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## Interpreting Social Change and Changing Production Through Examinations of Textiles of Xam Nuea and Surin

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# Interpreting Social Change and Changing Production Through Examinations of Textiles of Xam Nuea and Surin

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Figure 1 Left to right, Vientiane style sin muk, Xam Nuea style sin muk, Vientiane emulation of a Xam Nuea muk.

## ນຸກວຽງຈັນ ແລະ ນຸກຊຳເໜືອ

ຢູ່ປະເທດລາວຕໍ່າສິ້ນມຸກຈະໄຊ້ເຄື່ອງຕ່າງຫາກ: ນິເຄືອ (ຜ້າ, ຍຽບ) ແລະເຄືອມຸກ. ສິ້ນຕໍ່າໃສ່ມຸກເອີ້ນວ່າສິ້ນມຸກ. ຊິດສແມນບອກວ່າຢູ່ປະເທດລາວມີສິ້ນມຸກໄໝສອງຊະນິດຕ່າງກັນ: ລາຍຂອງວຽງຈັນແລະລາຍຂອງຊຳເໜືອ. ອີງຕາມຄວາມເປັນຈິງກ່ອນປີ ໑໙໗໐ ຊິດສແມນ ໃສ່ຊື່ມຸກຕາມການຜະລິດອັນຈຳກັດໃນທ້ອງຖິ່ນໃນພູມິສາດ. ສິ້ນນຸກວຽງຈັນໄດ້ຕໍ່າຢູ່ໄກ້ຂົງເຂດຮາຊະວົງ ທີ່ວຽງຈັນແລະສິ້ນມຸກຊຳເໜືອໄດ້ຕໍ່າຢູ່ອ້ອມແອ້ມສູນກາງແນວລ່າວຮັກຊາດ.

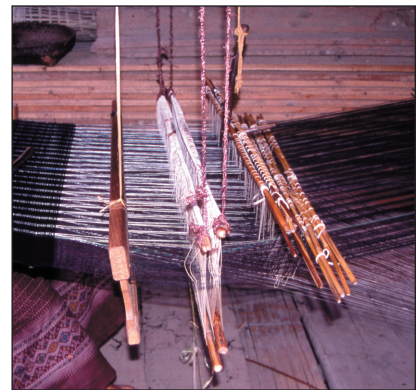
ນຸກວຽງຈັນຊື່ແຈ້ງໃຫ້ເຫັນວ່າມີການໃຊ້ເຄື່ອງຫຼາກທີ່ມີເສັ້ນໄໝຖືກດຶງຂຶ້ນຈ່ອງລົງ ເພື່ອສ້າງລາຍນ້ອຍເປັນ ເສັ້ນຂະໜານຊຶ່ງມີຫຼາຍດອກ. ລາຍນັ້ນນ້ອຍຫຼາຍ ຈົນວ່າຕ້ອງໄດ້ເບິ່ງໄກ້ໆຈິ່ງເຫັນ. ເວລາເບິ່ງໄກບໍ່ສາມາດບອກ ໄດ້ວ່າຕໍ່າດ້ວຍ ມຸກ, ຂິດ, ຈົກ. . . ກ່ອນການປະຕິວັດນຸກວຽງຈັນເປັນມຸກທີ່ທັນສະໄໝແລະ ນິຍົມໃນບັນດາຄົນລາວຊົນສັກດິນາ. ປະຈຸບັນນີ້ຊາວລາວອົບພະຍົບທີ່ ຕໍ່າລົງຊິວິດຢູ່ຕ່າງປະເທດຍັງເກັບໄວ້ເປັນ ສົມບັດ.

ລາວແຕກນຸກວຽງຈັນທັນສະໄໝສໍາລັບຄົນຊັ້ນສູງ, ປະຈຸບັນນີ້ລາວອົບພະຍົບ ຍັງເກັບໄວ້ເປັນສົມບັດ. ລາຍມຸກຊຳເໜືອຕາກວ່າງກວ່ານຸກວຽງຈັນ. ຈະສາມາດເບິ່ງລາຍໝົດທຸກຕ່າງກັນ. ນຸກວຽງຈັນຂະເຈົ້າຈະບໍ່ ໄຂ້ມຸກ, ຂິດ, ຈົກຕໍ່າລວມກັນ. ຕາມທໍາມະດາຊ່າງຕໍ່າສິ້ນມຸກຊຳເໜືອຈະໄຊ້ການຕໍ່າມຸກ, ຂິດ, ຈົກລວມກັນໂລດ.

