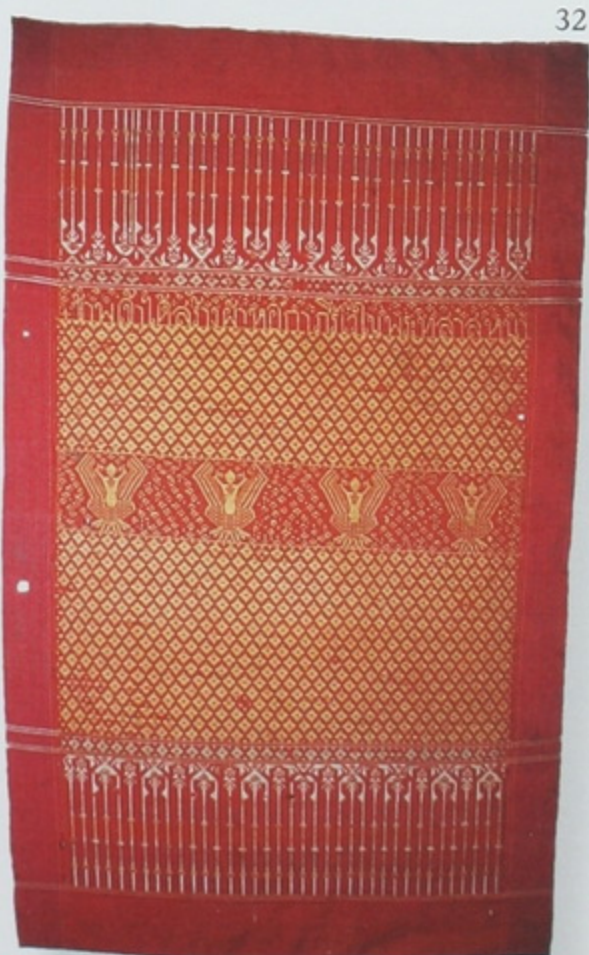
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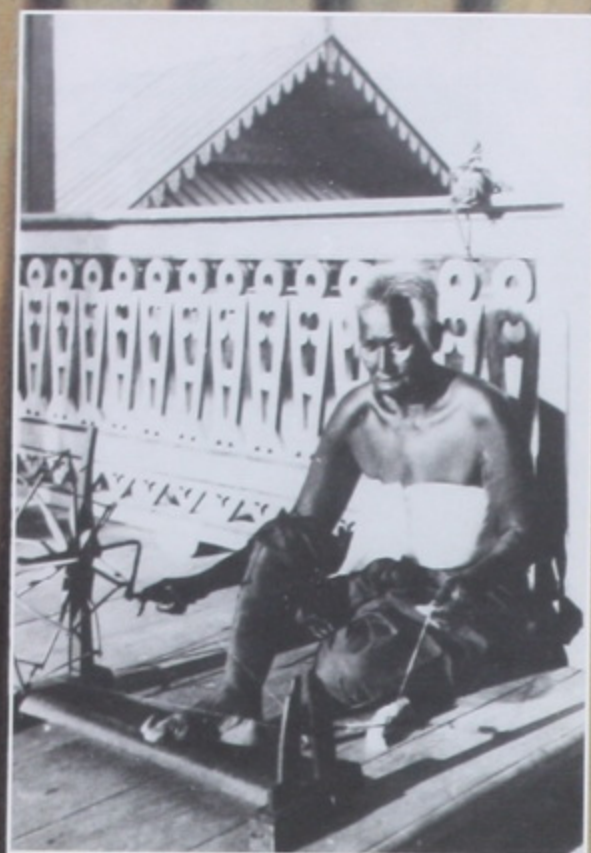
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THE PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF THAI TEXTILES

"When the harvest is over, the women shall weave and the men shall forge". This age old saying reflects the Thai belief that weaving is an important part of daily life. In former times, Thai women would use their spare time, after the farm work had been completed, to weave cloth for domestic purposes and for use in important social ceremonies. Weaving required a good memory and an expertise which has been preserved and passed down from generation to generation.

In Thailand, weaving is both a traditional folk craft and a delicate art which requires meticulous skill. Woven into each piece of fabric is a subtle beauty which is reflected in the intricate patterns, colours, styles and methods used. Each piece, unique to the area from which it originates, recalls the customs and cultural heritage which have been handed down from the past to the present. It is regrettable, however, that in recent times the traditional practise of handloom weaving is being lost to the influences of modern technology and social and economic changes. This has resulted in an awareness of the need to preserve and revive this unique craft and to enlighten the people of Thailand to the value of woven textiles so that they realize how important it is to

preserve them as an inheritance for future generations.

At present, both the government and private sectors, as well as individuals who have a knowledge of and interest in textiles, are looking for ways to restore and preserve Thai textiles. Preservation is of two types: preserving in their original form antique textiles which display traditional styles and methods so that they can be used for study and research, and commercial preservation which promotes production and marketing. The latter type also takes into consideration development. Traditional forms are used as a guideline to which the features of hand woven textiles individual to each region are applied in order to create new patterns and designs which harmonize with current social trends. The result is valuable textiles of a high quality. These are promoted so that output can increase and production continue. Commercial promotion is also carried out so markets can be expanded and the textiles sold. In this way village life is promoted and assistance is given to villagers and weavers to enable them to earn their livelihood through traditional means. It also helps to preserve production sources as well as village folk craft, thus enabling it to survive.

