

ฟ้าทอลาวครั้ง

ธำธา ชัสแมน

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ประจำปีงบประมาณ ๒๕๕๖

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Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Patricia Cheesman-Naenna, not only for her expert advice and assistance with my research and this report, but also for her unfailing support and wisdom.

Tara Cheesman

22 August 1994

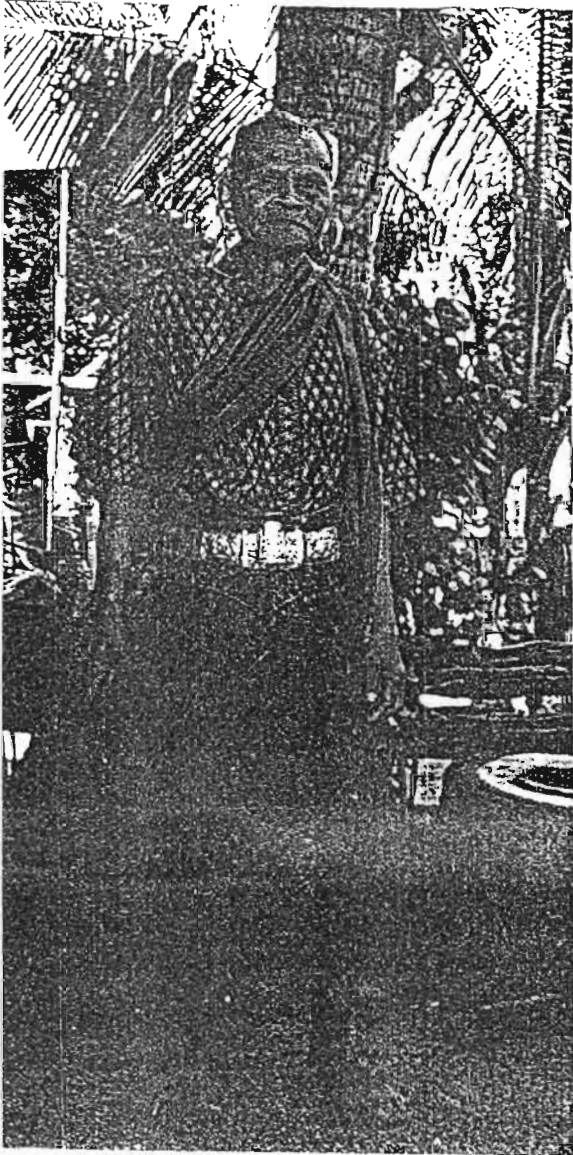
LAO KHRANG TEXTILES

TARA CHEESMAN

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Traditional mens clothing, Ban Don Phet,
Phani



Traditional womans clothing, Ban Sa Yai Chee,
Phichit province.

Introduction

All cultures have history and traditions which lay foundations for the future of their people, existing as basic guidelines for their unique way of life. This is especially true of South East Asian ethnic groups which are almost innumerable yet clearly distinguishable as a result of different cultural development. Unfortunately as we head towards the twenty first century these clear definitions of the past are blurring and often disappearing with the Westernisation of this region.

The Lao Khrang people are a largely unknown and ignored ethnic group that has become a victim of the rapid modernisation of Thailand in this century and despite their rich history they now face losing their cultural identity forever. The Lao Khrang developed a unique culture through their many migrations that is interesting from both a historical and anthropological point of view. As in most ethnic groups of this region, the textiles of the Lao Khrang play an integral part in their history and can give amazing insight into many aspects of traditional life that have already been lost.

At the beginning of my research I knew of few Lao Khrang villages in Thailand, but as the year progressed I became aware of many more scattered not only in Central Thailand, but also in other regions. Unfortunately I was only able to visit a few other villages outside of those I had already known, so this report may present information true only to the regions I was able to access. The lack of reference material for this research project has made generalisation in this report almost impossible, and I have avoided doing so to prevent any misunderstandings that may result.

I have undertaken in this report to record the knowledge I have gained of the Lao Khrang people as it was told to me by the villagers. In many instances the people themselves were unsure and confused about various details, and there were often differences in the facts recorded from adjacent villages, or even adjacent households. This is unfortunately the result of the lack of continuation of many traditions in most villages today, showing that in many instances it is already too late to recover this information. Despite these obstacles I have attempted to collaborate the information given to me so that through the appreciation of the textiles of this unique group, we may begin to understand their diverse history and its significance in the study of South East Asian cultures.



Elderly woman with textiles woven in her youth,
Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

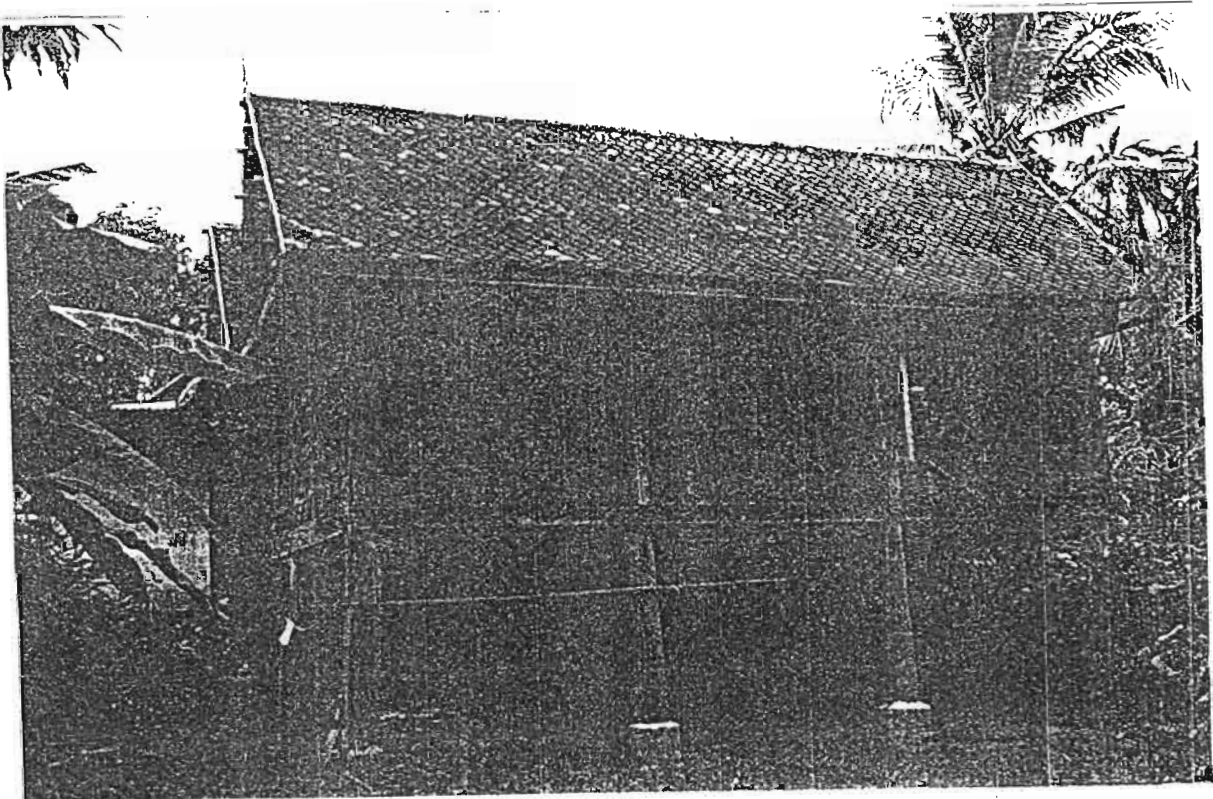
"Lao Khrang" is the name of one of the many Tai groups that were resettled from Laos into various parts of Thailand by the Thai government between the reigns of Rama I and Rama IV. The Lao Khrang peoples were settled in a number of provinces in northern Central Thailand and have remained in this area up until the present day. Small group migrations within this area were not uncommon in the past, particularly from Suphan Buri to surrounding provinces. Today Lao Khrang villages can be found throughout Phichit, Uthai Thani, Chai Nat, and Suphan Buri provinces in Central Thailand which is the focus of this study. There are small groups of Lao Khrang in other regions of Thailand but these have not been included here.

The Lao Khrang in Uthai Thani province are particularly interesting for textile research as they have maintained many historical weaving traditions, although today most of their products are for commercial sale and thus the raw materials and colour palette have changed considerably. Traditionally textiles were made for the family and gifts only. The Lao Khrang in Phichit province migrated from Uthai Thani province within the last century, taking many traditions with them, although weaving has almost died out and old textiles are becoming more rare. Traditional weaving continues in Chai Nat and Suphan Buri provinces but is not as well known as that in Uthai Thani.

It is unclear which traditions the Lao Khrang have maintained from their original homeland, and which were adapted during or in their new settlements. Culturally, they have been strongly influenced by their Thai environment while maintaining aspects such as Lao language and their traditional weaving methods. Some ceremonies remain an integral part of the Lao Khrang peoples lives, including the *piitthi sou khwan yung* and the *chan kathin* ceremonies. The former is a ceremony conducted after the rice harvest to bless the rice silos before storing rice in them.

The chun kathin ceremony, common among Tai groups originating in Laos, directly concerns textiles as it involves the preparation, weaving and dyeing of a length of fabric within 24 hours during the kathin festival time for offering to the temple. These cloths would be used as monks robes, giving great merit to the weavers. Other ceremonies conducted in the Lao Khrang villages are common throughout Thailand and Laos such as weddings, funerals, ordination ceremonies, and merit making ceremonies at the temple.

In the past, women in Lao Khrang villages began weaving at a very young age and provided all textiles used by her household. It was said that any girl who was unable to weave could not marry as weaving was an essential part of a married woman's life. This included weaving fabric for making her own clothing, clothing for her family, household items and special ceremonial textiles. She would weave until she lost her sight or was no longer able to sit for long periods of time, which was usually until the age of about eighty.



Antique house still lived in, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

WEAVING METHODS

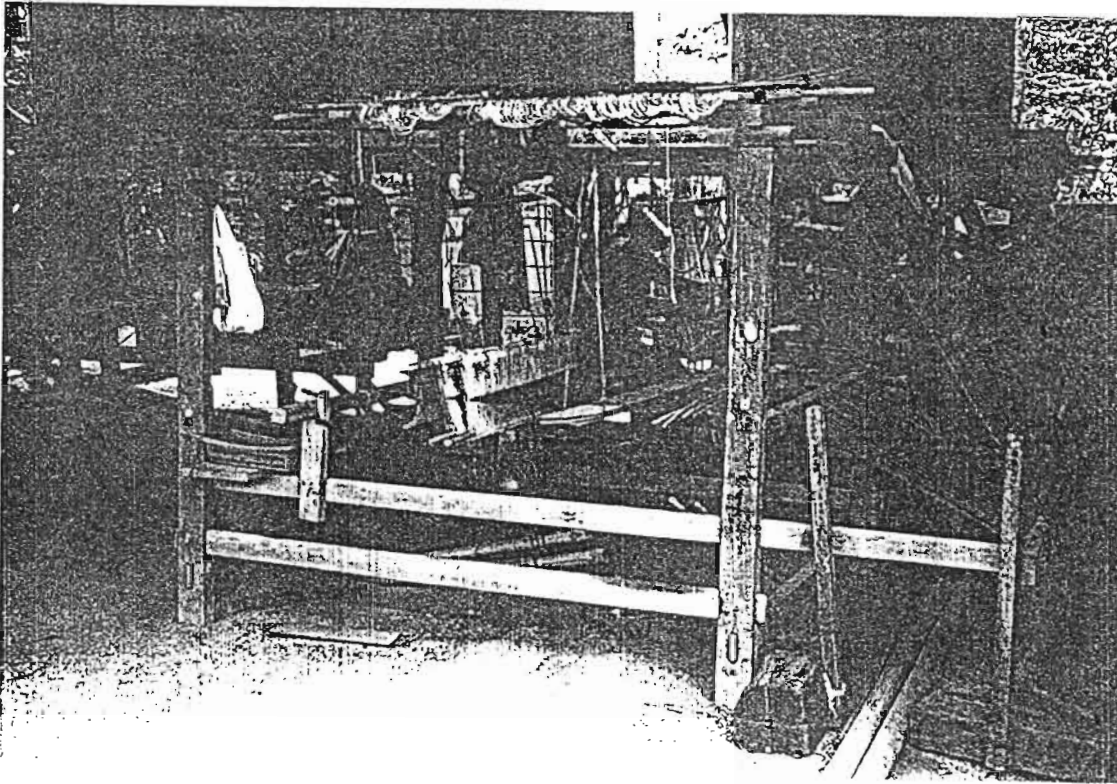
All preparation of yarns for weaving was done by the Lao Khrang women themselves, while the men assisted by constructing the looms and other equipment. Young men crafted shuttles for their sweethearts to weave with, and made weaving reeds once they were too old to work in the fields. Each family was self sufficient, so the weaver had to know all the weaving and dyeing steps herself. The main decorative techniques employed by the Lao Khrang were:

chok - discontinuous supplementary weft (**koh** in Lao Khrang)
khit - continuous supplementary weft
mat mi - weft ikat

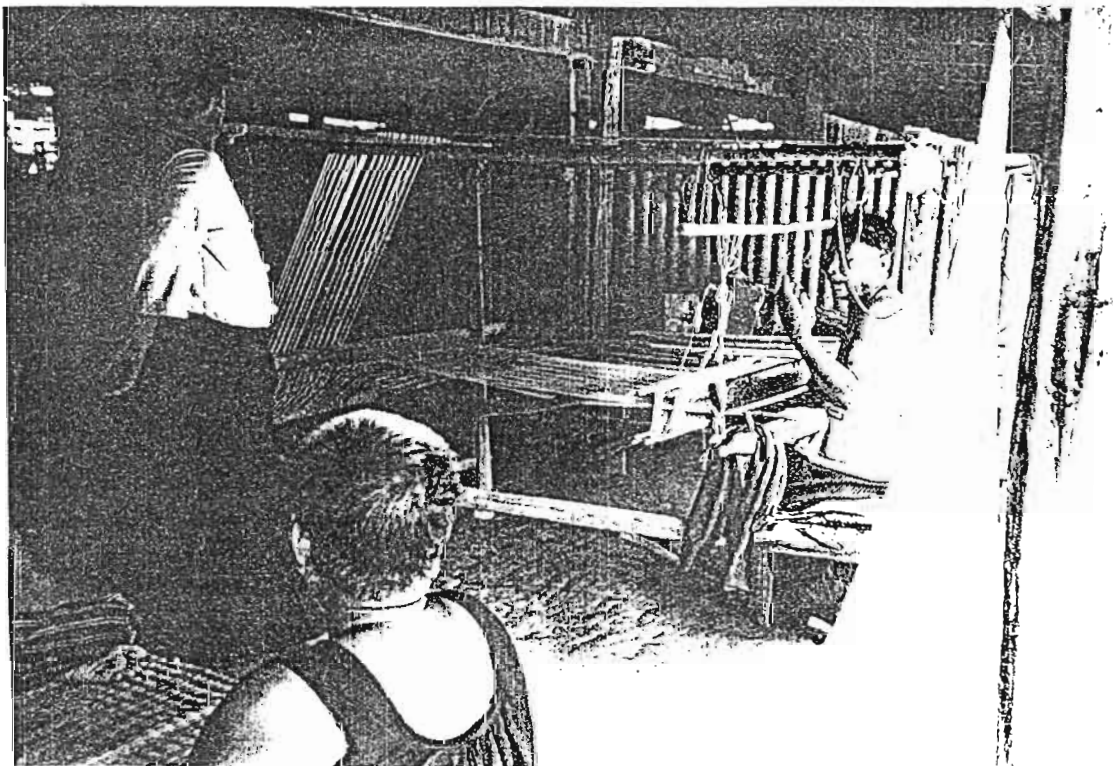
The looms were made from wood and bamboo, and had the same structure in all Lao Khrang villages. They were similar to the looms found in northern Thailand in that a piece of wood was extended out at the far end around which the warp yarns passed before being tied above the head of the weaver.

The preparation of the warp yarns was similar to other Tai groups : by winding them onto a large spools, and then winding them onto a specially prepared wooden warp stretcher, before drawing each yarn individually through the reed (**fuem**) and heddles which are stored with the yarns from the last weaving intact so that the new warp can be attached and drawn through easily. These warp yarns were traditionally red khrang (stic-lac) dyed silk for special clothing and cotton for other textiles, although synthetic and pre-dyed, machined cotton yarns have been introduced and these now replace almost all traditional warps in modern Lao Khrang textiles.

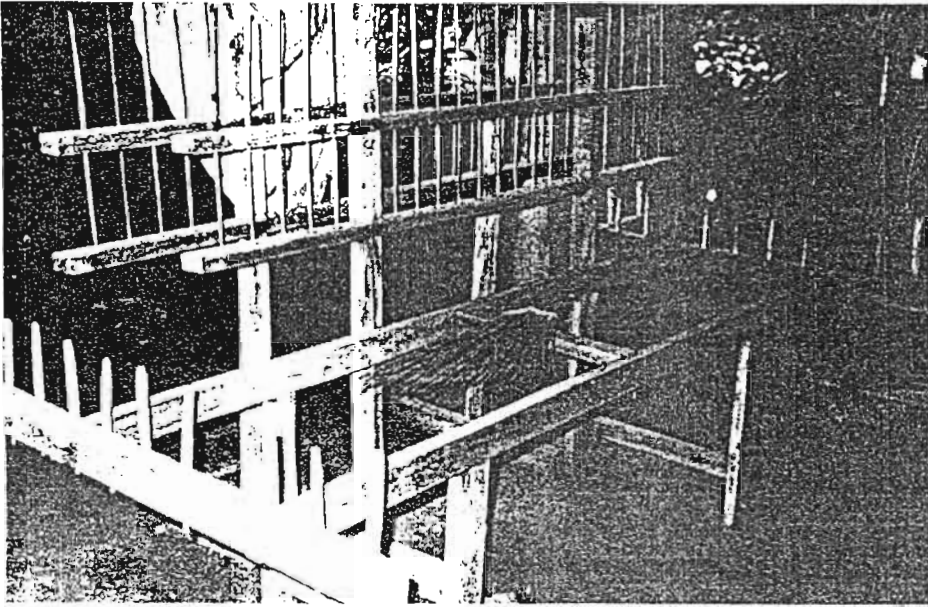
Traditionally, home grown cotton and silk were used for weaving. Both were reared in or near the villages. In Ban Khok Mo, Thap Than district, Uthai Thani province, villagers planted cotton and mulberry bushes on Doi Khao Luang to prevent destruction of the



Traditional loom style set up with red silk warp,
Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Traditional loom with white cotton warp for weaving pillows,
Ban Sa Yai Chee, Phichit province.



Wooden equipment for arranging the warp yarns,
Ban Nong Chanuan, Uthai Thani province.



Setting up warp yarns, Ban Thung Kathin, Suphan Buri province

crops by common lowland floods and silk worms were reared by each household. In Phichit, Chai Nat, and Suphan Buri provinces, cotton was planted in fields surrounding the villages, with mulberry bushes being planted in the villages by each household for rearing silk worms. The harvests of cotton were collected and prepared for weaving by the women, including the dyeing processes.

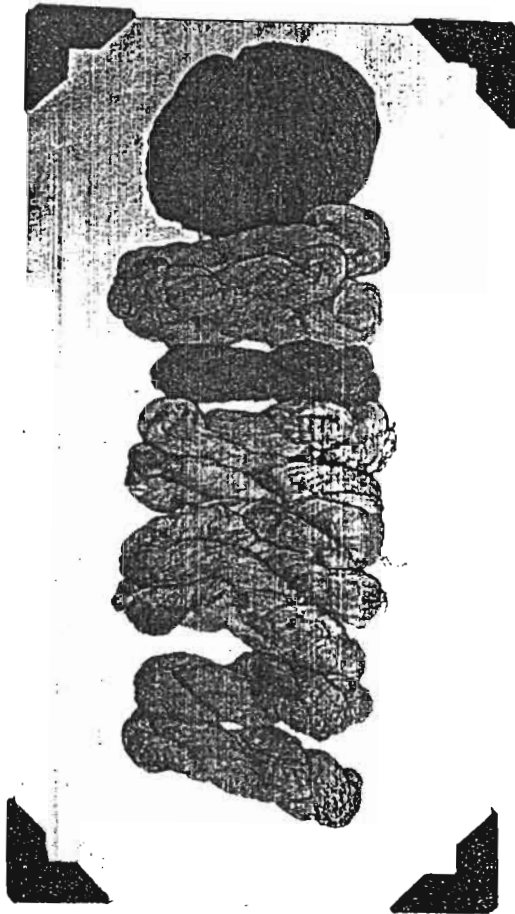
Historically, the Lao Khrang used local plants as dye sources although this century, particularly in the last fifty years, the use of chemical dyes and pre-dyed yarns bought from markets has increased until now the use of natural dyes is virtually non-existent. As their name implies, the main natural dye source for the Lao Khrang was **khrang** (stic-lac), which produced various shades of red when used to dye silk yarns. Indigo plants were grown to provide a blue dye source, and turmeric was used to give yellow. Green was obtained by the use of turmeric and indigo, while dark brown was obtained by combining indigo, turmeric and **khrang**. Black was extracted from seeds of the **maklua** (ebony) trees but required other methods, for example soaking in mud, to obtain a strong colour. As indigo is a strong alkaline it was rarely used to dye silk, except over other colours, but it was the most commonly used dye for cotton yarns.

