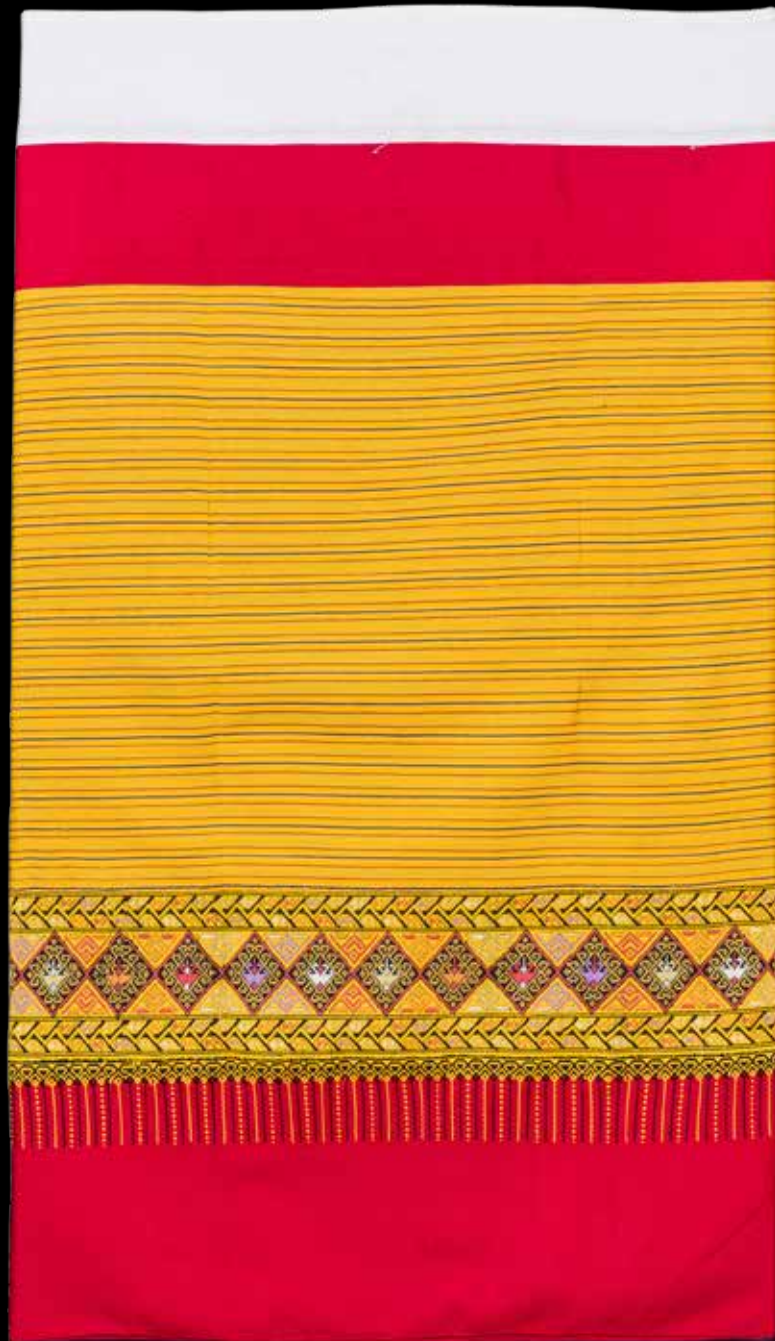




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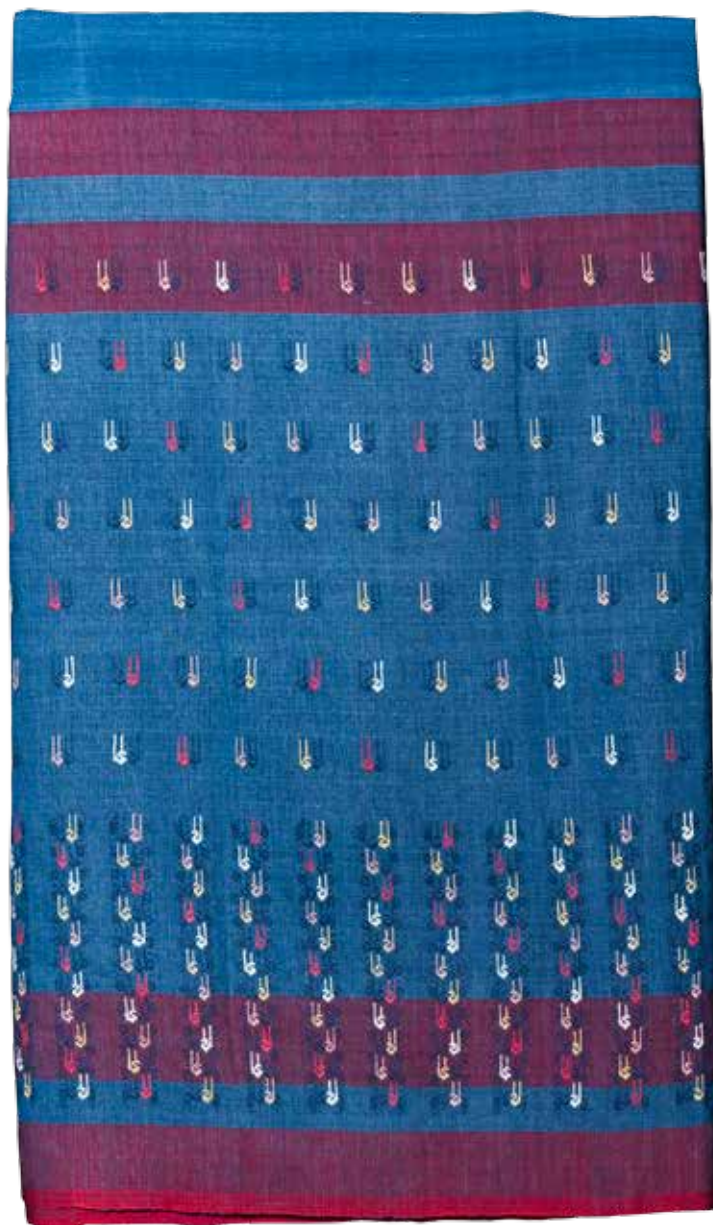


Types of Handicrafts

Pha Chok Mueng Long



“Pha Chok Mueng Long” is one of the significant works of Phrae province in Thailand. Its prominent quality is shown through its beautiful colors across the fabric. Also, this type of textiles is durable due to a small silk thread that creates a complex motif. Chok is used to weave a part of tube skirt, which Northern Thai people called “Sin”. “Sin” is composed of three parts; Hua Sin (top part), Tua Sin (middle part), and Teen Sin (bottom part or hem band). “Sin” that is attached with the chok hem band is called “Sin Teen Chok”, it represents a social status of its wearer. The weavers should love their work and be patient enough to create the exquisite piece.



Long City is an old community in Phrae province. In the past, the city belonged to Tai Yuan or Tai Yanok people. Since Long was the main fortress in the Southern area of Lanna Kingdom, it was considered a very important city. Tai Yuan people had diverse cultures, however, their clothing was similar to those of Yanok people in Lanna. Tai Yuan had varied techniques and arts of textile weaving. Additionally, Tai Yuan women liked to wear various types of Sin or tube skirt; particularly Sin Teen Chok which was worn in the special occasion. The materials used to weave Sin are cotton, silk, gold thread, and silver thread; these make the incredibly beautiful Phrae woven textiles from Long, Phrae Province.



