

Thai Treasure Trails

Explore the exquisite handcrafted heritage of Thailand's artisan communities.



amazing
THAILAND

The logo graphic for Amazing Thailand, featuring a stylized yellow and orange shape that resembles a traditional Thai smile or a decorative flourish.

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For centuries, Thai handicrafts have captured the world's imagination.

Thai civilization's legendary attention to the finest detail is reflected in a rich heritage of exquisite sculpture, carving, weaving and painting.

Reflecting their deep connection to the natural environment,

Thai artisans work with silver, wood, clay, and other natural materials.

Artisans craft jewelry, paintings, statues; and many other functional items, such as ceramics, bags, and traditional musical instruments.

Whether intricate and ornate, or simple and earthy;

Thai handicrafts communicate a vibrant charm,
infused with the gentle Thai spirit.

Thais and international guests enjoy buying crafts, meeting artisans, and sharing their inspiring stories. Nowadays, it is also possible to visit local artisan communities; learn about unique Thai arts, culture and traditions; and experience directly how Thai crafts are made.

This combination of crafts and cultural tourism provides precious livelihoods to local community members; while contributing to the preservation of Thailand's wealth of cultural and natural resources.

Many Thai artisans work in crafts groups and cooperatives, contributing towards thriving communities, and strong teamwork.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has the proud duty of promoting this precious heritage: helping to conserve traditional Thai skills; and promoting responsible, cultural tourism based on Thainess.

Tourists can see how quality products are made; experience the lifestyles, colour and uniqueness of diverse ethnic groups; and celebrate new innovations, building on ancient, Thai wisdom.

This book introduces you to some of Thailand's finest artisans.

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Preserving precious traditions Crafting value for visitors

Celadon earthenware, Chiang Mai province



Background

Celadon is a Lanna (Northern Thai) style of pottery; coated in a natural, transparent, jade-colored glaze. The glaze has a striking, **'cracked'** design, resembling natural jade, which is considered an auspicious material. The pottery is fired until its texture resembles real stone. This technique also creates the unique, light blue-green and jade-green patterns, for which Celadon is known.

The French word, Celadon, comes from a combination of the Sanskrit words **'sila'**, meaning rock, and **'don'**, meaning green. The rich, green color is produced by mixing hardwood ash with topsoil, and then glazing the pottery in an oxygen reducing kiln at temperatures of between 1260 to 1300 degrees Celsius. Celadon has been awarded the coveted GI (Geographical Indication) status, in recognition of its significant importance to Chiang Mai's rich artistic and cultural heritage.



 Highlights

Celadon originated in Xinjiang, China. The pottery first arrived via Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, where it was known as chinaware. Celadon later arrived in Chiang Mai, brought by Chinese traders. Chiang Mai established a flourishing Celadon trade, which continued until Chiang Mai suffered a period of military defeats against Myanmar. Highly skilled, Celadon potters were persuaded to move to Myanmar. Some time later, Shan refugees came to settle in Chiang Mai, and established new Celadon kilns in Chiang Mai. These artists have passed down their skills, from one generation to the next, until the present day. Most Celadon is green. However, Chiang Mai artisans have also experimented to produce many other colors, including brown, gold, dark blue, grey, white, crimson and yellow. Celadon has a special charm, enhanced by its' history, cultural value and hand-crafted production skills. Celadon pottery production does not rely on modern technology. These attributes have combined to earn Celadon a respected place as a high-end, fine art product. Today, Celadon is still produced using traditional methods, using predominantly natural materials. Designs reflect the color and creativity of Thai artistic wisdom; alongside new, creative, functional designs which broaden the uses of Celadon.



