

ASIAN  
DECENT WORK  
DECADE 2006  
2015



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# Indigenous Crafts of Cambodia



ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic



# Preface

This unique collection is a celebration of the rich cultural heritage integral to Cambodia's many indigenous groups. The traditional techniques used to create these products have been preserved by being passed down through generations of indigenous peoples. Here in this collection, ancient techniques are fused with modern adaptations to enhance the design quality, giving a contemporary edge to suit current tastes.

The weaving of textiles and baskets by hand and the creation of various household and decorative utensils through pottery are just some of the traditional techniques used to create these special products. Ideal as a thoughtful gift, a cultural memento, or simply as a decorative item, each piece captured in this brochure is hand-crafted with such a level of precision and care that it can take up to several days to produce a single item. This ensures that those who purchase these products can be guaranteed that each item is of the highest possible quality.

In purchasing one or more of these items, patrons are not only making a valuable contribution towards sustaining generations-old products and production, they are also assisting some of Cambodia's most vulnerable groups. Indigenous communities make up almost 1.4 per cent of Cambodia's population, equating to around 190,000 people.

The advent of the Khmer Rouge threatened to destroy the once prosperous indigenous traditions of weaving, woodcarving, pottery and handicraft production. Since then, years of having their rights and opportunities sidelined and little access to key services has created a situation where in crucial areas they are worryingly lagging behind the rest of the country. Indigenous groups have contributed to Cambodia's linguistic and cultural diversity and their traditional knowledge has been, and continues to be, an invaluable resource that benefits the wider community. Yet, indigenous peoples continue to suffer discrimination and marginalization.

Additionally, studies by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and others find that the societal disadvantages and poverty endured by indigenous groups are getting deeper, especially in terms of access to health and education services and land rights. Added to this, the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation are a growing threat to the very existence of these communities, who have highly specialized livelihoods that are adapted to the conditions of their traditional environments and are thus highly dependent on access to lands, territories and resources.

The ILO has had a longstanding concern for the situation of indigenous peoples. For a number of years the ILO has been advocating for indigenous communities' rights to Decent Work – work that is productive, delivers a fair income and gives better prospects for personal development and social integration. In Cambodia the ILO has two projects supporting and advocating for the rights of indigenous persons to land and economic opportunities.

This brochure comes from our Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP) which works to improve employment opportunities and income generation for indigenous peoples. A joint project of the ILO with three other UN agencies (UNDP, FAO, and UNESCO) CISP helps indigenous people make their traditional handicrafts profitable while at the same time preserving their culture through enhanced cultural entrepreneurship skills, improved business development services and market access.

CISP contributes to the livelihoods of more than 800 indigenous and Khmer artisans in the central, north and eastern provinces of Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, and Mondulkiri, as well as Ratanakiri. These newly-acquired skills have had the added effect of giving women greater independence from their spouse, in what were traditionally very patriarchal communities.

Complementing CISP's work, the Project to Promote ILO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples promotes a rights-based approach to indigenous peoples' development. Main activities have focused on promoting and facilitating the registration of indigenous communities land rights within the framework of the 2001 Land Law including training for indigenous communities in this regard and capacity building for national and provincial governments on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Each product showcased in this brochure plays a distinctive part in the rich tapestry of the Kingdom of Cambodia's indigenous culture. After years of being sidelined, it is only now that the art forms captured in this collection are experiencing a revival. Young people in the indigenous communities are rediscovering the craft of their elder relatives and their ancestors in learning how to create handicrafts that combine traditional techniques with modern, attractive designs. This brochure is a celebration of this revival and those who purchase from it can be assured that they are contributing to the sustenance of a splendid heritage and a truly unique cause.



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Director

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Bangkok, Thailand

## Acknowledgment

This brochure could not have been produced if it were not for the work of a number of individuals, including the indigenous handicraft producers who created the works showcased in this brochure, the Artisans Association of Cambodia, the photographers Mr Saur Sokhalay and Mr Yin Sophal, the CISP team, various colleagues at ILO, UNDP, FAO and UNESCO, ILO Local Strategies for Decent Work Specialist, Ms Sandra Yu, who initiated the production of this catalogue, and the wider indigenous communities of Cambodia. The ILO component of the CISP is managed by Mr Yin Sopheap, National Project Coordinator, and Ms Raksa Sophorn Preap, Administrative Assistant. Special thanks to Ms Suradee Bhadrasiri, Programme Assistant, ILO CO-Bangkok, and Ms Alin Sirisaksopit, Senior Secretary of the Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific, for their strong support.



