

# The Meung-Nakorn Brocade Textile

## Nakornsrihammarat Province

**Brocade** is a fabric with a raised pattern embossing from the surface. It is a technique which the weaver needs to raise or hold certain warp threads together to create space for shooting the weft. The purpose of this is to give the appearance produced by a supplementary, non-structural, weft in addition to the standard weft for, example silk, gold and silver threads to better pronounce the charm of the fabric. Sometimes brocade is adorned with a quaint-looking rim and referred to in accordance with the material of which its rim is made for example, silver-rim brocade or gold-rim brocade. In the present, brocade weaving is performed by keeping the harnesses



floated to make it more convenient and quicken the process. The weavers need not to copy and redo the pattern every time by lifting the harnesses from the warp threads and sometimes, two or more supplementary weft threads are added in weaving the fabric.



### The Origin of the Meung-Nakorn Brocade Textile

Brocade is produced in many provinces in regions throughout Thailand namely; North: Chiangmai, Lamphoon, Lampang, North-East: Roi-Ed, South: Nakomsrihammarat, Surat-thani, Trang. The brocades woven in Surathani Province has another name in dialect called “Phumriang” while the brocades woven in Trang Province is called Mhuen Sri and those produced in Nakomsrihammarat is called “Yok Nakorn”.

Meung-Nakorn brocade is a well-celebrated craft of Nakorn City, the city that has been widely recognized all over the Southern Region and Bangkok since the beginning of Rattanakosin era. In the ancient times, the former Nakornsri thammarat was the biggest trading port in the South. Many goods, especially fabric were traded here. Therefore Nakorn City has long manufactured the fabric for trading purpose. Whether since when or where it was first derived from is still unknown. It is suspected that weaving should have been introduced to the country prior to the age of Sriwichai kingdom. Brocade weaving must have existed prior to the age of Ayudhaya as confirmed in certain evidence indicating "Gold brocade was preserved for the Governor of Nakornsri thammarat and Senior Government Officers in the Grand Palace only. Moreover gold brocade was royal tribute that His Excellency, the Governor of Nakornsri thammarat offered to the Royal Court of Thonburi." Normal brocade was for commoners. Women usually wore Dok-Nha-Nang brocade or Kebnad fabric. As indicated in the existing evidence, gold brocade was first woven in the age of Thonburi or the end of Ayudhaya as the earliest as in history of 2320 B.E. In 2354 B.E., a rebellion broke out in Saiburi, Chao Phraya Nakorn (Nhoo) took charge in controlling the riot and captured Saiburi citizen and forced them to migrate to Nakornsri thammarat. At the time, some artisans e.g., caster, goldsmith, silversmith, including brocade weaver (As Saiburi had received the textile art from the Indians who settled and passed on the know-how to the local people). Being acculturated with the Indian weaving art, Saiburi created its own magnificent weaving style that is similar to the fabric that was adorned in the dances of Manpur, a state in the North-East of Republic of India. And according to the history of the two cities; Songkhla and Nakornsri thammarat, during the age of Thonburi, it can be said that gold brocade was such a rare item that it was offered as the royal tribute.

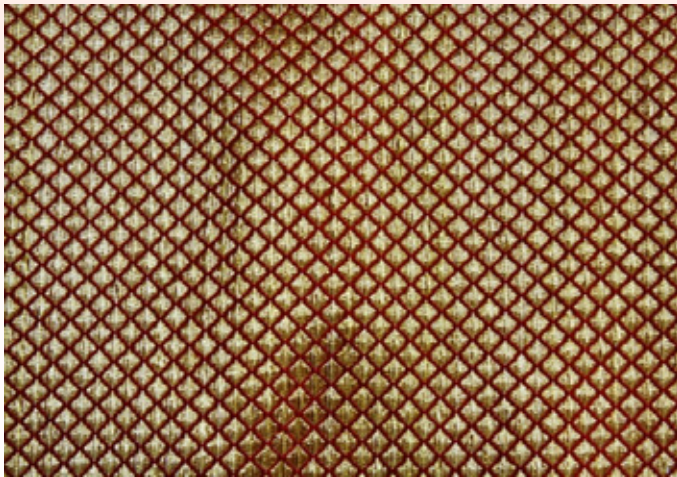
### **The Art of intellectual of the Meung-Nakorn Brocade Textile**

Meung-Nakorn brocade is a local fabric. Local identity, lifestyle, walk of life, tradition and culture are vital factors that drive the learning process and adapting new materials e.g., silk and gold threads, cotton thread, synthetic thread in the process of weaving. The clothes made from the fabric process the cultural beauty that has fabricated into different patterns inherited from the ancient times and altered by the weave of time and utility.