 Production Process

The stages of production are: i) Prepare the earth by washing and kneading it, until all of the air bubbles are removed. ii) Mold the shape of the Celadon object. This can be done in three ways: first, by hand-molding, secondly using a jigger, and finally by using a potter's mold. iii) Place the object to dry in the shade. iv) Decorate the pottery with various designs. v) Fire the pottery for the first time, at a temperature of 800 degrees for 8 to 10 hours. vi) Check the pottery carefully. Designs can be painted onto the objects during this stage. vii) Coat the object in natural, chemical-free glaze (this is made from mixing hardwood ash or ferric oxide / limestone / quartz and feldspar with topsoil). viii) Fire the pottery again at a temperature of approximately 1260 to 1300 degrees, for 10 to 12 hours. ix) The result will be the distinctive, jade-green stoneware, with an eye-catching, cracked design, which is Celadon.



The secret of making Celadon lies in preparing the earth. The earth must be dark, from Chiang Mai province. It should be left to settle for 3 years or more, so that organic compounds can biodegrade. The artisans pound the earth finely, and sieve it to remove iron ore, so that only pure earth is left. Baan Celadon, in Chiang Mai, places great emphasis on the importance of continuing the culture of handmade, Celadon earthenware; conserving traditional, Thai wisdom; and producing colorful designs which reflect Thai culture.

Baan Celadon is a combination of residence, factory, and a showroom to sell Celadon products. Their products include tableware, vases, decorations, lightshades, gifts and souvenirs, under the Baan Celadon brand. The company has a strong reputation for quality and craftsmanship, and excellent feedback

from customers in Thailand and overseas. Moreover, Baan Celadon has created livelihoods, income and pride among local community members; contributing to an improved standard of living. Baan Celadon is also an education center, where the younger generation come to learn Celadon skills, and adapt designs to meet customers' needs. To maintain the integrity of Celadon, adaptations are kept within 3 central styles: Standard Normal (no decoration); Carved Design (includes carving decorations in the earthenware, before it is fired); and Art Design (with painted designs to increase product value).

Celadon products are priced from 100 Baht to over a million Baht, depending on the intricacy of the design and decoration. Some artisans take over a year to decorate a single vase. For this reason, Baan Celadon has also crafted numerous artistic geniuses. These local village artists did not study art. They are simple people who learned and developed exquisite skills from experience. Perhaps, even beyond the delicate Celadon work, this human, cultural legacy is what makes the deepest impression on visitors.