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# កាផា KAPHA

Kapha is a type of basket that is produced by the indigenous peoples of north-eastern Cambodia. It is used to hold items and is carried on the back. The kapha is very distinctive to the north-east. Indigenous peoples in this region, especially women, often carry a kapha. Men, meanwhile, make kaphas as gifts for women. Kaphas come in different sizes and designs, depending on the ethnicity and taste of the weaver.

The kapha shown on these pages is made by the Tumpoun ethnic group in Laeun Kren village in Ratanakiri province.

The circular design in the middle is a signature of this ethnic group.

The maker of this kapha was awarded Designer of the Year in 2001 during an annual ceremony organised by the Creative Industries Support Programme. This kapha is made of bamboo, rattan, and run (a type of water hyacinth). It is handmade and it will last for many years. Kaphas have become popular among tourists and foreign buyers. They use kaphas as décor for offices, houses and hotels.

Kaphas can be purchased in Laeun Kren village as well as in other villages where the Tumpoun ethnic group resides. One can also find them in CANDO's shop in Ratanakiri province as well as in the Banlung market. It is also available at the Artisan Association of Cambodia (AAC) in Phnom Penh.









## កាផាតូច KAPHA TOCH

The kapha shown here is a new design developed by the Toumpoun ethnic group of Laeun Kren.

It is similar to the kapha shown on the preceding pages.

However, it is smaller so that it can be used as a container of fruits and vegetables on the tabletop.







កាផាកាត់

## KAPHA KAT

The kapha shown here is from the Putang community, which is part of the Bunong ethnic group in Mondulkiri province. In Bunong language, kapha is called sas-saev. This kapha, also a new design, is half the size of the original one.

Kaphas produced by the Bunong ethnic group have a distinctive design and shape. The lower part of the Bunong kapha features a thicker and longer wood.









## KROR LOR

### Ceramic Jar and Pottery

Ceramic jar and pottery are traditional products of the Lao ethnic group from Pakalan and Kampong Cham villages in Voeun Sai district, Ratanakiri province. They are made from a type of clay that is unique to the region and cannot be found elsewhere in Cambodia.

The traditional technique used in making ceramic products in these villages consists of digging a hole in the banks of the Sesan River. A temperature of 200 to 1300

celsius is required to turn the clay into stone to make wine jars, vases and pots.

These ceramic products can be purchased in the said villages, as well as at CEDAC's shop in Ratanakiri province and AAC's shop in Phnom Penh.



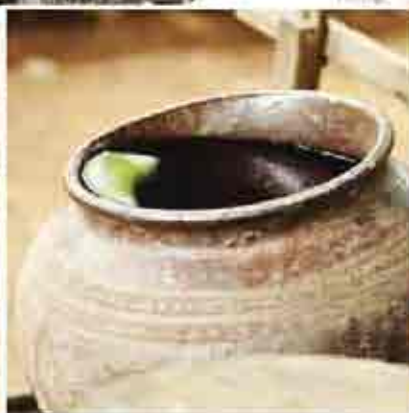
### Wine Jar

Wine jars are used by indigenous peoples in north-eastern Cambodia.

These jars are used to process rice wine, which symbolises solidarity and justice as well as the spirits of the gods. Some of the jars in this village are as old as 100 years and are used for ceremonies.







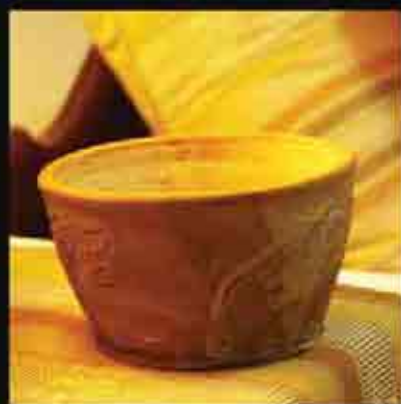
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# CANDLE HOLDER

This candleholder is a new design derived from the traditional pestle used by the Lao ethnic group. This product is from Pakalan and Kampong Cham villages in Ratanakiri province. It is made from clay and formed by hand. Apart from being a candleholder, this product can be used to hold small household items such as threads and needles, paper clips and medicines.