Meung-Nakorn brocade should be a hybrid between the Malay and Thai brocade weaving and later developed into a complicated and meticulous process. Highly skilled weavers molded to better suit their own cultural context.

Meung-Nakorn brocade is a cultural delicacy that states its identity and the ancient local wisdom of the region. There are two techniques of Meung-Nakorn brocade weaving as follows;



**1. Paa-Yok** The pattern is embroidered on the fabric by adding a supplementary weft, in addition to the standard weft. If the additional thread is silk, the fabric is called silk brocade. If the thread is made of gold or silver, then the fabric is called gold brocade or silver brocade respectively. In addition to the supplementary weft, the rim is made into the weave. The rim

can be made in to singlelayered, multi-layered rim, or in parallel with the edge.

**2. Paa-Yok-Dok** The technique is performed by holding the harness and lifting certain warp threads up to draw pattern on the fabric without the supplementary weft. The technique needs harness that is designed for making both Khat pattern and Yok-Dok pattern alternatively on the fabric. By lifting and pressing on warp threads on different spots on the fabric and shoot the weft through the space in-between the weft and warp, the thread is woven in the pattern area and the pattern is then brocaded. Such pattern also helps stiffen the fabric and makes the fabric more durable. Nowadays the Brocade Weaving Vocational Group in Nakornsri thamarat Province use loom to produce Paa-Yok-Dok resulting a fast working process and low price.

## The Importance of the “Meung-Nakorn Brocade” Textile in Folk Culture



“Nakorn City is a Buddhism land, holdfast to truth, virtual, commit in good deed with perseverance and avail no harm to others.”, the slogan of Nakorn City in the past. The slogan describes the city as the a Buddhism city ; large number of Buddhism temple can be found in the province. Pra-ba-rom-thaat (relics of Lord Buddha) is an important holy place where an old ceremony “Procession of Cloth to Wrap around the Stupa of Buddha’s Relics”, that has been practiced since the time of Phrachao Srithamma Sokharaatchantarabhanu in 1700 B.E. when the stupa of Buddha’s relics was first renovated and become a heritage passed on through generations.

In the past, Nakornsrihammarat (Nakornsrihammarat once held governance over up to 12 provincials, called the “12 Zodiac Provincials”), was once the biggest trading port city in the South. Many goods, especially fabric were traded here. Under such scenario, Nakorn City should be exposed to the textile culture-fabric weaving earlier than other provincials and for trading benefit.



In the South, the fame of Nakornsrihammarat weavers was well recognized all across the region and Bangkok alike. The fabric was generally called “Paa-Yok-Mueng-Na-Korn” (Meung-Nakorn Brocade). The gold brocade was exclusively for the Governor of Nakornsrihammarat and Senior Government Officers in the Grand Palace. Normal brocade was for commoners, and usually worn for auspicious occasions or ceremonies.

The texture and pattern of Nakornsrihammarat’s Yok-Dok brocade was considered as one of the models of highly-skilled craft in Thailand as described in “Khun Chang - Khun Phan”, Thai classic literature, when Khun Chang is getting dressed up to attend the wedding of Phlay-Ngaam (Khun Phan) and Phimphilahlai as follows;

“Then get bathed and draped in  
gold brocade Phraya Lakorn granted.  
Gowned in gold engraved ‘n get going  
clans of servants run following”

### **The significance of the “Meung-Nakorn Brocade” In relation to ceremony**

**1. Birth:** Cloth has long been related to birth. In the past, once a woman got pregnant, she would weave fabric in preparation for the baby delivery; example, diaper, quilt, bed sheet, baby clothes. Once the baby was delivered, the baby would be wrapped with a cloth especially prepared for the occasion. Some might weave a fabric as a gift to in waiting for the baby to be born.