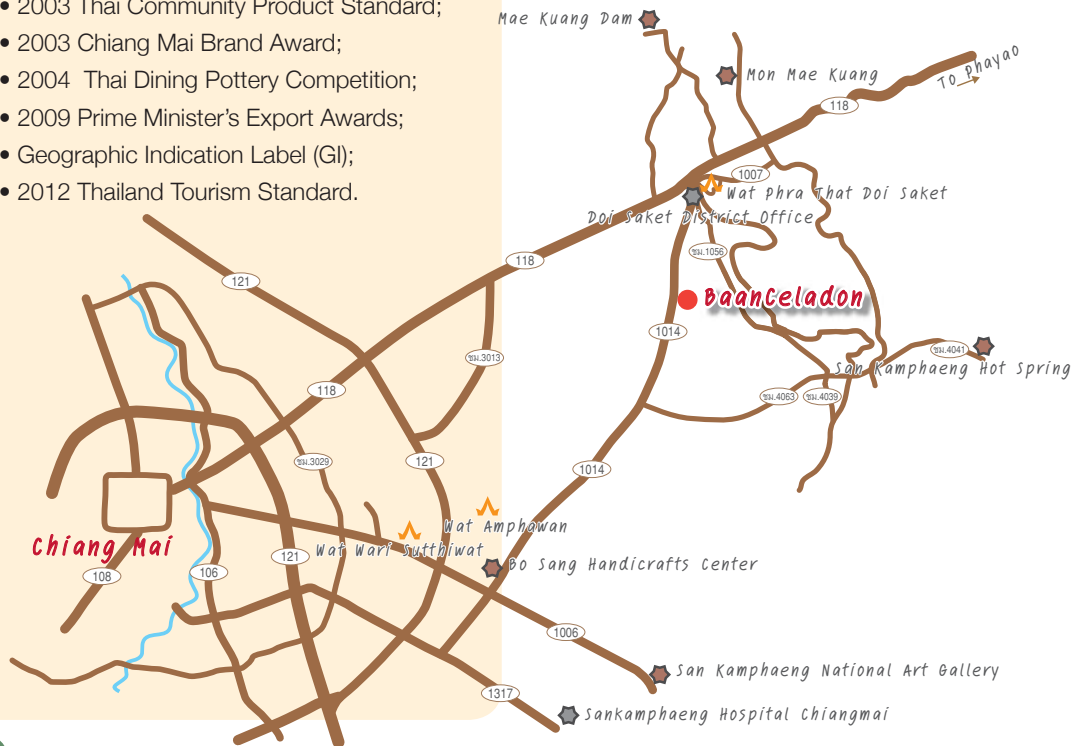




Awards

Baan Celadon has been awarded numerous prizes and standards, including:

- One Tambon One Product (OTOP) 5 Star;
- 2003 OTO Product Champion;
- 2003 Thai Community Product Standard;
- 2003 Chiang Mai Brand Award;
- 2004 Thai Dining Pottery Competition;
- 2009 Prime Minister's Export Awards;
- Geographic Indication Label (GI);
- 2012 Thailand Tourism Standard.



Contact information

Tourists who are interested to see a demonstration and to learn about Celadon production can contact Khun Kanda Kanchanakorn. Tel. +66 5333 8288.

Baan Celadon is located at Celadon, Moo 3, Chiang Mai Sankamphaeng Road, Chiang Mai 50130. The website is www.chiangmaiceladon.com.

A visit to Baan Celadon can be combined with visiting other tourist attractions in the area, such as the Sankamphaeng hot springs (accommodation is available). Many visitors also enjoy visiting local Buddhist temples. Close to Sankamphaeng is Mae Rim district. Here, visitors can visit the Dara Pirom Palace

Museum, of Royal Princess Jao Dara Rasamee, who was a famous patron of Northern Thai arts. Close to the museum, you can also visit Dara Pirom Forest Temple, where Phra Ajarn Mun Bhuridatta, a revered monk who is credited with establishing Thailand's forest temple tradition once resided. Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden is also close by. This garden impresses visitors with a diverse collection of flowers and breath taking, 360 degree views from a 30 meter high, 400 meter long forest canopy walkway. Call +66 5384 1234 for more information, or visit www.qsbg.org.

From faraway lands, to flourish in Lampang

Legendary chicken ceramics, Lampang province



Background

Chicken bowls have become a symbolic product of Lampang province. Today, numerous, local factories produce these distinctive plates and bowls. Traditional chicken bowls are made from white kaolin clay. They are round, with a distinctive outer rim, and tall base. The chicken designs are painted over an enamel glaze. Chicken bowls originated in China, over 100 years ago, made by Hakka Chinese people from Tai Pu district, Guangdong, China. Initially, Chaozhou Chinese exported the chicken bowls to Chinese migrants, who had escaped war, political disturbance, and natural disasters, by moving to Asian countries like Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Thailand had a large Chinese migrant community, and was a good market for the chicken bowls.





 Highlights

Traditional chicken bowls are made from white kaolin, Lampang clay. They are round, with a distinctive outer rim, and tall base. Designs are painted over an enamel glaze. The bowls are handmade, without motorized machinery. The bowls are fired in a traditional, wood fired, Dragon Kiln, which has a series of 'steps' inside. They are fired at a temperature of approximately 1260 degrees Celsius. The distinctive glaze is made from rice husk ash. After glazing and firing the bowls, the chicken designs are painted onto this glaze. Then, the bowls are fired again, in a round kiln, at a temperature of approximately 750 degrees Celsius.

