

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

A Comparative Study Of Ethnic Lao And Bodo Textiles

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Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(7). ISSN 1567-214x**

Keywords: Bodo tribes, design, ethnic culture, Laos, motifs, Textile

ABSTRACT

The hill tribes of Laos and the Bodo tribes of Northeast India, having racial affinities, share a lot of similarities in their ethnic culture, food habits and traditional textiles. Weaving is an integral part of the traditional culture of both Bodo and Lao society. This study aims to understand the similarities and the symbolic significance of the design motives and unique colour combinations used in the ethnic Lao and Bodo textiles. In both the cultures the traditional attire and textile bear symbolic significance, and it clearly represents the status of the weaver. The hill-tribes of Laos and the Bodo tribes of Bodoland live amidst nature, therefore the textiles woven by them reflect their belief, culture and relationship with the natural environment. The use of colour, shape and their arrangements has varied embedded meanings. The Bodos and the Lao ethnic groups create design on textiles for everyday and occasional wear. Both among the Bodo tribes and in the ethnic Lao society handloom weaving is regarded as a folk-art having age old features. In both the societies, weaving skills and folklore related to it are handed down orally from generation to generation. Moreover, from the earliest times, textiles came to be associated with social and ritualistic tradition playing a key role in socio-economic life of the community. Thus, the colours, patterns and designs signify artistic property and social status.

1. Introduction

For centuries handloom and textiles have occupied a significant place in the culture of both Lao and Bodo ethnic tribes with skills of exquisite weaving being passed down through generations. Within the context of weaving in India, the Bodos were perhaps the first ethnic group to have introduced the art of rearing of silk worms as well as spinning and weaving silk clothes. Like in most ethnic communities in the world, handloom and textile production in Laos and Bodoland is a typically feminine activity, although in some rare cases Bodo and Lao men have also displayed great expertise in the art of weaving. It is customary for young girls among both the Bodos and Lao ethnic groups to learn the art of weaving from an early age. Having grown up with the

orientation and commitment to weaving they maintain a lifelong fascination for the production, wearing and circulation of it at the individual as well as collective level. Although commoditization of the handloom industry and all traditional textile production in general have taken place since the last few decades, even today most Bodo and Lao women in the villages are skilled in the art of weaving clothes in the loom, in spinning of threads from the cocoons and in rearing of silk worms on the leaves of the castor oil plants and mulberry leaves. The prevalence of woven textiles in Laos and Bodoland attests to the inherent strength of the deep-rooted cultural richness and of textiles as a primary art form which governs aesthetic choices of color, pattern, and traditional life in both the cultures.

Before we go into details of the textiles in both the communities, we would like to briefly outline the origin and background of both Lao and Bodo people. The Bodos are the largest ethnic group of Assam. They are a Tibeto-Burman linguistic community who has inhabited the northern areas of the Brahmaputra valley since time immemorial. The Bodos, also known as Bodo-Kacharis, were formerly dominant in Assam prior to the British annexation in 1826. The Kachari kingdom spread throughout the region, from Koch Behar in North Bengal to Sylhet in Bangladesh stretching all the way to the area that consists of the state of Tripura today. When the Thai Ahoms came to Assam in the early thirteenth century, they confronted the rulers of the Kachari Kingdom and had to accept their sovereignty and maintained a non-interference territorial policy towards them. Over the centuries, many sub-tribes of the great Bodo race, like the Rabhas, Koches and Chutia, ruled over different parts of Assam, enriching its culture. The sixteen Bodo sub-tribes like Dimasa Kachari, Bodo Kachari, Rabha, Deori and Garo are spread over different parts of Assam and North East. Of these the Bodo Kacharis, popularly referred to as Bodo, form the largest sub-tribe. Today, while the mainstream Hindu Assamese outnumber in millions the indigenous Bodo population, the mighty Bodos have still managed to keep their socio-cultural and linguistic identity firm and intact.