1. *In former times, Thai women would spend their spare time weaving textiles for family and ceremonial use.*
2. *A traditional Tai Yuan costume on display in the National Museum, Chiang Mai Province.*

3. *Villagers from Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai Province, have preserved the traditional dress style of the northern region.*
- 4.-5. *Traditional textiles have been adapted to suit modern tastes and market demands.*



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Centres for the Preservation of Textiles

Antique Thai textiles are preserved and displayed for public viewing and study in provincial museums under the jurisdiction of the Fine Arts Department. These museums have an important role to play in textile preservation. Museums where antique textiles can be viewed are the National Museums in Bangkok and Ratchaburi Provinces in the central region; the National Museums in Chiang Mai and Nan Provinces in the northern region; the National Museum in Ubon Ratchathani Province in the north-eastern region; and the National Museums in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Chaiya (Surat Thani Province) and Wat Machimawas (Songkhla Province) in the southern region. Other government agencies preserving antique Thai textiles include the Centre for the Promotion of Arts and Culture, Chiang Mai University, the Southern Studies Institute, Sri Nakharinwirot University, Songkhla Province, and the Northeastern Art and Culture Research Institute, Sri Nakharinwirot University, Maha Sarakham Province. Individuals possessing a knowledge of and interest in Thai textiles have also established centres where antique textiles have been preserved and can be admired. These include the Centre for the Propagation of Pha



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Chok Textiles in Ratchaburi Province, the Nuan Nang Art Centre in Uthai Thani Province, the Haad Sieo Village Old Cloth Museum in Sukhothai Province and Komon Antique Textiles Museum in Phrae Province.



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6. **Pha sin** of the Tai Yuan preserved and displayed in the National Museum, Chiang Mai Province.
- 7-8. Traditional Tai Lue and Tai Yuan textiles preserved in the National Museum, Nan Province.
9. Ancient textiles on display in the National Museum, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.
10. Sample of designs used in textiles from the Southern Region on display at the Southern Studies Institute, Sri Nakharinwirot University, Songkhla Province.

- 11-12. Haad Sieo Village Old Cloth Museum, Sukhothai Province.
13. Woven textiles belonging to the Lao Khrang group in Uthai Thani Province on display at the Nuan Nang Art Centre, Uthai Thani Province.
14. Ancient textiles preserved by a contemporary collector.

15-17. Ban Rai Pai Ngam, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province is renowned for its hand woven cotton textiles and natural dyeing techniques.

18-19. Silk brocades beautifully woven in accordance with ancient traditions from the collection of Kum Chao Phong Kaew na Lamphun, Muang District, Lamphun Province.

20-21. Ban Don Chai in Pua District, Nan Province, one of the Tai Lue weaving villages promoted and supported by the private sector.



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22-23. Weaving Tai Yuan **tin chok** textiles. Tambon Khu Bua, Muang District, Ratchaburi Province.

24. **Pha sin** belonging to the Lao Khrang group are still woven today in Thap Than District, Uthai Thani Province.

25-27. Chonnabot District, Khon Kaen Province has long been renowned as a centre for weaving **mudmee** silks.

Weaving Centres Currently Being Promoted

Handloom weaving has been carried on in Thailand for many generations and can still be found today in various regions of the country, both as a domestic practise and as a cottage industry. Textiles are woven for personal and family use as well as for commercial purposes in response to consumer demands. Even though production and marketing systems have been developed to make textiles more suited to today's conditions, designs, methods and materials used in some regions are still in accordance with what has been passed down since ancient times. There is, however, a growing trend to develop traditional designs and mix features specific to types of textiles and regions so that they respond more to the needs of today's economic and social conditions. At present there are many weaving communities scattered throughout every region of Thailand and it is fitting that they be promoted and preserved. Examples of weaving communities in Thailand which receive promotion through the **SUPPORT** Foundation of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the government and private sectors, or local patrons are listed below according to region, province and district.

Northern Region

Chiang Mai	- Mae Chaem, Chom Thong, Hot, San Kamphaeng
Lamphun	- Muang*, Pa Sang, Li
Chiang Rai	- Chiang Khong, Mae Chan
Phayao	- Chiang Kham, Chiang Muan
Phrae	- Muang, Long
Nan	- Muang, Tha Wang Pha, Pua, Chiang Klang, Thung Chang

*Muang = the main city district of each province.



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28-29. Beautiful **mudmee** silks exquisitely woven by skilled weavers in Muang District, Roi Et Province.

30-31. The Weaving Group for the Preservation of Phutai Textiles has been established at Ban Phon, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province.

32-34. Textiles woven in the Southern Isan style. Ban Sawai, Muang District, Surin Province.

35-36. Textiles woven to suit the tastes of modern markets. Ban Na Mun Sri, Muang District, Trang Province.



