



The SUPPORT Arts and Crafts  
International Centre of Thailand  
(Public Organization)



## Handicraft work **Hol Cloth**



“**Hol**” is the word referred to a kind of Phanung worn by Khmer people in Cambodia and ethnic groups of Thai-Khmer people in southern part of northeastern region of Thailand including Surin, Buriram, and Sisaket etc. Its techniques and processes are tie-dying of wefts along created patterns before weaving the wefts to make it colorful and well patterned. Its procedures are similar to “Mudmee Cloth” in current day.

The word “**Hol**” in Khmer of Cambodia and Khmer in Thailand has similar meanings but there are some different points; that is, the word “**Hol**” in Khmer of Cambodia means all kinds of cloth produced with “**Mudmee**” process such as mudmee cloth with patterns of religious stories for hanging

on a wall or ceiling. This cloth is called “**Hol Padan**” or “**Hol Pidan**” while long Mudmee cloth is suitable for men to wear as loincloth called as “**Sampuad Hol**”. Furthermore, the word “**Hol**” covers Mudmee Sinh (Lao skirt fabric) with every pattern for ladies.

Meanwhile, the word “**Hol**” in Khmer in Thailand means long Phanung for gentlemen called as “**Sampuad Hol**” but it is different when it is used to define Hol of ladies as it only refers to Mudmee clothes with strip patterns woven by moving silk threads to produce overlapping patterns and weaving wefts alternately with silks in different colors until the cloth’s strip pattern is finished. Other patterns of Mudmee cloth are not referred as “**Hol**” in Khmer language in Thailand but it is called as “**Sinh**” or “**Sampuad Sinh**” instead.





## Uniqueness reflecting wisdom and craftsmanship skill

The word “**Hol**” in Khmer refers to the cloth woven to produce patterns from tie-dyeing process to make it colorful and patterned before woven in a whole piece of cloth called as “**Hol Cloth**”.

Hol Cloth’s structure was a frame with chintz like a loincloth of noblemen in the royal court of Thailand called as “**Hol Proh**” (chintz means the cloth used as insignia of noblemen or bureaucrats in the royal court and it indicates class, title or position in government service). However, the type worn by ladies is woven in strip pattern called as “**Hol Sroei**” (currently, Hol Proh’s structure like Hol worn by men in the past is rare and few people can weave it ). Most Hol Cloth in Surin means the Hol Cloth with strip patterns worn by ladies or Hol Sroei.



**Identity of Hol Cloth:** it is tied and dyed cloth with unique colors and patterns and it is woven with dashed line alternately with straight line by using 2 pairs of silk threads throughout the entire piece. The patterns of strip and Mudmee are alternate. Hol Cloth is cloth with extremely good quality and weaving this kind of Hol Cloth requires small, fine and delicate silk threads. Therefore, the cloth is dense, glossy and light suitable for wearing that is comfortable. The patterns are original of Thai-Khmer people in southern part of Northeastern region especially in Surin which is influenced by culture and arts of Khmer. Colors used for weaving Hol cloth are mainly red, black, blue, yellow, green and orange etc.



Hol Sinh





**Wisdom of Hol Cloth** or Sampuad Hol weaving in southern part of Northeastern region is slightly different from **“Mudmee Cloth”** of northern part of northeastern region as follows

In northern part of Northeastern region, when weft division process is prepared for the tie to make patterns before dyeing which is called as **“Lam”** in northern part of northeastern region, the weavers would prepare it continuously from the beginning to the end. Weft of the 1st bundle is connected with weft of the 2nd bundle and weft of the 2nd bundle is connected with weft of the 3rd bundle continuously until the last bundle.

In the same step, the preparation is dividing wefts into a bundle to be tied and dyed to produce patterns for weaving Hol Cloth in area of the southern part of Northeastern Region. Each bundle of weft is called as **“Kanan”** separated freely with no wefts

in each bundle that are connected.