ການອຸດສາຫະກຳຕໍ່າຫຼາກໃນສາທາລະນະລັດປະຊາທິປະໄຕປະຊາຊົນລາວມີ ການພັດທະນາຢ່າງແໜ້ນ ແຜ່ນທາງດ້ານສັງຄົມແລະການປະຕິບັດດ້ານວັດທະນະທຳ ມັນສະແດງອອກໃຫ້ເຫັນໃນການຕໍ່າແຜ່ນແຜລາວ ຊຶ່ງເປັນແວ່ນແຍງໃນການປ່ຽນແປງ. ດ້ານເສດຖະກິດການເມືອງ. ສິນມຸກວຽງຈັນຂອງພວກຊົນຊັ້ນສັກ ດີນາຖື ກາຍບຸຍອບລົງແລ້ວສິນມຸກ ຊຳເໜືອກໍ່ກາຍເປັນທີ່ນິຍົມຊົມຊອບຂອງມວນຊົນໃນຍຸກປະຈຸບັນ.

ຜ້າຕໍ່າຂອງຊິດສເມນທີ່ສະສົມສາມາດຊື້ໃຫ້ເຫັນໄດ້ວ່າຜ້າຕໍ່າມຸກຂອງວຽງຈັນ ຈະຮຽນແບບມຸກຂອງ ຊຳເໜືອ. ໃນເວລານີ້ການສະສົມຜ້າຕໍ່າໃນວຽງຈັນໄດ້ຊື້ ແຈ້ງໃຫ້ເຫັນວ່າບໍ່ຈຳເປັນຕ້ອງເຮັດເຄື່ອງແບບຊຳເໜືອ ເພື່ອຕໍ່າສິນ "ມຸກ" ຊຳເໜືອ. ຊ່າງຕໍ່າຫຼວງຈັນໄດ້ຮຽນແບບມຸກຊຳເໜືອໃຊ້ຂີດ, ຈີກແທນມຸກ.

ໃນຂະນະທີ່ມຸກວຽງຈັນທີ່ໃຊ້ໃນການຕໍ່າໄດ້ຄ່ອຍສະລາຍຕົວໄປຈາກຄວາມນິຍົມ ຂອງປວງົນແລະບໍ່ໄດ້ ນິການປ່ຽນແປງເຄື່ອງມຸກ. ເຄື່ອງມຸກວຽງຈັນບໍ່ໄດ້ແປງຕາມແບບຕໍ່າໃຫ້ຄືສິນມຸກຊຳເໜືອອັນແທ້ຈິງເພື່ອ ໃຫ້ສອດຄ້ອງກັບເສດຖະກິດ ການເມືອງຂອງກຸ່ມມະຫາຊົນ. ເວລາເບິ່ງມຸກເຮົາຮູ້ໄດ້ວ່າມີການປ່ຽນແປງ ແຕ່ເຮົາບໍ່ສາມາດເຂົ້າໃຈໄດ້ຢ່າງເລິກເຊິ່ງພຽງພໍຂອງການປ່ຽນແປງ ທາງດ້ານສັງຄົມແລະການຫລຸດຜ່ອນໃຊ້ ເຄື່ອງມຸກວຽງຈັນ. ການຊອກຄົ້ນຄວ້າ ເບິ່ງຕາມກຸ່ມສັງຄົມຊົນຕໍ່າຫຼາກອື່ນໆຈະຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ເຂົ້າໃຈເຖິງການປ່ຽນແປງ ໃນພາກປະຕິບັດຕົວຈິງທາງດ້ານສັງຄົມ.



Figures 2 and 3: Xam Nuea style muk production. Photographs by Patricia Cheesman.