**2. Marriage:** The cloth used in wedding ceremony of the local in NAKORNSRITHAMMARAT is called Paa-Whai, folded white fabric of which the length is not mention (minimum 3 yards) prepared by the groom used for expressing respect to the elder relatives of the bride and the groom. In the pillow ceremony session during the ceremony, the bride ought to prepare 2 pieces of white cloth; one will be hung like cloth ceiling over the ceremonious area; the other will be placed on the pillowed used in the ceremony.

**3. Cremation:** In cremation ceremony, the body is usually wrapped in white fabric, resembling the purity of Dharma. The coffin is draped with white cloth thrown over the body for 3 times in remembrance with the number of the Triple Gems (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha or the Buddhism monk). The cloth will then be offered to the monk after the pray.

**4. Khaophansa tradition:** The tradition begins on the first day of the Buddhist lent which last for 3 months, held on the new moon in the 8th month of lunar calendar. People will prepare the basic needs including Jeeworn (piece) of yellow fabric used as clothes for Buddhism monks).

**5. Procession of cloth to wrap around the stupa of Buddha's relics:** The tradition is held in the day of full-moon in the 3rd month according to the lunar calendar. On the day, people in NAKORNSRITHAMMARAT and from nearby provinces will get together and make a procession line to carry the cloth for wrapping around the stupa of Buddha's relics. Cloth is undoubtedly plays a vital part in the tradition.



**6. Songkran:** Songkran is Thai Traditional New Year Day. On the day, the youngsters will bring a piece of cloth to give as a present to the elders after pouring water on their hands to ask for forgiveness. In some regions, people will weave flags and give to the temple. The flags will be made in different colors as a flag is considered as an item of high value.

### **The Functions of the Meung-Nakom brocade Textile**

In the past, different styles and fabrics showed the feudal class, title and position of the wearers. The king would grant different type and different quality of cloth to the suites of the King. The male officials wore multi-layered rim brocade as a plant. Female wore brocade with single-layered rim. It can be said that one's social and lineage can be easily traced by the styles of fabric. The noblemen and upper-class people would wear silk as the fabric needed exceptional skill in making and extra effort in caring. Common people wore clothes made from cotton of which making process is simple and easy to take care.



Gold brocade was adorned by the Governor, or Senior Government officer, or offered as royal tribute to the Royal Court and provided to squire by Chao Phraya Nakorn. Ladies of noble lineage were usually adorned in draped brocade when greeting the honorable guest of the country, or attending religious ceremony at the temple under their patronage. Common fabrics were worn for wedding ceremony or other ceremonial occasions for example, Ordination ceremony and tonsure ceremony during which women usually wear Nha-Nang brocade while men wear Haang-kra-rok cloth.

### **The source Production of the Mueng-Nakorn brocade Textile**



There are 12 major Mueng-Nakorn fabric weaving groups namely; Weaving Group of Tambol Nasarn, Mamuang Plai Khane Weaving Group, Weaving Group of Tambol Chalong, Hua-Tapaan Weaving Group, Khao-Phangkrai Weaving Group, Pradoo-Hom Weaving Group, Paa-Suanluang Weaving Group, Khonhaad Weaving Group, Baan-Khuanphang Weaving Group, Saam-Tambol Weaving Group.

### **Mueng-Nakorn Brocade Textile weaving group sample:**

Mamuang Plai Khane Weaving Group, a community that makes the fabric with the province's signature patterns for example, Bullet Wood flower pattern. The textile art has been passed on within household. The weavers get together to work on the fabric weaving all year along when they have finished their work in the farm and plantations. According to an interview with La-ong Baupetch (Ms.), 52 year-old, a member who plays a vital part in Mamuang Plai Khane Weaving Group. She has inherited the weaving method from elder relatives since she was little. She was the first person who took weaving as profession during 2523-2524 B.E.. She started the weaving career by herself with the equipment sponsored by her parents. Today, more and more people took interest in the career, and weaving has widely expanded.

