

CHUAN-TANI OR LIMA CLOTH

Cloth in the Lower Region of Southern Thailand

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Chuan-tani or *Lima* cloth also known as *Tani* brocade, was formerly woven in the lower regions of southern Thailand for personal use. The material, decorated with exquisite designs demonstrates highly sophisticated weaving craftsmanship, which was originally centered in Muang Patani, an area which now covers Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces.

In the past, Muang Patani was a well-known seaport in the eastern part of the Malaya Peninsula. Trade and political relations contributed to the transference and adoption of the culture from the countries with which Pattani came into contact, namely: India, China, Arab countries, European countries, Java and Malaya. It was not clear when the use of cloth and its production commenced in the south, but some experts believe that this began before the Srivijaya Kingdom (8th – 13th centuries A.D) became prosperous.

Through contact and trade with China and India, the natives of Pattani, who might have already been knowledgeable in weaving, were imparted with new weaving traditions. This foreign influence rendered a uniqueness to the newly created textiles. The simple, local fabrics were replaced by intricately woven *mudmee* textiles, with a raised pattern known as *Chuan-tani* or *Lima* cloth, or *Tani* brocade. As the high-quality and beauty of these textiles improved over time, they became widely known during the Ayutthaya period and appreciated by communities in the south, especially in the three southern most provinces on the Thai-Malaysian border.

This type of textile was also referred to in Thai literature as a number of characters adorned themselves in attire made of *Tani* brocade. For instance, an excerpt from *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, a royal composition by King Rama II, describes an outfit of a character as double layers of *Tani* brocade; the under-layer made of colorful and refined plain silk and the top layer embroidered and perforated into intricate patterns. *Inoh*, a court drama written by King Rama II, describes how one high-ranking character wore a sarong made of *Chuan-tani* silk cloth of a star design. According to the text he let his garment hang loose and fastened it with a gold belt.

Characteristics of *Chuan-tani* (*Lima*) Cloth

There are two types of *Chuan-tani* cloth:

1. A long strip of cloth with “*long-chuan*” or a strip inserted between the cloth and each end.

Drawing showing *long-chuan* strip

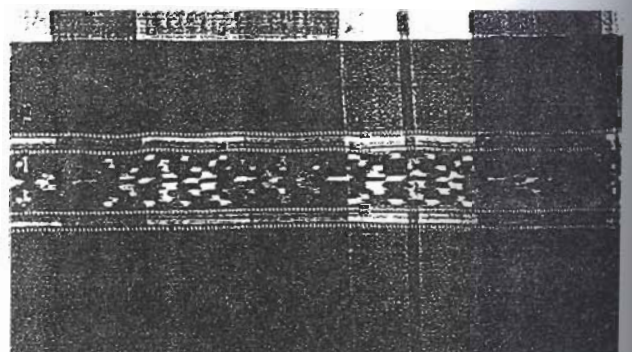
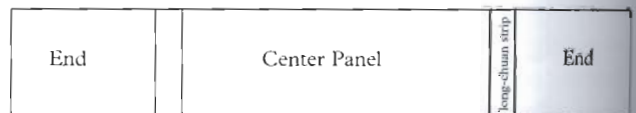
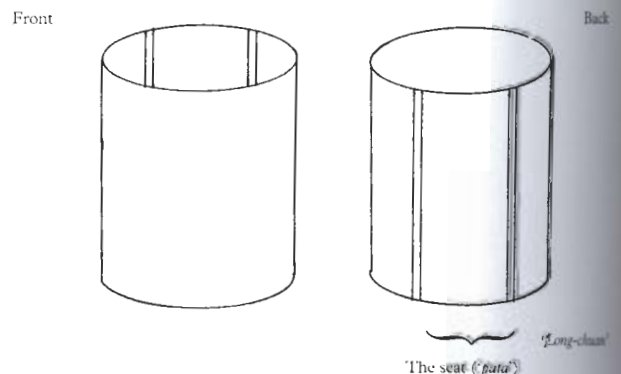


Fig. 1 Detail of textile showing *long-chuan* strip in middle

2. *Chuan-tani* cloth made into a *sarong* with stripe on each cloth end being placed in the seat commonly known as a “*pata*” area.