Dhanabadee factory, in Lampang, is a legendary producer of chicken bowls. The factory was established by Mr. E Chin Simyu, a Hakka Chinese from Guangdong, whose family had already produced chicken bowls in China. Mr. E discovered kaolin clay in Lampang. Initially, the bowls were molded by hand, and fired in traditional



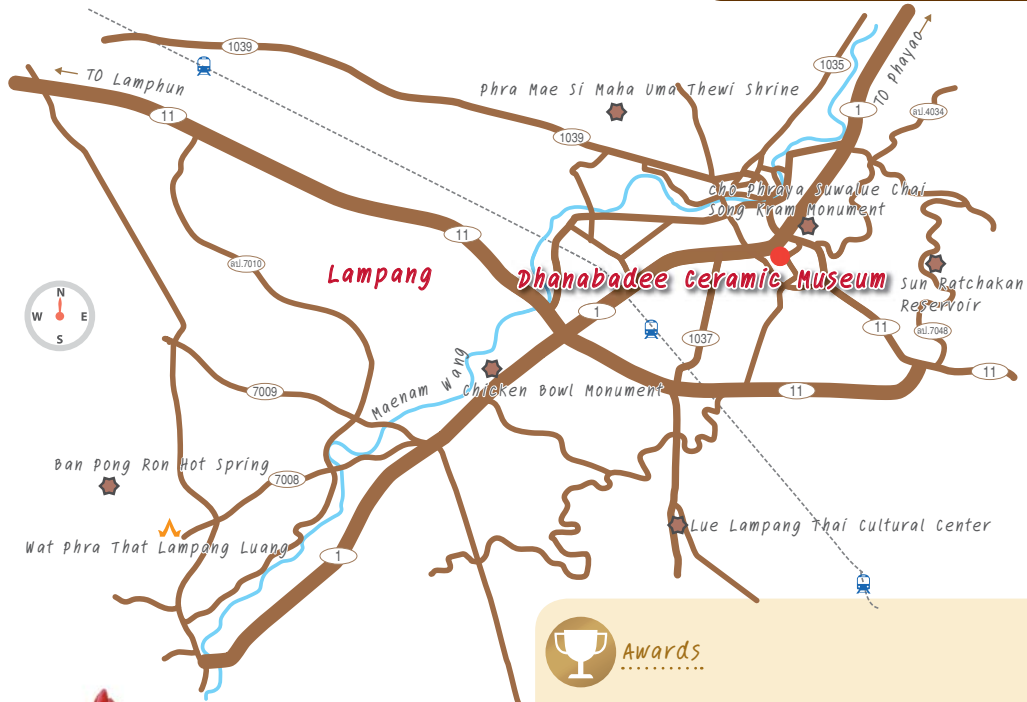
dragon kilns. Pudding bowls and sauce bowls became best sellers. Gradually, more beautiful designs were introduced. Later, craftsmen found a way of pressing traditional designs onto the bowls, before firing the pottery. Today, the chicken bowls made in Dhanabadee factory combine quality, diverse models and vibrant colorful designs. This makes Dhanabadee stand out, compared to other producers. To celebrate this history, the Dhanabadee Museum was opened, with the aim of conserving chicken bowls and sharing how kaolin clay was discovered in Lampang, which was the starting point of a unique aspect of Lampang's history. The 'Simyu Chicken' family tell the story of the chicken bowls to visitors.



production process

The stages of production are: i) Put the plaster mold on the jigger. ii) Push lumps of clay (which have already been kneaded) into the potter's mold, using sufficient force so that the clay sticks to the sides of the mold. iii) Push down the plaster with the blade of a knife, scrape off excess plaster, and sculpt the rim with a small stick; then lift the mold from the potter's target. iv) When the clay in the mold begins to dry and shrink, lift it out of the mold, for the next step of decoration. v)

Fire the pottery in the dragon kiln, beginning at the front of the kiln, for approximately 8 hours. The potters gradually increase the heat of the kiln, for 45 minutes to one hour. Gradually, the bowls are moved from one step of the kiln to the next. This takes a total of approximately 24 hours. Finally, the chicken bowls are left to cool down, and can be removed after 3 days.