# CHONGKIENG

This lamp is a new design. It is derived from the traditional wine jar of the Lao ethnic group from Voeun Sai district. The material has a special grey glass which reflects the light.

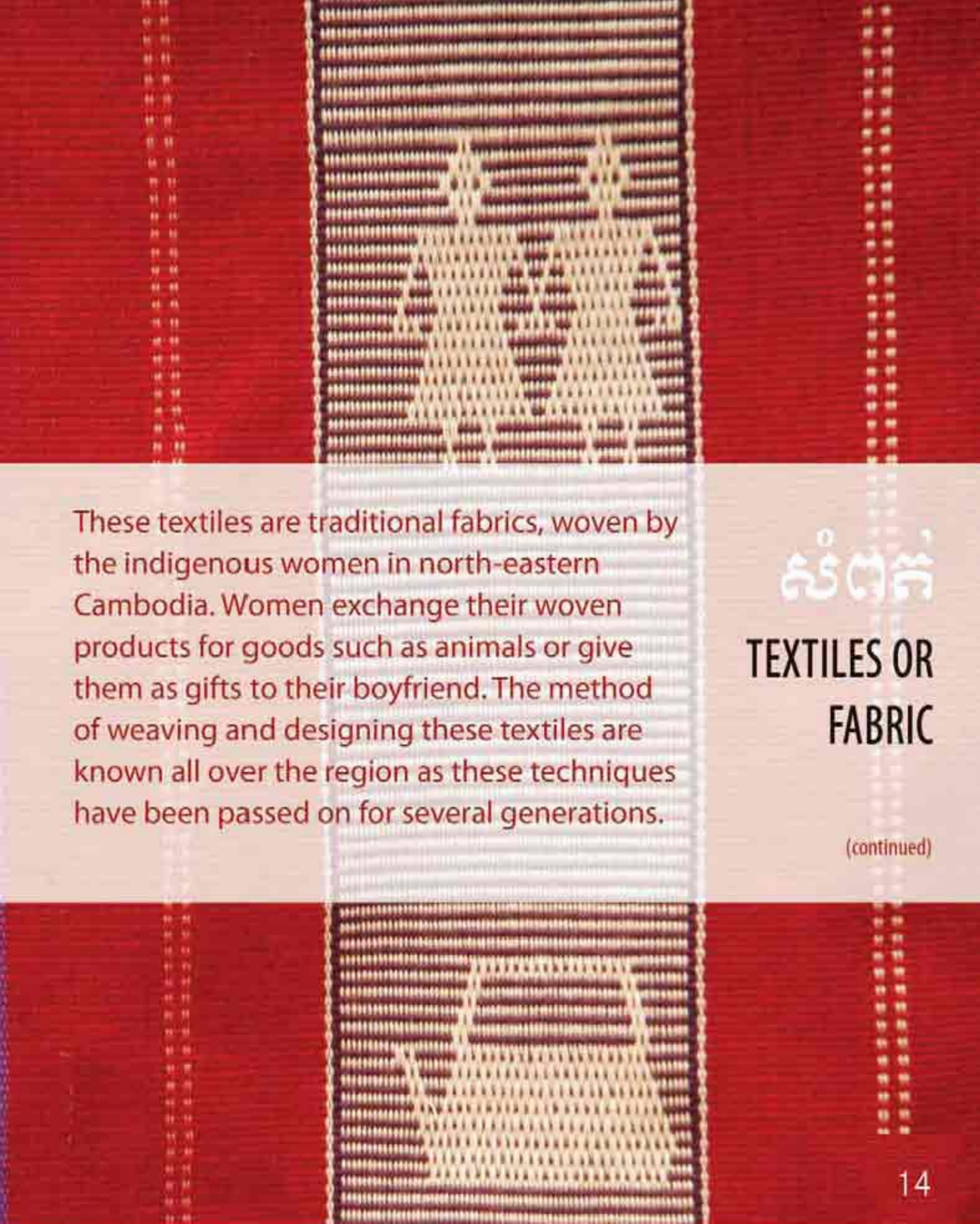
This piece of pottery can also be a room décor by itself.