Identity which reflects wisdom and knowledge

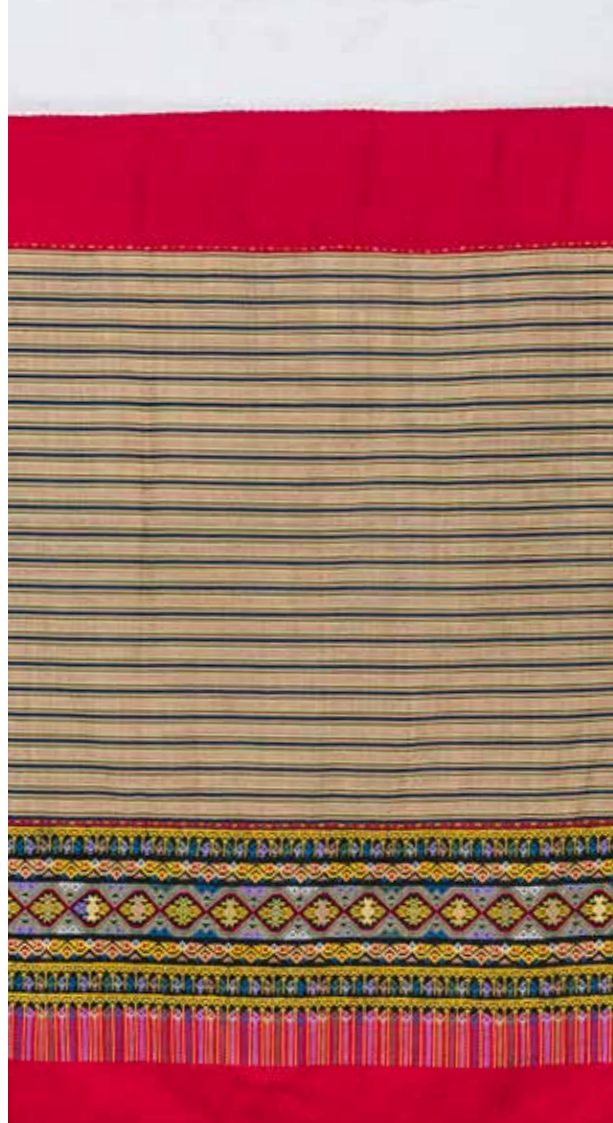
Sin Teen Chok Mueng Long is usually woven and used in family as an attire and shawl in the special event. Women usually weave for their own wedding, covering dead man's face, covering body on their own funeral, and other religious occasion. These textiles have beautiful colors and special patterns.

Sin Teen Chok Mueng Long can be divided in three parts:

- Hua Sin: A waist band is commonly made from white and red pieces of cloth.

- Tua Sin: The body usually has horizontal stripes on the yellow background.

- Teen Sin (decorative hem band): The Chok technique is woven with the black and red warp threads. For the traditional floral motif, contrast colors are used. The end bottom of the floral motif is decorated with Hang Sa Pao tail which is a set of colored stripes. Generally, Chok patterns are only woven on the upper half of Teen Sin, the bottom part is left plain red.



Chok weaving is a painstaking process. Weavers have to be very patient. It takes a great deal of concentration while weaving Chok which is similar to meditating. It takes a lot of time and affords to create each beautiful motif on each cloth; weavers have to be utterly taught until they can finally make their own stunning work.

Chok weavers need to pull the supplementary wefts up and down to create a pattern across the fabrics, which is similar to knitting a cloth. Normally, a pointed stick or a porcupine quill is used to raise the warps and create a space to insert the colored supplementary patterning threads. Thrown silk or reeled-silk threads (Mai Kuab Hok) are used as warp yarns because of its thickness and durability. The wefts, on the contrary, are Mai Noi or fine silk threads from the most inner part of a cocoon because they are delicate. As a result, a pattern appears to be complex and colorful.

