



Head Scarf

Date
early 20th Century

Primary Maker
Lao

Medium
Cotton and silk

Description
Silk-weaving has a long history in Laos and was

traditionally carried out by women. In 1975, the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party rose to power, and the practice of silk-weaving was suppressed due to its association with the ruling class. After the liberalization of the country’s economy in the late 1980s, silk-weaving resurged as a tourist industry, and Laotian textiles remain popular among visiting foreigners. Because this piece dates from the early 20th century, it is an example of what scholar Rebecca Hall refers to as “pre-commoditized” Laotian textile work. Three types of silk are used in Laos: mai peurk, made of the covering of the silkworm cocoon; mai kang, a popular silk made of the cocoon’s soft central layer; and mai nyod, the fine silk derived from the inside of a cocoon. Mai sao luan mixes one or more of these types of silk. Lao silk is known for absorbing dye well, allowing it to take on vibrant colors. Cotton and silk are often used together.

Dimensions
19 1/2 × 21 3/4 in. (49.5 × 55.2 cm)