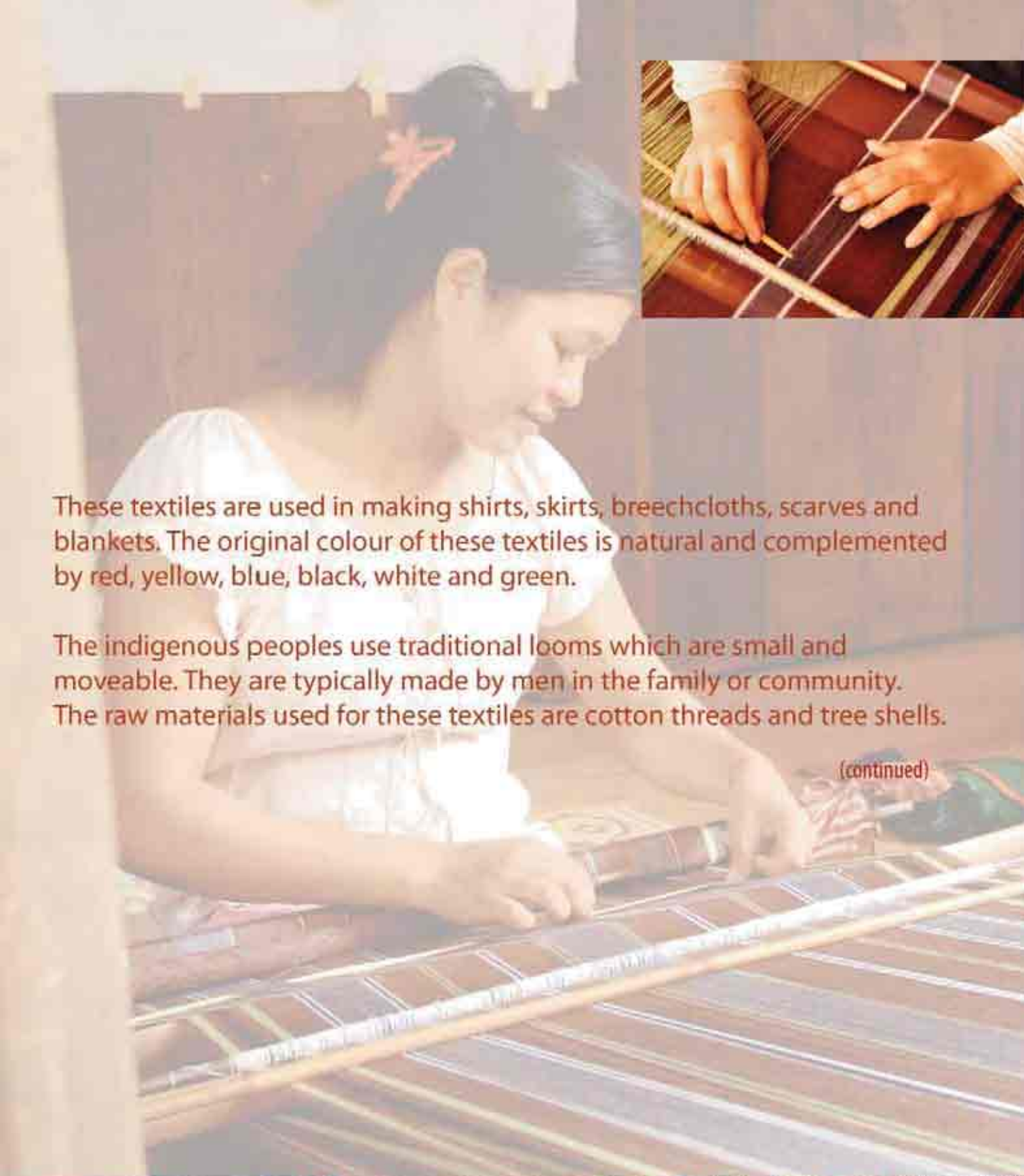


These textiles are traditional fabrics, woven by the indigenous women in north-eastern Cambodia. Women exchange their woven products for goods such as animals or give them as gifts to their boyfriend. The method of weaving and designing these textiles are known all over the region as these techniques have been passed on for several generations.