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Uttaradit - Laplae, Tha Pla, Fak Tha, Nam Pat, Tron

Sukhothai - Si Satchanalai

Central Region

Lop Buri - Ban Mi

Ratchaburi - Muang

Uthai Thani - Ban Rai, Thap Than

Northeastern Region

Nakhon Ratchasima

- Muang, Pak Thong Chai

Khon Kaen - Muang, Chonnabot

Udon Thani - Muang, Phen

Ubon Ratchathani

- Muang, Chanuman, Amnat Charoen, Det Udom, Phana, Muang Samsip, Pho Sai, Khemarat, Hua Taphan

Nong Khai - Muang

Yasothon - Muang



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- Roi Et - Muang
- Mukdahan - Muang
- Kalasin - Kham Muang
- Surin - Muang, Prasat
- Buriram - Muang
- Si Sa Ket - Muang
- Maha Sarakham
 - Muang
- Sakon Nakhon
 - Muang
- Nakhon Phanom
 - Muang, Renu Nakhon
- Chaiyaphum - Ban Khwao, Phu Khieo, Kaset Sombun

Southern Region

- Songkhla - Muang
- Surat Thani - Chaiya
- Trang - Muang
- Nakhon Si Thammarat
 - Muang



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37. Mrs. Saengda Bansit of Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province, a National Artist in the field of woven textiles, with some of her hand woven cotton textiles dyed with natural pigments.



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Expert Weavers

In former times, it was believed that weaving was women's work and was one criteria in assessing a woman's qualities. Young girls were taught the art of weaving at an early age. There were no schools or courses so girls would observe older women weaving and remember the techniques. The older women would also give them personal instruction. Consequently, weaving in Thailand requires a good memory and a certain skill. The techniques of weaving were passed on by grandparents to grandchildren. In this manner weaving has been preserved to the present day. Some weavers have become recognized as masters of their art and their names are well-known in the

38. Mrs. Phayom Sinawat of Roi Et Province, a National Artist in the field of woven textiles, is renowned for her silver and gold brocades woven according to ancient tradition.

39.-41. Mr. Songkham Ngamyang of Chonnabot District, Khon Kaen Province is recognized for his expertise in **mudmee** silk weaving.

different regions of the country. The works of some are highly treasured and they have been honoured with the title 'national artist'. Such famous weavers include the late Mrs. Saengda Bansit of Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province, renowned for her skills in weaving cotton textiles dyed with natural pigments, and Mrs. Phayom Sinawat of Roi Et Province who has mastered the ancient art of gold and silver brocade (**din ngoen din thong**) silk weaving. There are also other renowned weavers, both male and female, who are working today to preserve and promote this ancient craft. Included among them are Mr. Songkhram Ngamyang of Khon Kaen Province who is highly skilled in weft ikat (**mudmee**) weaving, Mrs. Pranom Thapaeng of Phrae Province who is an expert in supplementary (**tin chok**) weaving, Mrs. Malee Wongsad of Nan Province, renowned for her tapestry weave, Mr. Preechakiat Bunyakiat of Lamphun Province, an expert in brocade silk weaving, and Mrs. Wanma Nuineem of Surat Thani Province who is preserving the supplementary weave (**yok Phum Rieng**) style practised among the Thai Muslim community.



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42-43. Mrs. Pranom Thapaeng of Phrae Province who is an expert in supplementary (**tin chok**) weaving.

44. Mrs. Malee Wongsad, a renowned Tai Lue weaver from Ban Lai Thung, Thung Chang District, Nan Province.

45-46. Brocade textiles exquisitely woven by Mr. Preechakiat Boonyakiat of Lamphun Province.

47. Textiles woven in the supplementary weave (**yok Phum Rieng**) style by Mrs. Wanma Nuineem of Surat Thani Province.

48-49. Designs and colours used in textiles woven by village weavers are adapted to meet the demands of modern markets.

50-51. Thailand's silk products have won worldwide recognition and have now become an important export item and major source of national revenue.



Promotion of the Weaving Industry

Since ancient times, weaving has had an important role to play as a cottage industry. In the early days, cloth was woven on handlooms. However, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) efforts were made to introduce new silk weaving methods to the country. Japanese experts were hired to teach new production techniques and silk weaving methods to the public. A Department of Silk Weaving and a Silk Weaving School were established in Bangkok and the northeastern region. At the same time, cotton spinning machines and mechanized looms received greater usage. Industrialized weaving became more widely spread and soon began to find its way into the provinces and rural areas.

The weaving industry in Thailand went through another change in 1935 when the Ministry of Defence set up the country's first industrialized weaving factory. This led to a growing awareness of the potential of mechanized weaving. In the early stages industrialized weaving served only the domestic consumer market. However, beginning in 1961, when the country's 1st National Economic and Social Development Plan was introduced, and in the year 1962, when the government began to give promotion to foreign investment, the weaving industry received greater commercial development. Modern technology and mechanical looms were introduced and the standard of textiles was upgraded. Research was conducted, styles and colours developed and new patterns based on traditional styles devised to fit in with the fashion tastes of the day and the social and economic changes taking place. These modern textiles were able to respond rapidly to the growing market, both at home and abroad. In later years Thai textiles became, and for many years remained, the country's greatest source of revenue. In the year 1991 income derived from the export of textiles in the form of fabrics, ready made clothing,



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household articles and other textile items amounted to 121,499 million baht. Of this amount, 323 million baht was derived from silk and silk products which have gained recognition worldwide. Major importing countries are the European Economic Community, the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, Panama, Kuwait and Switzerland.