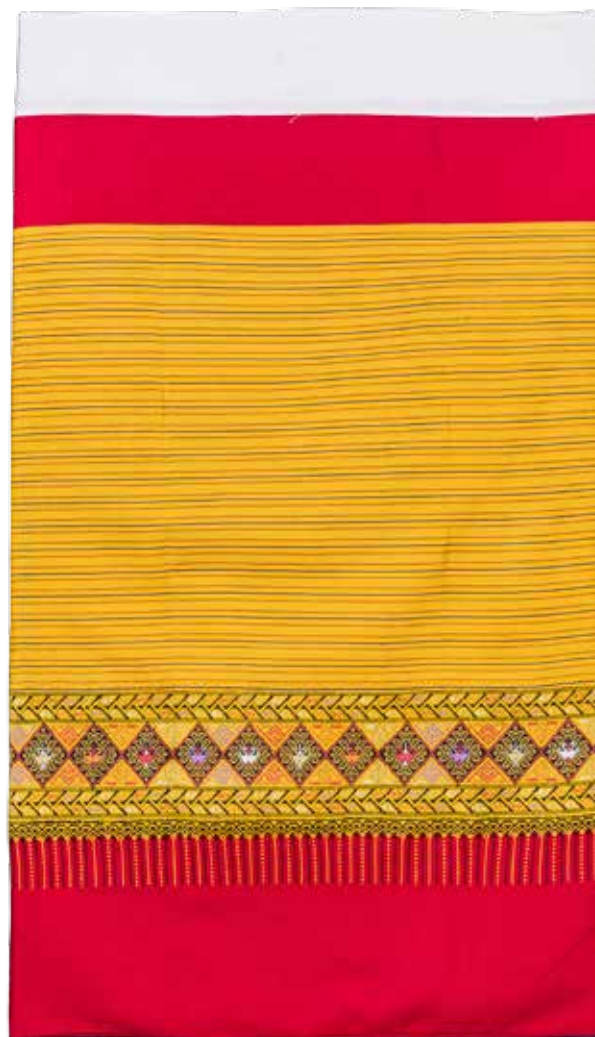




Weaving Chok is considered as a certificate to be an adult of the traditional women since they all have to practice with the master weaver to get ready for their marriage. It is necessary to be able to weave before getting married; for both daily life textiles and special Sin for important life events.

In the past, Chok textiles did not have a lot of designs. There were not more than four motifs for a piece of cloth. The design is obviously separated for primary and complementary motifs. The red and white waistband and the striped Sin are then sewn together.

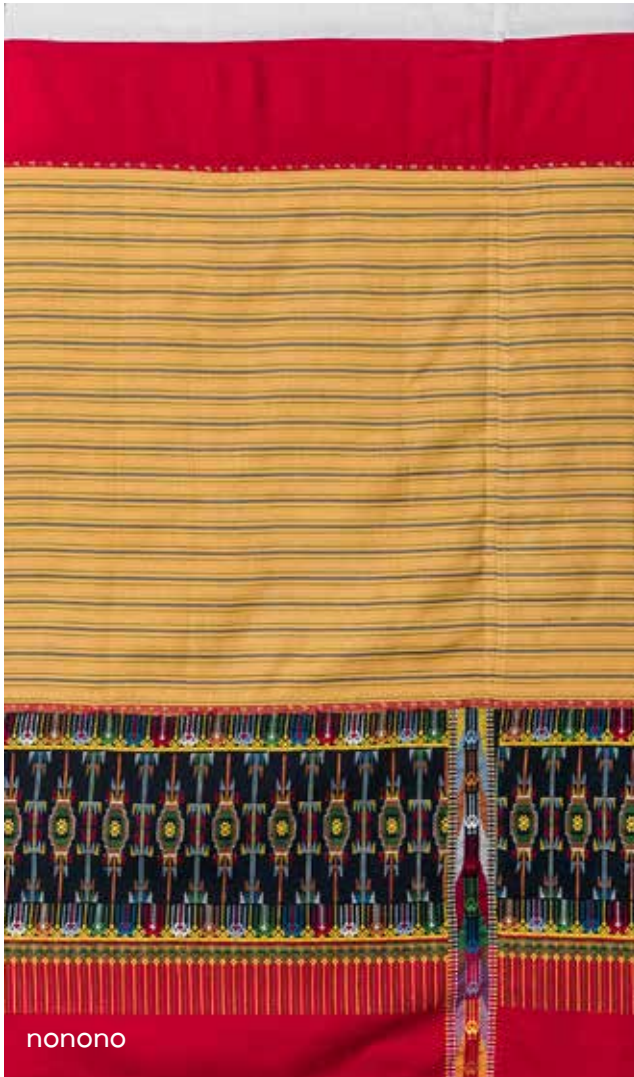
The decorative hem band is woven using the Chok technique with the black and red warp threads. For the traditional floral motifs, it is popular to use contrasting colors which is the style of traditional Tai Yuan's Teen Chok. Additionally, cotton thread and yellow silk are used to create decorative motifs. Each line of motifs is not too close. It also generally starts from the upper part of Teen Sin and leave the lower part plain red. When stitching Teen Chok cloth with Sin, it is important that the red part of Teen Chok has to match the red color of its waistband. Then, it would be a complete traditional Sin Teen Chok.