សំពត់  
**TEXTILES OR  
FABRIC**

(continued)





These textiles are used in making shirts, skirts, breechcloths, scarves and blankets. The original colour of these textiles is natural and complemented by red, yellow, blue, black, white and green.

The indigenous peoples use traditional looms which are small and moveable. They are typically made by men in the family or community. The raw materials used for these textiles are cotton threads and tree shells.

(continued)









## កំពង់ត្រែ BED COVER

The fabric colours displayed on these pages are produced by boiling tree leaves or shells. To make one square metre of this textile can take as many as seven working days, from the early stages of making threads to the final stages of weaving. Indigenous women never work on a textile for an entire day but only when they have free time in between housework and farming.



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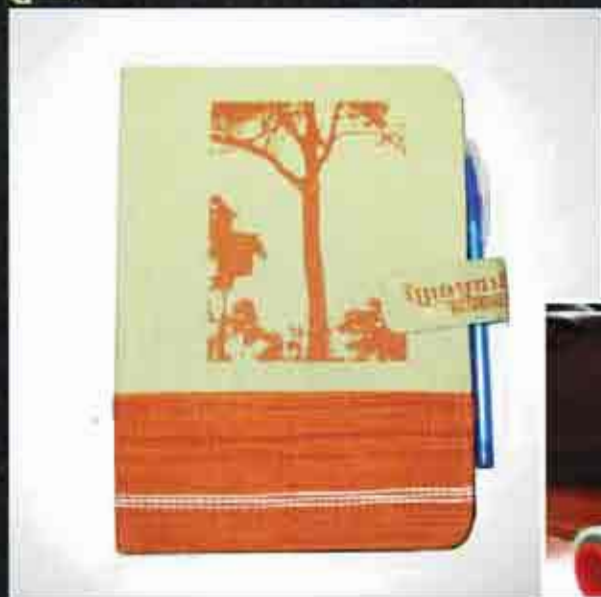




# ပြည်သူ့အသုံး BOOK COVER

Portable looms allow indigenous women to weave in their homes, outdoors, or in communal areas. Since planting cotton can be challenging, indigenous women buy coloured threads from the market.

(continued)







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# SAMPIEY

These textiles can be used to make wallets, bags, notebook covers, shirt accents, wall hangings, mattress covers, pillow cases and lampshades. One can find these textiles in the indigenous communities of the north-east provinces as well as in the town markets of Sen Monorom (Mondulkiri province) and Banlung (Ratanakiri province). They are also available at CANDO's shop in Ratanakiri and AAC's shop in Phnom Penh.







# ក្រូស KROUS



Krous is a traditional product of the Khmer and indigenous peoples, including the Kouy and Samre peoples living in the north of Cambodia, particularly in Preah Vihear, Battambang, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Banteay Meanchey, and Odor Meanchey as well as in the northeast region of Thailand. They use the krous to hold and carry water. Krous is mostly made of bamboo and some flexible wood (such as romdoul).

Today the krous is being replaced by modern metal and plastic containers and is consequently disappearing from the region.

In order to create a waterproof exterior, krous is varnished with tree resin and balsam (mrak). It is made by men and takes a few days to complete. This photo shows a krous from the Kouy ethnic group of the Sandan district. It can be used for home decoration. One can find a krous in the Gnon community in the Sandan district, Kampong Thom province, or in Prasat Sambo Saffray Shop at the Peykok Temples resort. They are also available at the AAC shops in Phnom Penh.











ក្រូស

## KROUS

The krous displayed on the next page is made by the Kouy ethnic group from the Gnon community, Sandan district, Kampong Thom province. It is a variation of the traditional krous and can be used as a flower pot.







# លីកាវ៉ែត

## L-EI KAVET

The l-ei kavet is a type of basket that is used at home for various purposes, such as for storing rice, vegetables and fruits. The photo here shows a l-ei kavet from the Kavet ethnic group of the Kok Lak community, Vouen Sai district, Ratanakiri province.

The l-ei kavet is made of bamboo. The design at the base bears the "trademark" of the ethnic group. It combines the pattern of flowers and leaves found in the community.