While part of the textile industry has been developed to incorporate modern technology and equipment, the practise of hand weaving textiles in traditional patterns and designs specific to certain areas is still con-



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tinued today. Ancient weaving techniques and production processes used in the past have been handed down from generation to generation and are still being used in the modern society. Only the work process has been adapted to fit in with commercial and industrial conditions, and patterns have been developed to suit social conditions and market demands, most of which are within the country. Textiles are still being woven today at both the domestic and cottage industry levels. Production at this level has no less an important role to play than production at the large scale industrial level in preserving the unique identity of Thai textiles.



Mai Fang



Khrang



Khamin



Mai Khanun



Kaelae



Ton Kham



Kham Saet



Maklua



Ton Hom

NATURAL DYES

	Central Thai	Romanised Thai	Local name	Latin name	English name
RED Cotton	ไม้ฝาง	Mai Fang	Mai Fang	<i>Caesalpinia sappan</i> Linn.	Sappan Wood
Silk	ครั่ง	Khrang	Khrang	<i>Coccus lacca</i>	Stick Lac
YELLOW Cotton	ไม้ขนุน	Mai Khanun	Mai Manun (north) Mai Mak Mi (northeast)	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> Lamk.	Jack Fruit Wood
	ขมิ้น	Khamin	Khimin	<i>Curcuma domestica</i> Valetton	Turmeric Rhizome
Silk	แกแล	Kaelae	Khae	<i>Maclura cochinchinensis</i> Corner	Ermarginate Wood
ORANGE Cotton+ Silk	คำแสด	Kham Saet	Kham Ngo	<i>Bixa orellana</i> Linn.	Lipstick or Annatto Seeds
BLACK Cotton+ Silk	มะเกลือ	Maklua	Maklua	<i>Diospyros mollis</i> Griff.	Ebony Fruit
BLUE/INDIGO Cotton	ต้นคราม	Ton Kham	Kham	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> Linn.	Indigo Leaves
Silk+ Cotton	ต้นห้อม	Ton Hom	Hom	<i>Baphicacanthus cusia</i> Brem.	Indigo Leaves

GLOSSARY

am prom (อำปรม)	Khmer. A tubeskirt made in silk with tiny double ikat dots. The main colour is red with white ikat and green stripes.		
buat luk kaeo (บัวลูกแก้ว)	Northern Thai. A traditional ordination ceremony for Buddhist novices.	khit (ขีด)	Continuous supplementary weft.
chedi (เจดีย์)	A monument originally built to enshrine the relics of the Buddha or royalty. Sometimes built to mark an important site in Buddhism.	Khom (ขอม)	An ethnic group mentioned in ancient manuscripts and presumed to mean the Khmer peoples.
chok (จก)	To pick out or lift out. Refers to a weaving technique whereby the warp yarns are picked out by hand to weave discontinuous supplementary weft.	lai bu nga (ลายบุหงา)	A floral motif commonly seen in southern Thailand.
chongkraben (โจงกระเบน)	Method of wearing a long fabric about ninety centimetres wide by four metres long wrapped around the waist and tied at the front. The excess fabric at the front is twisted or folded and passed through the legs and tucked into the waist at the back. A belt is worn to secure the folds.	lai dok bua (ลายดอกบัว)	A lotus-shaped motif.
din ngoen (ดินเงิน) / din thong (ดินทอง)	Gold and silver yarns for weaving and embroidery.	lai dok chok (ลายดอกจก)	A vegetal motif based on the water cabbage plant.
hang krarok (หางกระรอก)	Cloth woven with a twisted, two coloured yarn in the weft.	lai dok mali (ลายดอกมะลิ)	A decorative motif based on a variety of the jasmine flower.
hang sapao (หางสะเปา)	Tai Yuan. A motif representing tassels made in various techniques and usually placed at the edge of a tubeskirt. Known among the Lao Phuan in Hat Sieo as soi sa , while in central Thai it is called kruai choeng .	lai dok phikun (ลายดอกพิกุล)	A decorative motif based on the Little Yellow Star Flower.
hua chok dao (หัวจกดาว)	Isan. A waistband, commonly found in Ubon Ratchathani, made from silk in alternating stripes of red, green or purple with discontinuous supplementary diamond patterns made in silver or gold yarns. These waistbands display the high status of the wearer.	lai dok rak (ลายดอกรัก)	A floral motif based on the Crown Flower.
hua sin (หัวซิ่น)	The waistband of a tubeskirt.	lai kan khot (ลายก้านขด)	A spiral motif.
ikat (อีซัด)	Indonesian. Adopted into the English language to describe a resist dye technique used on yarns before weaving.	lai kan yaeng (ลายก้านแย่ง)	A flame-like decorative motif.
kathin (กฐิน)	A ceremony conducted during the month following the end of the annual rains retreat when special robes known as kathin robes are offered to monks.	lai kanok (ลายกนก)	A flame-like motif, one of the major basic motifs of Thai decorative art.
khet mam (เค็ดหม้าม)	Northern Thai. Method of wearing a short fabric known as pha toi wrapped and tucked in the same way as the chongkraben , but worn to mid-thigh length or shorter. Known in central Thai	lai khao lam tat (ลายข้าวหลามตัด)	A diamond-shaped motif.
		lai kho kut (ลายขอกูด)	A hook-shaped motif.
		lai khom (ลายโคม)	Northern Thai. A diamond motif found in the tin chok and representing a lantern.
		lai khlun (ลายคลื่น)	A ziz zag motif seen in the hem pieces of the Lao Khrang.
		lai kruai choeng (ลายกรวยเชิง)	A motif representing tassels made in various techniques and usually placed at the edge of a textile. Known in northern Thai as hang sapao .
		lai luk kaew (ลายลูกแก้ว)	A diamond-shaped motif with eight points.
		lai nuai (ลายหน่วย)	A diamond motif seen in the hem pieces of the Lao Khrang.
		lai phum khao bin (ลายพุ่มข้าวบิณฑ์)	A decorative motif designed to represent the heads of rice.
		lai phrik thai (ลายพริกไทย)	A decorative motif based on the pepper plant.
		as thok khamen. (See chongkraben and thok khamen)	