The Lao people are a Tai ethnic group who speak the eponymous language of the Tai-Kadai linguistic group and are believed to have originated from southern China. They are the largest ethnic group of Laos. However, in the context of this paper Lao implies not only this majority ethnic group but all the indigenous ethnic tribes residing in the country who speak mainstream Lao as well their own group-specific languages and dialects. Some of these ethnic tribes are – Lao Theung, Tai Daeng, Tai Dam, Tai Lu, Phu Thai, H'mong, Katu, Lao Loum, Dzao, Akha, etc. In Laos there are total 49 ethnic groups and 160 sub-ethnic tribes. The diverse colorful ethnic groups in Laos provide a wonderful tapestry of rich material cultural heritage with incredible variety of weaving styles, cloth, patterns, symbolic motifs and colour schemes. There are some 16 basic weaving styles across four regions of the country. The clothes portray the wearer's identity as well as their social and marital status. Ethnologists state that Lao textiles can be traced back to specific villages because the design is so representative of each unique culture or community. The evolution of weaving in Laos, which emerged from the cultural contact

between different ethnic groups, has created some of the most intricate and stunning textiles considered by collectors and connoisseurs to be amongst the finest textiles in the world. Today, Lao weavers are well-known throughout the world for their exquisitely woven, naturally dyed textiles.

2. Objectives

The present study intends to:

1. understand the similarities and the symbolic significance of the design motives and unique colour combinations used in the ethnic Lao and Bodo textiles, and
2. bring out the motifs and other folkloristic elements used by both the communities in their age-old weaving skills and techniques.

3. Methodology

Here, basically comparative method is applied to arrive at the conclusion. Data are taken from secondary sources like books, journals, research articles etc. written by designated scholars. As the researcher belongs to the Bodo tribe, it is her added advantage to apply own observations to make proper comparison between the two.

4. Motifs in Bodo and Lao textiles

Textile design is called *agor* in Bodo. Traditional Bodo fabric designs are similar to many Lao designs which are mostly constituted of geometrical patterns, straight and vertical lines more than ornamental curved lines. Although the names of motifs correspond to different objects, fauna and flora, including insects and mythological characters, they are woven in a more abstract form depicting the imagination and power of conceptualization of individual weavers instead of representation through a direct realistic style. The distinctive designs developed by the weavers are influenced by natural and geographical factors, traditional beliefs, cultural practices and political changes. Mohini Mahan Brahma, a scholar of Bodo folk literature mentions that the particular motif '*DerhasarAgor*' was believed to be the sign of victory in the battlefield. In this connection a legend is still prevalent among the Bodos that the wife of the valiant hero Bashiram Jwhwlao dressed him with a long *Aronai* bearing the '*Derhasar*' design. On the eve of proceeding towards the battlefield, the beloved wife wishing him great victory placed the *Aronai* across his chest and waist.¹

The designs usually noticed in the textiles of both Lao and Bodo are of natural objects like plants, flowers, leaves, fruits, seeds, creepers, hills, animals, birds, insects, planets, fish, craftworks and ornaments or objects all of which are rendered mostly in abstract and semi-abstract highly stylized geometrical forms. A list of motifs is provided in the end.

¹Mohini Mahan Brahma: '*A Glance of BoroAgor*' in *BoroAgor*(1992) of Sukumar Basumatary in preface.

5. Symbolism in Lao and Bodo Textiles

The value of textiles in Laos not only stands for utilitarian purpose and aesthetic pleasure but also for deeply-rooted symbolic meanings that denote age-old socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the weavers' community. The symbolic patterns are so distinct that anthropologists can determine the ethnic group, marital status, region and function from looking at textiles.

Just like the Bodos the Lao people traditionally valued orality and did not write down the stories of their history and culture. Instead they preserved all their tales in their individual and collective consciousness that are beautifully woven on textiles by the women folks whose exquisite weaving takes the onlookers' breath away. Strand by strand, Lao stories are woven in the intricate dense patterns and motifs of textiles. The stories, which are religious, mythical, legendary, historical and even about personal aspirations, are so elaborately fantastic and the motifs so esoteric that in many cases the outsiders cannot accurately interpret them without enough knowledge about the background of each tribe that the weavers belong to. What may look just geometric patterns conceal within wonderful stories from Buddhist tales, beliefs in birth and rebirth, wholesome and unwholesome deeds, and their effects in this and afterlife. Thus, each textile's design contains traditional symbolic motifs, most of which appear "buried" within the geometric complexity. Motifs may include mythological river-serpents (naga), elephant-lions (siho), giant spirits (phiinak), rainbow-bellied birds (hong) and many others.