In this paper I explore the transformation of the Lao Xam Nuea style *sin muk* through two different approaches to the examination of change in practice. My intention is to reveal ways in which changing handloom production in Southeast Asia are inextricably embedded within broader changing social practices. In the first part of this paper I present an historical and structural analysis of revolutionary migration and technological transformation of the Lao Xam Nuea style *sin muk*. I examine the adaptation of techniques in the adoption of the Xam Nuea style through the comparison of Vientiane and Xam Nuea *sin muk*. This initial analysis is limited by the information that can be drawn from historical data and the physical features of the textiles abstracted from social practices of production.

To better understand details the first approach may elide, the historical/structural analysis is paired with an ethnographic analysis of product change in Surin, Thailand. A community of weavers in Surin, that less than a decade ago produced complex multi-shuttle ikat textiles, recently became a supplier of supplementary weft fabric for Bangkok

markets. Interviews and observations with weavers from this community reveal ways in which transformation of practice is linked to broader transformations of social life; spiritual practices, conceptions of space and time, and educational practices are fundamentally altered along with the shift in products. The ethnographic research from Surin is employed to build a foundation for further theorizing about broader social transformations that may have accompanied the Vientiane emulation of the *sin muk*.

XamNuea *muk* and Lan Xang (Royalist) *muk*:

ມຸກ (*muk*) is the Lao term used to refer to a supplementary warp technique of weaving.<sup>1</sup> The *muk* I discuss are produced on Lao frame looms, and on the loom one can trace the path of both the primary warp and the supplementary warp beginning at the knots tied to the frame just above the weaver's head. From above the weaver both warps extend to the back end of the loom. While the primary warp passes around a back beam and heads directly to the tension bar, the supplementary warp passes around a second back beam and is directed downwards where small diameter free-standing weighted pattern sticks are used to arrange the supplementary warp design. From the pattern sticks the separated supplemental warp angles upwards to the tension bar passing through a series of shafts.

These shafts are used to lift the supplementary warp ends up into the primary warp at desired locations. These supplementary shafts supercede the treadle operated tabby shafts through which the primary warp passes. The supplementary warp passes between the heddles of the tabby shafts and is raised or lowered independently of the primary warp. As shown in figures 2 and 3 of a weaver creating a Xam Nuea style *muk*, the supplemental warp shafts are worked by means of an 'L' shaped hook hanging down from the frame loom (see detail in figure 3). While some shafts are hoisted, the remaining supplemental shafts rest upon the primary warp, allowing the supplemental warp ends that are not selected to angle downwards away from the weaving.

The fabric produced through this method has distinct parallel lines of supplemental warp, and over the centuries the Lao have used this fabric to produce the bodies of tube skirts. In the Lao language tube skirts are referred to as ສິນ (*sin*), and as mentioned above, the supplementary warp technique is referred to as ມຸກ (*muk*)— thus the tube skirts produced with supplementary warp fabrics are known as ສິນມຸກ (*sin muk*).

Prior to 1975 one could ascertain a number of distinct styles of *sin muk* that were affiliated with different geographical regions. The two styles I focus upon in this essay are the Lan Xang style and Xam Nuea style.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information on regional classification system see: Cheesman, Patricia. *Lao-Tai Textiles: The Textiles of Xam Nuea and Muang Phuan*. Chiang Mai: Studio Naenna Co. Ltd., 2004



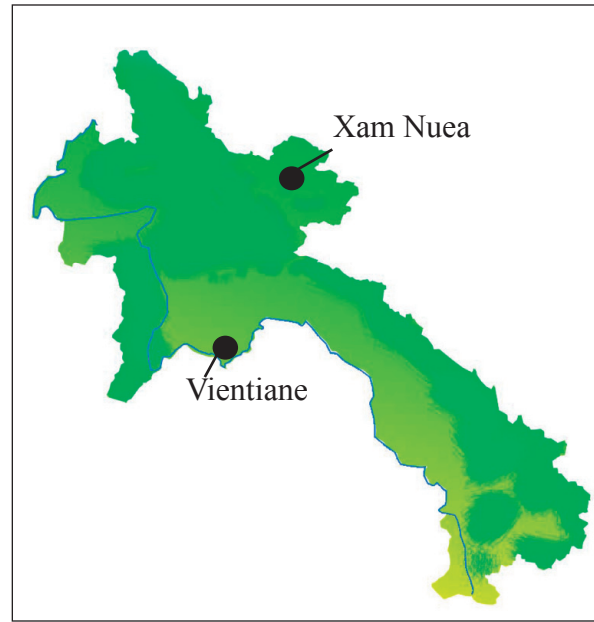


Figure 4 Lan Xang (left) and Xam Nuea style (right) *sin muk*. From the collection of Patricia Cheesman.