lai rachawat (ลายราชวັตร)	A criss-cross pattern forming a grid-like design.	mon hok (หมอนหก)	A square-shaped pillow made of six sections.
lai rachawat khom (ลายราชวັตรโคม)	A diamond pattern forming a grid-like design.	mon khwan (หมอนขวาน)	Central Thai. A triangular-shaped pillow. Known in northern Thai as mon pha . (See mon pha)
lai samuk (ลายสมุก)	A traditional Thai decorative motif.	mon pha (หมอนผา)	A triangular pillow.
lai si liam (ลายสี่เหลี่ยม)	A square-shaped motif.	mudmee (มัดหมี่)	Weft ikat technique.
lai ta makruk (ลายตาหมากรุก)	A checkered motif.	na nang (หน้านาง)	A style of wearing cloth as a tubeskirt with large pleated folds at the front.
lai yo mum mai sib song (ลายย่อมุมไม้สิบสอง)	A twelve-stepped square motif.	naga (นาคา)	A Thai mythological river dragon or snake-like guardian creature of the underworld. Also known as nag .
Lao (ลาว)	The ethnic groups speaking Lao language or other Tai-Lao groups from Laos.	nag (นาค)	A candidate for Buddhist ordination.
Lao Khrang (ลาวครั่ง)	An ethnic Tai sub-group living in Phichit, Kamphaeng Phet, Uthai Thani and other provinces.	patola (ปาโตลา)	Hindi. A long silk sari length cloth from Gujarat, India made in the double ikat technique. These cloths were imported into Thailand by the court in the 16th century and presented as gifts to loyal servants of the crown. One cloth was said to be equal in barter to the value of one slave. The patola structure was copied by weavers throughout Thailand and Southeast Asia and was given magical and exemplary powers.
Lao Phuan (ลาวพวน)	The ethnic Tai sub-group living mainly in Xieng Khouang Province, previously called Muang Phuan, in Laos. The Lao Phuan groups living in Thailand are often called Tai Phuan.	pha atalat (ผ้าอัตลัด)	A silk fabric from Persia with gold brocade motifs placed in the weave at intervals.
Lao Song (ลาวโซ่ง)	Name given to a group of Tai ethnic group living in Phetchaburi and Nakhon Pathom Province. A branch of the Tai Dam who migrated from Lao.	pha ba (ผ้าป่า)	Literally 'forest cloth'. Cloth offered throughout the year to Buddhist monks for personal use. Symbolic of cloth discarded in the forest and collected for making monastic robes.
Lawa (ลัวะ)	Ethnic Mon-Khmer sub-group living in the Lanna Kingdom of northern Thailand.	pha bang sukun (ผ้าบังสุกุล)	Cloth offered to Buddhist monks at the time of a funeral or cremation as a dedication to the deceased.
loi chai (ลอยชาย)	A method used by men for wearing a piece of cloth around the lower torso whereby the tube is attached at the centre front and the ends allowed to hang loosely in front.	pha beng (ผ้าเบง)	Phutai. Sometimes called pha bing . A shoulder cloth also known as pha biang . (See pha biang).
long khuang (ลงช่วง)	A tradition formerly found in Isan and northern Thailand where young men and women would spend their evening hours socializing with the young women sitting spinning cotton in the middle of the yard while the young men would come to court them.	pha biang (ผ้าเบี่ยง)	Isan. A cloth used by Lao men and women to wrap over one shoulder and around the torso in various ways. The Thai equivalent is pha sabai . (See pha sabai).
mi hol (หมี่โฮล)	A silk weft ikat tubeskirt, called chong hol in Khmer, woven in a three shaft twill by ethnic Khmer in the lower northeast of Thailand.	pha chet (ผ้าเช็ด)	Tai Lue. Literally a wiping cloth. A cloth worn by Tai Lue and Tai Yuan men over one shoulder as a decorative garment.
mi hol phabol (หมี่โฮลปะบอล)	Refers to a weft ikat tubeskirt of Khmer origin called mi hol to which a separate ikat hem piece has been added. These were used for dancing and theatrical performances. Phabol is Khmer for hem piece.	pha chet luang (ผ้าเช็ดหลวง)	Tai Lue. A long narrow cotton cloth made in continuous supplementary weft designs at each end with a plain twill weave section in the centre and fringes at each end. Used for temple banners.
Mon (มอญ)	An ethnic group living mainly in southern Myanmar and parts of western central Thailand.	pha chet noi (ผ้าเช็ดน้อย)	Tai Lue. A small handkerchief.
mon (หมอน)	A pillow.		