When finishing weaving process, Mudmee cloth of northern part of northeastern region would have weft prepared in long and unceasing from the beginning until the end. So, only a weft was used and spinning thread into a tube would finish when it was full, and it could be continued with next tube. So, only a shuttle could be used to weave the whole cloth

For Hol Cloth in southern part of northeastern region, after dividing weft in each bundle freely, it must be filled into 1 tube in orderly manner. A shuttle with equal amount of weft bundle for weaving the whole cloth is required but the better result is that the patterns are more distinct.

Another feature of using **“Hol Cloth”** of Thai-Khmer people in the southern part of Northeastern Region which is clear pattern division for males and females.



**Another identity** of Hol Cloth is cloth edge which is woven differently from other clothes with silk thread pulling on the end reversely to tidy up the edge to make it thicker and easily taken care of. importantly, tie and dye method will start from dyeing in red which is durable and not shrinking. So, Red is the symbol of Hol Cloth.







### “Hol” Cloth: tied and dyed cloth in the south of northeastern culture

Hol Cloth in culture of the south of north-eastern region (lower northeastern region) is high-ranked cloth as it is not only worn in special occasions, but it is also selected to be clothes in important rituals like the queen of all clothes. It is the cloth, apart from weaving process, requires expertise of weavers having knowledge and proficiency in dyeing method with natural materials and having aesthetic in minds to transform the cloth look beautiful with balanced coloring to obtain the great Hol Cloth.

Hol Cloth’s structure is similar to Poom Cloth or Sompak Cloth of noblemen in the Royal Court of Siam with frames and edges for men to wear.

The word “**Sompak**” or “Songpak” is presumed to be originated from “**Somphot**” or “**Sampuad Hol**”. Hol in Khmer means “cloth” divided as 3 types



Hol Cloth

### 1. Patterned embroider (Sompak Lai)

It is to produce patterns on clothes with process of writing, printing, dyeing or smearing. This kind of embroider is designed by the royal court for Indian craftsmen to create and return it to the royal court of Siam to be used in important ceremonies. It was mostly used with masters, king or noblemen referred as to “Pha Lai Yang”

### 2. Lifted embroider (Sompak Yok)

It is to create patterns on cloth with weaving method called as “Yok” by intermingling the silk thread. Sompak Yok was produced and used in Siam and ordered from foreign countries such as India, China and Persia to be worn by noblemen in royal ceremonies such as topknot-shaving and hair shaving ceremony.

### 3. Sompak Poom or Sompak Mai

Sompak Poom or Sompak Mai is cloth woven with silk as materials in tie and dye method with creation of patterns on wefts (low line). Sompak Poon was selected by the Royal Court of Siam. The components of pattern on cloth are arranged with different details on the cloth and it is used to indicate title or position of administrative noblemen in Royal Court in each department and division. People wore it to present themselves in front of the king. It was official cloth and there were numerous criteria of categorization as follows



Example of **Sompak Lai** or Pha Lai Yang is cloth for noblemen in Royal Court since Ayutthaya Period for the kings or royal relatives and it is the cloth given to noblemen as insignia.



Example of **Sompak Yok** or Pha Yok was popularly worn by men since the period of Ayutthaya until early Rattanakosin Period. It was royal cloth bestowed to ministers and noblemen according to title.



Example of **Sompak Poom** or Pha Poom with pattern creation of tie and dye method. It is worn by men as the King would grant it to noblemen, minister and bureaucrats according to their title, position and feat.





**3.1 Sompak Poom Thong Nak** is the embroidered cloth with highest rank and its patterns signify meanings of Naga pattern. It was used as Phanung for ministers ranking Somdej Chaophraya and Chaophraya only



**3.2 Sompak Poom Dokyai** has patterns similar to Sompak Poom Thongnak as appearing in the government gazette in the reign of King Rama IV identifying that he promoted noblemen with title of Phraya and they would be bestowed with Sompak Poom Dokyai Cloth and land of 6000.