Awards

- One Tambon One Product (OTOP) 5 Star;
- The Department of Intellectual Property awarded Lampang as Thailand's top **'Ceramics City'** and awarded chicken bowls with GI status.



Contact information

Visitors can see the traditional dragon kiln and orange chicken bowls at the **Dhanabadee factory, and Dhanabadee ceramic museum**, which are located at 24 Wat Chong Khum Road, Phra Bat sub district, Muang Lampang. The Dhanabadee Museum is open to visitors every day, from 09.00 to 17.00. Activities include demonstrations and the chance to paint your own chicken bowl. Tel. +66 5422 1103 extension 118, or visit www.dhanabadee.com. The cost of entry is 100 Thai Baht, for international visitors.

If you visit Lampang, you should also definitely not miss ancient Wat Phra That Lampang Luang, which is considered to be the most sacred temple in Lampang. Another popular activity is to ride a horse and cart around the city, for either 30 minutes or one hour.

Techniques for firing the dragon kiln include: i) observing carefully whether the bowls are sufficiently baked. An indicator is that the flame color will change from orange to yellow, and almost white. You should use sunglasses to observe this. If you are unsure, remove a selection of dishes from various areas of the kiln to check. ii) During firing, ash will block ventilation channels in the kiln, reducing the heat. Bamboo sticks can be used to clear the ventilation channels and push small pieces of charcoal back into the fire. iii) If flames start to leap out of the mouth of the kiln, heat will also be lost. When this happens the artisans close the mouth of the kiln with a metal plate, until the flames are subdued.

From earth to art, defining the spirit of Sukhothai

Chinaware, Sukhothai province



Background

Chinaware is a type of earthenware known for its combination of beauty and durability. In Thailand, chinaware has been well known since the Sukhothai period (1238-1583). Chinaware designs and patterns have been passed between Thai artisans for generations. This artistic heritage continues to inspire modern Thais, kindling memories of the Sukhothai period, which is fondly remembered as an era of abundance and good governance. During the Sukhothai period, clay was a very popular material for making household wares. Traditional kilns were a common household object. Even today, surviving artifacts make an important contribution towards our understanding of history; and of the priceless, artistic heritage of the Sukhothai period, which has been passed down until today.





Mr. Paeng Prompetch, of Muang Kao sub-district, Muang district, Sukhothai is recognized as a leading champion of Sukhothai's artistic heritage. His family has produced chinaware for many generations. They were also bestowed the honour of presenting examples of their work to HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, on the occasion of a royal visit to Sukhothai. Mr. Suthep Prompetch, owner of **'Suthep Chinaware'**, and a former antique repairer for the Thai Fine Arts Department, is one of nine artisans who have built upon his father's legacy. Mr. Suthep Prompetch has struck a delicate balance. He has developed ranges of innovative



and functional chinaware products, while continuing to preserve the traditional, historic, designs of **'Suthep Chinaware'** and the local artisans of Sukhothai. As a result of his work, it is now easy for Thais and international visitors to appreciate the chinaware of Sukhothai.

Highlights

Sukhothai chinaware's most distinctive feature is delicate, pale, blue-green glazing (known as 'crow-egg' color in Thai). The glaze is made from a unique, Sukhothai recipe. There are two main types of chinaware. The first, known as **'hard earth'**, is used for objects which hold liquids, such as glasses, vases and jars. The second, known as **'soft earth'**, is molded from earth with a rich, terracotta tint. These pieces are highly polished on the outside, and decorated with beautiful patterns. Popular patterns include roundels, flowers and suns. Fish designs are considered to be most outstanding, and a symbol of Sukhothai. Fish designs allude directly to the famous inscription of the Sukhothai Stone: **"In the rivers are fish. In the fields is rice."** The Sukhothai Stone was built by order of King Ramkhamhaeng, Sukhothai's greatest king. Historians propose that the fish, which are referred to on the Sukhothai Stone, are shark minnows. This is because an ancient chinaware dish was discovered in Sukhothai, decorated with a fish design and the words 'shark minnow'. Shark minnows are freshwater fish, commonly found in the Yom River valley, where Sukhothai was established.