pha chiwan (ผ้าจีวร)	Tai Lue. A small banner woven for use as an altar decoration.	pha khian thong (ผ้าเขียนทอง)	A fabric made in a Siamese design exclusively for court use and executed in India using gold leaf lines.
pha chong (ผ้าจ้อง)	Phutai. A blanket made in supplementary warp technique using silk and cotton. Two cloths are joined together with fringes at one end. The Phutai in the northeast still use this cloth for warm wraps or as coffin covers.	pha lai yang thong lian (ผ้าลายอย่างทองเลียน)	A fabric made in a Siamese design exclusively for court use. The fabric was plain in the centre with decorations only at the borders.
pha chongkraben (ผ้าโจงกระเบน)	A cloth to be worn in the chongkraben style. (See chongkraben).	pha lo (hua chang) (ผ้าล้อ (หัวช้าง))	Tai Lao. A cloth used to put on an elephant's head for decorative purposes and to sit on. This name is used in Nam Pat and Fak Tha Districts, Uttaradit Province to refer to pha laep. (See pha laep).
pha ho khamphi (ผ้าห่อคัมภีร์)	A small cloth or mixed media textile for use as palm leaf book binders. Made in various techniques including supplementary wefts, brocades, wrapped bamboo, and weft ikat.	pha lop (ผ้าหลบ)	Northern Thai. A bedsheet.
pha hom (ผ้าห่ม)	A blanket.	pha mon (ผ้ามนตร์)	Phutai. A small square-shaped silk cloth of the Phutai origin made in discontinuous supplementary weft technique and used to place over the head of the candidate during a Buddhist ordination ceremony.
pha hom hua keb (ผ้าห่มหัวเก็บ)	The pha hom of the Tai Yuan found in Nam Ang Village, Tron District, and in the vicinity of Laplae District, Uttaradit Province. Woven in twill weave with a khit design in red or yellow at one end.	pha muang (ผ้าม่วง)	A cloth made from dark blue, purple or green silk for use as chongkraben. Sometimes a two-toned twisted silk was used. Fashionable during the Rama V period. (See chongkraben)
pha hom lai khit (ผ้าห่มลายขีด)	Isan. A silk or cotton cloth made of two pieces of continuous supplementary weft fabric and used by the Lao people in northeastern Thailand as a shoulder cloth, warm wrap for women, or head cloth for men.	pha na nang (ผ้าหน้านาง)	A piece of fabric about ninety centimetres by four metres worn by women as a skirt wrapped around the waist with one end left long which is folded to make pleats that are positioned at the front of the skirt. A belt is used to secure the skirt.
pha hua (ผ้าหัว)	Tai Yuan. A head cloth.	pha phan chang (ผ้าพานช้าง)	Southern Thai. A cloth used to cover the coffin at the time of a funeral.
pha khao ma (ผ้าขาวม้า)	A multi-purpose cloth in cotton or silk approximately fifty centimetres wide by two metres long and made with a large check design or in plain indigo. Commonly used by both men and women as thok khamen, head cloths, belts, ceremonial shawls, shoulder cloths, baby carriers, baby hammocks, money pouches and handkerchiefs.	pha phrae (ผ้าแพร)	Silk or cotton fabric with a satin finish mostly woven in China. This word has recently been put into use by some groups to refer to silk of any type.
pha khem khab (ผ้าเข็มخاب)	A striped gold brocade fabric from Persia.	pha phrae wa (ผ้าแพรวา)	Phutai. A cotton or silk cloth of one wa length. (1 wa = 2 m.) This term is used by the Phutai and refers to a fabric used in a similar way to the pha sabai. The Phutai sometimes call this cloth pha beng or pha biang.
Pha laep (ผ้าเหลบ)	Northern Thai. A cloth woven by the Tai Lue and used as a travelling or temple mattress. It is sometimes stuffed with kapok to a thickness of about one inch. Also known as pha taem, pha non, pha lo hua chang, or pha lo.	pha pieo (ผ้าเปีย)	Lao Song. A general purpose cloth used by the Lao Song women as a breast cloth, a head cloth, etc.
pha lai nam khanun (ผ้าลายหนามขนุน)	A cloth made in the tie-dye technique and used in the courts as belts.	pha pok hua nag (ผ้าปกหัวนาถ)	A piece of cloth used to cover the head of the candidate at the time of Buddhist ordination.
pha lai nok yang (ผ้าลายนอกอย่าง)	A cloth made in patterns similar to the pha lai yang but inferior in technique, pattern and fabric.	pha pum (ผ้าปุม)	A long cloth made in weft ikat designs from Cambodia and used for chongkraben. (See chongkraben).
pha lai yang (ผ้าลายอย่าง)	A fabric made in a Siamese design exclusively for court use. Some of these designs were executed in India and sent directly to the Siamese court who then	pha sabai (ผ้าสไบ)	A long narrow cloth for women to wrap around the breasts with the ends draped