Some motifs are mythical creatures of legends and folktales. There are different textile motifs that are connected with characters from the ancient Lao epic verse, *Sinxay*. One such motif is the siho motif. As is told in the story of *Sinxay*, one of his brothers is named Siho, who has the head of an elephant (like the Hindu God Ganesha) and the body of a lion (like the legendary Egyptian Sphinx). Most interestingly in the character of Siho we have a Laotian mixed version of a deity and a powerful mythological figure from the pristine world of Hindu civilization. The Siho, a mythological composite half-lion, half-elephant, is unique to the Lao culture and is considered to be imbued with special powers. The Siho is usually shown with an ancestor figure riding on its back.

Another very significant mythical motif in Lao textile is the Naga, which is a colossal mythological water-serpent believed to be the possessor of unparalleled magical power. The people on the either side of the Mekong river believe the Naga to be a river god, so this symbol features heavily in folk tales, ancient literary classics, temple architecture and above all in textiles. Legendary beliefs hold that a Naga can transform itself anytime and take the form of other beings, such as animals and human. Imbued with the power of fancy and imagination, Lao legends narrate love tales between Nagas and human. Generally, Nagas are seen as benevolent beings that protect and save human from illness, hunger and ominous spirits, but when they are angry or provoked for any reason they are capable of wielding their power to give rise to natural disasters like storms and floods, or inflict mild or even fatal illnesses and in extreme cases cause death.

Similar to the legendary Naga is another very unique motif is the mythical bird, Hong. The xanghong or soho is a magnificent creature combining the power and strength of the elephant with the prestige and delicate beauty of the bird. The Hong is considered a creature of extraordinary beauty, and are sometimes used as a metaphor for female beauty. Sometimes the soho or hong are shown pregnant with naga. As already mentioned, religious beliefs also play an integral role in the textile design; often depicted are ancestor spirits, the afterworld, heaven and hell scenes, temples and stupas.

Apart from all the mythological influences motifs in Lao textiles are also inspired by the natural environment – water, clouds, lightning, flowers, trees, birds and animals. But each motif has its own unique symbolic meaning embedded in it, as for instance, the frog represents rain and reproduction. Most animals are respected and thought to have special powers. The elephant represents wealth, respect, strength and prosperity, and is thought to have rain bearing powers. The crab, a common food item and resource of protein, symbolizes resourcefulness and the promise of a bountiful harvest. Different kinds of birds are seen as signs of freedom. Some folk tales are replete with beautiful fairy tales of birds constantly giving company to young maiden weavers and eventually transforming into handsome young men to propose and marry the girls. Animals from the zodiac signs are also depicted in the textiles as they are all considered to be auspicious. Another reason for using animal motifs is because of the important role animals played in the Hindu Epic of Ramayana that simultaneously accompanied the introduction of Buddhism into Laos.

Common in Bodo textiles are big bold flowers in stylized and geometric forms, of which a floral motif called *derhachar-agar* is regarded as a symbol of success. It is used profusely in the traditional Bodo scarf Aronai, which comes in bright beautiful colours like red, yellow, orange, green, violet, white, maroon, pink, etc. and have come to acquire a distinct cultural significance. Commonly grown ferns, weeds and herbs in the countryside that have captured the creative eyes of the weavers and stirred their imagination are exquisitely woven in stylized manner to support the floral patterns. The juxtaposition of flower and fern symbolically replicates nature's bountiful beauty in the rural environment. There are other uniquely contrastive motifs like the *khaphaljofia* which symbolizes ill luck or lack of luck, on the one hand, and *derhashadagor* which symbolizes victory, on the other hand. The *shikriagor* (butterfly like design) is commonly used in the aronai, traditional jackets, and dokhona and is suggestive of nature's exuberant beauty. Being practical and down-to-earth in their understanding of nature, human relationship and life itself, the Bodo people's *weltanschauung* or philosophy of life is based on realism and pragmatism. The different motifs both capture and reveal their realistic approach to being and becoming, for instance, while the above mentioned *derhachar-agar* is presented as a symbol of prosperity, the *thaigir bibar-agar* or the flower of wood apple like design is considered as a symbol of loss and failure, not necessarily in the battlefield outside, but in the conflictual ties that bind human relationship. Thus, this particular motif is associated with

unrequited love. Contrary to this are the bird motifs that stand for freedom, peace and harmony.