Weft yarns were dyed before weaving, as lengths of already woven fabric were rarely dyed, except for indigo working clothes. Weft ikat patterns were created by tying the weft yarns, which had been prepared to the exact width to be woven on an ikat frame, with small strips of banana palm stem to prevent the dye from taking on those areas. Small amounts of yarn, usually silk, were also dyed in hanks to be used for the **chok** and **khit** techniques. The weaving was done with the back of the fabric facing up which enabled the weaver to tie off neat ends for the supplementary patterns. Most designs were woven with a plain tabby weave except for blankets which required more than two shafts. Supplementary patterns were woven with two tabby shots

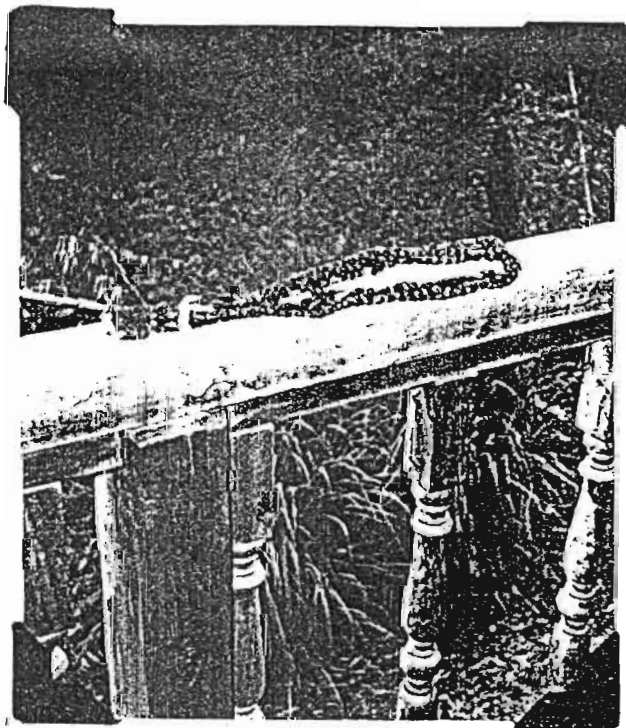
between the supplementaries. The patterns were placed by the use of shed sticks (*mai kep lai*) in the warp. Today the introduction of vertical or long heddles into which the shed sticks are placed enables multiple repeats of the same pattern and weavers can buy sets rather than rely on their own skill. This has led to a uniformity of designs which was not present in the old textiles.

In the past, patterns and designs were passed down in families as mothers and grandmothers taught young girls how to weave. The combinations of patterns were often up to the weaver and was her own artistic expression. Quite often scraps of old fabric were kept as models of the traditional patterns. Most weavers could imitate a pattern on sight as they were trained to pay attention to detail.

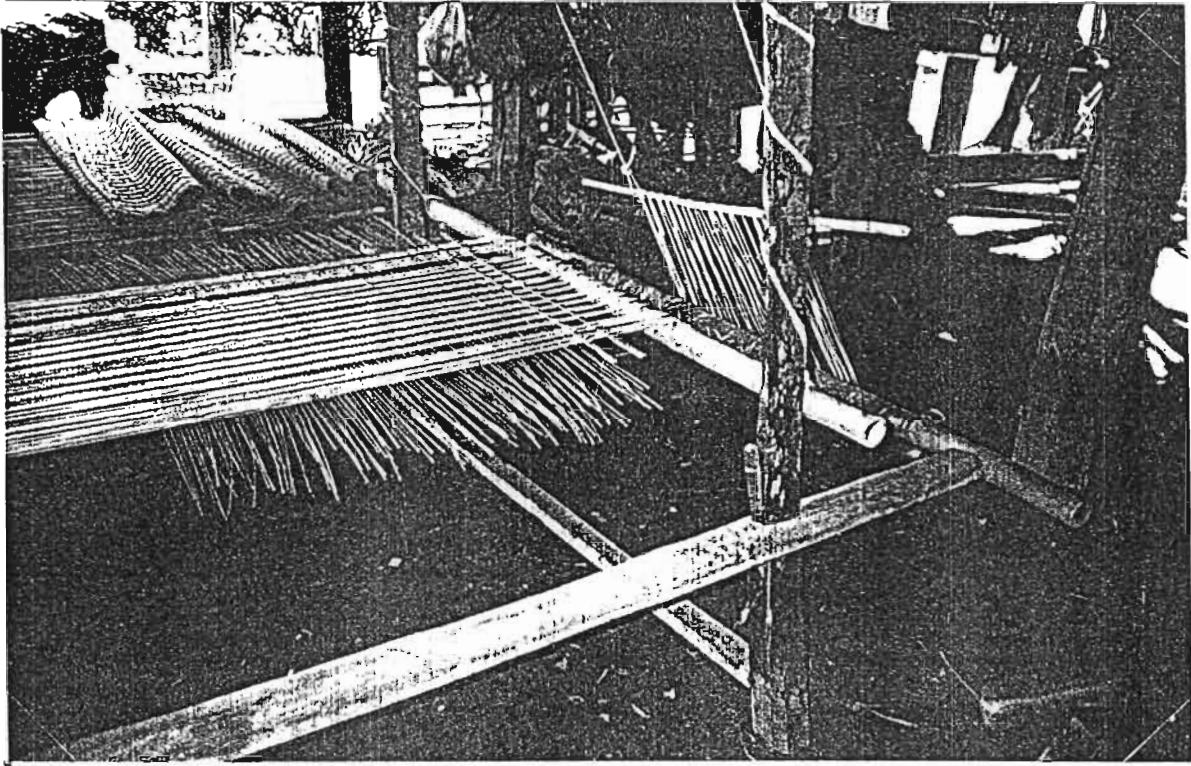
Each piece of fabric took a long time to complete, but the actual weaving was usually a short step after the preparation of the warp, shafts, shed sticks and weft yarns. Once woven, the fabric had to be sewn into a garment or for its particular function which in most cases involved constructions that did not require the cutting of the selvages. The stitching used to sew most Lao Khrang material was very similar, being a chain-stitch that could be seen on the outside and identified on most textiles. A yellow or red cotton yarn was usually used to do this stitching.



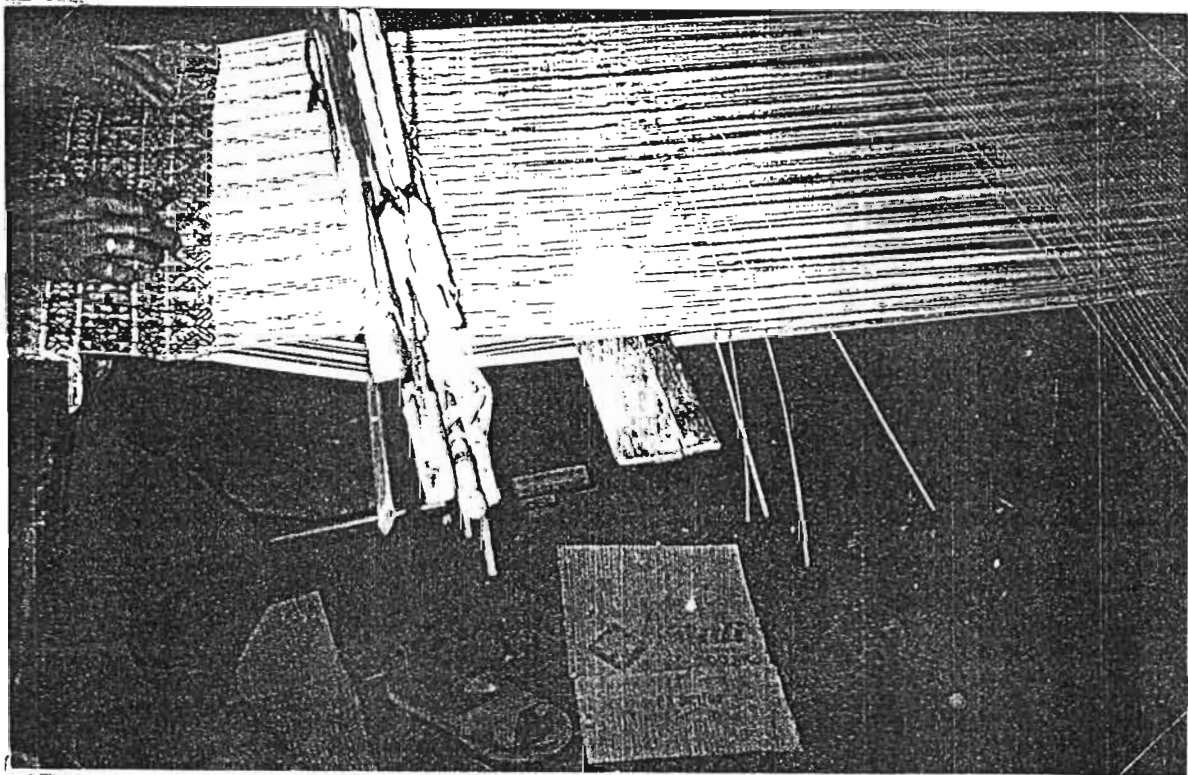
Cotton yarns naturally dyed with local plants, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



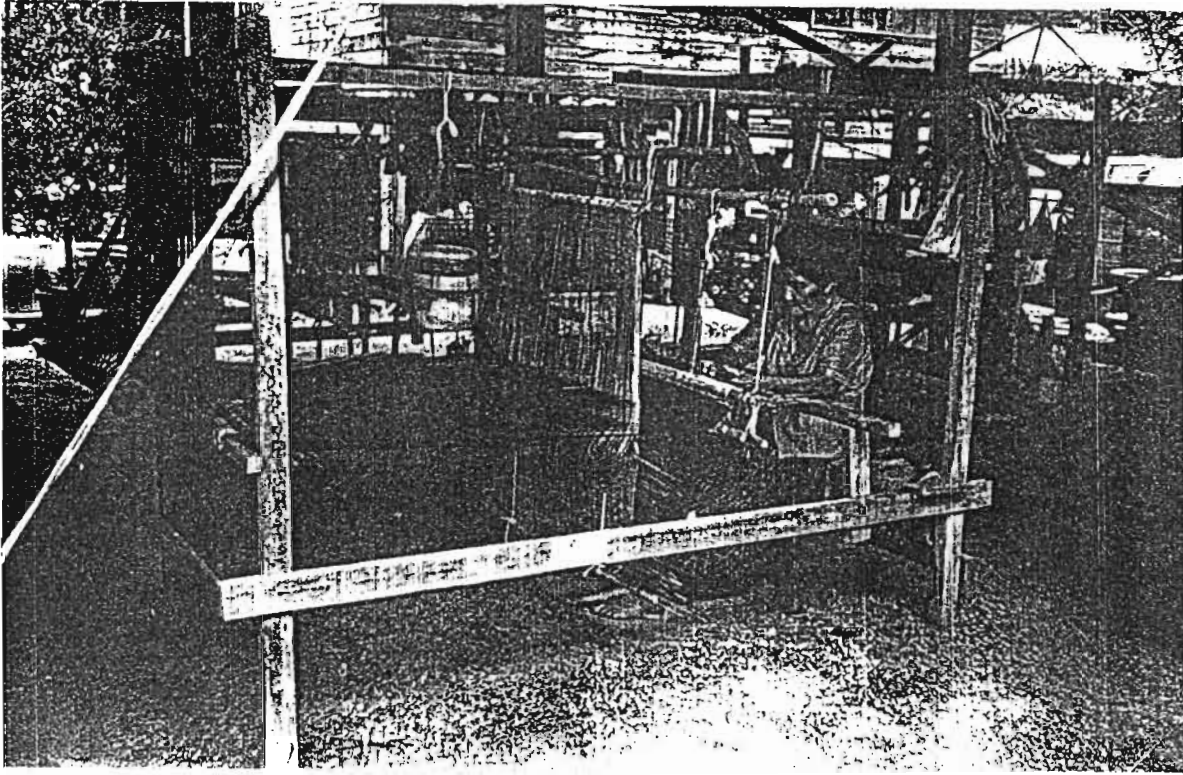
Silk yarns, tied and dyed in ikat patterns, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



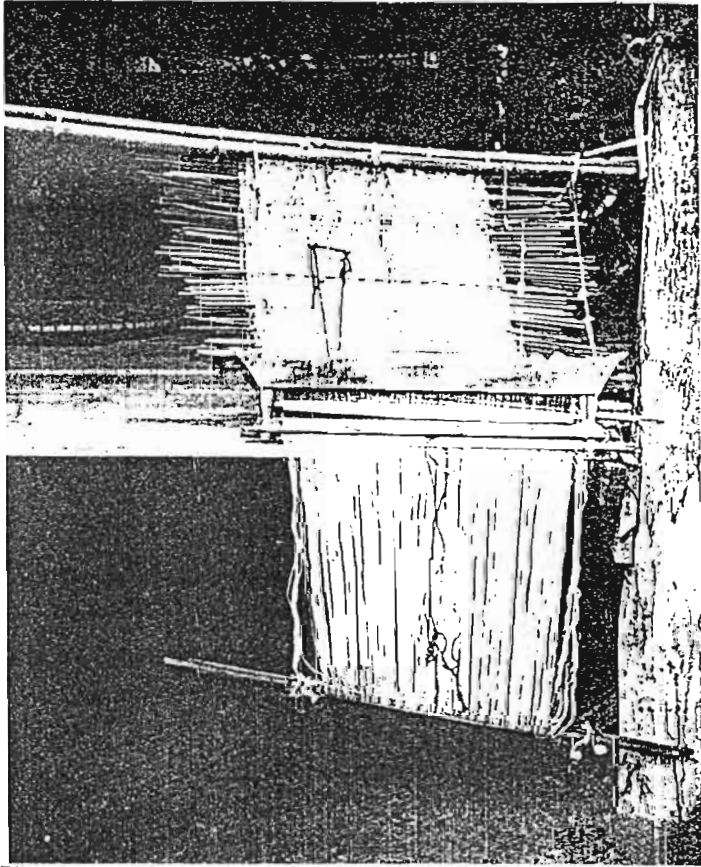
Shed sticks inserted in the warp to create **khit** patterns, Ban Thung Kathin, Suphan Buri province.



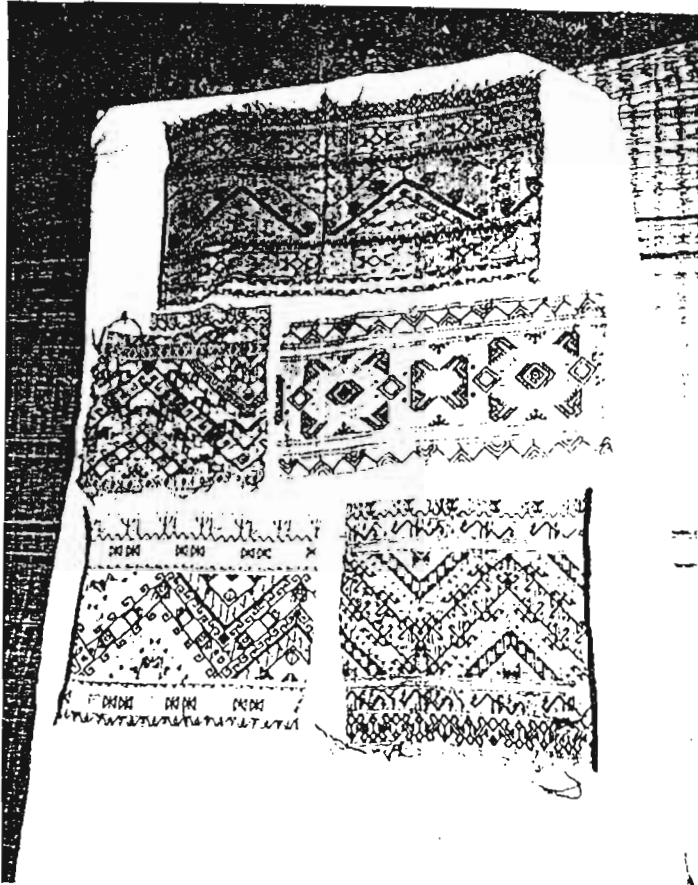
Pattern created using shed sticks as above, Ban Thung Kathin, Suphan Buri province.



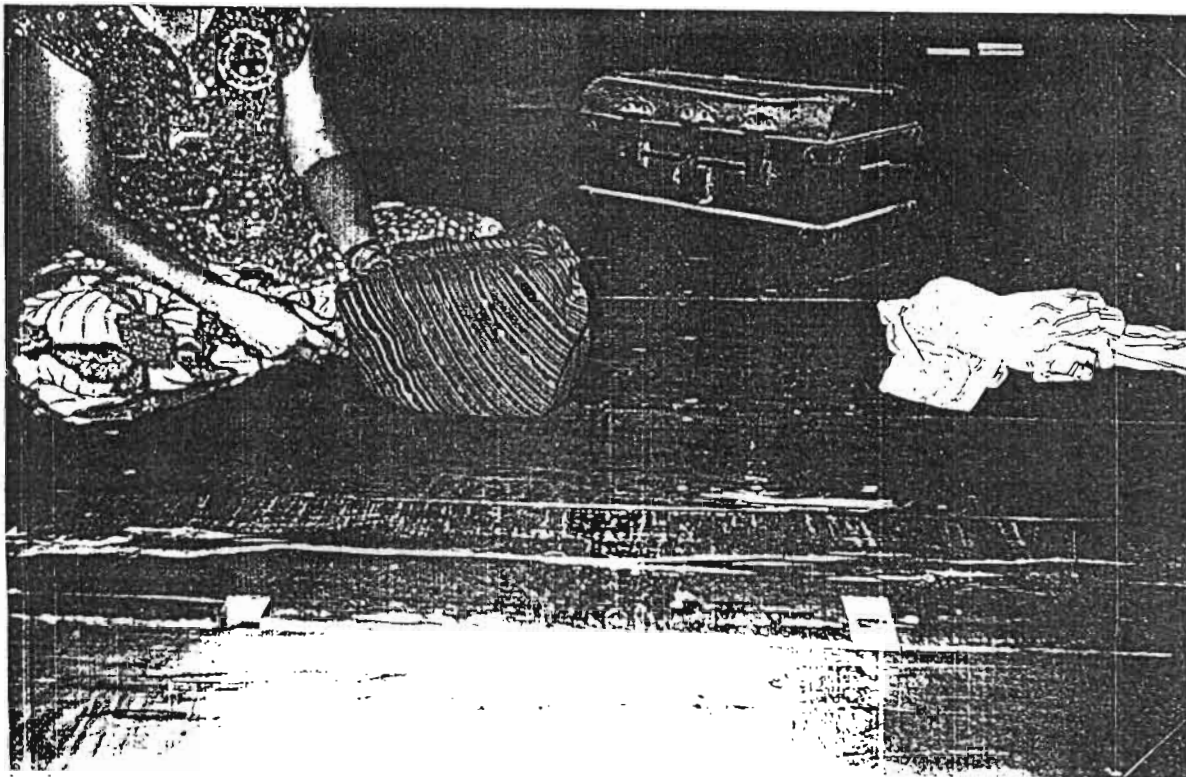
Loom with shed sticks being used on warp yarns for creating patterns, Bsn Nong Chok, Uthai Thani province.



Detail of shed sticks from above photograph.



Antique pieces kept for copying patterns,
Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



Careful preservation of antique textiles by wrapping in cloth and storing
in a chest, Ban Khok Ho, Uthai Thani province.



Wearing of silk pha sin, Ban Sa Yai Chee,
Thani province.



Wearing of cotton pha sin, Ban Na Ta Pho,
Uthai Thani province.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

TUBESKIRTS : PHA SIN

Women's tubeskirts remain the most distinguishing tradition of the Lao Khrang peoples, although the weaving of these is dying out in some villages today. The villagers of Uthai Thani, Chai Nat, and Suphan Buri provinces continue to weave the traditional styles and patterns for commercial sale, although rarely using the traditional materials of silk and cotton; whereas in Ban Sa Yai Chee, Sam Ngam district, Phichit province, there is no longer any weaving of these elaborate art works.

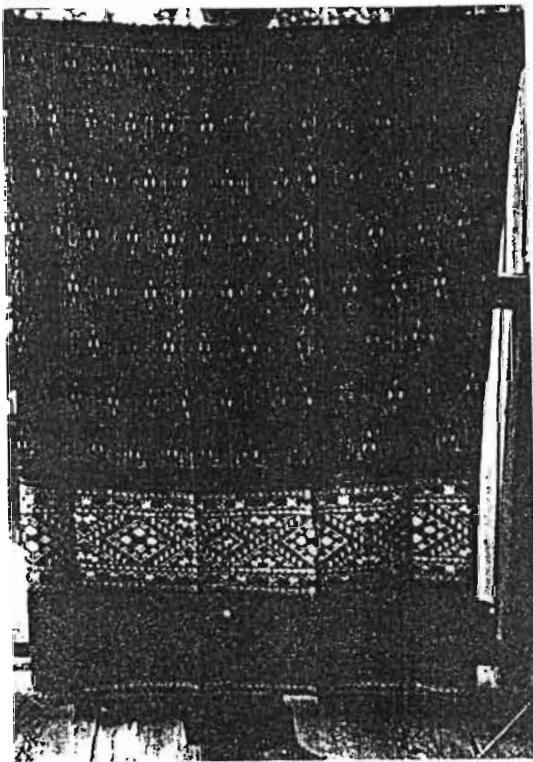
Pha sin were woven by women for both everyday and ceremonial use. Their size varied with each weaver, but they were usually woven on 60-80 cm width looms, in both silk and cotton. There were three sections to each pha sin: the waistband or hua, the central section or tua, and the hempiece or tin. Each section was woven separately and the three joined to create a complete pha sin, although not all pha sin contained all three sections. For working, just the central section was worn (usually cotton), while tin were added for ceremonial wear, and hua were added to increase length.