The distinctive part of Sin Teen Chok Mueng Long is its motifs which are freely created. Therefore, there is no particular name to call the motifs in the middle of textiles. The weavers usually have their own special patterns. Some weavers mark their hidden signatures or symbols on the fabric. This kind of textiles represents the weaver; it is called “Mhai Sin”.

A pattern is composed of primary and complementary motifs. There are twelve traditional motifs used as primary designs: Nok Khu Kin Nam Ruam Ton, Samphao Loi Nam, Nok Yaeng Ngao, Kha Mod Daeng, Kha Kampung, Khor Lai, Mha Kanad, Chan Paed Kleeb, Dok Chan, Khor Dao, Khor Phak Kood, and Dok Khor.



There are eight traditional primary motifs used as “continuous patterns”: Bai Phak Waen, Maeng Pong Len, Khom and Chor Tung Noi, Khor Nam Ku, Chan Paed Kleeab, Krue Kab Muak, Kongkeng Son Nok, and Phum Dok Nok Kin Nam Ruam Ton. For the complementary pattern, there are 6 types of motifs; plants, animals, geometry, vector, animal combined with geometry, and animal combined with vector pattern. Now there are many new motifs, such as Kaab Mak, Hang Sapao Ton Son, Soi Prao, Med Maeng Lak, Bua Kwam Bua Ngai, Pikul Chan, Hang Sapao Nok, Nok Khum, Kha Mod, Tom Krue Lai Hang Sapao Dok Tom, Fun Pla, Khor Lai, Krue Khor, Mali Loei, and Phee Sue.



The patterns of Sin Teen Chok Mueng Long are similar to Chok fabric of Mae Chaem, Chiangmai. However, most patterns of Sin Teen Chok Mueng Long have been inherited from their ancestor, for example, Phak Waen, Nok Kin Nam Ruam Ton, Khor Lai, Chan Paed Kleeab, Kha Mod Daeng, Phum Dok, Bai Phak Waen, Dok Mali, Hong, and Khor Lai. Other motifs are adapted with more modern designs to look more contemporary and beautiful.



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Background of Pha Chok Mueng Long

There is no complete evidence on when Long people started weaving textiles. From the studies, some of the decorative Chok hem band age more than 200 years because Long used to be a border town and a fortress of Lanna Kingdom. It was a time of prosperity. The city was rich in culture, especially traditional clothing, since the Tai Yuan or Tai Yonok people has extraordinary weaving skill.

In the past, Sin Teen Chok was used in the special occasion for high-ranking women and the ruling class of Lampang, Long, Taa cities. It was worn to show the social status, therefore, high quality materials used are cotton, silk, silver silk, and gold silk threads. The fabric is delicately and elaborately woven with magnificent colors and exquisite motifs.

According to the myth, there was a cave in the Yom River which flows through Long City. People called it “Wang Nam” (current location is from Pak Kang to Laem Si Sub-district). There was a mermaid-some called “Phee E Ngeuk Tor Hook” or “Nang Nheuk Tor Pa” (Weaving mermaid) came up from the river.



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The mermaid borrowed a weaving reed from the villagers. After finish weaving, the music was played loudly across the river to celebrate her success. Then, she returned the reed to the villagers.

The villagers noticed the beautiful colored patterns on their reed, so they tried to follow her patterns. As a result, they could make a special Teen Sin that is different from their original cloths. It has become the pattern of the current Sin Teen Chok in Long City since then. Moreover, the painting on Taa Mon temple reflects Long people’s life and textiles culture that holds life philosophy of Buddhism as well as peacefulness and abundance of nature.