Figure 5 Map of Lao PDR showing locations of Xam Nuea and Vientiane.

#### Xam Nuea style *sin muk*:

Production of the Xam Nuea style centered around the region of Xam Nuea, contemporary Hua Phan province in the northeast of Laos the capital of which is the city of Xam Nuea. Over the centuries, before French colonization, the people of the region paid tribute to shifting regional power centers, including the Sipsong Tjau Tai.<sup>2</sup> Late in the first Indochina War (the war against French colonization from 1946-1954) anti-French forces wrested control over this region establishing a “liberated zone.”<sup>3</sup> After the Geneva Agreement of 1954 this region became the regrouping grounds for anti-imperialist forces, forces that subsequently would battle to oust the U.S. backed royal government of Laos.<sup>4</sup>

With the passage of time the distinctive Xam Nuea style *sin muk* was viewed by many as the clothing of the ‘liberated zone.’ In this manner, the *muk* textiles produced in the region of Xam Nuea were affiliated with the political aims and the people waging battles to free Laos from imperialism.

The Xam Nuea style *sin muk* is distinctive in that the bands of *muk* are relatively wide. Measurements of Xam Nuea style *muk* from textiles in the collection of Patricia Cheesman reveal common widths ranging from around half an inch to just over one inch. Generally an observer standing some distance from the fabric may distinguish these bold design bands with considerable ease. This width is not necessarily the result of using thick threads. Rather, the width of each band of supplemental warp is the result of the multiple shaft technique.

<sup>2</sup> See Cheesman, Patricia. *Lao-Tai Textiles: The Textiles of Xam Nuea and Muang Phuan*. Chiang Mai: Studio Naenna Co. Ltd., 2004: 25-36.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart-Fox, Martin. *A History of Laos*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 82-84.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Information and Culture. *25 Years Lao P.D.R.* Vientiane: Ministry of Information and Culture, 2000: 33-34.

The Lao classifier used to refer to a pattern unit is ດອກ (*dok*). Upon close inspection we see that while the central line in each *dok* is produced with paired threads passing through a single heddle, the peripheral threads that constitute each *dok* are controlled with shafts that operate paired heddles.

The parallel bands of *muk* do not necessarily have identical parallel *dok*. The heddles operated by shafts are not identical across parallel *dok*. It is the multitude of shafts that produce the distinctive width of the Xam Nuea style *muk*.



Figures 6 and 7 Xam Nuea style *muk*. Units shown in inches. From the collection of Patricia Cheesman.

#### Lan Xang style *muk*:

While the wide *muk* is a characteristic common feature of the Xam Nuea style, the comparatively narrow width of a *muk* is a distinguishing feature of the Lan Xang style (see figures 8 and 9). The Lan Xang style *muk* was popular among the elite in the Royal Lao strongholds of Vientiane and Luang Phabang. Standing a distance from the Lan Xang style *sin muk* the narrow bands of supplemental warp appear as simple pin stripes that could be formed by a variety of techniques. It is only upon close inspection that one can determine that the lines are produced with a supplemental warp.

In contrast with the Xam Nuea style *sin muk*, weavers produced the Lan Xang style using fewer shafts. Further, the parallel lines of supplementary warp in the Lan Xang style were generally arranged closer together than those of the Xam Nuea style.

As with the production of the Xam Nuea style, in the creation of Lan Xang *sin muk* the heddles of each shaft are not necessarily arranged to produce identical parallel designs in each band of supplemental warp. A single shaft may have different heddle configurations for each band of supplemental warp. The sequence of shafts lifted to produce the *dok* in one band will likely operate an entirely different sequence of heddles in the adjacent bands of supplemental warp.





Figures 8 and 9 Lan Xang style muk. Units shown in inches. From the collection of Patricia Cheesman.