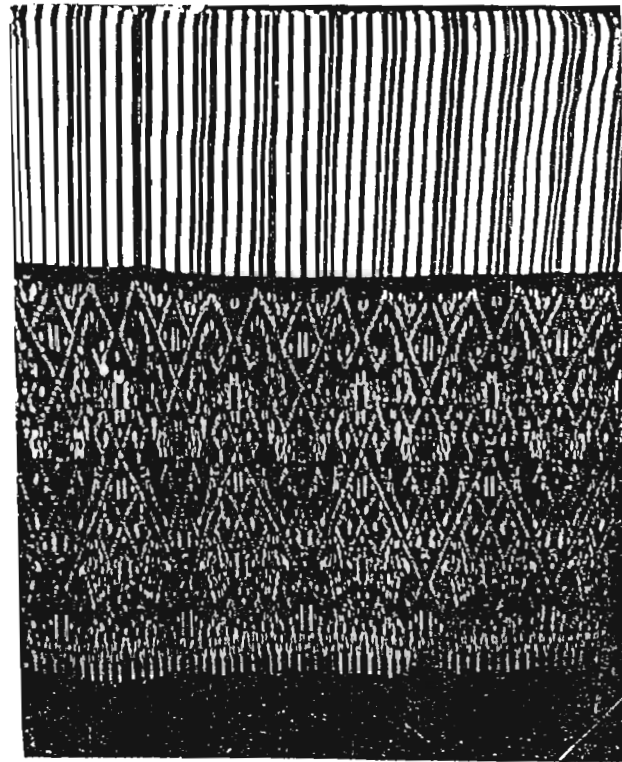
mi lot centrepiece with cotton waist band and hempiece, Ban Sa Yai Chee, Phichit province.



60 year old pha sin with mi lot silk centrepiece and cotton hempiece, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



mi lot silk centrepiece with cotton waist band and hempiece, Ban Sa Yai Chee, Phichit province.



Silk mi lot centrepiece with wide waistband but lacking hempiece, Ban Nong Chanuan, Suphanburi province.

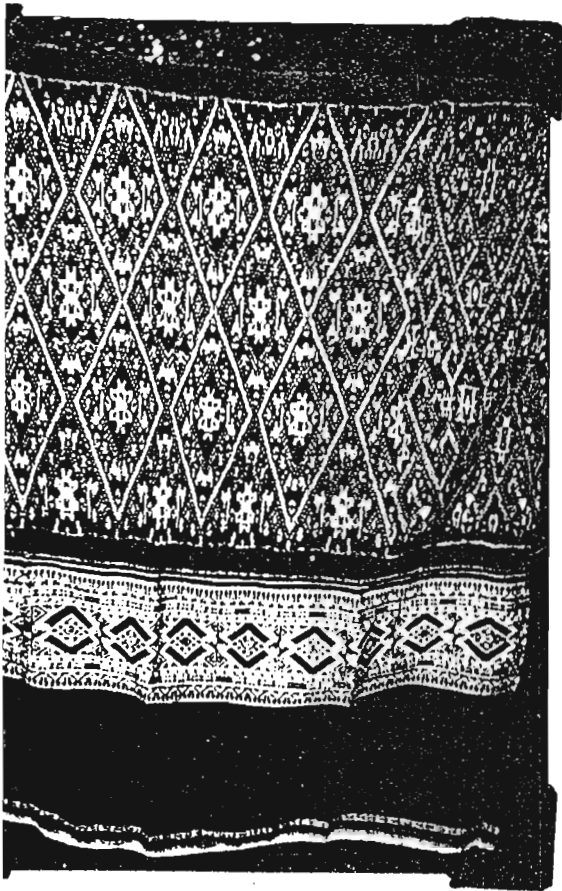
CENTRAL SECTIONS OF THE PHA SIN

The central sections of Lao Khrang pha sin had many different styles. Each style would use plain colours, ikat, or *khít* techniques, usually being combinations of these three. The colours included red, indigo, yellow, green, orange, white, and black. Most were woven with silk in the warp and the weft, although some were all cotton. Those that were cotton sometimes included silk, and occasionally the silk pieces were woven on commercial cotton warps. For working in the fields cotton pha sin were worn and no hempiece was added, but for other purposes an elaborate tin chok hempiece was added to both the cotton and silk tubeskirts.

The different central sections of the pha sin can be summed up as follows :

1. Mi lot / mi thang tua / mi thang phuen

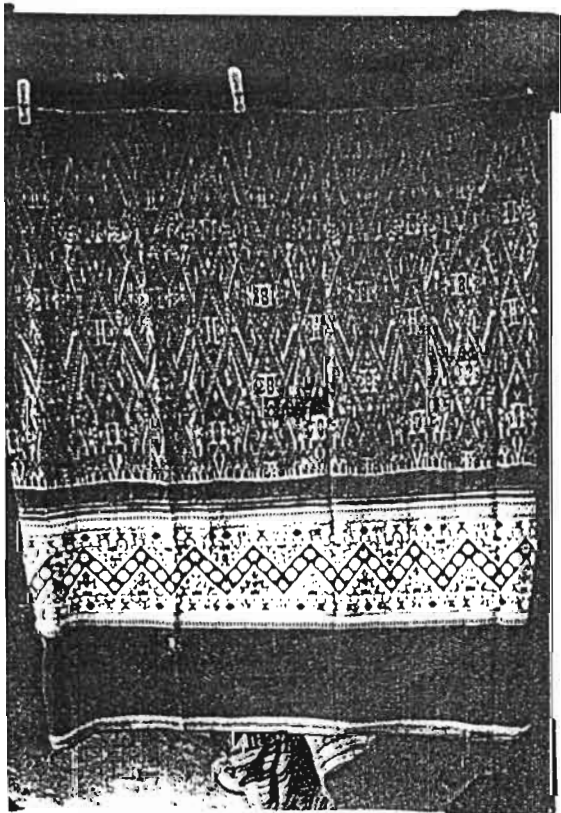
As the name indicates, these consisted of very elaborate ikat patterns covering the whole piece, in either cotton or silk. The cotton pieces were mainly indigo with various ikat patterns in white, yellow, orange, and green. The dominant colour for the silk pieces was red (or sometimes a dark brown) with ikat patterns being made in white, yellow, blue and green. The size of the patterns varied from very small to large bold shapes. When many small intricate ikat patterns were used to create large designs they were called *mi luang* as these were the hardest to produce and therefore the most valued pieces. The *mi lot* were woven as one long piece and joined with one sideseam to create a tubeskirt.



lot with change in pattern on the right, used
 urns of one ikat pattern ran out, with cotton
 e, Ban Nong Chanuan, Suphan Buri province.



Silk mi lot with large ikat patterns, cotton waistband
 and hempiece, Ban Sa Yai Chee, Fhichit province.

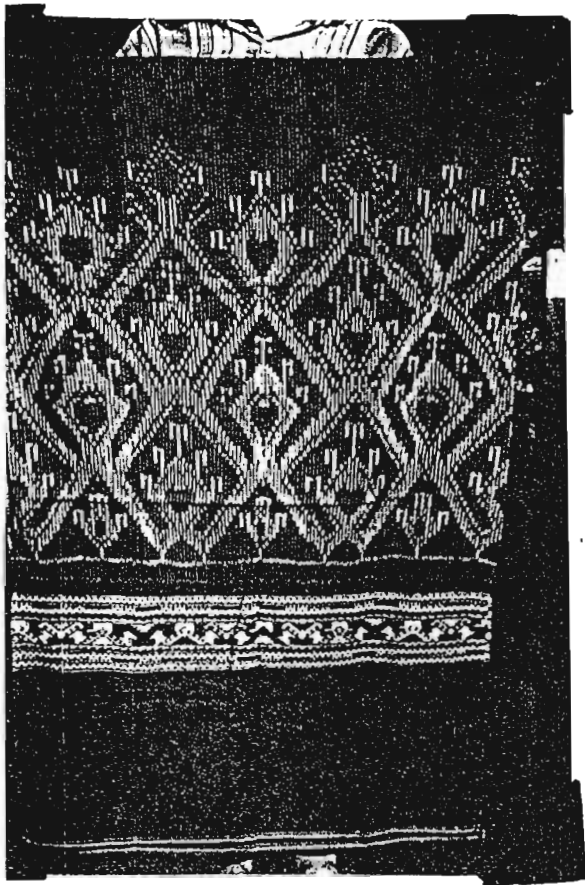


i lot with cotton hempiece, Ban Nong Kathum,
 Buri province.

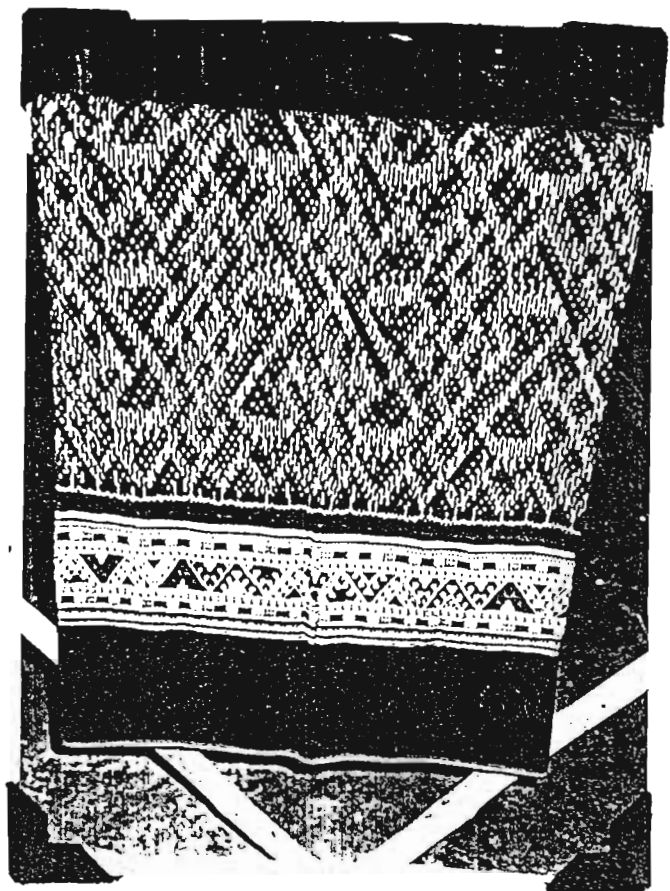


Silk mi lot with cotton hempiece, Ban Thung Kathin,
 Suphan Buri province.

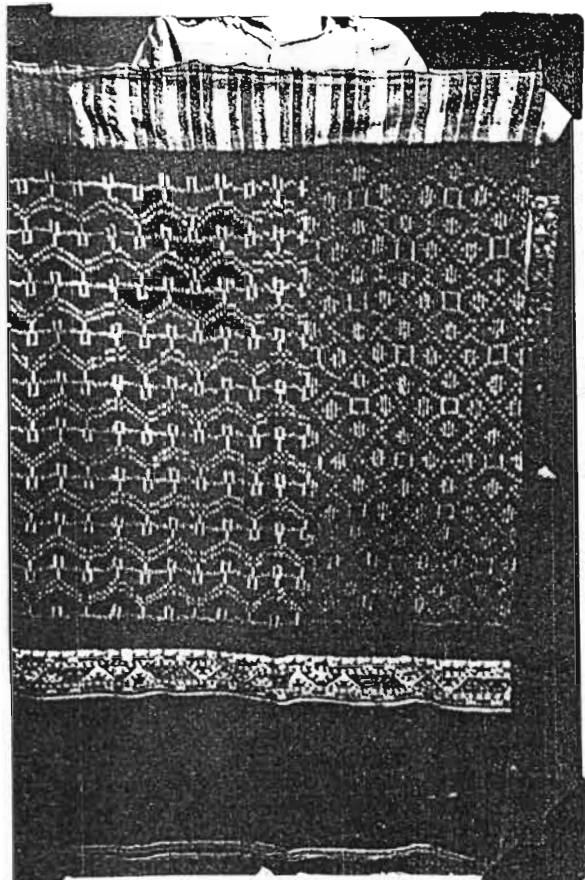
NOTE the similar ikat patterns in pieces from different
 villages.



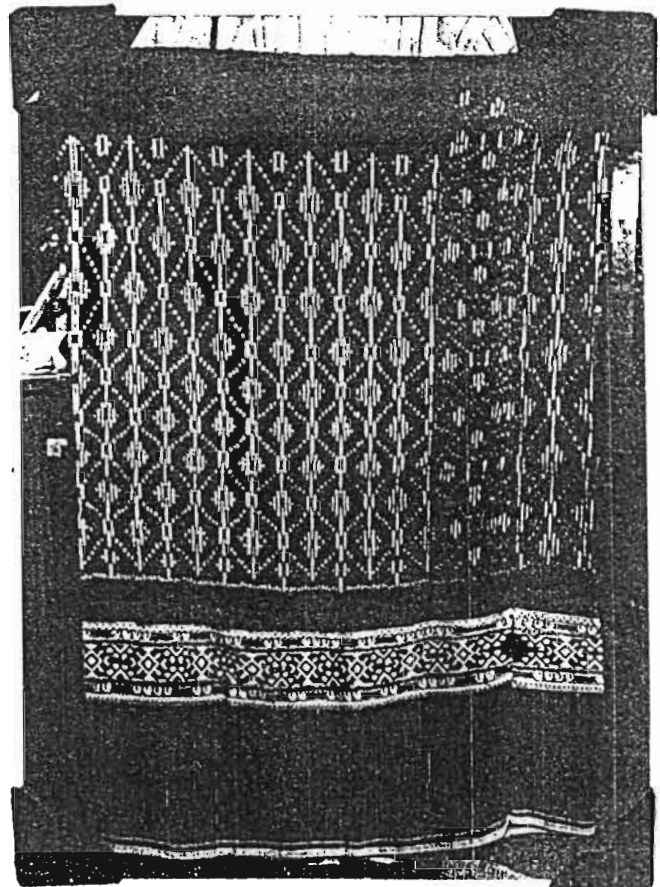
on mi lot with indigo background and red cotton piece, Ban Nong Chok, Uthai Thani province.



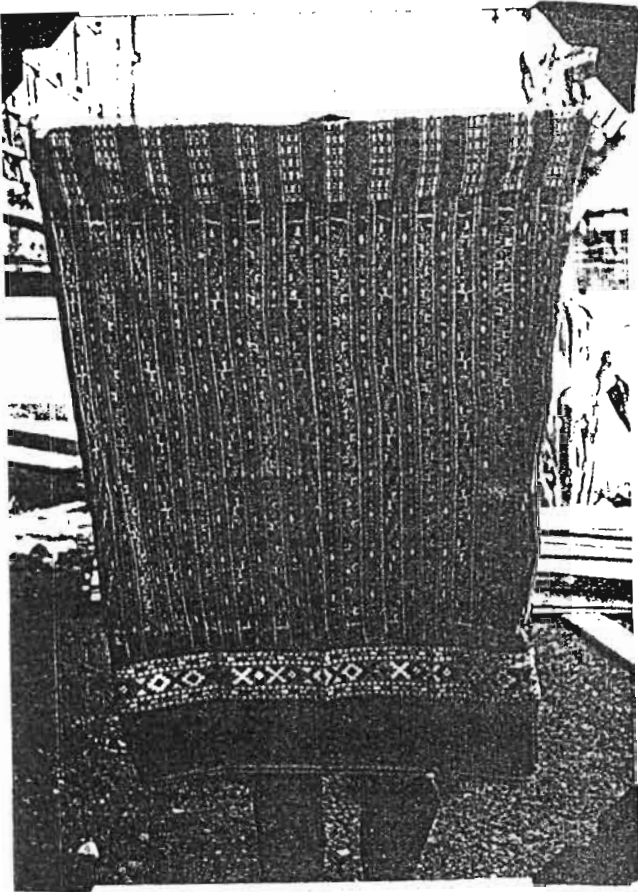
Cotton mi lot on indigo with unusual black hempiece (significance unknown), Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



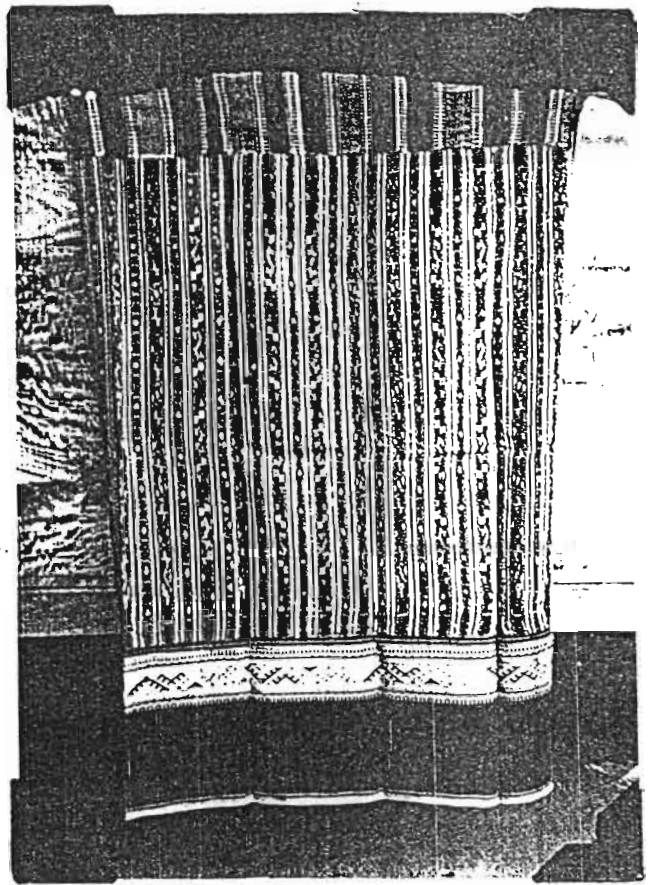
on mi lot woven with two different ikat patterns the indigo background, cotton hempiece and stband, Ban Nong Chok, Uthai Thani province.



Cotton mi lot centre-piece with narrow band of fabric (distinctly different pattern) sewn in to increase the size of the pha sin, Ban Nong Chok Uthai thani province.



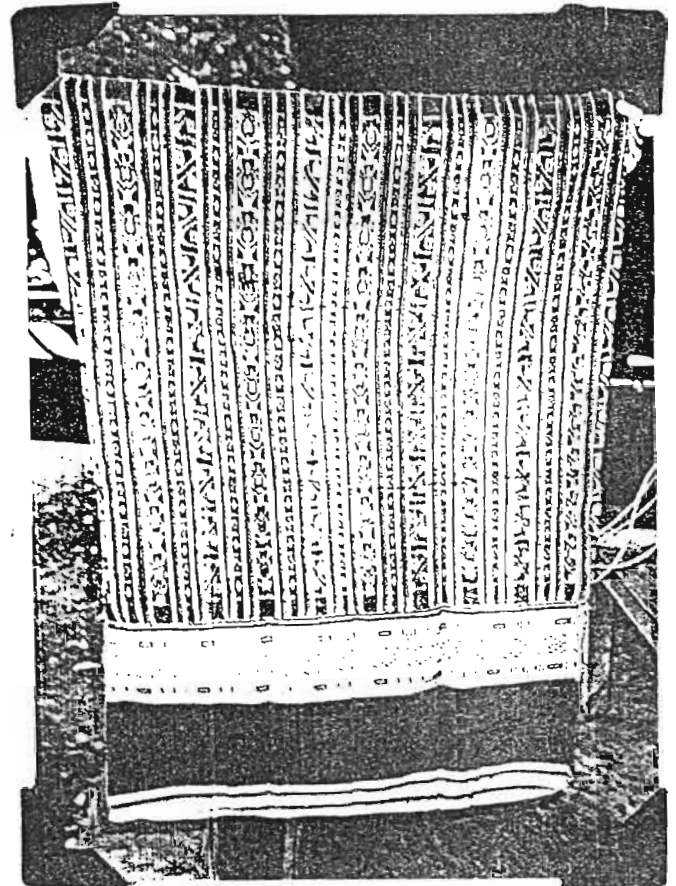
Silk *mi noi* centre piece with cotton waist band and hempiece, Ban Bo Kru, Suphan Buri province.



Silk *mi noi* with cotton hempiece and waistband, Ban Thung Kathin, Suphanburi province.



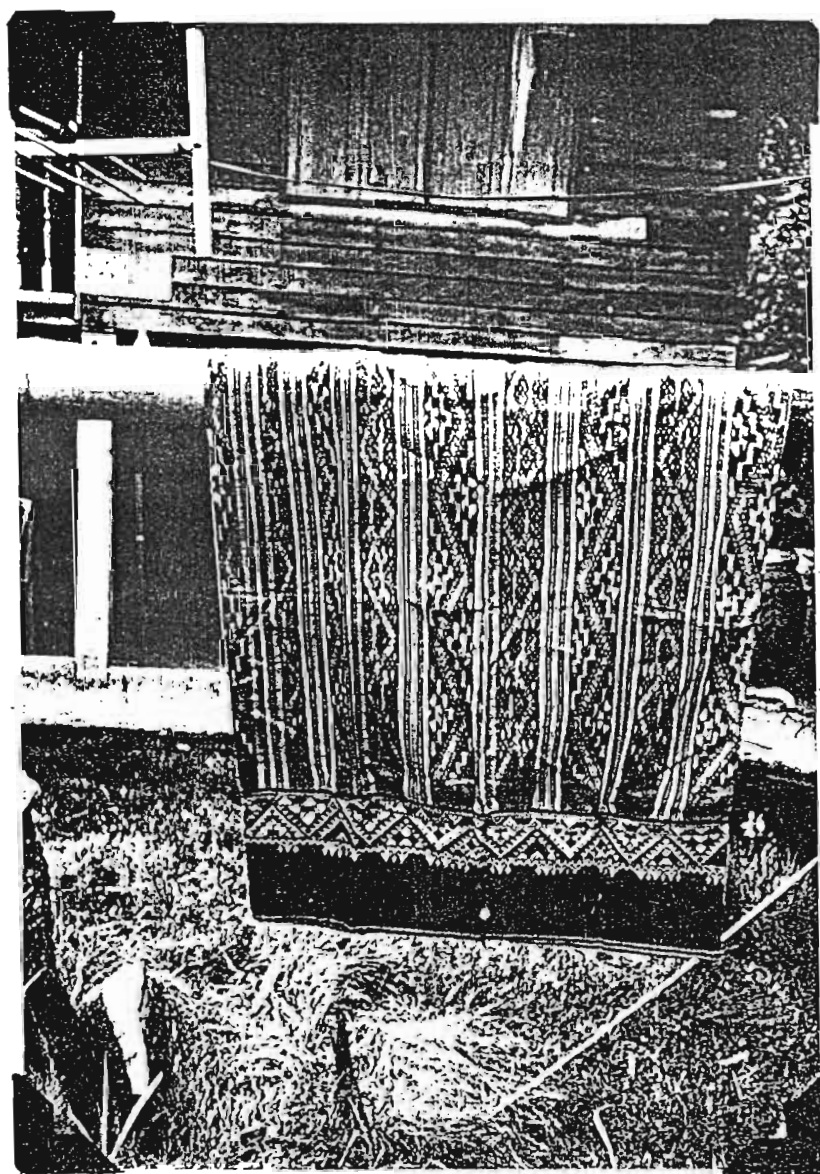
Silk *mi noi* with cotton waist band and hempiece, Ban Ong Chok, Uthai Thani province.



