



Shaman's Cloth

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Lao

Medium
Cotton and silk

Description

Cotton textiles with silk embroidery were made across the border region between northern Laos and Vietnam for a variety of purposes. Generally, these textiles are defined primarily by their decorative motifs: diamonds, short scroll shapes and humanoid figures; as well as the quality of the silk and dying which goes into their creation. These textiles are woven exclusively by women, and particularly the materials used to create dyes are guarded secrets passed along from mother to daughter. They are used for several purposes and though most-often classified as shawls also sometimes served as waist wraps, head coverings and even surface cloths. Apart from being visually significant, the diamond also held special importance in Lao culture as they were important representations of the third eye and were often used in healing rituals as ways of dispelling evil forces from the body. Offerings are laid upon small cloths like this in the Lao Baci ceremony.

Dimensions

11 1/2 × 33 1/2 in. (29.2 × 85.1 cm)