### Movement of people and practices of textile production -- War and the migration of material culture:

An examination of the changes that occurred in *sin muk* production in Laos requires an understanding of the fundamental transformation of warfare that occurred over the region during the period of American involvement in Vietnam. Noam Chomsky wrote of the U.S. strategy of attack on the ‘liberated zones’ of Laos as, “vast efforts at population removal.”<sup>5</sup> Fred Branfman described this new form of warfare as, “the most protracted and extensive bombing of civilian targets in history.”<sup>6</sup> According to Branfman, the strategy of this bombardment was aimed at:

- (1) demoralizing the civilian population; (2) depriving the Pathet Lao of rice, vegetables, and livestock; (3) depriving them of porters, recruits, and civil administrative personnel; (4) depriving them of natural locales for regroupment, recreation, and storing arms; and (5) destruction of commerce and trade.<sup>7</sup>

Reporter T.D. Allman explained the depopulation of the anti-imperialist regions: “The bombing, by creating refugees, deprives the Communists of their chief source of food and transport. The population of the Pathet Lao zone has been declining for several years and the Pathet Lao find it increasingly difficult to fight a ‘people’s war.’”<sup>8</sup> Historian Martin Stuart-Fox writes that by the time of the 1973 cease fire, “over two million tonnes of

<sup>5</sup>Chomsky, Noam. “Introduction.” In *Laos: War and Revolution*, edited by Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, xv-xxiii. New York: Harper & Row, 1970: xvi.

<sup>6</sup>Branfman, Fred. “Presidential War in Laos, 1964-1970.” In *Laos: War and Revolution*, edited by Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, 213- 280. New York: Harper & Row, 1970: 231.

<sup>7</sup>Branfman, Fred. “Presidential War in Laos, 1964-1970.” In *Laos: War and Revolution*, edited by Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, 213- 280. New York: Harper & Row, 1970: 232.

<sup>8</sup>Allman, T. D. “Support by U.S. Alters Laos War: Territory Is No Longer Goal in Hit-and-Run Conflict.” *New York Times*, October 1 1969: 9.

bombs had been dropped on the Pathet Lao zone, or more than two tonnes for every inhabitant.”<sup>9</sup> Xam Nuea was the region that was “hardest hit” by U.S. bombardment.<sup>10</sup>

According to reports in the New York Times, by October of 1969, largely as a result of the aerial bombardment, nearly a quarter of the population of the kingdom of Laos (600,000 people) became refugees.<sup>11</sup> The historically unprecedented aerial assault on the civilian population of Xam Nuea resulted in a large internal flow of refugees from the northeastern region to the area around Vientiane. These refugees brought with them textiles and the practices of Xam Nuea textile production.



*Figure 10 Joint coalition police patrol in Vientiane 1973. Royalist officer (left) and Anti-imperialist officer (right). Photo from the Joel Halpern archives. Scan provided by Grant Evans.*

#### 1970's Revolutionary style:

As Cheesman has documented, clothing has served for centuries as a distinguishing feature of political loyalties within the region.<sup>12</sup> Photographs gathered by anthropologist Joel Halpern during the period of the third coalition government, illustrate the contemporary use of clothing as an indicator of political loyalty. The repeated failed attempts at forming coalition governments brought the warring sides of the Lao conflict (i.e. Anti-imperialists and the U.S. backed Royalists) together in a variety of common social arenas. Photographs depicting paired interactions, such as joint Royalist and Anti-imperialist police patrols, illustrate how clothing served as a visual indicator of the political divide (see figure 10).

By the mid 1970's with the withdrawal of U.S. support for the Royal Lao government, and the collapse of the third coalition government, the political figures and styles

<sup>9</sup>Stuart-Fox, Martin. *A History of Laos*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 144.

<sup>10</sup>Brannan, Fred. “Presidential War in Laos, 1964-1970.” In *Laos: War and Revolution*, edited by Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, 213- 280. New York: Harper & Row, 1970: 234.

<sup>11</sup>Allman, T. D. “Support by U.S. Alters Laos War: Territory Is No Longer Goal in Hit-and-Run Conflict.” *New York Times*, October 1 1969: 9.