Silk *mi noi* with three ikat band designs and cotton hempiece, Ban Nong Chanuan, Suphanburi province.

2. Mi noi / mi samphao

These were silk pieces consisting of ikat sections divided by small plain coloured bands, creating a vertically striped tubeskirt. Each piece usually consisted of two or more small ikat patterns contained in bands alternating throughout. Again the dominant colour of the ikat sections was red, with green, yellow, and blue ikat motifs. The dividing band of plain usually contained yellow and white stripes, and sometimes red lines as well. Most pieces had wide sections of ikat and smaller plain divisions, although some were woven with small ikat pattern sections and very thin plain coloured lines.



Silk mi noi centrepiece with two large ikat band patterns and cotton hempiece, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



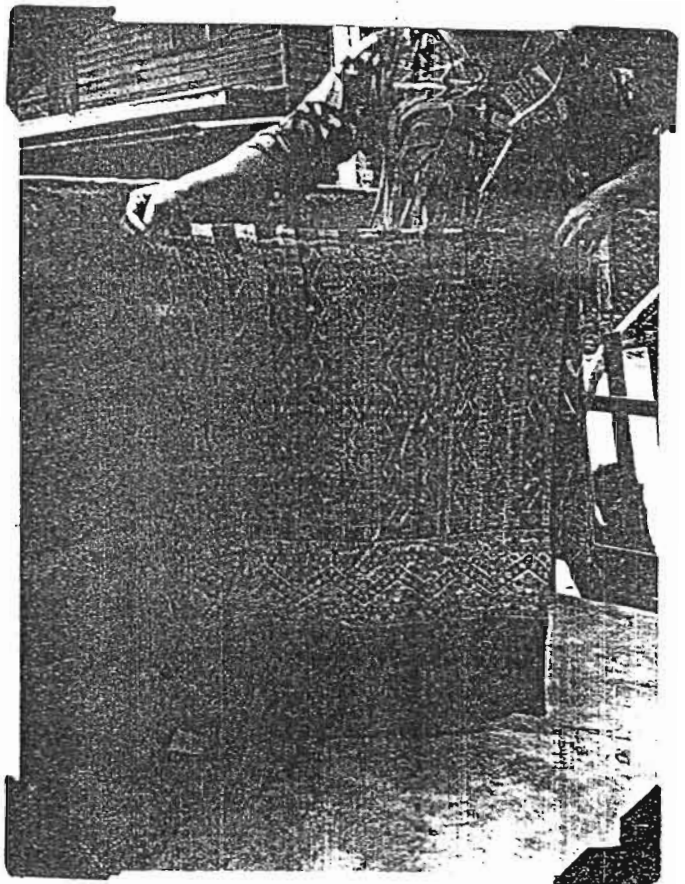
Black cotton mi ta centrepiece with cotton hempiece, Ban Bo Tu, Suphan Buri province.



Silk mi ta with cotton hempiece, Ban Thung Kathin, Uthai Thani province.



Cotton mi ta using both indigo and red colours with cotton hempiece, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.

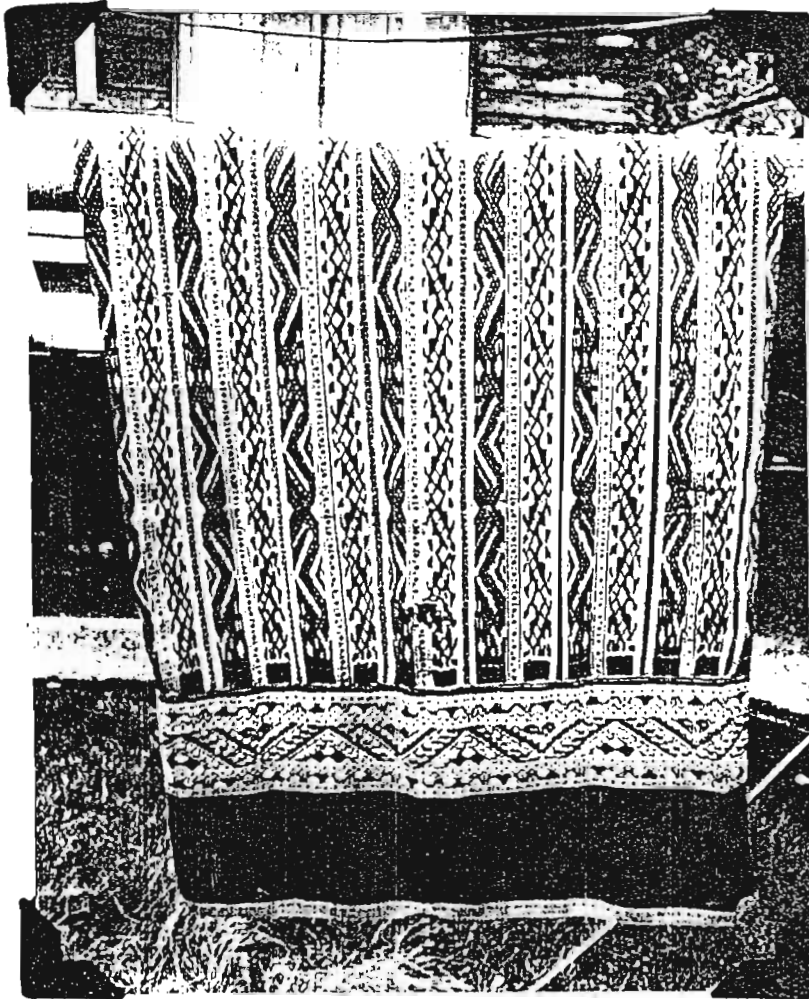


Cotton mi ta with silk khit bands and red cotton hempiece, Ban Sa Yai Chee, Phichit province.

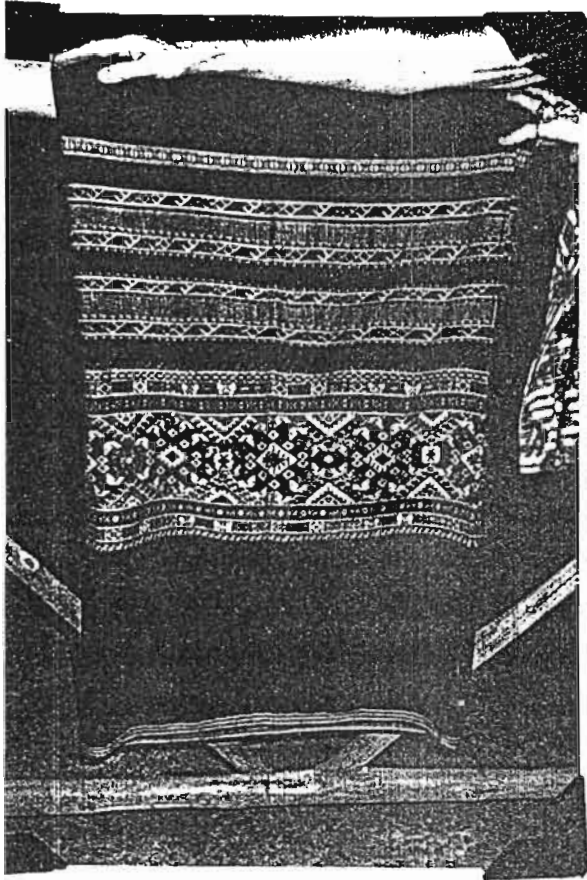
3. Mi ta

These were very similar to mi noi, but replaced the plain weave stripes with khit designs. Many different khit patterns existed, but each pha sin generally had only one throughout, though alternating yellow and white colours.

The dominant colour for silk mi ta was red; the khit sections were traditionally also silk but sometimes cotton was used. There were also indigo cotton mi ta which incorporated the indigo in the ikat sections. Quite often both red silk and indigo cotton ikat sections were used in the same piece. In this case the two different colour tones would be alternated throughout, while maintaining the khit sections in between, and were thus called mi dam sap mi daeng.



Mi dam sap mi daeng tubekirt with alternating silk red ikat and indigo cotton pattern centrepiece and cotton hempiece, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



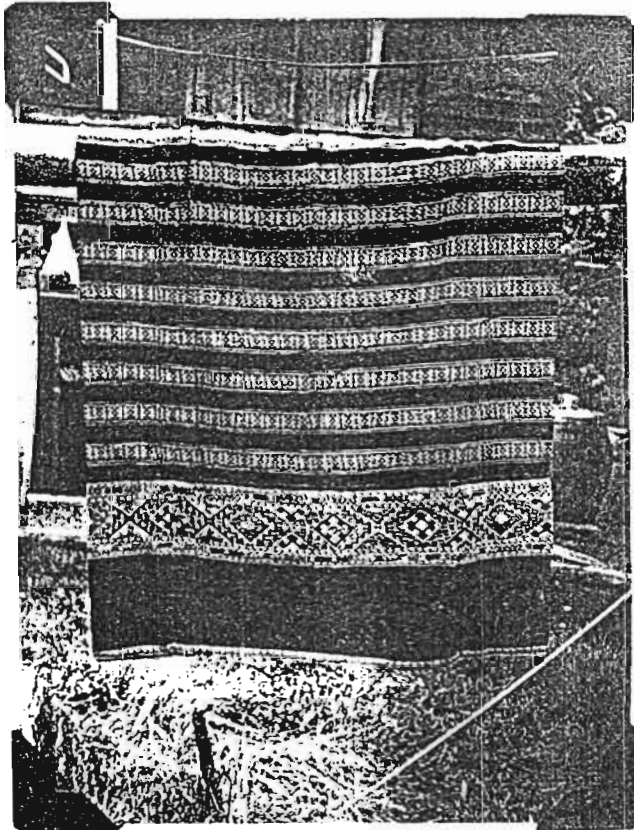
Black *sin kan* with hempiece design woven with the hempiece, stitching on sideseams only, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



Lao Khrang woman wearing cotton *sin kan*, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



Black *sin kan* with black background and indigo ikat bands, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



Sin sip siu with ten green khit bands (not all seen) on black warp and traditional hempiece joined, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

4. Sin khan / sin kan

These were very different to the other pha sin styles in many aspects. The ground colour was black or indigo, rarely there was ikat, but the patterns were horizontal when worn. To create this horizontal effect two pieces were joined with two side seams in order to become a pha sin.

The horizontal banding on the pha sin was created by the use of various colourful khit and chok designs on the darker background. Most of the designs were geometric, although some pieces incorporated animal figures, such as horses, which was unusual in Lao Khrang tubeskirts. Some pieces also used some simple ikat in the banding, but this was not common. These patterns were positioned in the centre region of the piece, leaving dark bands at the top and bottom, and at the hem there would usually be some small colourful bands or khit designs.

In some cases the hempiece design was incorporated as part of the central section, therefore negating the need for a separate piece to be added, whereas on other pieces a central section would be woven and then the traditional red hempiece joined.

When the central banding consisted of predominantly green khit stripes throughout, these were known as sin khan siu or sin sip siu.

Sin kan woven on black cotton warp with silk khit patterns and red hempiece joined, also with silk khit patterns on a cotton background, Ban Thung Kathin, Uthai Thani province.



HEMPIECES

The hempieces that the Lao Khrang added to their *pha sin* were very different to the hempieces found among Tai groups in Laos although they employed similar techniques of *chok* and *khit* supplementary wefts. The distinguishing feature of the Lao Khrang hempiece is the large band of red plain weave below a section of elaborate *khit* and *chok* patterns. Stylistically, they are similar to Nam Pat district, Uttaradit province and Lanna styles rather than Lao, and may indicate influence during or since resettlement.

Although most central sections of the *pha sin* were in silk, the separately woven hempieces were almost always pure cotton. Some older pieces were found to be silk, perhaps indicating that originally the hempieces were also silk, being replaced with commercial red cotton yarns more recently as the colours seemed more attractive than those extractable from local dye plants. A slightly different hempiece was sometimes made in Ban Rai district, Uthai Thani province, being woven on an indigo or black cotton background with the same colourful designs and structure as the red pieces. Both types required two side seams in the construction of the *pha sin*.

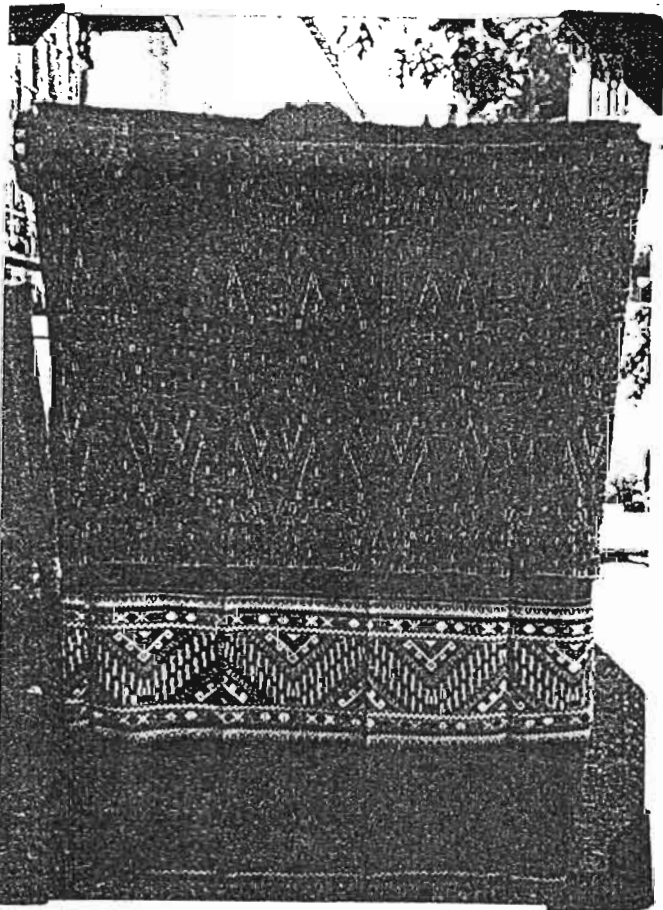
The overall structure of the hempieces from top to bottom was: very thin sections of black and yellow (probably indicating line for cutting and sewing); a slightly wider section of plain red or indigo; a large section of *chok* patterns; a large band of plain red or indigo; then a thin line of small designs along the bottom in either plain weave or *khit*. The sizes of the hempieces varied, but those with larger *chok* sections were considered more beautiful.

Many different *khit* and *chok* patterns existed, but there were two general designs that can be used to classify the styles. These can be seen in the large *chok* section and were : *lai nuai* and *lai khuen*.

The general appearance of lai khuen was a large continual horizontal zig-zag going around the tube skirt, into which intricate details were added using chok technique with many different coloured yarns. Lai nuai was a row of big diamond patterns (longer in the horizontal) created by combinations of small chok designs and colours.

Each small chok design had its own name, and there were no rules for the combination of these. Each woman wove the designs she liked and most women could easily weave new designs as they felt inclined. However, animal motifs were not used in either the chok or khit on these pieces.

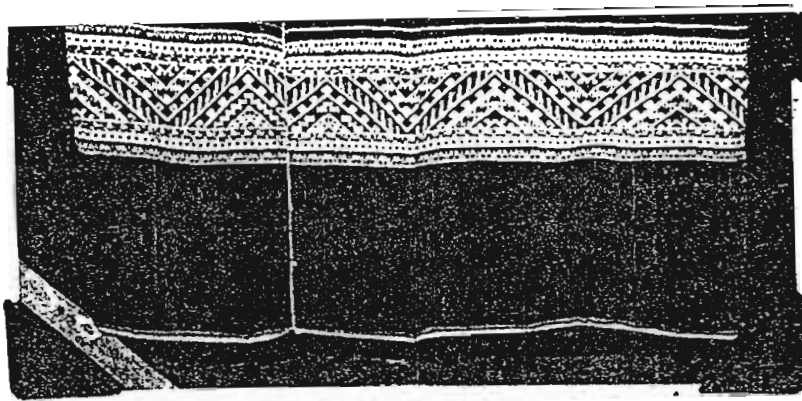
These elaborate hempieces would then be added to the central sections of any style, to be worn for ceremonial occasions such as weddings, ordinations, or merit making ceremonies.



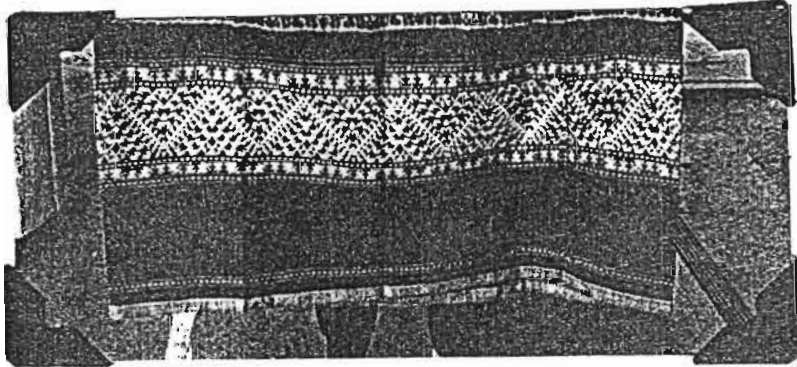
Cotton hempiece (joined to silk centre piece) with lai khuen design, Ban Bo Kru, Suphan Buri province.



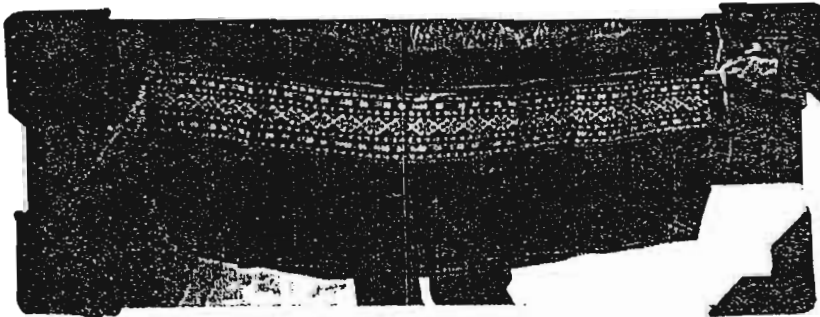
Cotton hempiece (joined to silk centre piece) with lai nuai design; Ban Thung Kathin, Suphan Buri province.



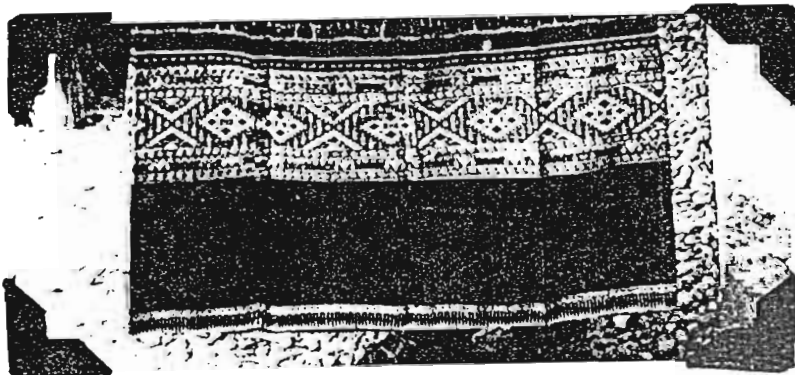
Cotton hempiece with **lai khuen** pattern, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



Cotton hempiece with **lai khuen** pattern, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Cotton hempiece with small **lai nuai** pattern, Ban Sa Yai Chee, Phichit province.

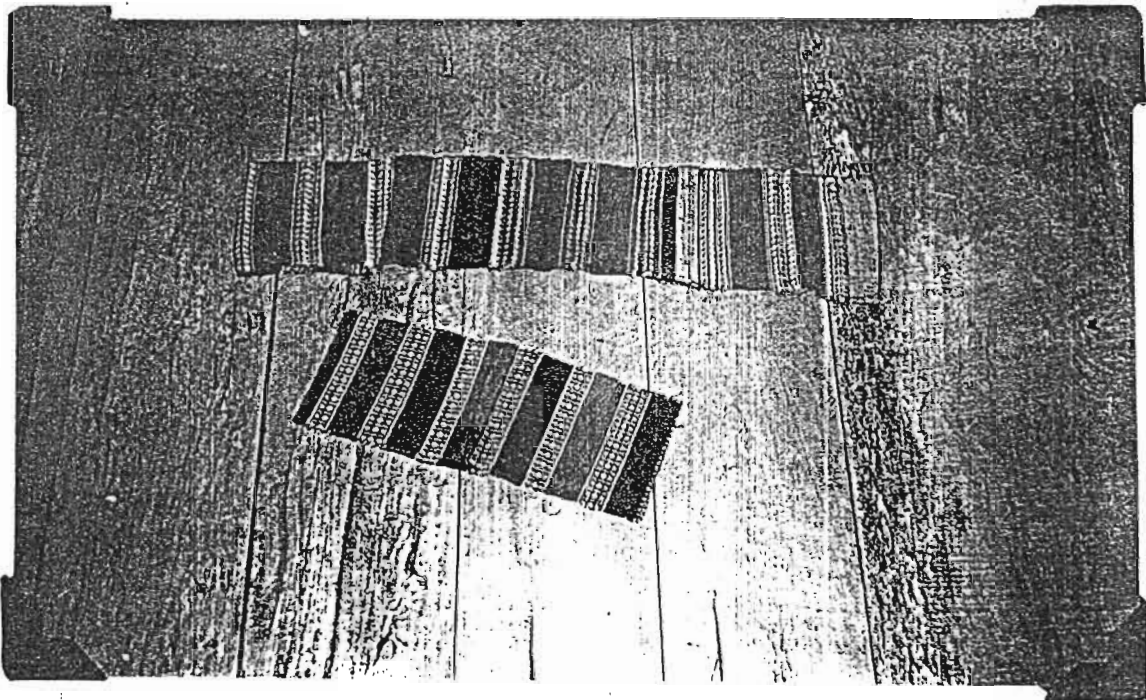


Cotton hempiece with large **lai nuai** pattern, Ban Sa yai Chee, Phichit province.