This type of art can also be seen in other places such as on the walls and roofs of indigenous communities in the north-east. Artists spend almost three full days to create a l-ei kavet. This product may last up to three years if used as storage and longer if used as decoration.

This product can be purchased in the Kavet communities in Ratanakiri province. They are also available at CANDO shops in Ratanakiri and at AAC in Phnom Penh.







លើកយ  
ក្នុង

## L-EI KOUY

Similar to l-ei kavet, k-ei kouy is slightly larger and differs in design and colour. Using the same production technique as that used for krous, producers apply resin and balsam (mrak) to varnish the l-ei in so that it can store water. The l-ei in this picture was made by the Kouy ethnic group from the Gnon community, Sandan district, Kampong Thom province.

(continued)





លីកយ

លីកយ L-EI KOUY

The l-ei kouy can be used for decorative purposes to hold fruits and flowers. They are for sale at the Prasat Sambo Saffary Shop in Peykok Temples resort and at the MODE shop in Kampong Thom. It is also available at the AAC shop in Phnom Penh.









# ប្លង់ ចង់-អា

The chang-a is made of bamboo and is commonly used by Cambodians in cleaning rice. The chang-a in these photos come from the Bunong ethnic group residing in the Putang community in Mondulkiri province.





# ចង្កា CHANG-A

The production of high quality chang-a takes a minimum of three days. In addition to traditional uses, chang-a can be used as home decoration. They can be purchased from the community or from My Village in Mondulkiri province. They can also be ordered through the AAC.









ផែនការ

# CHEUNG PEAN

The products shown in these photos are made by the Kouy and Khmer ethnic groups from the Salavisay and Sambo districts in Kampong Thom province. They are used mostly to hold fruits and other types of food. They are made of rattan and branches of sugar palm. The design combines the traditional cheung pean and contemporary forms. These can be purchased at the Sambo Temple resorts, the Salavisay Handicraft Shop, and at the Santuk Mountain Resort. They can also be found at the shops of Cambodian Organisation for Women Support (COWS) and Minority Organisation for Development of Economy (MODE) in Kampong Thom and of AAC in Phnom Penh.







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CHEUNG PEAN

CHEUNG PEAN









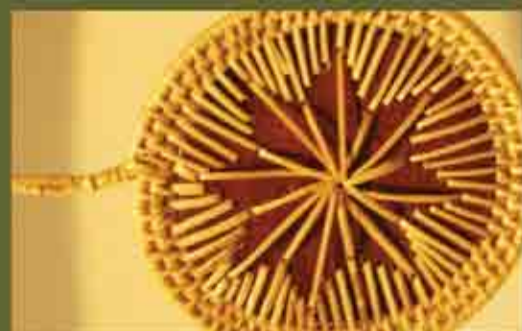
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# KEYCHAIN



The products shown in these photos are made by the Kouy and Khmer ethnic groups from the Salavisay and Sambo districts in Kampong Thom province. They are used mostly to hold fruits and other types of food. They are made of rattan and branches of sugar palm. The design combines the traditional cheung pean and contemporary forms. These can be purchased at the Sambo Temple resorts, the Salavisay Handicraft Shop, and at the Santuk Mountain Resort. They can also be found at the shops of Cambodian Organisation for Women Support (COWS) and Minority Organisation for Development of Economy (MODE) in Kampong Thom and of AAC in Phnom Penh.





ផ្សែង

# PONG

The pong is a Cambodian tool traditionally used to catch fish in lakes, streams and rivers. The pongs shown here have been redesigned for decorative purposes.







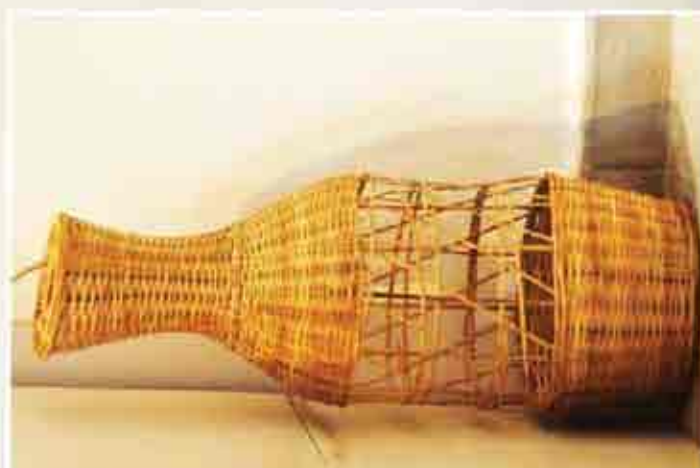


## សំពត់ PONG

Pongs are made of rattan. They are made by the Kouy ethnic group from Salavisay subdistrict in Kampong Thom province.