Drawing showing front and back views of sarong

The following is the criteria for classification of *Chuan-tani (Lima)* cloth:

1. Composition: *Chuan-tani* cloth, widely-known as a woven textile from Muang Pattani, can be identified by its specific features: the positions of the design, colors, number of designs and design patterns (fig. 2).

1.1 Positions of the designs on the cloth

- “*Long chuan*” or a strip is inserted between the cloth and each end.

- The cloth and both ends are woven into one inseparable piece of cloth.

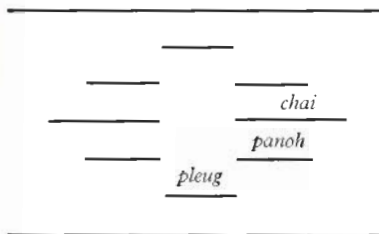
- Both ends are generally tied and dyed in red color before the weaving process.

Each stripe or “*Long chuan*” consists of three main parts: (fig. 4).

i. “*Pleug*” or a series of outmost broken narrow bands (to border “*panoh*” and “*chai*”).

ii. “*Panoh*” or a series of inside broken narrow bands (to border “*chai*”).

iii. “*Chai*” or a series of innermost broken narrow bands (bordered by “*panoh*” and “*pleug*”).



Drawing showing three parts of *long-chuan*



Fig. 2 The “*pata*” must be worn at the seat of the *sarong*

Fig. 3 Detail showing the position of the design

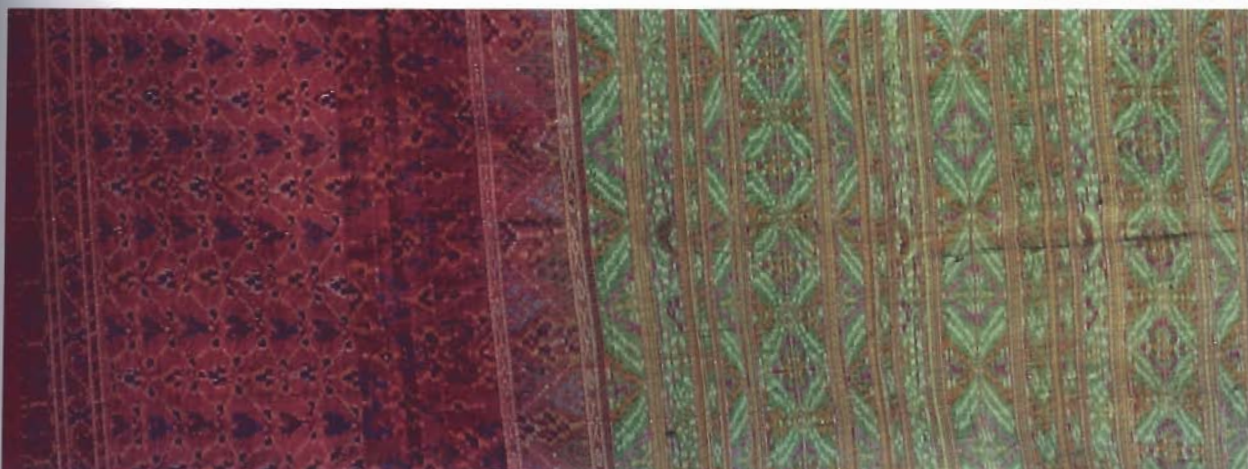




Fig. 4 Textile showing *long-chuan* with strip containing *pleug*, *panoh* and *chai*



Fig. 5 Cloth showing contrasting colors



Fig. 6 Cloth showing contrasting colors

Colors: The main cloth and its ends generally clash in color. The cloth end is usually of different shades of red-bright red, scarlet, fuchsia red and crimson. The main panel is in dark purple, green, dark blue, reddish brown and brown (figs. 5, 6).

Besides clashing colors, it is found that each strip of *Chuan-tani* cloth generally contains five colors. The word “*lima*”, which is another name of *Chuan-tani* cloth, is a Malay dialect word meaning “five”. In some rare cases this type of textile has more than five colors.

Number of designs: In each piece of cloth, there are five to seven designs, three to five of which are found in the cloth end. A similar type of cloth from other regions has only one to two designs (fig. 8).