Due to the lack of support and successor, together with the cumbersome and time consuming working process, many weavers tend to think that the revenue from weaver dose not paid off the hard work and effort. Most of the remaining weavers are the elders while youngsters usually turn to other career choice that is more financially rewarding. Another threat is the lack of support from the Government's related department.

### **The Inheritance of the Mueng-Nakorn Brocade Textile**

In ancient times, Mueng-Nakorn fabric weaving was limited to within the court of the governor only, under the supervision of the governor's family member as the patterns are highly intricate and confidential. As a result, the weaving and pattern forming was inherited individually. Once the governing system was changed into state system, the authority of Nakornsrihammarat governor was dramatically diminished, so was the number of workers and servants in the palace and household. Ever since the weaving of top-notch Mueng-Nakorn fabric has been relatively lessened as the fabric is so complicated and time-consuming that many weavers turn to other profession leaving only a small number to inherit Mueng-Nakorn fabric weaving art till today.

### **Main Equipment for Producing the Mueng-Nakorn Brocade Textile**

The equipment for brocade weaving is called "**Kreung-Thor-Hook**" (Brocade loom) or "**Gae**", like in other regions there are 2 types of Gae; Lifting Gae and Pressing Gae. Those who made a living by weaving normally keep Gae at the cellar.

#### **A loom:**

**1. Reed:** similar to a comb, as long as the width of the fabric used for tightening the yarn in the woven area into pattern and stiffening the texture. The reed of certain antique loom found engraved or carved into exquisite shape and pattern.

**2. Reed's foot:** Two pieces of wood tied with rope hanging at the front, serving as pedals to move the harness up and down with the weavers' feet.





**3. Cloth beam:** a wooden frame placed at the front of the loom over the weaver's lap used to roll/wind the thread for weaving and the finished fabric.

**4. Harness:** contributed into 2 types; Yok-dok harness and Stepping harness.

**5. Look-Doong:** 2 handles , one on the left and one on the right, for hanging a board for keeping the crooked or broken thread.

**6. Look-Suay or Shutter:** the shutter for putting the winded thread, taking shape of a boat, used for shooting the weft back and forth to gain fabric. The shuttle consists of many components e.g. Lookkayhad, Nad, Pang, Tron, Kangae etc.

**7. Phang:** wooden tool used for pulling the two ends of the fabric to keep the fabric stretch and smooth (the needle hoops are tied at both ends of the stick, underneath the fabric), and prevent the thread from being entwined and the reed for breaking.

## **Mueng-Nakom Brocade Textile Weaving Process**

### **Weaving Process**

1. Tie the warp threads to the warp beam. Then slip the end of each thread into each set of harnesses and reeds pulling all the warp-thread ends and roll them around the beam on the other side. Adjust the looseness of the threads as desired. Feed the thread onto the shuttle to serve as the weft thread.

2. Start weaving by pressing on the loom to separate the harnesses. The 1st set of the warp threads are pulled apart leaving space for shooting the weft shuttle to the other end. Switch the harness set, lift the 2nd set of harnesses, then shoot the shuttle back. Keep repeating the process alternatively.

3. Move the reed up and down once the shuttle is shut to obtain a thicker fabric.

4. Roll the fabric by loosen the thread beam then readjust on the looseness as appropriated.

## **The Distinguished Character of the Mueng-Nakorn Brocade Textile**

The characteristics that make Mueng-Nakorn Fabric stand out and put it into fame is the pattern's intricacy, especially the pattern on the rim that is one of the kind. The weavers have special technique in design and forming the pattern with the floating harness for the warp alone, allowing the weavers to lift as many threads as desired resulting in exceptionally splendid brocade. To weave exotic patterns need to use a lot of harnesses. Once, in Nakornsrihammarat up to 70-80 harnesses were employed in a special brocade weaving. It took 3-4 people just to move the all the harnesses. Even in the making process of the gold brocade or the "12-Harnesses' Size Brocade" which is up to 39 inches in width, 3 assistances are needed to master the work.