6. Creativity in colour combination in Lao and Bodo textiles

The profusion of symbolism in traditional Lao and Bodo textiles is brought to a synchronized aesthetic balance through exquisite color combination that makes every motif stand out from the two-dimensional surface of the fabric and have a life of its own that triggers the buyer-wearer's imagination and connects her with a lasting bond of love and appreciation to the creator-/artist-weaver/s of the textile. Through this bond the admirer-wearer and the artisan-creator become the 'simultaneous' owner of the piece of artistry.

In Bodo textiles the primary colours of red and yellow and the secondary colors of green and orange are used profusely that depicts the weaver's keen interest in preserving the trace of Mother Nature in her own creation. The most common and predominantly used colour in a *dokhona* is the different hues of the primary color yellow which vividly captures the shades in progressive patterns of the ripening paddy. Creative color combination is a unique characteristic trait in Lao textiles as well that clearly reflects the weavers' imagination and the power of renewing their aesthetic skills from one product to the other. In both traditional Bodo and Lao textiles, the colors used are derived from natural dyes.

7. Innovation in the wearing style

Previously, the *dokhona*, the main single piece wrapper worn by Bodo women used to be much shorter and simple. But with the passage of time great innovative thinking led to the elongation of the cloth to approximately three meters which is then worn with elegant folding that helps cover the entire body. Since *dokhona* is used in every occasion, the innovative wearing style helped merge all differences among every wearer in every walk of life and engagement. Thus, an educated Bodo woman would wear it the same way as a farm laborer or a woman working in the paddy field. So does a female performer of any Bodo colorful dances. Regarding Lao weavers the innovative skills are displayed in designing unique *sinhs* (traditional skirts) and patterns that differentiate each weaver from her peers. Imaginative use of motifs is replete in weaving the cloth for the *sinhs* as well as the intricate skirt borders that make each *sinh* unique.

8. Philosophy of life in Bodo textiles

Traditional Bodo society has been founded upon the philosophy of reverence for Mother Earth (i.e., Nature), self-sufficiency economy, sustainable growth and holistic approach to life since time immemorial. The philosophy of self-sufficiency is itself rooted in the concept of what in our present era is defined as sustainable development. Bodo society's strength lies in developing self-sufficiency, contentment and moderation. Weaving as an occupation and

cultural art form epitomizes all these three features and perhaps more. Every traditional Bodo household has its own set of handmade attires to be used in a self-sufficient manner by each member. Although the weavers had enough leisurely time, they would not necessarily overburden themselves to produce textiles in great quantity for the sake of ostentatious display and consumption by family members. Costumes and dresses were woven in just sufficient and moderate quantity. This inherent practice of moderation has its own practical side. The art of weaving is to be preserved and sustained in a learning-oriented and holistic manner without any need for commodification and commercialization. When young female members of the family grow up, they learn the art of weaving from senior members of the household like the mother, aunt and grandmother. If the senior members produce in excess, the young ones would simply indulge in donning the attires without perhaps feeling the exigent need or the inner urge to be productive on their own terms. Moderate production thus helps in sustainable growth and proper proliferation and preservation of the art of weaving in traditional Bodo communities. The numerous folk songs related to weaving among the Bodos reflect how each generation plays its own role in the preservation of the age-old tradition of weaving.

*'dehaylwgbimaburwini
danay-lunaiagorernaikhwushwlwngdini
shikhribidwishwbni
okhrangaodaobirnai
agorerwierwiboinibwshigangao
khinthanilwkwkhinthani.'*²

Come friend let us learn weaving
And to make the design
Of our mother old,
Let us weave the butterfly
That gathers floral honey sweet
Flying bird in the sky
Let us weave and make design
On our cloth and display to all.

However, it is to be noted that the characteristic trait of moderation in outlook mentioned above has been misunderstood by some people as lack of motivation and a lethargic approach to weaving. Such misinterpretations can be easily countered when one takes a close look at the production of the unique scarf known as Aronai, which today stands out as the identity-marker of Bodo ethnicity as a whole as much does the dokhona when it comes to Bodo women's identity. Originally, the Aronai used to be offered to the warrior-soldier prior to his leaving for the battlefield. The weaving of this very

²M.M. Brahma: *Folk Songs of Bodos*, p. 5.