From the social environment mentioned above, motifs of Long are consequently in animals, birds, swan, floral, and sacred objects. They show the long-time valuable ability to create great works of art.

Accordingly, weaving Chok (discontinuous supplementary weft) textiles have become the cultural heritage that Long people are proud to keep inheriting. Although, it takes a long time to practice, the awareness to preserve Thai textiles during the recent 2-3 centuries helps to publicize this heritage. Thai textiles have become more popular and “Pha Sin Teen Chok Mueng Long” has accentuated the ability of skilful weaver as well as the Long culture costume to be more well-known.

Now Chok fabric of Phrae province is so famous that it has a popular saying “Chok Mueng Long, the great product of Phrae”.





Creating Pha Chok Mueng Long

In the previous style of weaving, Long's Chok was woven by using the local loom to weave. Woven of cotton or silk, the narrow Chok cloth is made by picking up the warp with a porcupine quill or a pointed bamboo stick, then adding the colorful or special weft to create patterns on the reverse side of the loom. The patterns can only be admired once the reverse side is turned up. Chok weaving demands a high level of expertise, patience, and experience. The identity of Chok Mueng Long is unique because the weavers have both experience and creativity. There was no written evidence for patterns and instructions of Chok making. Though Chok fabrics were woven by the same teachers, each piece has its own special character. As a result, it is very difficult to find an inheritor that can create original-like cloth. Thus, reed and heald are used in preserving ancestor's motifs and in weaving Chok. A heald contains a set of complete patterns which is called "Krue", one krue can make more than 10 pieces of textile. Weavers only change colors as they desired. The latter generation can easily install yarns with the weaving tool and employ the Chok technique using a quill or a pointed stick to make some new motifs to get a textile they want.

In the past, natural materials can create only a few colors, for example, red from stick lac and yellow from Garcinia (Gamboge) bark. Now many new chemical colors are created and ready-made yarns are used instead of natural fibers. Although Chok fabrics are still made from naturally dyed cotton and silk threads, it is undeniable that some weavers turn to chemical products as it reduces half of the weaving process, and they are easily found in markets and give a variety of colors for customers.

Teen Chok with warm colors is now more popular than the original colors. The Ombré technique is also used as a way of dyeing weaving threads, sometimes it needs only one or two different shades of colors. This contemporary style makes it easier for daily use. Now Teen Chok is not necessarily used only for tube skirt. It helps expand the market of Chok customers.





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Weaving Process

Reeling cotton to prepare the warps and supplementary yarns.

Setting warp yarns, calculating how much yarn a weaver needs, and then lining the yarns.

Pulling cotton threads is to get the expected width and height of the threads.

Inserting the warp yarns into the reed, setting a heald, and preparing the loom.

Making cotton threads run through the reed. Then setting a heald to form a simple criss-cross pattern.

The Sueb Hook process is to put cotton threads into a loom. After tying the healds containing the weft and supplementary threads in the loom, start weaving.

Creating chok patterns is executed through picking or raising colored threads, or threads of select design with a pointed instrument such as a porcupine quill and alternating the picking with the warp.



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Creating and collecting a pattern into a heald which is lifted up to pass the threads back and forth.

After preparing the warp and the weft yarns, then tie the warp threads with the reed of a loom and proceed a shuttle into a weaving process. The warps are separated by raising or lowering heald frames to form a clear space where the weft can pass. The weft is propelled across the loom by a shuttle. It is then pushed up against the fell of the cloth by the reed or the beater.





To weave Pha Chok Mueng Long, a weaver must be very patient because it takes a lot of processes, from planting, harvesting, spinning cotton to remove seeds, dyeing, to weaving. Only a weaving process already takes skills and exquisiteness. This is a valuable cultural heritage that should be promoted and preserved, so it is more well-known and still considered as the treasure of Phrae Province.

Long District has become a Chok weaving center of Phrae Province. This hand woven cloth is still proudly made and worn by younger generations who have inherited the wisdom from local Chok experts. Moreover, further development is made into modern patterns, colors and usage to broaden the appeal, and to meet customer needs and expectations.





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