## **The Distinguished Characteristics of the Mueng-Nakorn Brocade Textile**

Patterns of Thai textile are normally memorized from the model or the previous work of the ancestors. Most of the patterns also take theme of everyday life. Such patterns were transferred from one generation to another by imitating both the pattern and working process. It can be said that the textile patterns are truly originated from the skill and local wisdom of the weavers.

The ancient patterns of Mueng-Nakorn fabric make no exception. The usual textile patterns reflect things seen around the weavers' everyday scenario. The most recurrent designs are figures of flowers, especially Bullet Wood flowers in varied styles as this kind of flower were usually planted in temples animals.

Kled-pim-sane pattern (literally: Borneo Camphor Grain pattern) is an ancient patterns of the Mueng-Nakorn fabric. It is a small square-shaped pattern. Another pattern found is a diamond shape. Pim-sane or borneol was commonly used in the old days because of its pleasant aroma. The pattern appears in both gold and silk brocade making.

According to the research on Meung-Nakorn brocade, it is concluded that there are 2 formats of pattern's composition. Each format has different making process and utility.



### **Thong-Paa Pattern (literally: cloth's navel pattern)**

Thong-Paa pattern is the pattern drawn at the center of the cloth, contributed into 8 original patterns of which the name listed as follows:

1. Dok-kris: (literally: dagger flower) imitated from Javanese (Indonesian) weapon. Taking the motif of the sharpness of a dagger, the pattern looks like a tiny dagger with short handle

2. Dok-Jok: imitated from a kind of dessert in the South. The pattern takes shape of a circle with split end at the middle.

3. Dok-phudson: (literally: Cape Jasmine flower) imitated from Cape Jasmine flower. The pattern is similar to Bullet Wood flower pattern but the petals are larger.

4. Dok-pi-kul-yhai: (Literally: Giant Bullet Wood flower) imitated from a kind of flower. The pattern takes shape of a circle with small petals lined inside the circle.

5. Dok-pi-kul-song-nha: (literally: Double-faced Bullet Wood flower) imitated from Bullet Wood flower but the pattern can be showed on both sides.

6. Bhim-thong: (literally: Gold print) imitated from a kind of local dessert in the South of Thailand

7. Yok-chemng-kan-yang: The pattern takes motif of blossoming flowers sharing the same branch, showing the interconnection between flowers.

8. Sa-muk: The pattern imitates a kind of vessel, for putting miscellaneous items found in the South of Thailand.

### **Chueng-Paa Pattern (literally: Rim Pattern)**

Chueng-Paa pattern or Kruay Chueng pattern is the pattern applied at the bottom or the edge of the cloth, which can be contributed into 3 designs as follows;



1. Multi-layered rim design: found in Mueng-Nakom brocade is the cloth for the governor aristocrats and the Royal family member, generally woven with gold thread. Long array of various figures are delicately lined along the edge throughout the cloth length. The rim pattern is normally designed in 2 or 3 layered incorporated with Pra-cham-yam-Kam-poo pattern, Pra-cham-yam-kliaw-bai-tade pattern, Kreu-tao pattern.

The design is characterized by its Ikat weaving technique-weaving different colors alternatively e.g., red, blue, orange, brown, navel pattern found in both whole fabric and brocade e.g. Borneo camphor pattern, bullet wood pattern etc.



2. Single-layered design: Normally found woven in gold or silver thread in the cloth for the Squire or family member of the governor. It is a rather short pattern woven in the interval with Pra-cham-yam-Kam-poo pattern, Pra-cham-yam-kliaw-bai-tade pattern without edge pattern. The navel pattern is normally woven in gold thread e.g. Bullet Wood pattern, Khmer flower pattern, Marble-cluster pattern etc.



3. Edge-parallel design: This type of Mueng-Nakom brocade is fabric for commoners used in daily life. The rim design is adapted to a side of the cloth incorporated with simple patterns with less details make it easier for mass production, woven with silk, cotton, or silk and cotton. The fabric is normally used for making Paa-nung or brocade worn over the trunks for lady or cloth for

Chao-nak or a person about to be ordained as a Buddhist priest in the Buddhist ordination ceremony.