Design Patterns

- Strips (“*long chuan*”, suggesting the origin of the name “*Chuan-tani*” cloth)
- Meshes/nets/basket weave (fig. 10)
- Checks (fig. 10)
- Stars (golden lanterns) (fig. 12)
- Arabic script (fig. 13)
- Plain end (fig. 14)
- Plain cloth (the end being decorated with designs)



Fig. 7 Five colors as seen in this *lima* cloth



Fig. 8 Cloth showing multiple designs in the body and end



Fig. 9 Cloth showing strips with design



Fig. 10 Pattern showing net or basket weave design



Fig. 11 Cloth with checkered pattern



Fig. 12 Cloth with star and golden lanterns design

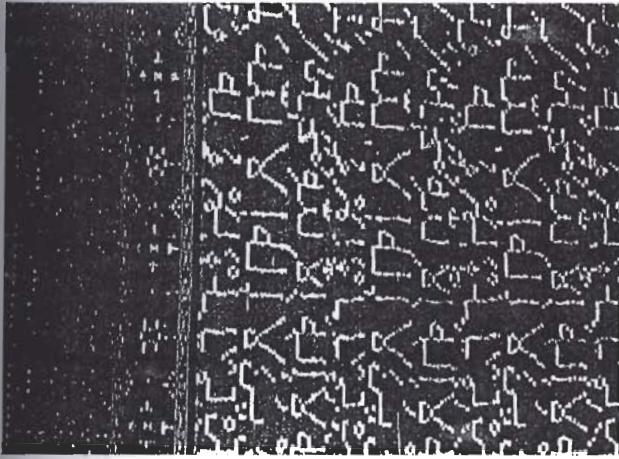


Fig. 13 Cloth with Arabic script

Production Methods

- By a *mudmee* process (only weft yarns being tied and dyed, or both warp and weft yarns being tied and dyed) (fig. 15).

- By raising the designs in the fabric through the “*yok*”, “*chok*” and “*khid*” techniques (continuous or discontinuous supplementary weaving techniques).



Fig. 14 Cloth with plain end without design



Fig. 15 Cloth woven with *mudmee* (*ikat*) process



Fig. 16 Detail of *phasin* showing supplementary weave



Design Methods

Weaving Method: Using two-ply weaving, three-ply weaving or four-ply weaving. Additional design is added by raising the designs in the fabric through the “*yok*”, this can be either through “*chok*” (discontinuous supplementary technique) or “*khid*” (continuous supplementary technique) (figs. 18, 19).

Dyeing Method

- *Tani* threads obtained from *tani* banana trunk are used to embroider the design onto the cloth before the cloth is dyed (fig.20).

Fig. 17 Cloth can be woven using various ply threads



Fig. 18 Weaving with supplementary design



Fig. 19 Detail of supplementary design



Fig. 20 Design made by using *tani* threads to embroider pattern design before dyeing



Fig. 21 Batik design

- The method of making batik (fig. 21)

Classification by fibers used for cloth weaving

- Silk
- Cotton
- Gold or silver threads

Dyeing process

- Natural dyes from indigo, lac, straw, cumin wood, jackfruit wood and balsam leaves
- synthetic dyes imported from India and China.

Weaving apparatus: a loom

Uses

- To cover the head (fig. 23)
- To wear around the neck (fig. 24)
- To wear as a top: tucked in under the arm (for women) (fig. 25)
- To wear on top of trousers (for men)(fig. 26)
- To use as shroud.

Chuan-tani or *Lima* cloth is associated with the upper classes as it was difficult to obtain. Thus this textile was used only on special occasions, for instance, weddings or festivals to celebrate the birth of Mohammed.

At present, the tradition of weaving *Chuan-tani* cloth has died out in the lower regions of the south of Thailand and its production has stopped in the southern communities. The making of this unique cloth, of such high aesthetic beauty, has gradually disappeared over the past eighty to one hundred years due to the influence of free trade and the use of machinery in the textile production process. Yet, it is not too late to revive the study of this marvelous hand-woven material and preserve the memory of this unique textile for future generations. A number of elderly persons, who are now of eighty to ninety years of age, can still give information on the glorious past of *Chuan-tani* cloth.



Fig. 23 Cloth used as head cover



Fig. 24 Cloth used as shoulder cover



Fig. 22 Variety of textiles worn in a procession



Fig. 25 Cloth used as bodice wrap



Fig. 26 Cloth wrapper over man's trousers