**3.3. Sompak Pom Dokklang:** the size of pattern was smaller than Sompak Poom Dokyai and mostly, it was tied with silk thread as a pattern of Kan Yaeng or Nak Kiaw. The patterns were created with tie, dye and enfolding method. Sompak Poom Dokklang's main pattern looked like rhombus with pendant pattern. Presumably, it was influenced by the pattern of Sompak Poom in Cambodia.



**3.4 Sompak Poom Doklek:** this kind of Sompak Poom had small size of tie and dye pattern. Well-known patterns were such as Khom Ha, Khom Jed patterns which were delicate, orderly including other components that were downsized too.



**3.5. Sompak Cheng or Sompak Thonglian or Sompak Thongphlan** was a cloth with same components but it was different from others in major part of the cloth which contained no patterns. It was just plain and mostly it was dyed and enfolded with silk thread including the tie of patterns of both cloth edge and long pattern. This kind of Sompak was bestowed by the king to bureaucrats with title of Phra up to Luang and Khun



**3.6. Sompak Longjuan or Sompak Riew** was Sompak cloth with reduction of long pattern, pattern and cloth edge. However, Mudmee pattern was created as strips across the long side of the cloth. This kind of cloth was bestowed to noblemen with title of Luang up to Khun, Muen Thanai which ranked the lowest in group of Sompak cloth.



**3.7. Sompak Riew** is the cloth ranking the lowest with no patterns on cloth. Although patterns are produced, it is few and mostly simple like Mede Nuai on weft tied as a section as strip patterns of the cloth. Furthermore, the technique of weaving weft with alternate colors was used also. This kind of Sompak cloth was mostly bestowed to noblemen with title of Khun down to Muen holding lands for 600 and 400 and it ranked the lowest in Poom Cloth group.





Later, Poom Cloth gained more attention from people and villagers and thus it was carved with patterns before tied and dyed for making “Hol Cloth” which was suitable for villagers or commoners. There are various kinds of Hol Cloth but one of the most difficult types is Hol Bantuead which is high-ranked Hol Cloth used in rituals such as ghost offering ritual, ancestor offering ritual or a bride in a wedding. Hol Bantuead must be patterned with ancient prototype that has been inherited since the ancestors.

While general Hol Cloth [is used by men called as “Hol Proh”. Presumably, Khmer accepted

the word “Proh” from Pali Language or Puris or Burut in Sanskrit. It is a long cloth with tie and dye of weft with about 3-meter length and 1-meter width. The cloth space is divided in sections including the part with warp pattern from the top to bottom area of the cloth parallel with both sides of cloth edges called as “Ruang Jeng” (Cloth edge)

The remainder is between Ruang Jeng at both sides of cloth edge with weft patterns. Sometimes, it was just bands like multi-layer cones.

The middle part is most space of the cloth containing pattern called as “**Khom**”.



**Hol Cloth for men or Hol Proh** is restricted for men only and women are prohibited because it is the cloth signifying title. Later, the Hol Cloth of men was modified by being tied in pattern specified by the Royal Court before removing it and weaving with strip patterns. This kind of Hol Cloth was intended for women called as **“Hol Sroei”**. Assumingly, Khmer accepted the word **“Sroei”** from **“Saree”** in Pali or **“Satree”** in Sanskrit according to traditional culture of Hol cloth with strip patterns.

Sampuad Hol Cloth of both ladies and men was woven with at least 3 bundles and the cloth was dense. Color on one side was darker than the other side and in some pieces of cloth, small square patterns were produced all over the cloth.





## Hol Cloth Creation

### Silk preparation

1. Draw silk into a basket and use pebbles or plant seeds such as pink cassia seed to put on silks so that when spinning silk, it will not be entangled.
2. Remove silk knots by using a spoon or knife so that the silk thread is smooth and delicate.
3. Then, spin the silk thread into a wheel (twisting) to make the silk threads twisted. When woven, it will be sticky, dense and not easily torn or broken.
4. When finished, put the silk cloth to spin in a bamboo by placing silk threads in a box by counting it to gather in a bundle (6 threads/ 1 bundle) and a lump of silk contains 12 bundles.