WAISTBANDS

Pha sin were worn just above the ankle. Waistbands were only added to pha sin if needed to increase the length after joining the central section and the hempiece. Long lengths of fabric, usually silk but sometimes cotton, were woven to be cut up and used as waistbands. This fabric was woven with small bands of plain weave alternating with bands of khit patterns. The plain weave bands were woven in either plain red, or red alternating with green or indigo. There were usually two alternating khit patterns in yellow or white.

When added to the central section of the pha sin these bands were vertical with one side seam corresponding to a seam on the central section. The top border would not be sewn even though it usually had been cut from the original length. An old saying of the Lao Khrang stated that the cut edge of the hempiece had to be left unsewn for prosperity to prevail in the family.



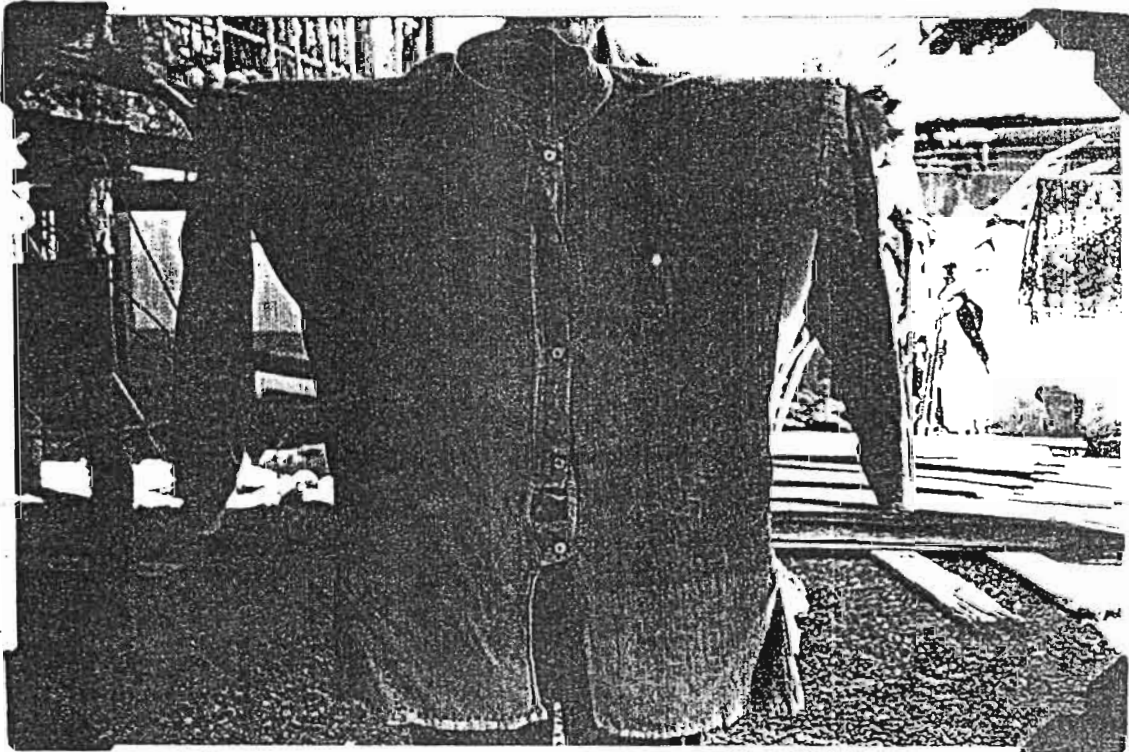
Cotton waistbands woven and kept until needed,
Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

BLOUSES AND SHOULDER CLOTHS

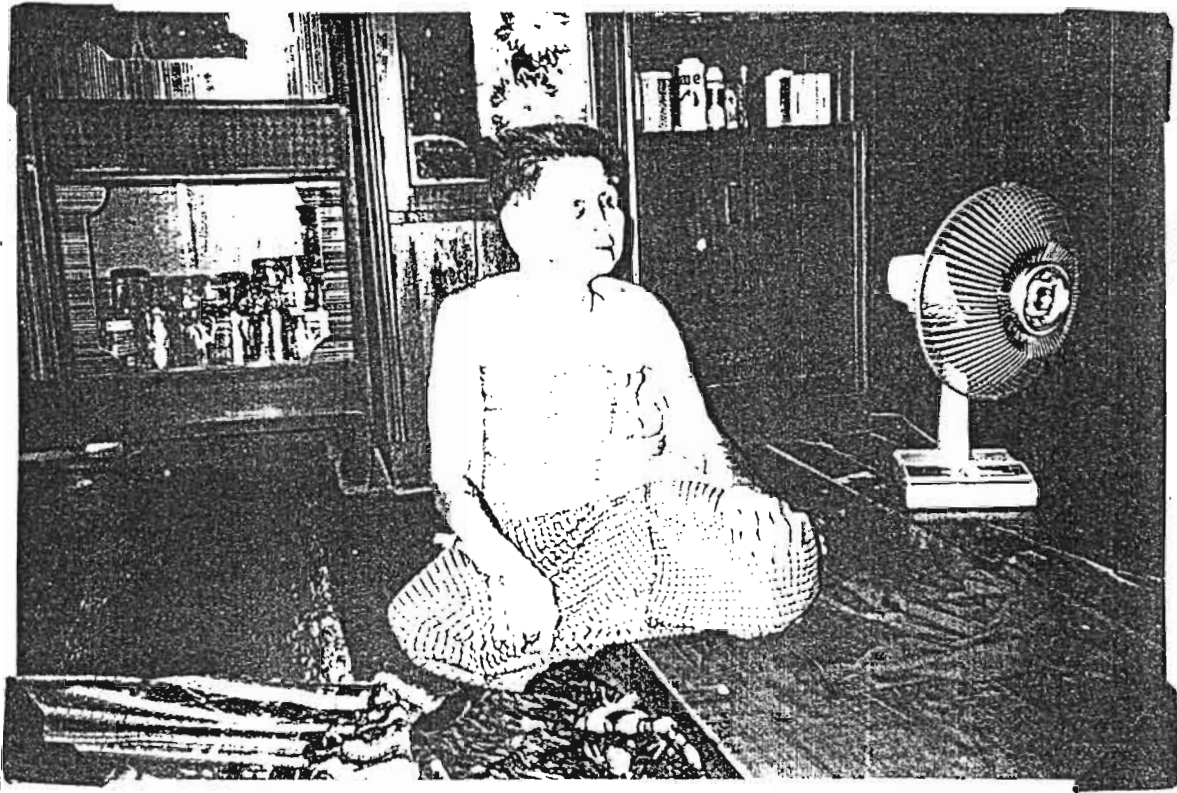
There is no evidence of blouses being used traditionally by the Lao Khrang women, although central Thai and foreign influences in this century have introduced blouses as part of the women's clothing. As a result, lengths of plain white or indigo cotton were woven to be sewn into blouses and working shirts, but more recently ready-made clothing has replaced this.

Before the introduction of blouses, pha bing lai were worn tied around the chest to cover the breasts. These were woven in cotton with khit patterns throughout the piece, and tassles at each end. They were usually plain white cotton and black khit, with red khit bands at the ends.

These pha bing lai were multi purpose, also used for wrapping around the shoulders when cold and, after the introduction of blouses, they were folded lengthwise to be worn as shoulder cloths over one shoulder and across the torso in the Thai sabai leng method. More recently, plain white silk or synthetic lace pha bing were worn over blouses for special occasions.



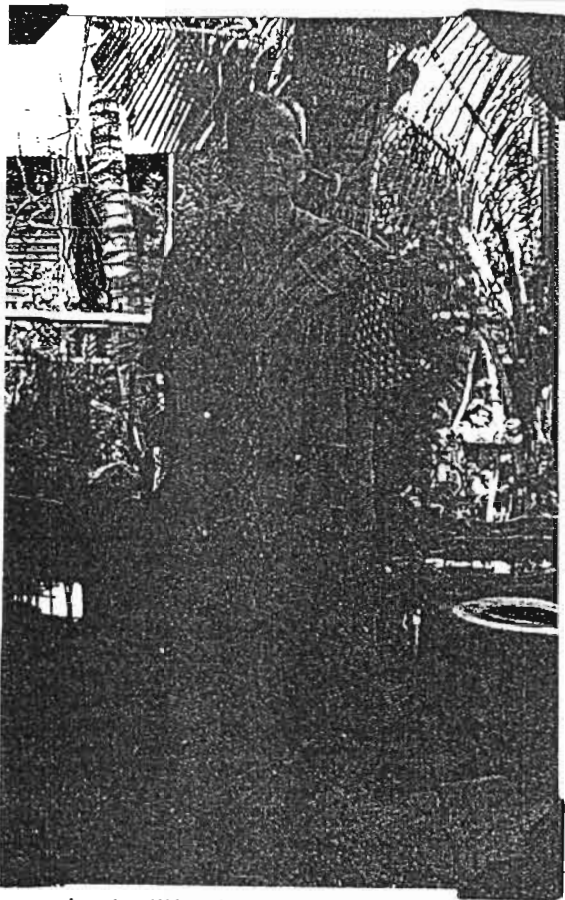
Very old indigo working shirt with red stitching, Chinese collar and inner pocket, Ban Bo Kru, Suphan Buri province.



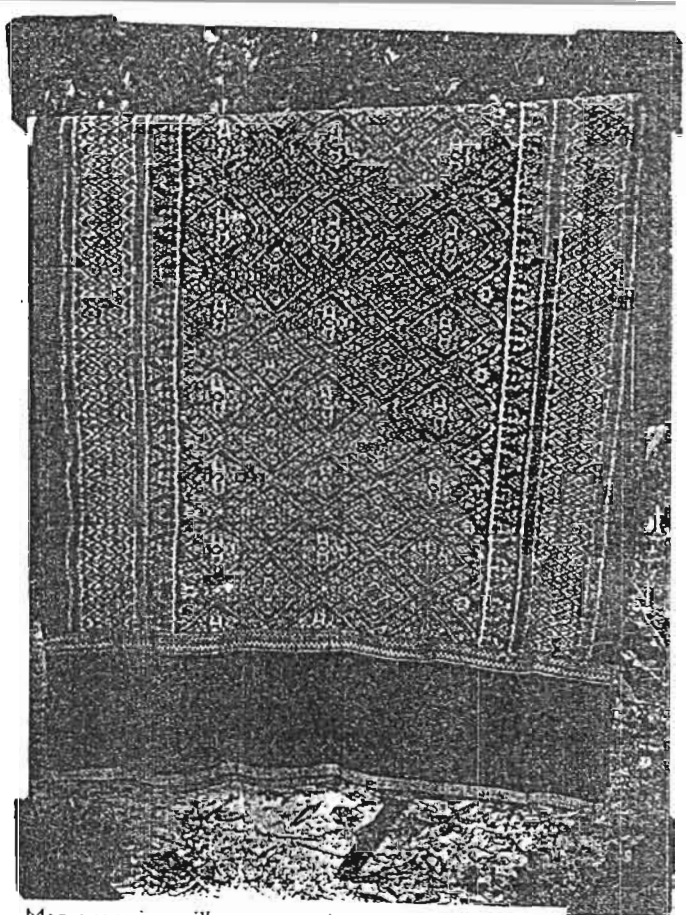
Woman demonstrating wearing **pha bing lai** around the chest, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Demonstrating use of **pha bing lai** as a torso wrap, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



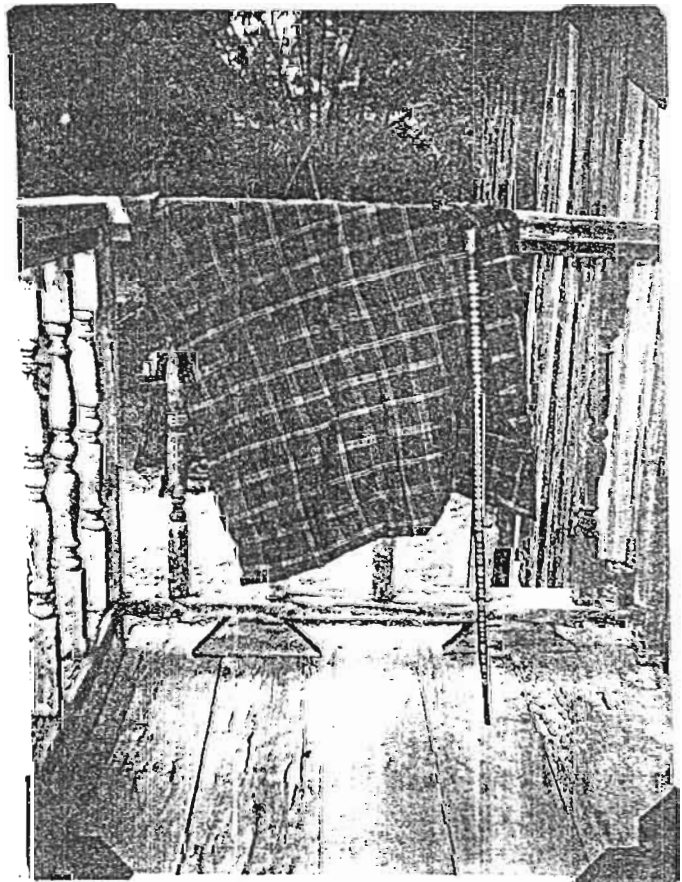
wearing traditional silk **chongkraben** and **pha o ma** with modern Chinese style shirt, Ban Don t, Uthai Thani province.



Man wearing silk **sarong** in pre-WWII style with **pha khao ma** around the torso, silver belt and sword, Ban Don Phet, Uthai Thani.



Antique traditional silk **chongkraben** with ikat designs and some **khit** at the ends, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Silk **sarong** and walking stick with bone rings, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

MEN'S CLOTHING

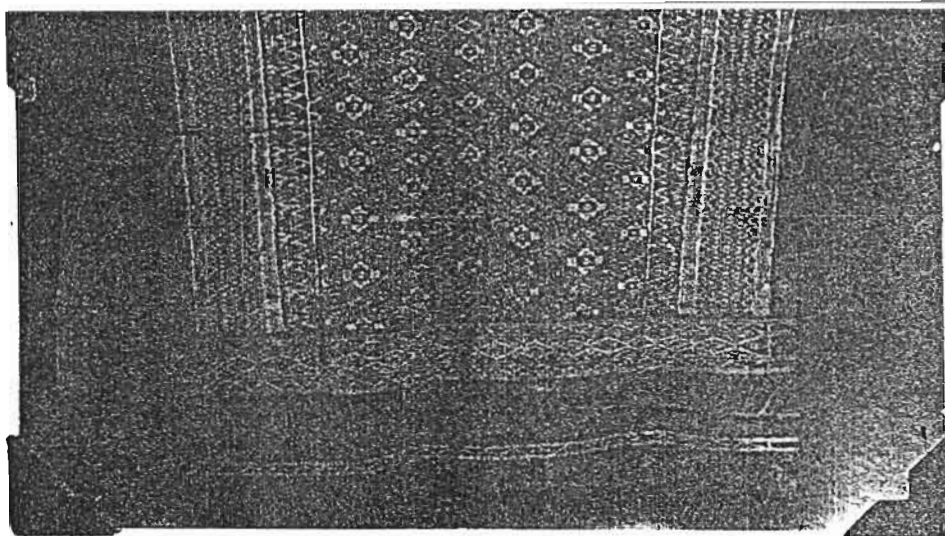
The clothing of the Lao Khrang men was very similar to that of men throughout Thailand and Laos, with very few distinctive features. This traditionally included sarong and chongkraben, which were worn for different purposes. This century the use of Chinese style pants and shirts was introduced and more recently western style clothing completely replaced the traditional dressing of Lao Khrang men.

Sarong were woven, usually in silk, by women for their husbands and sons for everyday use. The check patterns on these were similar to that found on the pha khaoma found throughout Thailand, but red was the dominant colour.

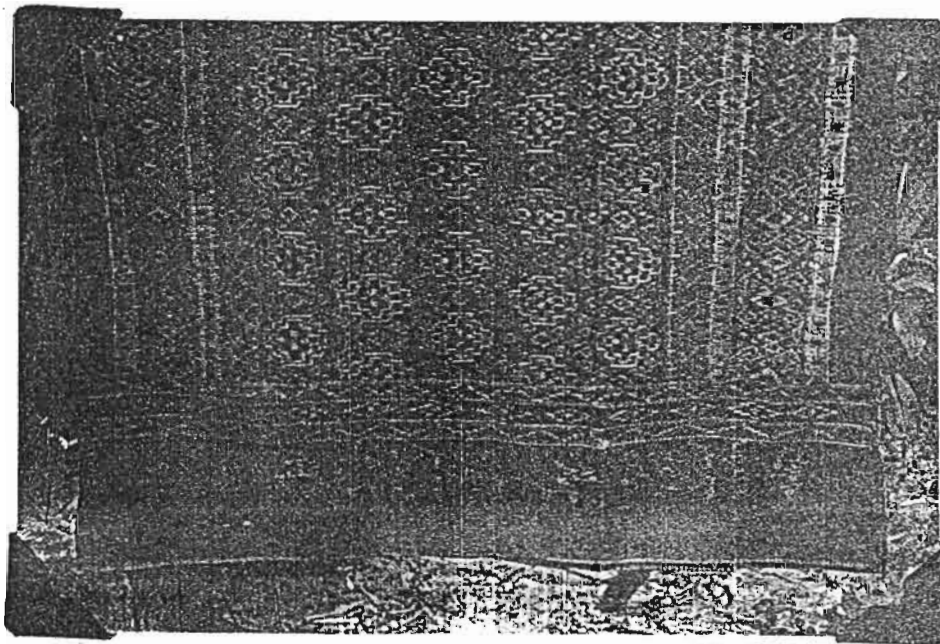
Historically, silk ikat chongkraben were woven with intricate patterns to be worn for ceremonies, although early this century these disappeared with the fashion of pha muang and by the fourth decade western styles of clothing had become the norm. Those that remain as evidence of this lost tradition indicate a strong structural similarity to the patola : a double ikat sari from Gudgurat in India that had a great influence on the textiles of south East Asia when imported between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Again, the dominant colour in the ikat chongkraben was red with yellow, green, and indigo ikat patterns. Some were woven with the dominant colour being a dark brown or almost black, but maintained the red borders down each selvage. Some elders state that shamans wore the darker toned chongkraben for conducting ceremonies.

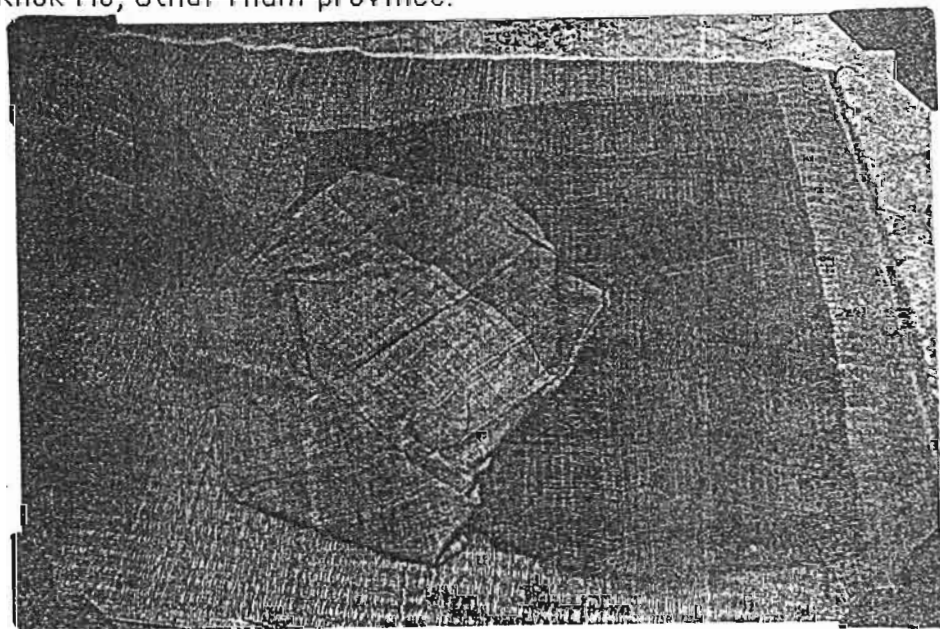
The residents of Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani, who recall the use of ikat chongkraben describe that they were woven by mothers for their sons before going into the temple to use when they left the monkhood. Men who had left the temple would then wear these



Silk ikat **chongkraben**, Ban Don Phet, Uthai Thani province.



End of silk ikat **chongkraben** with intricate designs, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



More modern **pha muang** and colourful **sarong**, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

elaborate cloths to other ceremonies such as other men's ordination ceremonies, merit making ceremonies at the temple, or weddings. They were worn with large silver belts and were a sign of status.

The elders of Ban Sa Yai Chee recall that these chongkraben were woven by young women before marriage as part of the gifts she would be expected to give her future father-in-law.

Both sarong and chongkraben were traditionally worn without shirts. Cotton pha khaoma were woven in the villages to be used as a man's all-purpose cloth. They were used for belts, short loin cloths, head cloths and shoulder cloths; with the silk pieces being worn as accessories for special occasions. Other accessories included silver belts, canes, and swords, and were signs of wealth. Before the introduction of shirts, blankets were used as warm wraps in cold weather.