Production Process

Sukhothai chinaware is made using local, white earth, from which iron ore and other impurities have been removed. First, artists soak the earth until it resembles mud. Next, they use a very thin cloth to sieve impurities from the mud. This earth is rolled into lumps, which are dried in a cool breeze, and then pounded into fine earth. The artist adds water, and kneads this mixture until it is sticky, and there are no air bubbles.



This, potter's earth, can be stored in a bag. When the potter is ready to make objects, he begins by molding the potter's earth into the desired shapes. This can be done by hand or using a mold. The objects are left to dry, and surfaces are smoothed using sandpaper. Next, the objects are fired in a kiln for one day, at a temperature of approximately 800 to 900 degrees Celsius. They are dried in a warm kiln for a further two days, and left in a cool kiln for half a day, before being removed. After this, surfaces are smoothed again using sand paper. At this point, the pottery can be painted, usually with black or dark blue ink. Next, the artist dips the objects in blue-green or brown glaze, and fires them for another day, at temperatures of approximately 1250-1280 degrees Celsius. The objects are left to sit in the warm kiln for a further two days. The result is beautiful, glossy chinaware.



Awards

Suthep Chinaware was awarded 5 star OTOP in 2003, top 3 star OTOP in 2004, 2006 and 2009 and the Thai Community Product Standard.



Contact information

Visitors can watch a chinaware making demonstration or try their hand painting their own souvenir at **Suthep Chinaware**, 203/2 Moo 3, Old City, Muang Sukhothai 64210. The factory is open daily from 08.00 to 18.00. For more information, contact Khun Suthep at +66 5569 7036 / +668 7198 0203 / +668 7737 8611 or by e-mail at sukdee1983@hotmail.com.

The chinaware community is close to Sukhothai Historical Park, a World Heritage site, which is open every day from 06.00 to 21.00 (ticket sales close at 18.00). The historical sites are beautifully illuminated between 19.00 and 21.00.



Information is available from the Sukhothai Historical Park tourist information office, Muang Kao, Muang District, Sukhothai. Tel. +66 5569 7310.

Other fun activities include visiting the statue of King Ramkamhaeng; and taking a tram, or cycling around the historic park to visit sacred, historical sites such as Wat Maha That, Wat Si Chum and Wat Chang Lom. With a little extra time, visitors can also enjoy climbing to the peak of Sukhothai mountain, in Ramkhamhaeng National Park.

Ban Chiang's charming, prehistoric pots

Vibrant, earthenware pottery

Udon Thani province



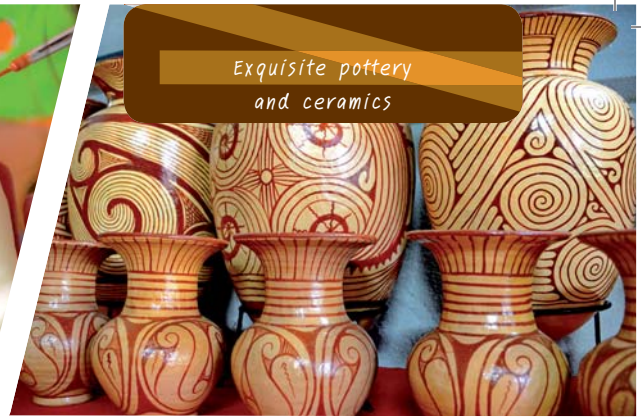
Background

There is a particular sense of achievement, which can only be experienced by trying your hand, painting an earthenware pot in ancient **Ban Chiang Community**, Nong Han district, Udon Thani. This sense of pride is because Ban Chiang is one of Thailand's oldest, most famous and most important archaeological sites.