	over one shoulder and hanging down the front and back.		
pha sin (ผ้าซิ่น)	A women's tubular skirt made of several pieces of fabric sewn together, usually comprising a waistband, a main body and a hem piece.	sin long (ซิ่นล่อง)	Isan. A tubeskirt found in Ubon Ratchathani and made in brocade silver or gold stripes with plain or ikat stripes, a separate hem piece and a waistband.
pha som pak pum (ผ้าสมปักปุม)	An alternative name for pha pum.	sin luan (ซิ่นเหลี่ยน)	An alternative name for sin lae.
pha som pak Rachanikun (ผ้าสมปักราชินิกุล)	A long cloth made in weft ikat and used by the Queen's family as a chongkraben or pha na nang.	sin mai kham (ซิ่นไหมคำ)	Northern Thai. A brocade pha sin fitted with a hem piece and further decorated with coloured silk chok to enhance the colour. Common to Nan Province.
pha ta takataen (ผ้าตาดักแตน)	A gold brocade fabric from India with tiny diamond motifs.	sin mai kom (ซิ่นไหมกอม)	Isan. A tubeskirt woven with small weft stripes in a two-toned yarn and worn by elderly women in the northeastern part of Thailand. Sometimes called mai khaen.
pha tat (ผ้าตาด)	A gold brocade fabric from India with dense gold brocading.	sin mi (ซิ่นหมี่)	Tai Lao. A weft ikat tubeskirt in cotton or silk.
pha toi (ผ้าต้อย)	Northern Thai. A cloth worn by men in Lanna wrapped and tucked in the same way as chongkraben but worn to mid-thigh length or shorter. (See also chongkraben) This method of wearing is called khet mam in northern Thai and thok khamen in central Thai.	sin mi lot (ซิ่นหมี่ลอด)	Lao Khrang. An ikat pha sin made by the Lao Khrang in red silk with ikat designs throughout.
pha tong (ผ้าตอง)	Northern Thai. A plain or checkered multi-purpose cloth used by men in a similar way to the pha khao ma. (See pha khao ma).	sin mi noi (ซิ่นหมี่น้อย)	Lao Khrang. A silk ikat pha sin with small ikat patterns made by the Lao Khrang.
pha tum (ผ้าตุ้ม)	Northern Thai. A cloth for wrapping around the shoulders for warmth in the manner of a shawl.	sin mi ta (ซิ่นหมี่ตา)	Lao Khrang. A silk ikat pha sin made by the Lao Khrang with ikat and supplementary designs alternating.
pha yiarabab (ผ้าเยียรบับ)	A striped gold fabric from India.	sin nuan (ซิ่นนวล)	Lao Phuan. A pha sin with a structure similar to that of the sin siu.
pha yok (ผ้ายอก)	Textile woven using the yok technique. (See yok).	sin siu (ซิ่นซิว)	Tai Yuan. A green tubeskirt with black stripes and two wide bands of red near the hem and waistband which sometimes had tiny supplementary designs within.
pha yok thong (ผ้ายอกทอง)	A silk fabric made in brocade gold using the supplementary weft technique.	sin ta (ซิ่นตา)	Tai Lue and Northern Thai. A pha sin made in stripes without any supplementary weft or ikat decoration. In the Tai Lue pha sin the stripes are in the weft whereas in the Tai Yuan pha sin the stripes are in the warp.
phithi sen huan (พิธีเสนเฮือน)	A ceremony conducted annually by the Lao Song to pay respect to their ancestors.	sin ta dok (ซิ่นตาดอก)	Tai Yuan. Another name for the sin ta mu.
prasat (ปราสาท)	A monument; a celestial abode; a castle.	sin ta mu (ซิ่นตاه่ม)	Tai Yuan. A multi-coloured striped cloth woven with a cotton warp, but the weft incorporated cotton and silk to emphasize red with green, blue, purple, black and some supplementary bands of khit technique.
salee (สะหลี)	Northern Thai. A mattress.	sin thiou (ซิ่นทิว)	Isan. A tubeskirt woven with red and black stripes and sometimes a tiny warp ikat dot. It is commonly worn by elderly women and is seen among nearly all Tai groups.
sarong (โสร่ง)	A cloth sewn into a tube to be worn by men. The cloth is either cotton or silk made in check designs. Malay printed sarongs for women have become popular in Thailand but these are called pha thung.	sin tin chok (ซิ่นตีนจก)	A tubeskirt with a special hem piece attached which is woven in the discontinuous supplementary weft technique.
sin kan (ซิ่นก่าน)	Lao Khrang. A horizontally striped tubeskirt.	sin tin daeng (ซิ่นตีนแดง)	Isan. A tubeskirt from Buriram Province with wide red bands at the waist and
sin kham khoeb (ซิ่นคำเคียบ)	Northern Thai. A pha sin woven in brocade based on the Persian brocade fabric called khem khab. Common to Nan Province.		
sin lae (ซิ่นเหลี่ยน)	Tai Yuan. A black tubeskirt made in plain black or black alternating with indigo stripes and with two wide bands of red		