Man wearing silk pha muang of the post-World War II period, Ban Don Phet, Uthai Thani province.

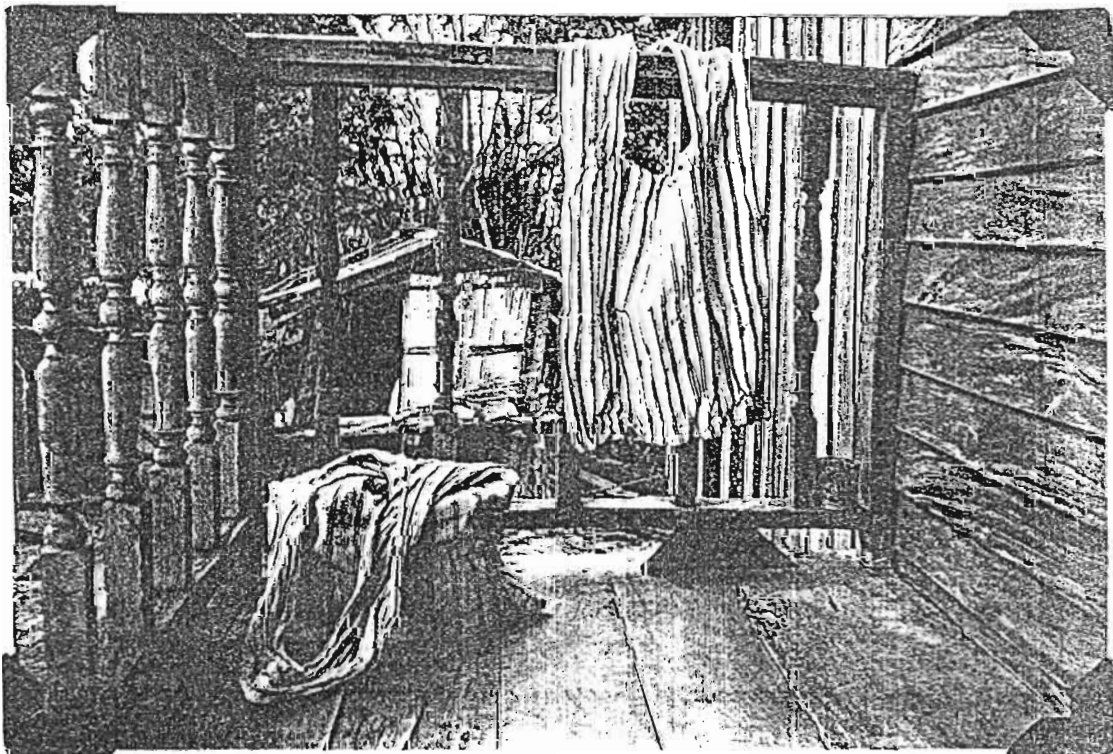


Man demonstrating the use of blankets for warmth, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.

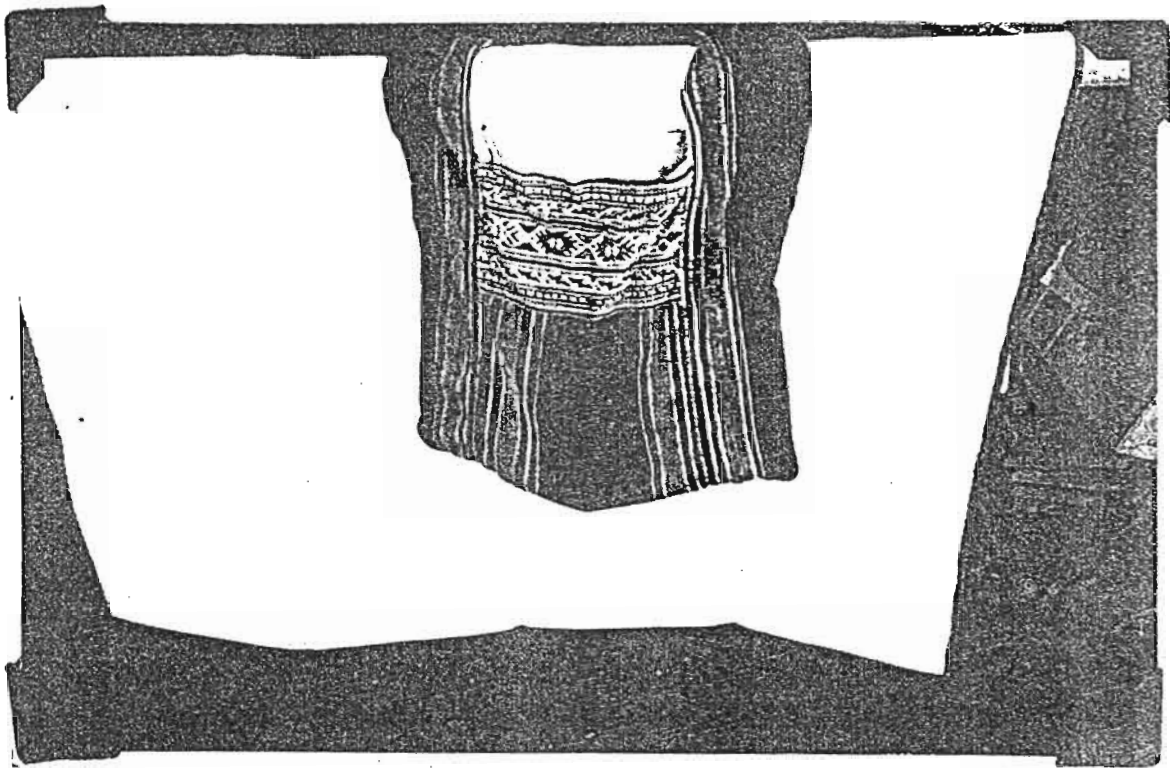
BAGS

Two types of bags were made by the Lao Khrang, each for a different purpose. The simple bags were called thong, and were similar to the handwoven bags found throughout Thailand. Long narrow pieces of cotton were woven to be sewn into these bags, usually being white with stripes of red and indigo in the warp. Two pieces were sewn together to form a bag with minimal cutting of the cloth by using one piece for the main section and one for the shoulder strap. These were often quite large, the size being determined by the width of the fabric woven. These were used for general carrying, storage, and for draining rice noodles.

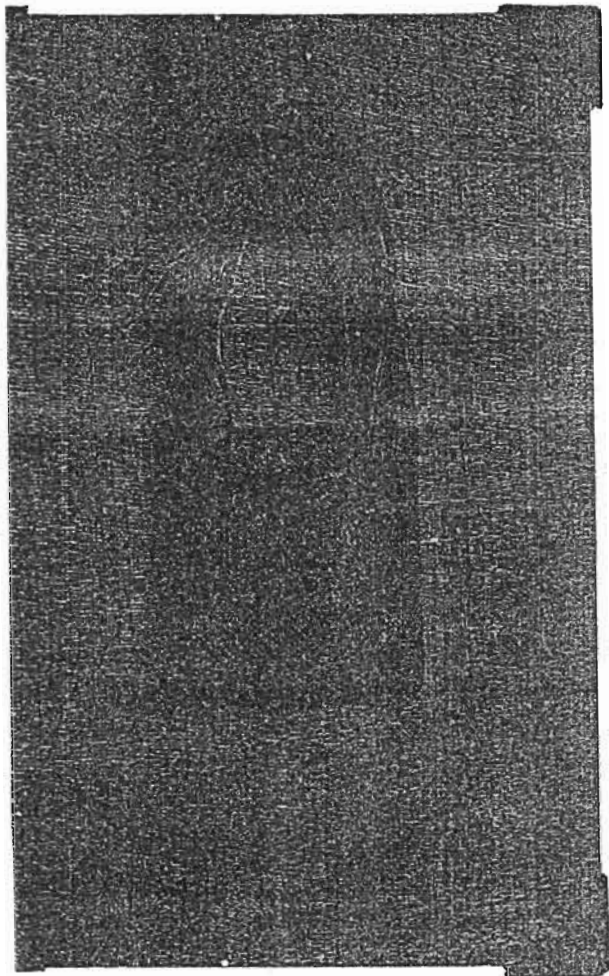
Another style of bag made was called thong mak as this style was used for carrying betel nuts and other leaves and seeds often chewed by older women in Thailand and Laos. These were woven in darker shades to hide any staining by their contents, but were decorated with chok designs unlike the other style. The narrow pieces woven had indigo or black down the centre and bright coloured stripes down both selvages. When sewn into bags these stripes ran along the length of the single strap. The construction of these was similar to the other style. Small pieces of chok material were sewn onto the mouth of these bags, and white cotton was used to line the interior.



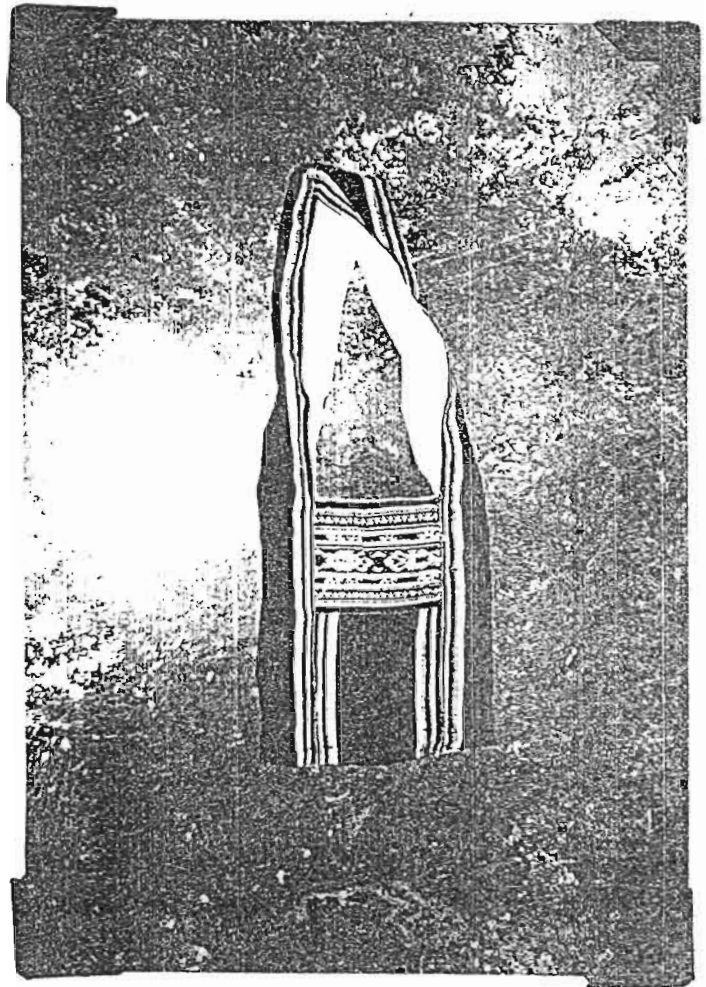
Very large cotton bags, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Cotton **thong mak** with black background, Ban Bo Kru, Suphan Buri province.



g mak with indigo colour, lined with cotton and stitched with red yarn, Ban Chok, Uthai Thani province.



Thong mak with black colour, also lined with white cotton, stitched with yellow yarn, Ban Nong Chanuan, Suphan Buri province.

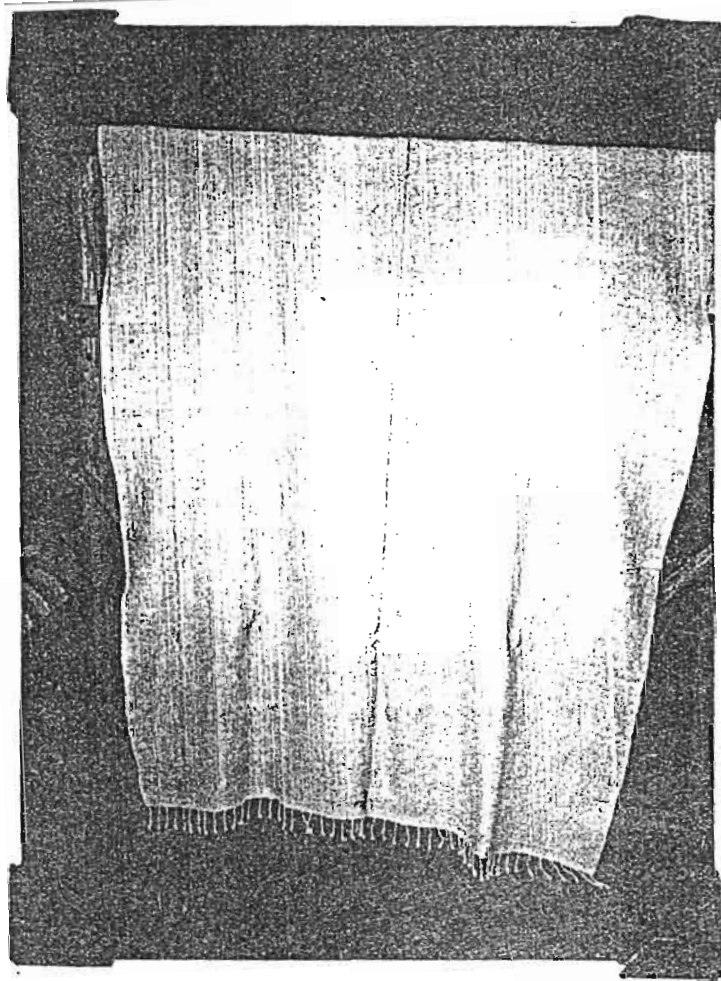
HOUSEHOLD TEXTILES

BLANKETS AND CURTAINS

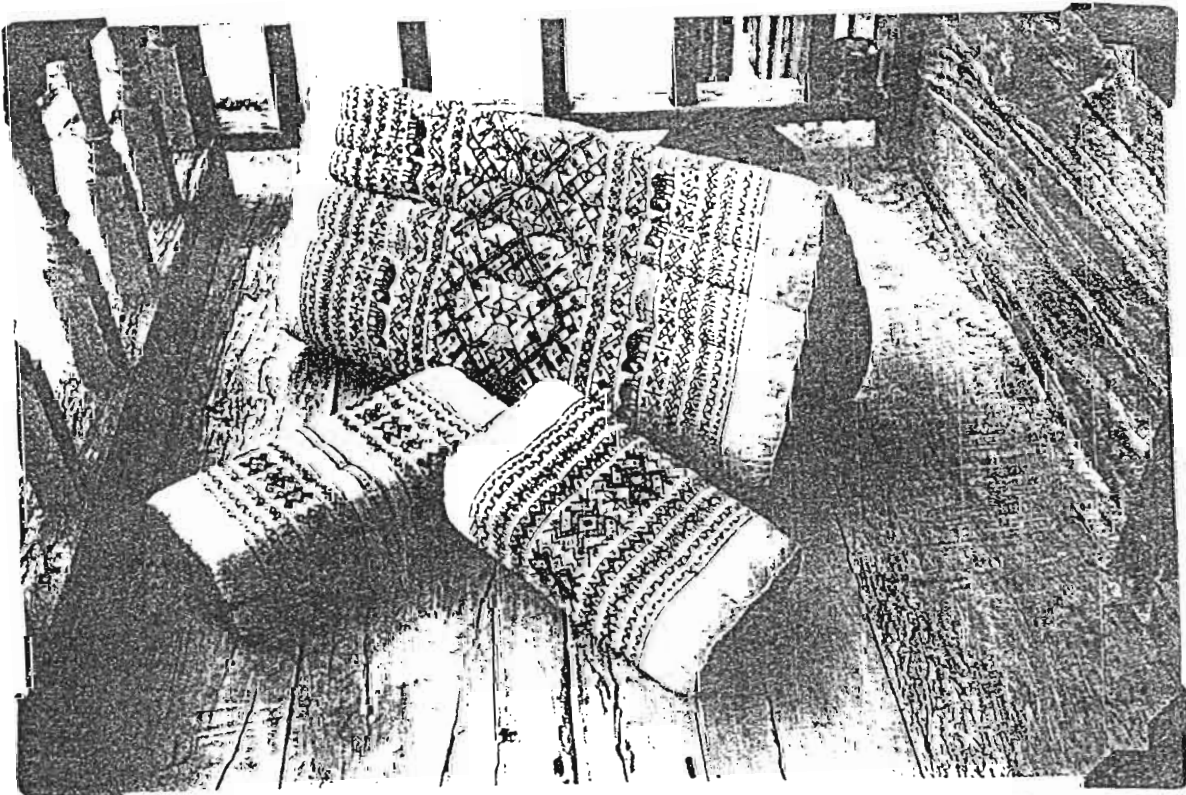
Both Lao Khrang blankets and curtains were woven with the same structure, technique and colour. Only minor differences existed in the *chok* detail. The overall structure consisted of two pieces joined vertically in the centre with a thin red edging on three sides and white tassles at the bottom. The ground colour was white cotton, woven in a twill weave. There were two large bands of the colourful supplementary weaves *chok* and *khit* towards each end and a large dark centre field consisting of small *khit* designs bordered by a broad vertical design at the side selvages. The two ends were plain white although a narrow *chok* section was included in lower section.

The only distinguishing feature between blankets and curtains was the arrangement of the animal motifs within the *chok* sections. As curtains were hung, they required vertically aligned patterns and thus all the animals were standing, whereas the animal motifs on blankets were often mirrored. Traditionally the upper *chok* section of both blankets and curtains contained a single repeat of the pattern, often in a triangle design which when repeated created an diamond, whereas the lower *chok* pattern did not have a repeat and was often in a large zig-zag design. The modern textiles woven in this structure do not strictly follow the above arrangements. They do not have a centre seam and often have tassles at both ends. The characteristic red edging is not added and the pattern arrangements are no longer strictly traditional.

Young women used to weave blankets as gifts for their sweethearts, who used them as warm shoulder wraps. They were also used as bed blankets in which case the upper section was always placed at the head and the tassles placed at the lower end.



Plain white cotton blanket, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province.



Pillows: mon hok (front) and large mon khwan, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.

They were approximately two meters in length and one meter twenty centimeters wide.

There were also plain thick white twill weave cotton blankets used in the home and special curtains made as temple offerings. (see later section)

PILLOWS

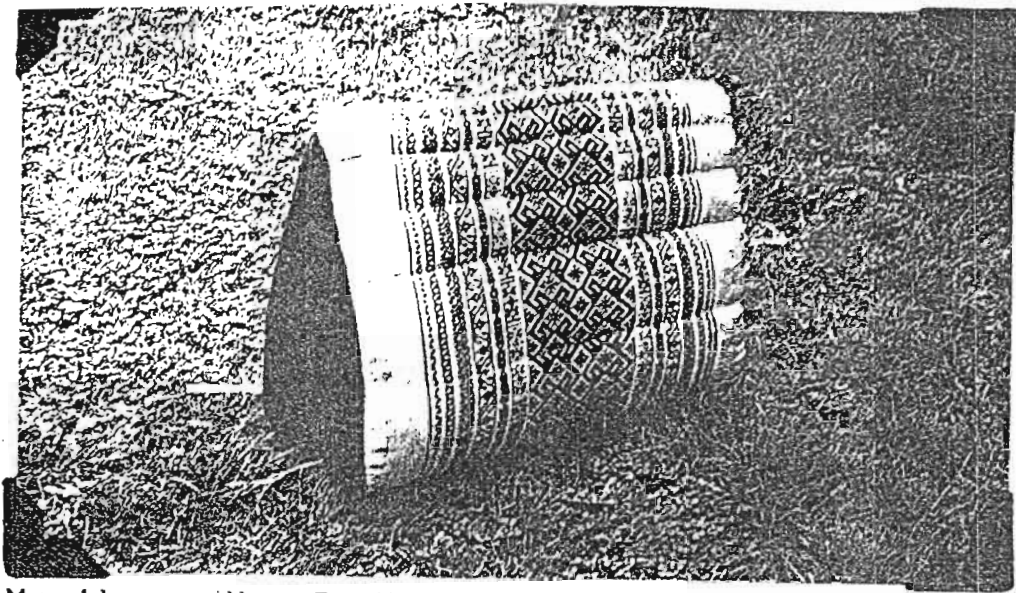
Pillows were very important to the Lao Khrang people as they were used in all aspects of their lives. As well as being woven for general use in the household, they were made as wedding gifts by the bride for her future husband's parents, and for offering to the temple during religious ceremonies.

There were two types of pillows made, different in shape and purpose but woven in the same way. Long, thin pieces of cotton were woven with colourful **khit** and **chok** patterns down the centre on a white background. These patterns were made in vertical bands and consisted of various geometric and symbolic images, including animal motifs such as elephants and horses.

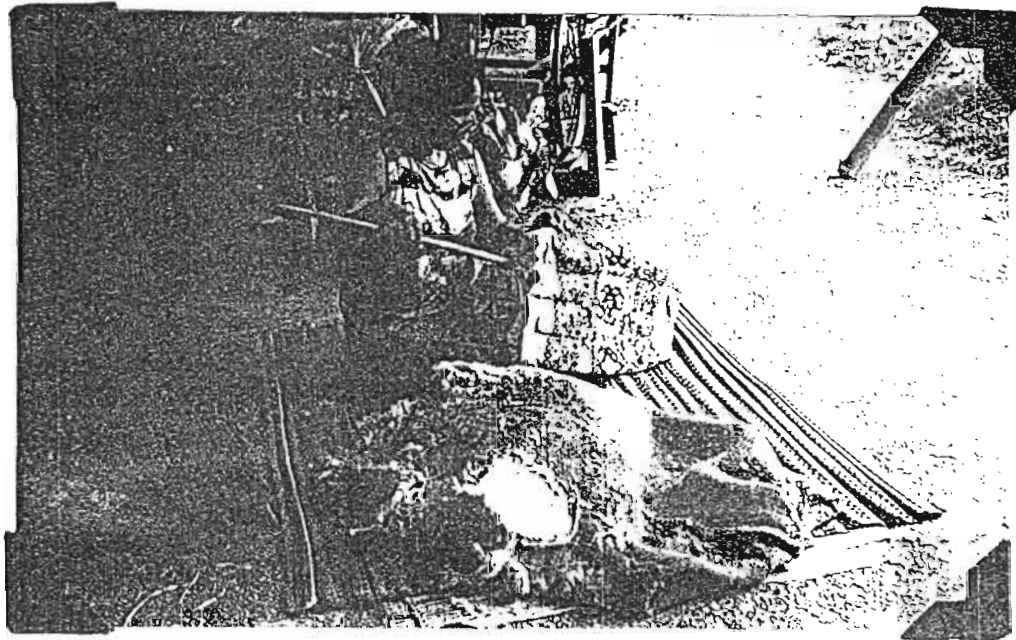
These pieces were then sewn to become the large decorative side of both types of pillow. Plain red or indigo cotton was sewn to either end and this was stuffed with kapok to complete the pillow.