auspicious item that served as a protective armor (in the figurative sense) throws light on the weaver's determination, dedication and perseverance in the art of weaving bearing all its sacred beauty, for the entire piece has to be woven in a single night from freshly spun cotton thread with all the sacred motifs intricately woven and to be readied for offering to the warrior prior to his taking leave from the community and heading to the battlefield where he is destined to display all his valor and courage while encountering the enemies who pose a threat to the solidarity of his own clan. The freshly woven Aronai is imbued with spiritual power too, for the weaver, who is usually the warrior's wife seals it with protective power by offering it at the altar of Bathou with the Siju tree, and invoking the spirit to protect her beloved. In case of unmarried warriors, the Aronai is either woven by the mother, sister or any female member of the household. The Aronai in that sense is a sacred item that symbolizes at a deeper level not just the individual weaver's technical skills but feminine power itself with the implied meaning of healing, protecting, nurturing deeply embedded within it. The Aronai used to be worn as a guard of honor across one's chest and also girdled around one's waist.

Today, the Aronai is offered to speakers and chief guests on any formal occasions like political gathering, academic meeting, seminars, etc. as well as at home as a welcoming gesture and extension of warm hospitality on the occasion of any informal or casual visit by friends and relatives. While the context of the Aronai's offering has changed and widened to meet present-day need, the feeling of original bondage that this unique piece of cloth symbolized has not altogether lost. In fact, the Aronai has helped both protect and merge cultural spaces and boundaries. It has helped dismantle cultural barriers and barricades through its signifying power of Bodo ethnic identity and the all-encompassing fraternal love and solidarity that this ethnicity holds within itself and simultaneously extends to other communities.

9. Philosophy of healing and protection in Lao textiles

Most Lao weavers and especially Tai Daeng weavers of Northeast Laos who specialize in the chok supplementary weft technique and weave textiles using hand spun silk produced locally on silk farms, coloured using natural dyes to create unique pieces that tell tales of mythological creatures, reveals through many of their specially woven clothes the philosophy of healing that is an integral part of community life. Special healing cloth like the Shaman Shawls can take up many weeks and months to complete, but since weaving is not just a skill but an art that is closely related to the beliefs of the weavers, the time factor involved in the process is never a concern. Both the motifs woven into the patterns and the textiles themselves are believed to offer protection to the individual wearer. Since the exquisite art of Lao weaving is extremely laborious, especially the most difficult step of arranging threads to create innovative new designs, so during the weaving, most weavers leave a knife sitting on the loom to ward off mischievous spirits from making a mess of their warp yarns.

Healing cloths are used in healing ceremonies, and are also used in ceremony to foster a healthy future for the entire village or paddies and crops. They may be worn by the healer, or the ill person, or even laid in the farm or garden depending on the unique traditions of that village and the type of healing that is being sought. Each ethnic group, sub-group, valley, and even individual villages often have unique styles of weaving and ritual to express their spiritual lives and needs. Individual weaver's outlook on life, belief-system, imaginative and technical skills all have input as to a healing cloth's design elements and color.

The "phaasabai" healing cloths are used by both shaman and ordinary people, and use a combination of color and design for their powerful healing protection. Just as a mother is protective of her child and persistently nurtures and protects it ever since the time of its birth from impending dangers in life, the weaver powerfully depicts at the psycho-symbolic level the motherly caring nature in her and every other woman through complex geometric patterns on the cloth that hide the protective mythical figures from the evil spirits which are causing harm. Through dance and chant, the shaman calls upon the spirits of the ancestors to release the power of the hidden figures which then chase the bad spirits from the infected body or place. As Patricia Cheesman aptly describes a particular piece of shaman cloth – "The symbolism of the textile was a pathway, with the powerful box of river dragons, spirit birds, and crested river dragons to chase out evil spirits and send them to the other end of the textile, which had decorative bands representing a ladder. It was also a pathway for the souls of sick persons to return to their body, and for the helpers of the shaman to come from the spirit world."

Phaa phi monare shawls that are worn and used by a shaman during any of a variety of healing rituals – from curing a physical injury, disease, or a mental illness to protecting a new-born baby or performing a fertility rite. The "phaaphiimon" shaman cloths are used exclusively by Tai Daeng shaman for ritualistic healing. The hand-spun, naturally-dyed silk shawls have colorful, tight geometric designs, and it is difficult to pick out an obvious pattern without careful deciphering. The shaman, which can be of either gender, follow a complex tradition that includes elements of Buddhism, ancestor worship, and animism. Healing rituals are essentially performed to chase out bad spirits and return the ill person's own spirit back into their body.