<sup>12</sup>See Cheesman, Patricia. *Lao-Tai Textiles: The Textiles of Xam Nuea and Muang Phuan*. Chiang Mai: Studio Naenna Co. Ltd., 2004.



of Xam Nuea came to dominate in Vientiane. In the first days of December 1975 the Congress of People's Representatives met to dissolve the third coalition government and announced the formation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is estimated that ninety percent of the "educated middle class" fled Lao P.D.R. as a result of the revolution.<sup>13</sup> This large-scale exodus constituted the departure of the primary consumers of the Lan Xang style *muk*.

The massive wartime internal migration from the region of Xam Nuea, and subsequent resettlement around Vientiane; the collapse of the Royal Lao government and rise to power by the anti-imperialists; and the departure of a considerable portion of the royalist elite, all contribute to the relative decline in Lan Xang style *muk* production and the growth in popularity, and spread of production of the Xam Nuea style *muk*.



Figures 11 (front) and 12 (back) Vientiane supplemental weft emulation of a Xam Nuea style *muk*.  
Textile from the collection of Patricia Cheesman.

Pieces purchased in Vientiane at this time of political transition provide evidence of Vientiane weavers adapting techniques to emulate the Xam Nuea style *muk*. Figures 11 and 12 are a textile illustrative of how a Vientiane weaver used supplemental weft techniques to produce a faux Xam Nuea style *sin muk*. Viewing the textile from a distance (see figure 1) one sees what appear to be the Xam Nuea style's distinctive broad parallel bands of supplemental warp forming the boundaries between sections of weft ikat and supplemental weft borders. A close inspection of the reverse side reveals that what appeared to be supplemental warp bands are, in fact, created with supplemental weft techniques (see figure 12). Such pieces speak to the fact that some Vientiane weavers adapted existing techniques to produce textiles that were marketable in the changing political environment. Production of Xam Nuea style *muk* in and around Vientiane continues to this day.

We can tell a great deal through such an historical/political analysis: We know the products changed; we know the practices of production changed. But some vital facets of

<sup>13</sup>Stuart-Fox, Martin. *Historical Dictionary of Laos*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001: 260.



the transformation of practice are missing in such an analysis. To demonstrate what some of these facets are I now present a brief picture of changing textile production in Surin, eastern Thailand.

#### The Mii Hol: A multi-shuttle weft ikat from Surin

Vi, a weaver living in Chomthong, northern Thailand first introduced me to the ikat textiles of Surin. She herself was born and raised outside of Surin, learning the complex processes of producing ikat in her village on the outskirts of the city. Vi explained that her older sister continued to produce minutely detailed ikat in the village. In 2000 my wife and I drove to Surin with the express purpose of observing the production of silk ikat. We drove to the village fully expecting to find looms filled with exquisite ikat textiles, but to our dismay almost every loom in the village was producing multiple-shaft supplemental weft textiles, filling orders from Bangkok. Our intention was not to document changing practices, but rather to document continuity; our documentation of changing textile production was entirely serendipitous.

Two of Vi's sisters explained that in a period of ten years many of the weavers in the village had gradually added shafts to their looms in order to produce textiles that would be marketable. As the styles popular in Bangkok change so do the shaft systems on the looms in the village. Ten years ago when the village weavers were primarily producing ikat textiles, three shafts were common. Today looms in the village contain up to fifteen shafts and these looms are not weaving ikat. Another weaver explained that the weavers in the village are not responsible for picking the designs; rather, a middleman delivers the shafts to the weavers with the designs already in place.

Knowing that we had been drawn to the village by her ikat textiles, Vi's older sister brought her treasured collection of silk ikat textiles out of storage to share with us. The most complex ikat in the collection was a style they referred to as a *mii hol*. This is a multi-shuttle ikat, requiring up to twenty separate shuttles to produce the very narrow bands of weft ikat. Vi's older sister explained the social significance of the *mii hol* as an essential component of exchange in the relations of the village, stating that the *mii hol* is the textile a bride gives to the groom's mother at the time of marriage.