### Silk Cleaning

1. Mix dried banana sprout, dried spicy amaranth, dried kapok fruit, dried palm and dried sterculia foetida with weight of 5-6 kilograms and then burn them until obtaining ashes for approximately 1 kilogram. After that mix the ash with 15-litr clean water and then filter it for 2-3 times to obtain clean alkali water before pouring it in a coated large container.
2. Immerse 1-kilogram raw silk in alkali water for 1-2 hours before boiling it for about 1-2 hours. When seeing that the water is boiling, the silk is like mucilage. Continue boiling until that mucilage is melted by trying to touch it and feeling like gruel. If so, remove it from the stove.
3. Clean silk threads with clean cooled water for many times until the mucilage is removed after that, dry it in the sun and silk threads' color will change from yellow to crab-fat like white.





### Mudmee process

1. Set up dying stake by folding cleaned silk threads with the stake from left to right side and separately intertwining it until all 21 bundles are completed.
2. Use a banana rope or plastic rope to tie covering the white part or yellow, green or indigo parts
3. When covering parts, dye silk threads in red and dry them in the wind.
4. Next, use a rope to tie the red part and the parts to be dyed in purple and then, cut the rope with a knife and untie the yellow part.
5. Dye the silk threads in yellow with cockspur thorn and then dry it in the sun.
6. Use a knife to cut knots in the green part before dyeing it with Mundu and drying it in the wind.
7. Tie the yellow part with a rope and untie the part to be dyed in purple and white part to be dyed in indigo. Next, dye the silk threads with indigo and dry them in the wind.
8. Spin the silk threads for further weaving.



## Example of weaving

### Hol Cloth for men

1. Weaving weft from the 1st bundle which mostly contains 4 threads depending on different thickness of patterns. In case of a bundle with 4 threads, the pattern is thin and delicate. Keep weaving it from the 1st to 21st bundles and then a pattern of half lamp is finished.

2. After that, reverse weaving from the 20th to 1st lines and a pattern of lamp is obtained. Repeat it continuously until a piece of cloth is finished provided that length of the cloth depends on a weaver to determine how long that cloth should be.

### Hol Cloth for Women

1. Use Mudmee head to weave cloth from the 1st bundle with 4 threads before pulling silk threads tightly to make it overlapped. This process is called “Pana” and it is repeated for 4 times.

2. After that, weave the dyed silk threads to make supporting pattern alternately with main pattern. Mostly it is made in dark color like indigo or green etc.

3. For weaving cloth in that part, the silk clothes are twisted referred as to “**Kaniew or Kara**” (weaving the white threads as dashed line)

4. Continue weaving this way until the 1st bundle is finished and then, start the next bundle until it is completed.





### Hol Cloth and Mudmee Cloth Inheritance Center

currently, it is found that key inheritors of Hol Cloth and Mudmee Cloth in Surin Province are Natang Village, Khwao Sinarin District, Tha Sawang Silk Cloth Weaving Village in Tha Sawang Sub-district, Mueang District, Chanrom Village in Ta Ong Sub-district, Mueang District, Sawai Village in Sawai Sub-district, Mueang District, Kae Yai Village in Kae Yai Sub-district, Mueang District, Khwao Sinarin Village, Khwao Sinarin Sub-district, Khwao Sinarin District and Jaraphat Village, Jaraphat District, Sri Khoraphum District.

**Hol Cloth** is cultural heritage of Surin People that is popular among silk cloth users. It is deemed as a unique Mudmee Cloth of Surin Town especially among Khmer speakers with distinguished styles, colors and patterns, meticulousness and magnificence. This kind of cloth is woven in traditional local way which has been inherited until today.



แหล่งที่มาข้อมูล Data source and reference for data provision

Interview with Mr. Surachot Tamcharoen, data from Boonchai Thongcharoenbuangam

Silk cloth in Thai Kui and Thai-Khmer Living Way Book, [www.surin.ru.ac.th](http://www.surin.ru.ac.th) , [www.surin108.com](http://www.surin108.com)