1. Mon hok

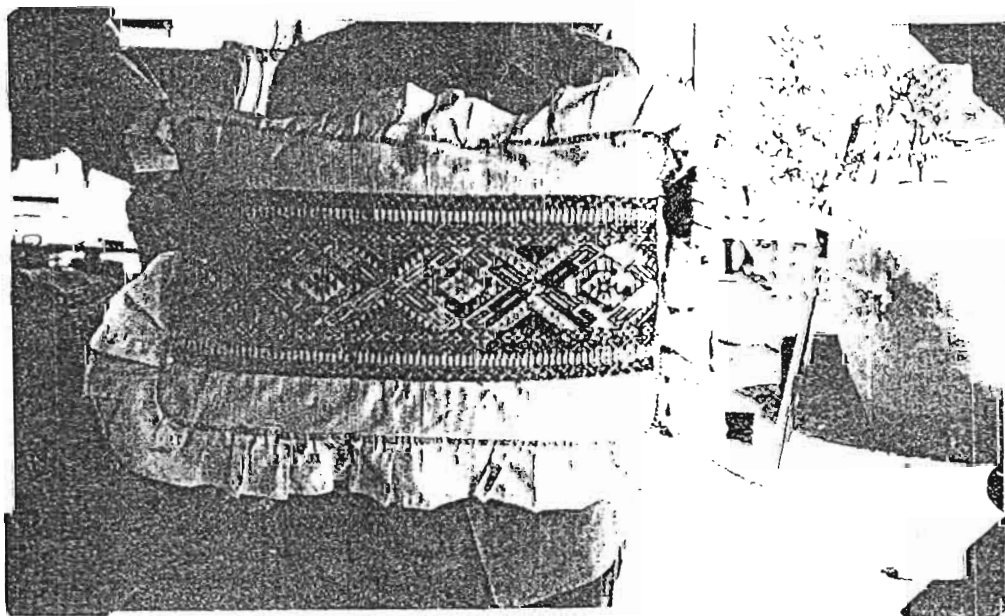
These were small rectangular prism shaped pillows, using the patterned material around the wider sides and plain red at both ends. Looking at these red ends one notices six inner sections have been sewn together to form the pillow, and this gives these pillows their name.



Mon khwan pillow, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Stuffing a pillow with kapok using a bamboo stick before sewing the ends, Ban Khok Mo, Uthai Thani province.



Modern pillow made using traditional khit and chok designs woven with synthetic yarns.

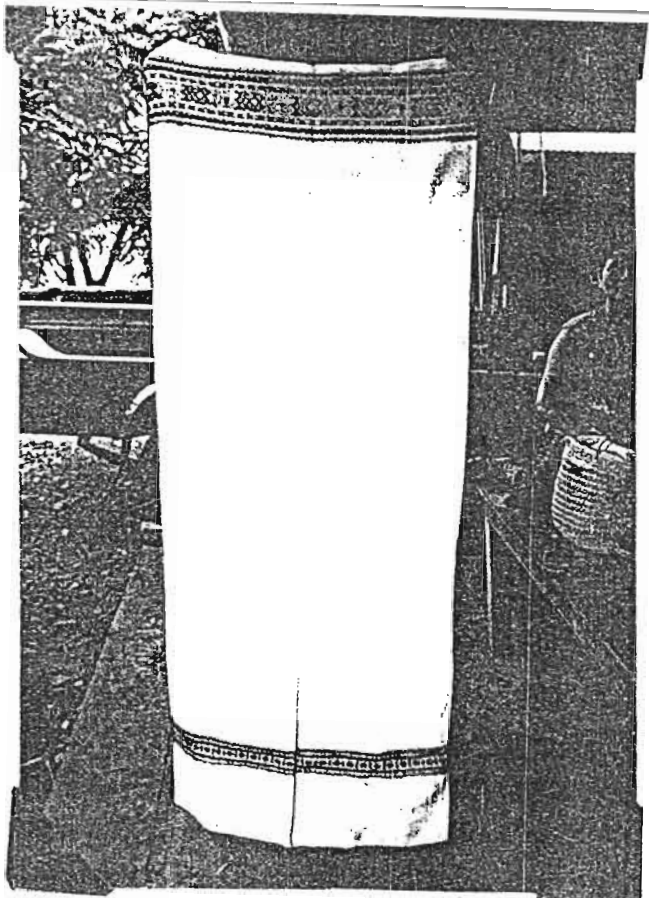
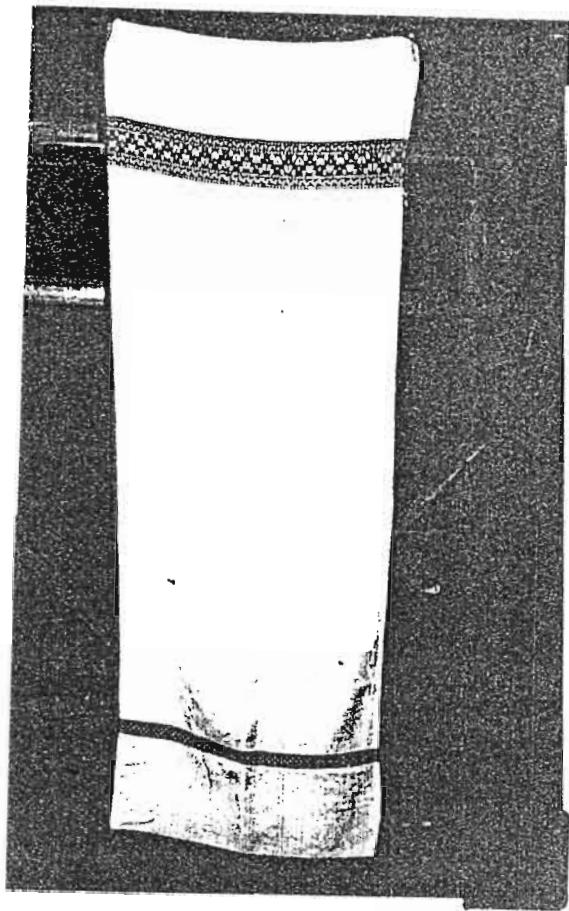
Mon hok were used as sleeping pillows within the household. The bride would give them to her future mother-in-law before her wedding and individuals offered them to monks either during their ordination or at other religious ceremonies as a merit making deed.

2. Mon khwan / mon thao / mon ing

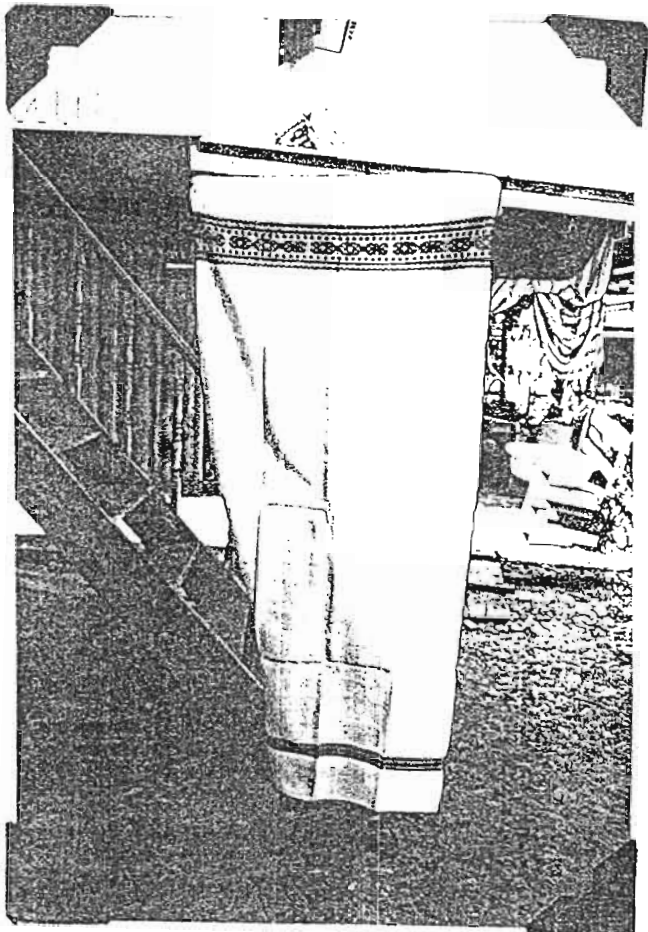
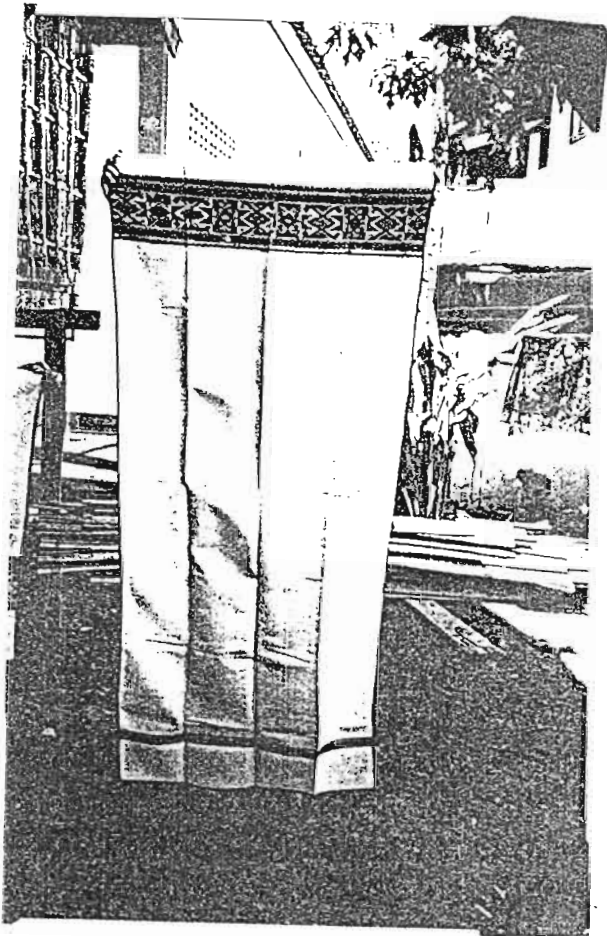
These pillows were much larger than mon iok, sometimes so large they were hard to handle. They were made in a triangular prism shape with the triangles being at either end of the pillow, similar to the triangular pillows common throughout Thailand, however they were slightly different in that the triangles at each end were isosceles rather than equal sided. The name mon khwan comes from the two axe-head shaped pieces sewn together to form these triangles at each end of the pillow and were often made in two colours of red and blue. The three main sides of the pillows were rectangular, and these were covered in the elaborately designed chok fabric.

Their primary purpose was for being leaned upon when seated on the ground in the Asian style, and thus often lost their rigid shapes. They were also known as mon thao as they were made by a bride for her future father-in-law as a wedding gift, as well as for her husband and for offering to the temple. Men prided in these pillows and often took them on any travels to assure comfort in any surroundings.

Large square thin pillows called asana were also made, but these were specifically for offering to monks to be used as sitting pillows in the temples. This would bring great merit to those that offered them.



o, Ban Na Ta Pho, Uthai Thani province. Pho 1o, Ban Nong Chanuan, Suphan Buri



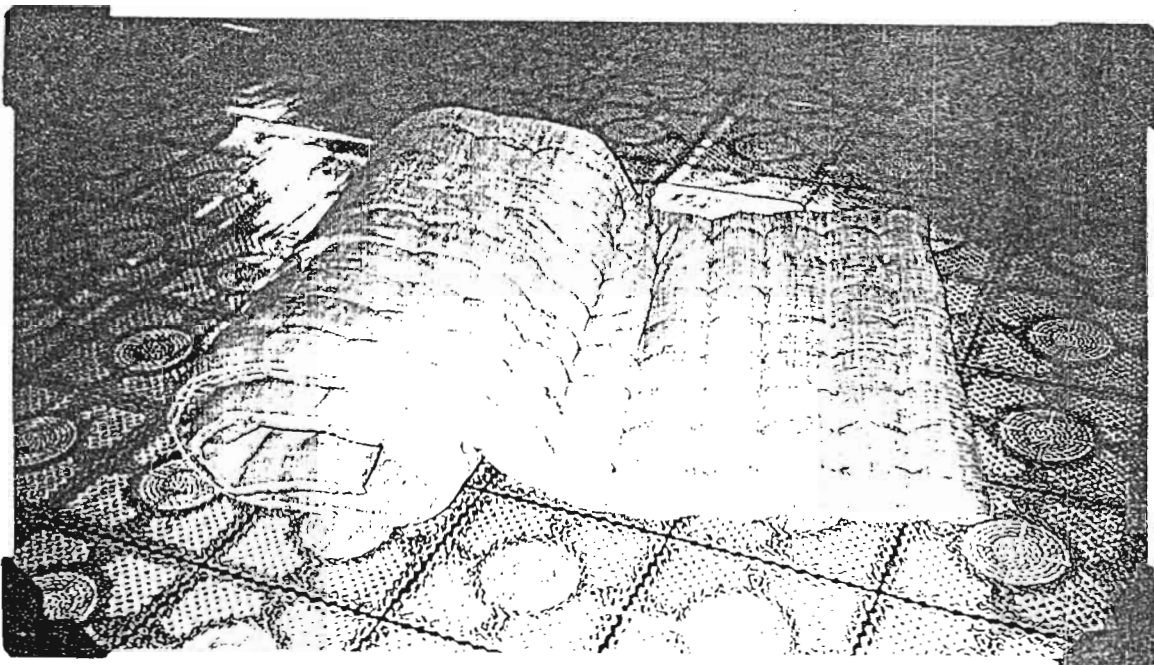
o, Ban Bo Kru, Suphan Buri province. Pho 1o, Ban Nong Kathum, Suphan Buri

MATTRESSES AND SHEETS

The mattresses, called *sia*, made by the Lao Khrang women were covered in plain woven white cotton and stuffed with kapok, forming a long thin mattress always approximately 60 cm wide and 2m long. Girls slept on a thin rolling mattress called *sia ta ma kok*, and not until she was married could a woman start sleeping on the thicker mattresses, known as *sia pap* as they were folded into three sections rather than rolled for storage. Two of these narrow mattresses were placed side by side for married couples but were still covered with two separate bedsheets.

Sheets were made only for covering the mattresses and were called *pha lo*. They always had the same structure, only varying in the patterns used for decoration. The background of these pieces was a white twill weave similar to that used for weaving the blankets and curtains. They were also woven with the same width as the blanket and curtain pieces, but the sheets were never joined to become wider.

The distinguishing characteristics of the Lao Khrang sheets were the red edging sewn around all sides, and the two bands of *khit* towards each end. These bands would contain a variety of colourful yarns and patterns, with a wider band made at one end to be placed at the head of the mattress.

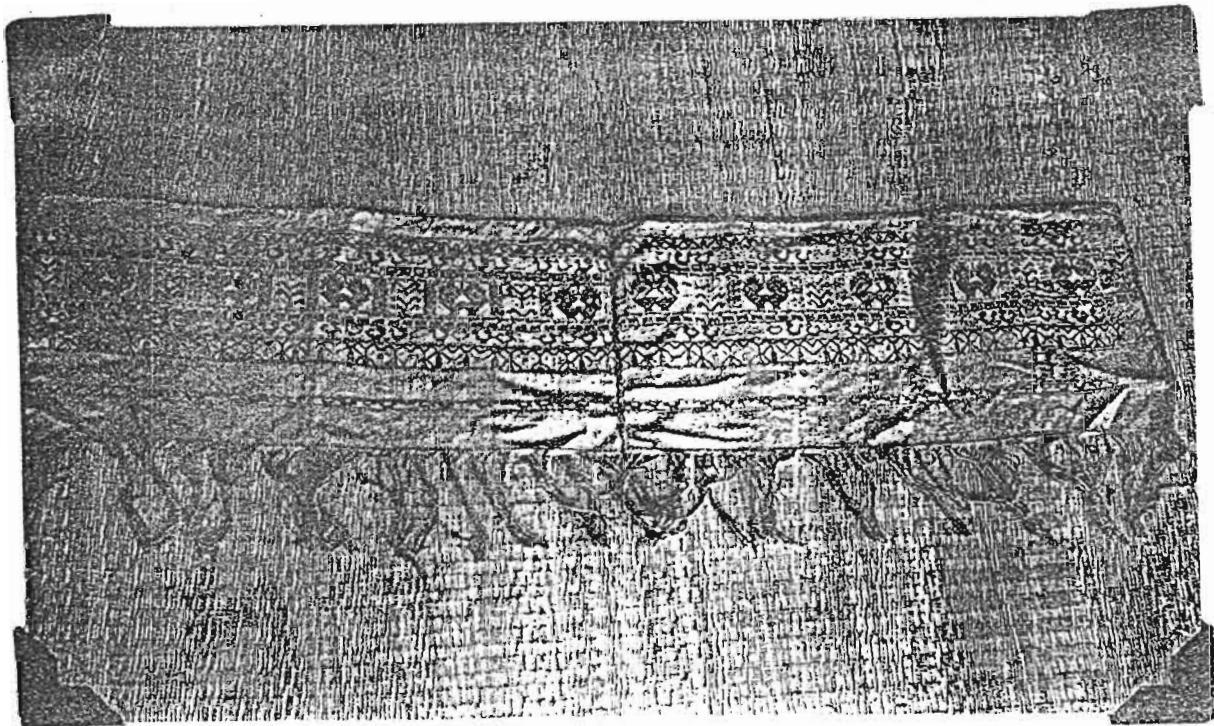


Sia ta ma kok mattress with cotton covering, Ban Khok mo, Uthai Thani province.

OTHER BEDDING TEXTILES

Women traditionally wove lengths of white cotton to be made into mosquito nets, and also small cloths called pha na mung for decorating one side of these mosquito nets.

Pha na mung were cotton textiles with white background and decorated with colourful khit and chok patterns in horizontal bands. They were woven with the same width as pha lo, but only 30 cm long, and two identical pieces were sewn side by side with the bands aligned. Red edging was then sewn along the top and down both sides, and tassles were made along the bottom edge to complete the piece. They were made by girls for attaching to the mosquito net on their wedding night to ensure a long, happy marriage.



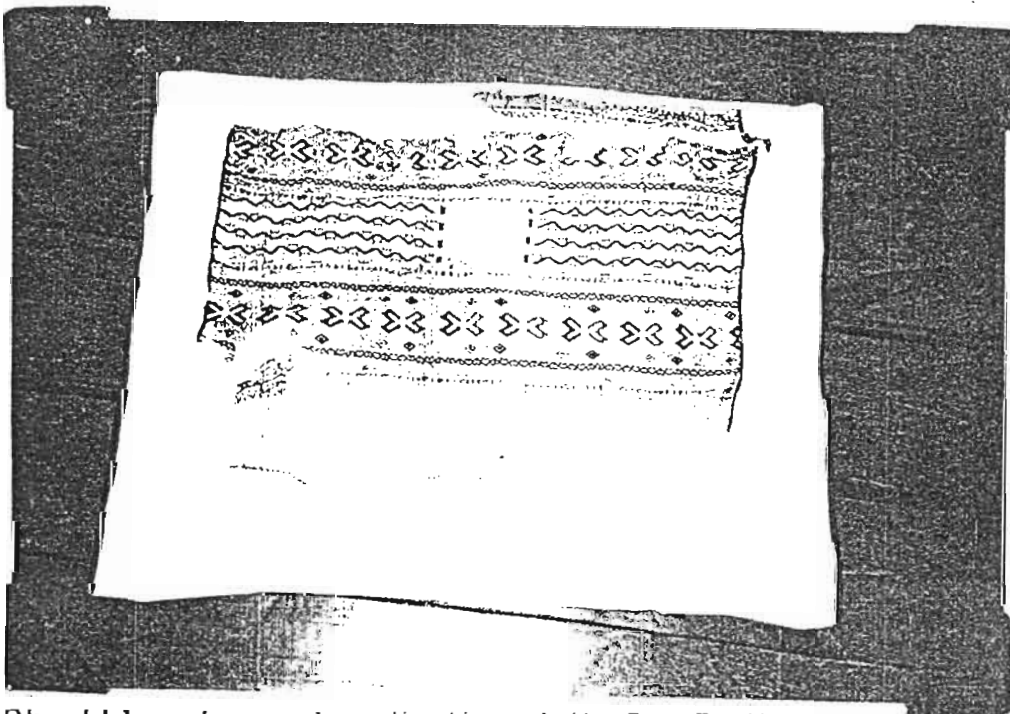
Pha na mung in cotton with khit and chok patterns, Ban Nong Chok, Uthai Thani province.