hem made in weft ikat silk woven in three shaft twill.		
soi sa (สร้อยสา)	(See hang sapao)	
songkran (สงกรานต์)	The traditional Thai New Year.	
stupa (สถูป)	A monument built to enshrine the relics of the deceased.	
sua hi (เสื้อฮี)	Lao Song. A shirt worn by the Tai Dam or the Lao Song people.	
sua kom (เสื้อก้อม)	Lao Song. A long-sleeved shirt made from indigo cotton and fastened at the front with silver buttons. Worn by Tai Dam women.	
sua mo hom (เสื้อหม้อห้อม)	Northern Thai. A short-sleeved, collarless, round-necked shirt made of cotton dyed in indigo and tied with strings instead of buttons. Similar in appearance to a Chinese farmer's shirt.	
sua pat (เสื้อปัต)	Tai Lue. A woman's blouse fastened down one side.	
sua rat pataen (เสื้อราชปะแตน)	A coat or shirt made from high quality fabric for official wear since the period of Rama V. The design is a high round collar, gold buttons down the front, long sleeves and three pockets.	
sua tai (เสื้อไท)	Lao Song. A long sleeved shirt made from indigo cotton and fastened at the front with silver buttons. Worn by Tai Dam men.	
tabaengman (ตะเบงมาน)	The method of wearing a breast cloth by women by crossing the cloth at the front and tying behind the back.	
Tai (ไท, ไต)	The ethnic groups speaking Tai languages of many dialects and sub-groups.	
Tai Dam (ไทดำ)	The Black Tai ethnic group from the Dien Bien Phu area of Vietnam. Many Tai Dam can also be found living in Laos. Known in central Thai as Lao Song.	
Tai Lue (ไทลื้อ)	The ethnic Tai sub-group living mainly in Sipsong Pan Na, China. Groups can also be found living in Laos and in Northern Thailand.	
Tai Phuan (ไทพวน)	The ethnic Tai sub-group living mainly in Xieng Khouang Province, previously called Muang Phuan, in Laos. The Tai Phuan groups living in Thailand are often called Lao Phuan.	
Tai Yon (ไทโยน)	An abbreviation of Tai Yonok and Tai Yuan.	
Tai Yonok (ไทโยนก)	Tai people from the ancient legendary kingdom of Yonok said to be in Northern Thailand.	
Tai Yuan (ไถยวน)	The ethnic Tai sub-group living in the Lanna Kingdom in Northern Thailand.	
tan kuai salak (ตานกล้วยสลาก)	A ceremony performed in Northern Thailand where people present a variety of offerings to temples in their community.	
Thep Phanom (เทพพนม)	A decorative motif depicting a celestial being with hands in the anjali gesture.	
Thep Pharam (เทพรำ)	A decorative motif depicting a celestial being in a dancing posture.	
thok khamen (ถอกเขมร)	A method of wearing a narrow width of cloth about fifty centimetres wide by three metres long, wrapped and tucked in the same way as the chongkraben , but the length of the resulting pants falling at mid-thigh or shorter.	
thung yam (ถุงย่าม)	A shoulder bag.	
tieo sado (เตี่ยวสะดอ)	Northern Thai. Chinese-style trousers made from indigo fabric, wide at the waist for tucking in.	
tieo sam duk (เตี่ยวสามдук)	Northern Thai. The name used in Nan Province for Chinese-style trousers sewn in three seams and wide at the waist. Called tieo sado in Chiang Mai Province.	
tin chok (ตีนจก)	A decorative cloth woven in the discontinuous supplementary weft technique used as a hem for the pha sin . This term is used mainly in the central and northern parts of Thailand.	
tin sin (ตีนซิ่น)	The hem piece of a pha sin . This term is used mainly in the northeast of Thailand.	
tin tam lae (ตีนตำและ)	The narrow compound weave hem piece of a pha sin in the northeast of Thailand.	
tua sin (ตัวซิ่น)	The main body of a tubeskirt.	
tung (ตุง)	Northern Thai. a banner or temple flag.	
yok and yok dok (ยก, ยกดอก)	To lift or lift designs. Used to refer to various types of twill weave. In Central and Southern Thailand this term is used for silver or gold brocade fabric which is technically woven in khit or the continuous supplementary weft technique.	

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