Vi's younger sister added, "You know, we have to *wai khruu* when we make this." *Wai khruu* ceremonies are used throughout Thailand to pay homage to, and thank the teachers of a variety of skills. Diverse and highly ritualized forms of *wai khruu* ceremonies are involved in an assortment of practices ranging from Thai classical performing arts to kickboxing. At the roots of *wai khruu* ceremonies is the belief in a lineage of teachers that stretches back to the original practitioner of that particular practice.<sup>14</sup> Vi's eldest sister explained that the *khruu* (teachers) "descend down to us from ancient times past." Ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong writes of the *wai khruu* ritual in the performing arts as, "a combination of ancestor worship (in the sense that deceased teachers are ancestors) and direct contact with Hindu deities of performance."<sup>15</sup> Further Wong

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<sup>14</sup> See Dhanit, Yupho. *The Custom and Rite of Paying Homage to Teachers of Khon, Lakhon, and Piphat*. 5th ed. Bangkok: Promotion and Public Relations Sub-Division, Fine Arts Department, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Wong, Deborah Anne. *Sounding the Center: History and Aesthetics in Thai Buddhist Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001: 7.

relates that the *wai khruu* ritual opens a channel between realms; the realm of the contemporary practitioner (the person performing the ritual) and the realm of the lineage of teachers.<sup>16</sup> The performance of a *wai khruu* ritual is therefore a means by which time is collapsed; through the ritual, the lineage of teachers is embodied in the practitioner.

Vi's sisters explained that the complexity of the multi-shuttle ikat *mii hol* requires the performance of a *wai khruu* ceremony prior to the start of weaving in order to prevent any possible problems from occurring during the weaving process. Prior to beginning the weaving, the weaver must make an offering on the loom; the offering includes water, and leaves and ingredients for chewing betel nut. Further, if the weaver forgets the order of shuttles or runs into any other sort of problem she will again *wai khruu*, calling the lineage of teachers to the present to assist with problem solving.

In the transformation of practices of textile production in this village we see a rupture in the spiritual and educational practices of the community. The *wai khruu* ceremony is no longer needed when the weavers are not producing multi-shuttle silk ikat textiles. The young women creating the multiple shaft supplemental weft products for the markets of Bangkok no longer need to perform the ceremonies and rituals specific to multi-shuttle ikat techniques. As a result, the lineage of instructors is no longer called to be present in the daily activities of the weavers. What appeared at first glance to be a simple change in products and techniques of production is, in-fact, a revolutionary social transformation unraveling components of marriage ceremonies, family relations, the social production of space and time, educational practices, spiritual rituals, and approaches to problem solving.

#### Conclusion:

My understanding of the spread of Xam Nuea style *muk* is derived from the contents of private collections, and documents that provide accounts of the movement of people and the shifting Lao political landscape. The depth of the social transformations that accompanied the spread of the Xam Nuea style *muk* cannot be adequately ascertained through the analysis of an analysis of existing historical records or examinations of textiles cloistered in private collections. By introducing the example of social transformations in Surin I hope to stir thoughts of how complex weaving techniques are interwoven into broader social practices of communities in Southeast Asia. With the insight gained from Surin we can turn back to the transformations of production in Vientiane and speculate about facets of social revolution experienced as supplemental warp techniques and their concomitant social practices were pushed to the political fringe with the revolutionary overthrow of the Royal Lao Government. We can further surmise that social practices (spiritual, educational, etc) related to the production of the Xam Nuea style *muk* were in part transplanted and in part transformed in the movement of people and practice. It would not be far fetched to speculate that the revolutionary transformation of the weaving contributed to disruptions in well-established educational, spiritual, and problem solving social practice of the weavers in the Royalist strongholds.

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<sup>16</sup> Wong, Deborah Anne. *Sounding the Center: History and Aesthetics in Thai Buddhist Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001: 9.

Both the Xam Nuea *muk*, and Surin *mii hol* examples provide insight into the interconnectedness of changing textiles and broader social transformations. In the migration and transformation of the *muk*, we see an enmeshing of regionally specific textile production and internationally linked battles for control over the political-economy of the nation. Through an exploration of the market driven supplanting of ikat techniques on the outskirts of Surin we gain insight into the interwoven relations of material production, and the production of the social-spiritual and temporal relations of the weavers.

It is my hope that insights gained from this paper will have practical implications for those who advocate ‘development’ through the introduction of new products or the transformation of production techniques. In exploring or promoting the introduction of new techniques or products we must be cognizant of the potentially far-reaching social/political repercussions of the transformation of well-established social practices.

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