RELIGIOUS TEXTILES

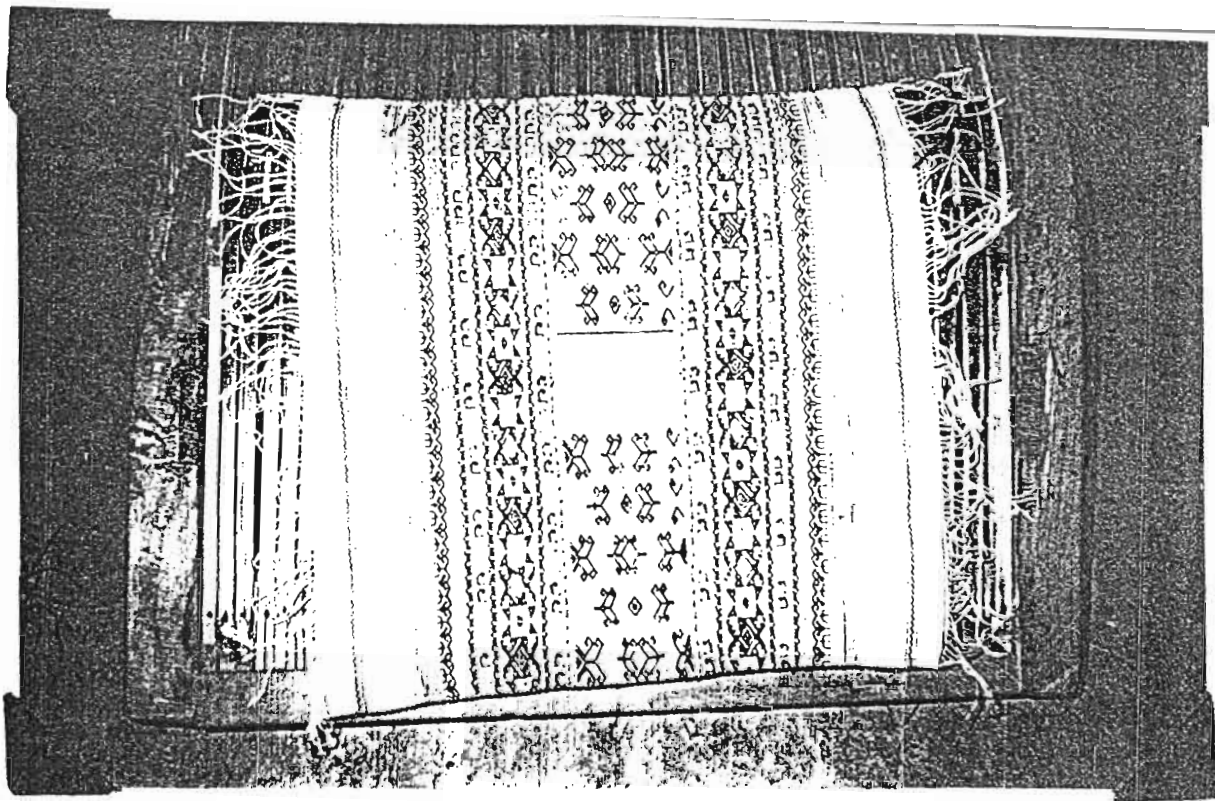
The Lao Khrang people are faithful Buddhists and in the past a number of textiles were woven specifically for use in various religious ceremonies and for offering to the temple.

A very important ceremony in a man's life was his first ordination, or *buat nak*. His mother would weave a special ceremonial headcloth for this ceremony called *pha khum hua nak*. This cloth was a square woven in white and yellow cotton, decorated with very elaborate *khit* and *chok* designs. These designs were made in horizontal bands and covered the central section of the cloth, although a small plain white or yellow square was left in the very centre. Both ends were plain white with a thin band of *khit* and had white tassles. Red edging was sewn down the sides and left hanging at each end to become part of the tassles. When covering the head these tassles were hung down the sides, leaving the face bare.

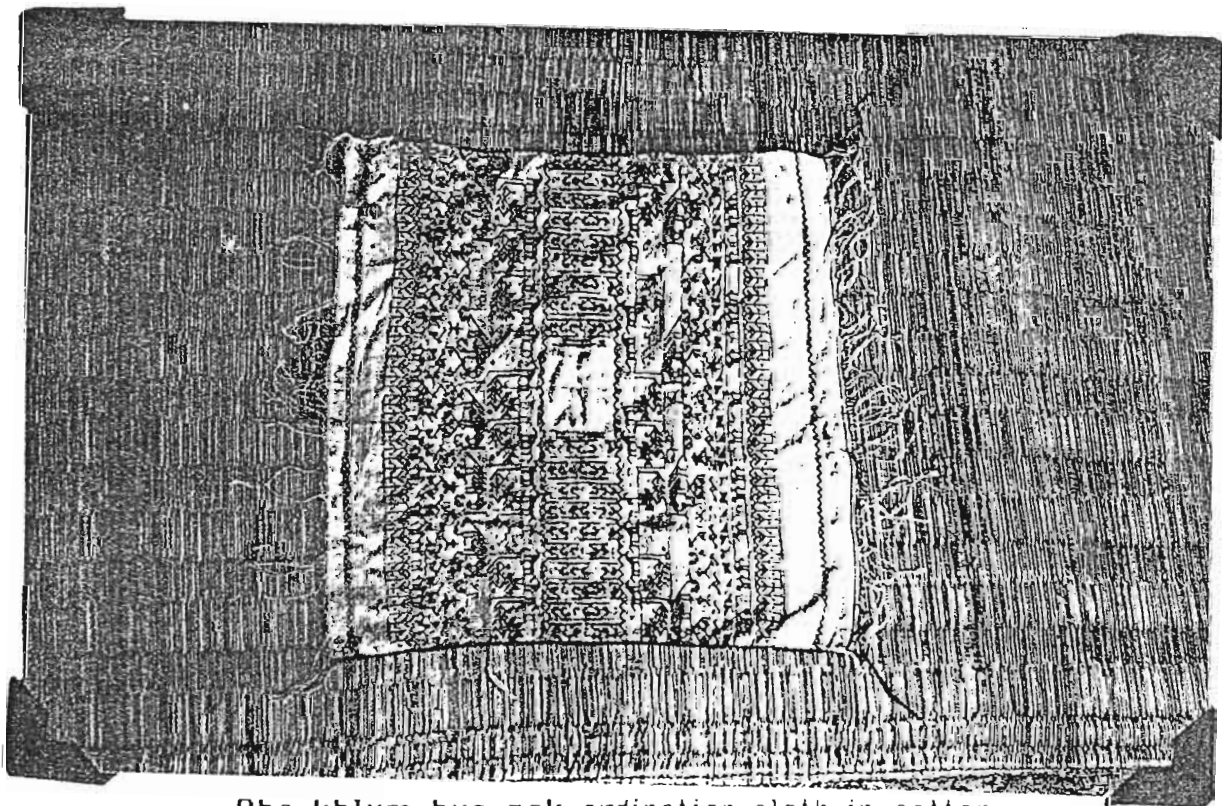
Other textiles woven by mothers for their sons to take into the monkhood included pillows, mosquito nets, blankets, and robes which were woven during the *chun kathin*. *Ikat chongkraben* were also woven for the *buat nak* ceremony but they were not to be worn until a man left the monkhood to show that he was now mature.



Pha khum hua nak ordination cloth, Ban Bo Kru, Suphan Buri province.

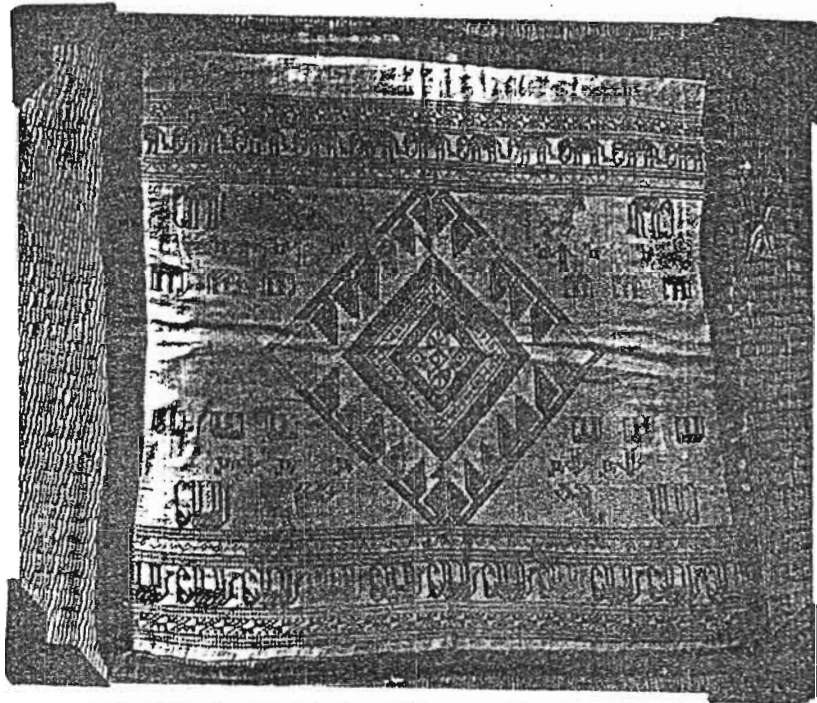


Pha khlum hua for ordination ceremonies, Ban Kud Chok, Chainat province.

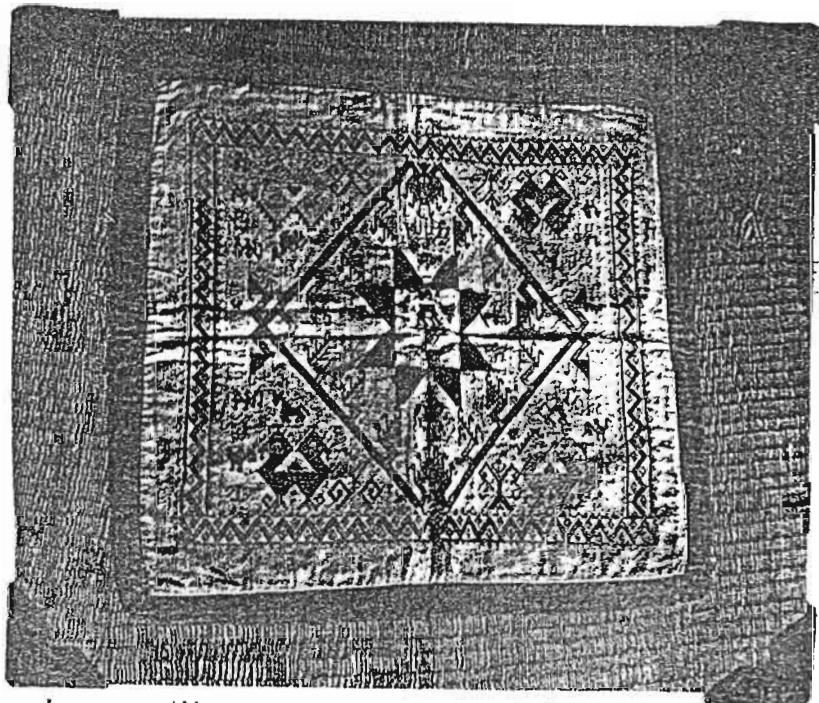


Pha khlum hua nak ordination cloth in cotton,,
Ban Thung Kathin, Suphanburi province.

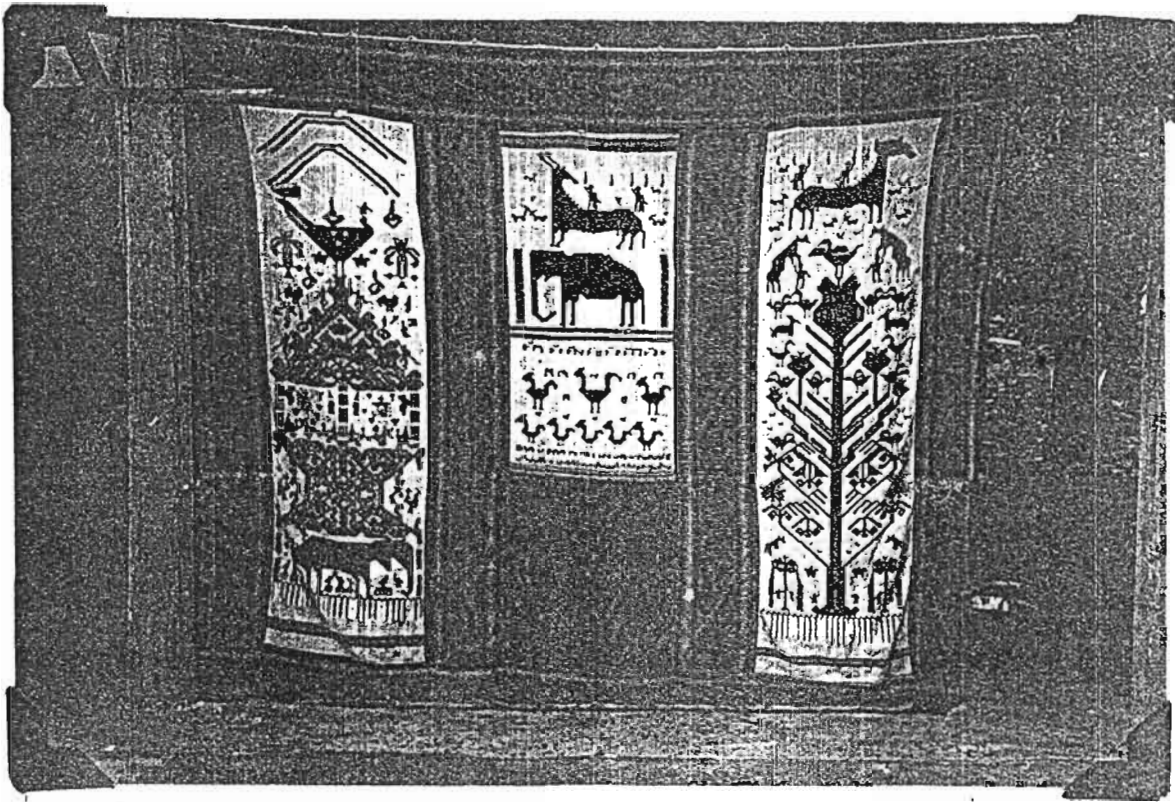
Large square thin cotton pillows approximately two foot square, called sana or asana, were made for offering to monks to sit on when meditating and praying. The upper side was woven on a yellow or white background with chok and khit designs on it. Many different patterns were used to decorate these pieces, but they all had a diamond shape in the centre and usually included animal motifs in the patterns. More recently Thai writing was also used as part of the chok pattern, depicting the year it was made and the temple it was offered to. Red edging approximately an inch wide was sewn around the sides of this piece, and plain



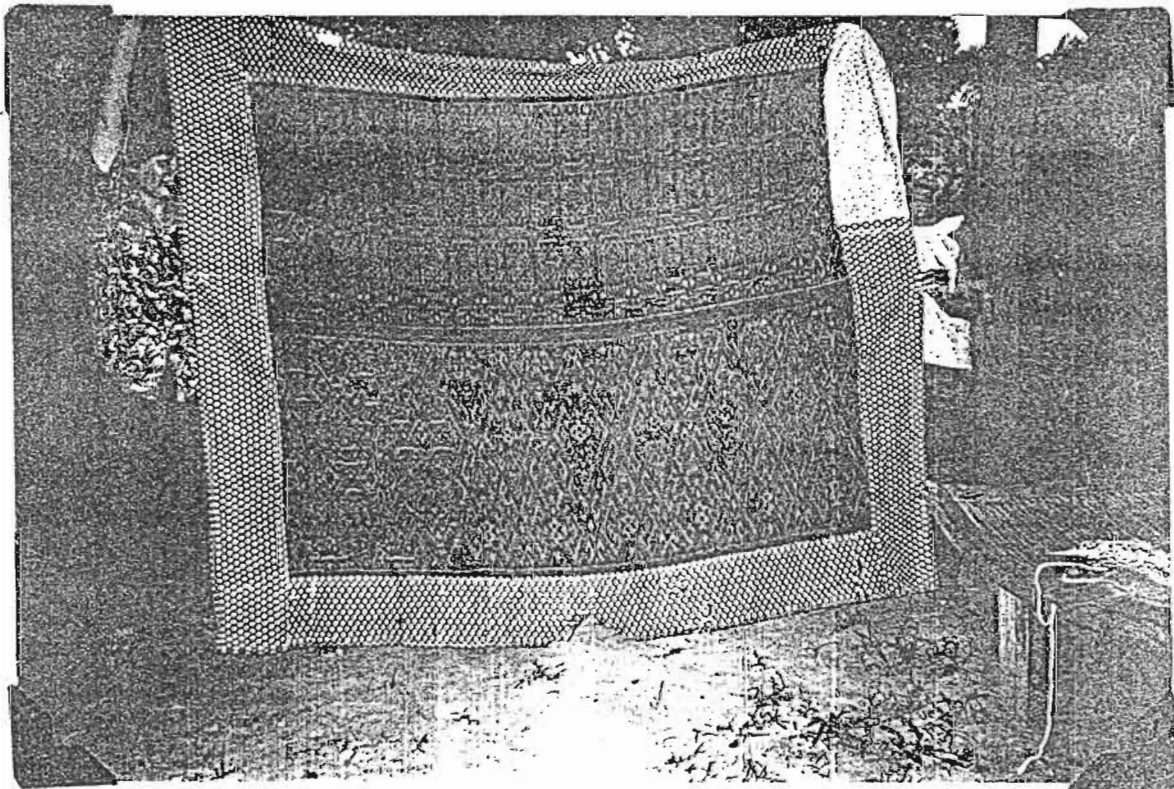
Asana pillow made in cotton with kapok stuffing, Ban Nong Chok, Uthai Thani province.



Asana pillow made in cotton with kapok stuffing, Ban Nong Chok, Uthai Thani province.



Large ceremonial curtain with silk ikat and three cotton chok sections, Ban Sa Yai Chee, Uthai Thani province.



Ceremonial curtain with silk ikat centre piece, Ban Kud Chok, Chai Nat province.

white cotton was used for the backing on the underside. These pillows were stuffed with a thin layer of kapok.

Large elaborate curtains were made for offering to the temple as a merit making deed by relatives for the dead. These were made from both silk and cotton pieces of material which were sewn together. The silk component was usually very intricate ikat patterns similar to that used for pha sin mi luang, and the cotton was often woven with various chok symbols and motifs, with both real and mythical animal figures included. Some included Thai letters in the chok patterns. The more recent pieces use modern machine woven fabrics as part of the decoration. Cotton rings were attached along the top and a cotton rope passed through for hanging these curtains in the temples.

Elders of the villages recall the weaving of long flags or thong for ceremonies in the past, but none of these remain to be seen today as they were often burnt after use. They are described as being narrow lengths of white cotton approximately three metres long with khit and chok bands at short intervals along the whole piece. Small pieces of coloured cotton were sewn onto both sides similar to tassles, and there were white tassles on the bottom end. They were hung on long bamboo poles at festivals.

Cloths for wrapping Buddhist scripts, called pha ho khampi, were also made for offering to the temple, but unfortunately these have disappeared due to lack of preservation in the temples. They were white cotton rectangular fabrics covered with khit and chok patterns with red edging sewn around them and white cotton linings.

EPILOGUE

The Lao Khrang traditions are now dying out very fast due primarily to rapid modernisation throughout Thailand, offering exciting and easy alternatives to the often laborious traditional crafts. As a result of this, the production of traditional textiles is fast becoming part of the past for the Lao Khrang people as well as for most other Tai groups throughout the region. Although there has been some revival of these ancient crafts recently, a large portion is being lost with elders who possess the knowledge but lack students to pass it on to before their death. Often all that is left behind are a few precious textiles preserved and passed on through the family. As younger generations no longer understand and appreciate the importance of this legacy, these heirlooms are usually sold. Those families that still keep some pieces have often lost the knowledge that was passed down with them and no longer treat the textiles with the love and care with which they were created.

As a consequence of this, during this research many textiles that were spoken of could no longer be seen, and many of those seen could not be identified by the owners. Family members often disagreed on the purpose of a textile, and there were many discrepancies regarding the usage of textiles between households and villages.

This causes both frustration and sadness for anyone interested in these traditions, that they are lost without being recorded and given the attention or respect that they obviously deserve.

TRANSLITERATION OF THAI WORDS

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| asana | อาสนะ |
| buat nak | บวชนาค |
| chok | จก |
| chongkraben | โจงกระเบน |
| chun khathin | จุกฐิน |
| feum | ฝีม |
| hua | หัว |
| khit | ขีด |
| khrang | ครึ่ง |
| koh | เกาะ |
| lai kheun | ลายชั้น |
| lai nuai | ลายหน้าย |
| makleua | มะเกลือ |
| mai kep lai | ไม้เก็บลาย |
| mat mi | มัดหมี่ |
| mi dam sap mi daeng | หมี่ดำสับหมี่แดง |
| mi lot | หมี่โลด |
| mi luang | หมี่หลวง |
| mi noi | หมี่น้อย |
| mi thang pheun | หมี่หึ่งผืน |
| mi thang tua | หมี่หึ่งตัว |
| mi samphao | หมี่สำเภา |
| mi ta | หมี่ตา |
| mon hok | หมอนหก |
| mon khwan | หมอนขวาน |
| mon thao | หมอนเท้า |
| mon ing | หมอนอิง |
| patola | ปาโตลา |
| pha bing lai | ผ้า빙ไหล |
| pha ho khamphi | ผ้าห่อคัมภีร์ |
| pha khaoma | ผ้าขาวม้า |
| pha khum hua nak | ผ้าคลุมหัวนาค |
| pha lo | ผ้าล้อ |
| pha muang | ผ้าม่วง |

pha na mung
pha sin
pha sin mi luang
phithi sou khwan yung
sabai Chiang
sarong
sia
sia pap
sia ta ma kok
sin kan
sin khan
sin khan siu
sin sip siu
thong
thong
thong mak
tin
tin chok
tua

ผ้าหน้ามุ้ง
ผ้าซิ่น
ผ้าซิ่นหมี่หลวง
พิธีสู่ขวัญมุ้ง
สไบเฉียง
โสร่ง
เสี้ย
เสี้ยพับ
เสี้ยตามะกอก
ซิ่นกำน
ซิ่นซิ่น
ซิ่นซิ่นซ้า
ซิ่นสับซ้า
ธง
ทง
ทงหมาก
ดิน
ดินจก
ตัว