The "phaa phi mon" shaman's cloths are woven in discontinuous supplementary weft design: in one row of weft (the left to right threads), in addition to the primary weft thread, additional threads are added to create the pattern in which the thread changes each time the color changes. If, in one weft row, the color changes 20 times, the artist-weaver manually weaves 20 spools of thread through a hand-picked pattern to create the specific design. Generally, there are over 40 rows of weft per inch, and there is no plain, central, solid-colored section. This detailed, time-consuming weaving process takes up to four months; this is time spent in addition to raising the silkworms, spinning the thread, gathering the natural dyes, making the dyes, and dyeing the threads.

Designs and colors used vary by village and region based upon traditions and the weaver's artistic sense.

While traditional healing may appear as superstitious from our modern-day approach to life which is guided by scientism, a close look at the entire process of production of the traditional textiles reveal the psycho-spiritual and aesthetic talents of the weavers which is not devoid of objective understanding of the world as such. What is beautifully inherent in the Lao weaving of the Tai Daeng community of weavers is a perfect harmony in the co-existence of subjective and objective approach to both art and life. Their artistic creation is a mirror that reflects their inner life colored by love, warmth, nurturing and fellow-feeling.

10. Conclusion

Bodo and Lao textiles are exquisite forms of artistic expressions that not only reflect the technical skills of the weavers but the entire philosophy of life of both the communities which is based on genuine love for nature, harmonious co-existence, healing and nurturing. Modern-day commoditization of traditional handloom and textiles which are geared towards mass production, profit-making, fetishization of age-old artistic talents, valorization of tribal women's imaginative and technical skills are trends of polarized currents of thoughts arising from a capitalistic and consumerist way of thinking and behaving. It is essential that economic support should be extended to traditional weavers by the state, NGOs and interested people, but this support should not destroy the foundational base of the weavers' philosophy of life and turn their artistry into mere products ready for sale and profit-making. Due respect should always be given to the weaver and her talents.

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Appendix

Variety of Motifs in Bodo Textile

Plants and Flowers:

- beshorbibar (a design like mustard oil flower)
- bwigribibar (a design representing the flowers of plum)
- dingkhiaagor (design resembling the fern)
- endibegor (a design like seed of castor oil plant)
- fulmwbla (bloomed flower design)
- gongarthaishib (a design like the fruit of nuni tree)
- hajwagor (a design like hills)
- khambrenga (a design like fruit of Avarhoacarambola)
- khanghrikhola (fruit of Sweet morardicacharantic like design)
- khwdwmbibar (a design like flower of *khwdwm*)
- laihagar (this particular design is derived from *tharailai*, leaf of the wild cardamom)
- laobegor (seeds of bottle gourd like design)
- leoagor (creeper design)
- mandarbibar (a design like flower of *Erythrina stricta*)
- mogaiaagor (like buds design)
- mwithabibar (flower of *Hibiscus cannabinus* like design)
- nasher (a design like *Mesuaferrea*)
- odalbibar (flower of *odal*, *Steculiavillosa* tree like design)
- phanthaobibar (a design like flower of brinjal)
- shalbibar (flower of *Shorearubusta* like design)
- shaldongfangagor (a design like *Shorearubusta* tree)
- shingribibaragor (flower of creeping Wood sorrel like design)
- shwmlibibar (silk cotton tree flower like design)
- thaigirbibar (flower of wood apple like design that is considered as a symbol of unrequited love)
- toblobibar (flower of lotus like design)

Animals and Birds:

- batho (parrot design)
- bwrnabibu (like stomach of a goat) also known as honey comb
- daokhiagor (design like a stool of hen)

daorai (pea-cock design)
 daoraimwkhreb (twinkling of a peacock like design)
 daoshamwkhreb (twinkling of fowl like design)
 daothu (dove design)
 daothugodo (dove neck like design)
 gorai (horse)
 hangshwafa (foot print of duck like design)
 khasheobikha (chest of a tortoise like design)
 maoji (cat)
 maojiapha (pug mark of cat)
 mwideragan (foot print of elephant like)
 muphurapha (pug mark of bear)
 mwi (deer)
 mwider (elephant)
 mwideragan (foot print of elephant like)
 mwshamegon (eye of tiger like design)
 mwshwu (cow)
 mwshwuhathai (molar of cow like design)
 pharwumegon (pigeon eye like design)
 shwima (dog)

Insects:

bemaagor (spider like design)
 gandwula (dragon fly like design)
 gangugodo (a design like neck of *gangu*, a type of grasshopper)
 jwremaagor (design like a stinging insect)
 khangkhraybikhong (shell of crab like design)
 shikriagor (butterfly like design)
 thamphwiagor (design like house fly)
 shongkhoagor (conch shell like design).