(continued)







These pongs can be purchased from the Sambo Temple resorts, the Salavisay Handicraft Shop, the Santuk Mountain Resort, as well as from the shops of COWS and MODE (in Kampong Thom) and AAC (in Phnom Penh).









## កន្ត្រក KANTROK

The kantrok in this photo is produced by the Kouy ethnic group from the Korolot community, Cheb district in Preah Vihear province. It is made of bamboo and is used to carry a variety of items. The products shown here, designed as a shopping basket, is a variation of the traditional kantrok. These kantroks can be found in the said community as well as the shops of Farmer Livelihood Development (FLD) and AAC, both in Phnom Penh.







# Shops listed in the catalogue

1. Artisan Association of Cambodia (AAC)  
Address: #11b, Street 240 GPO Box 1303 Phnom Penh, 3307  
Tel. : (855) 23 213 904  
Email: aac@online.com.kh
2. Farmer Livelihood Development (FLD)  
Address: No 3, Street 323, Sangkat Boeung Kak II, Toul Kork, Phnom Penh  
Tel. : (855) 23 998 442; (855) 12 789 173  
Email: somithfld@ezecom.com.kh
3. Village Focus Cambodia (VFC)  
Sen Monorom city, Mondukiri province
4. Bunong Handicraft Shop  
Sen Monorom city, Mondukiri province
5. My Village (MVI)  
Mr Sun Youra  
Sen Monorom city, Mondukiri province  
Tel. : (855) 16 590111  
Email: youra@mvicambodia.org
6. Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC)  
Mr Chenda Ravuth  
Address : Village 2, Labansieik, Banlung city, Ratanakiri province  
Tel. : (855) 12 794857  
Email: chendaravuth@gmail.com
7. Cambodian NTFP Development Organisation (CANDO)-Ratanakiri  
Address : Village 3, Labansieik, Banlung city, Ratanakiri province  
Tel.: (855) 75 6451000, Mobile: (855) 92 286383  
Email: candontfp@camintel.com; candodevelopment@gmail.com
8. Minority Organization for Development of Economy (MODE)  
House number 13, Kampong Thom Village, Kampong Rotes commune,  
Stung Sen district, Kampong Thom province  
Tel. : (855) 62 962962; Mobile: (855) 12 947924  
Email: sinalpeanh@yahoo.com
9. Cambodia Organisation for Women Support (COWS)  
Mrs Chum Chanputheavy  
Address: 4 villages: Srae, Korky, Okroach and Marak Kor village, Prasat Balang district,  
Kampong Thom province  
Tel. : (855) 12 784122  
Email: cows\_org@yahoo.com





## Indigenous Crafts of Cambodia

Indigenous peoples in Cambodia, especially in the north-eastern provinces, are considered by researchers to follow very closely the tradition and customs of their ancestors. These traditions however are at risk of vanishing due to the lack of promotion and threats of displacement.

The Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP) is a joint programme of four UN agencies, FAO, ILO, UNDP and UNESCO. It aims to promote Cambodia's cultural heritage, while improving the livelihoods of the poor in the remotest parts of four provinces, Monduliri, Ratankiri, Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom.

This catalogue showcases the fascinating products created by indigenous peoples. While these products are used as part of their daily activities, the designs were further developed, with the support of CISP, to serve the functional needs and decorative tastes of a wider market. This catalogue furthermore recounts the lives and practices of the communities that produce them.

Increasingly known for their beauty, cultural identity and uniqueness, these products attract significant amount of attention at trade fairs and exhibits. It is hoped that this catalogue will help preserve and promote the culture of Cambodian indigenous peoples, allowing them to be living heritage forever.

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**DECENT WORK**

A better world starts here.