Planets:

hathorkhiagor (star like design)
 okhrangagor (sky like design)
 okhaphwragor (a moon like design)

Craft objects:

arashiagor (a design like a mirror)
 bakshuagor (box like design)
 dahramohor (motif like a bamboo mat)
 dolagor (a design like a drum)
 garishakhaagor (cart wheel design)
 gashaagor (design like traditional Bodo lamp having a stand)
 gishibagor (hand fan like design)
 gudamagor (button like design)
 jafaagor or khantaagor (large earthen jar like design)
 jeoramohor (motif like bamboo fencing)
 jongagor (spear like design)
 khashihathai (reeds of a sickle like design)
 khophriagor (a design like wicker hat)
 khushlidentha (handle of ladle like design)

mushraagor (a design like strand or thread reeled)
 shandriagor (sieve like design)
 thingkhliagor (earthen jar like design)
 zinziriagor (chain like design)
 zekhaiagor (a design like a *zekhai*, a fishing implement)

Ornaments:

chandrahar (a neck ornament or pendant design)
 kheruagor (bangle like design)
 rajmukhut (a design like forehead ornament)
 zinziriagor (chain like design)

Diamond design:

There are some motifs which are constituted as diamond even some are diamond within diamond pattern.

agorgidir (big diamond motif)
 agorgubwi (means original design)
 daoraimwkhreb (winkled of a peacock like design)
 khamaragor
 khasheobikha (chest of tortoise like motif)
 makhuriagor (name after a women Makhuri)
 mokhordomaagor
 pharwumegon (pigeon eye like motif)

There are some designs which are not in categories like:

anarkhuli
 bonduram (name after its creator – BanduramKachari)
 bwiragi (priest)
 derhashadagor (sign of victory motif)
 dokhanagor (shop like design)
 drillmohor
 dwimamohor (wavy river-like or zig-zagmotif)
 gob-shob
 gongnangagor
 halw-dwilw (a design with plant having flower, leaf, branch)
 hashashali
 kaddar motif
 khaphaljofia (unlucky)
 laoshongagor (after the name of a woman who created it)
 naaishamohor (motif of fish shell)
 nathaiagor (design that depends on other design).
 phwishaagor (a design like a coin)
 shibthalagor
 thwitmohor
 The Mukordama motif

Different kinds of motifs in Lao Textiles

Mythological Animals

Flying horses: In Lao literature, these often performed essential tasks for military heroes. Frog-person: Ancient tradition associates frog-people with essential monsoon rains. Giant-Spirit: A terrifying protector who stands guard in doorways (often used in

door curtains).Gibbon-person: An ancient story tells of a mother gibbon bringing food to starving children.Hong birds: Stylized birds that some references say are male spirits, but, when flying, are mythical swans that represent socially privileged women.

Living Animals

Birds, Butterflies, Chickens Crabs Deer Elephants. Fish

Frogs Horses .Humans Lizards Monkeys

Silkworms

Snails

Spiders Tigers Water buffalo

Plants:

Gourd seeds

Leaves

Rattan

Rice Plants

Trees represent the "tree of life." Vines Young stems

Nature and the environment:

Clouds Lightning Moon: A twelve-pointed star Mountain ranges, Paddy fields, Rainbows

River currents or flowing river pattern Stars Sun

Human-made objects:

Airplanes

Ambulances

Boats: Shamans are said to travel to other worlds on flying spirit boats.

Candelabrum: Often depicted lighting the way for a spirit boat Helicopters Hooks

House gable: A very common motif representing the home. Lantern: Like the candelabrum, this diamond-shaped motif "lights the way". Stupas (Buddhist temples): Shamanism and Buddhism are often intertwined in Lao culture. Writing

characters: Both locally-used and English letters can be found used as motifs.