Originally, three antique pots and other stone fragments were discovered by anthropologists. By 1992, Ban Chiang had been designated as a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO. Ban Chiang earthenware is an archaeological site of global significance, and vibrant artistic value.

The ancestors of Ban Chiang's current inhabitants migrated across the Mekong River from Muang Puan, in Xiangkhouang, Lao PDR. During the reign of Rama III,





the area was known as Pong Paeng forest, and later Ban Chiang. The people in this area are often called the Tai Puan of Ban Chiang.

 *Highlights*

The highlight of Ban Chiang pottery are distinctive, eye catching, prehistoric designs, dating back more than 5,000 years. The designs are lively, with a simple power. Visitors can also see original examples of Ban Chiang's pots and jars in Ban Chiang National Museum. Most local villagers, from children to the elderly, are very proud of this heritage and able to paint the ancient designs.





Production Process

The process begins by preparing **'fine earth'** and **'fixing earth'**, from the local area.

First, the fine earth is dried in the sun, and then pounded into a fine powder. Impurities, such as stone and wood fragments are removed. Water is sprinkled on the earth until it is damp. Then, the earth is covered with plastic sheeting for two nights. The **'fixing earth'** is a kind of sticky, local mortar, which helps to prevent the earthenware objects from cracking, while they are being made. The two types of earth should be mixed at a ratio of 1:1. The earth is kneaded together, and molded using a shaping stone on the inside, (this looks like a stone pestle), and a flat wooden paddle on the outside. Next, the pots are dried in the sun, before being fired in a straw and firewood kiln, until the pottery turns a glowing red.

Artisans paint the designs based on their memory of the original patterns. As a result, these ancient designs have been given a new lease of life.

There are three common types of design. The first is inspired by nature, including leaves and flowers. The second is based on geometry, like spirals, squares, circles and triangles. The third is free-style, based on the artists' imagination, such as 'S' designs.

In Ban Chiang, men are generally more skilled at carpentry and pottery. Women are more skilled as cooks and weavers. Based on their interesting way of life, the people of Ban Chiang have opened the **'Ban Chiang Homestay.'** Here, it is possible for visitors to learn about pottery, natural dying using indigo, traditional Tai Puan dress, and bamboo weaving to make various household goods.





Awards

Through their homestay program, the local community offers a warm welcome to guests who wish to experience local culture. Their welcome includes traditional dance and a blessing. Visitors can also enjoy a demonstration of Ban Chiang pottery making and painting, and even have the opportunity to join a crafts workshop; where they make their own miniature Ban Chiang jar and paint a spiral, flower, or leaf design. As a result, Ban Chiang won a Thailand Tourism Award in 2013, and a Creative Tourism award.



Contact information

Ban Chiang is open every day, from 08.00 to 20.00. For more information, please contact Khun Chumpon Sitiboon, **Ban Chiang community**, Nong Han district, Udon Thani 41320. Tel. +668 1485 1864. The journey from central Udon Thani is approximately 50 kilometres, along highway 22. Turn left when you reach the World Cultural Heritage sign, and continue for a further 6 kms to reach the village.



Don't forget to visit the Ban Chiang National Museum, which includes many fascinating artifacts, discovered in Ban Chiang, including plates and jars; as well as information about life and culture in Ban Chiang.

Cheeky, charming sculptures

Dan Kwian village, Nakhon Ratchasima province



Background

Lining both sides of the road from Nakhon Ratchasima to Chock Chai, you will see a sea of various-sized vases, lampshades, and smiling statues. With cheeky charm, these creative and colorful crafts invite one inside rows of local shops, for a little friendly bartering over diverse, beautiful products. As a result, **‘Dan Kwian’** has become one of the best known pottery communities in north-east Thailand. The community is home to almost countless kilns and shops. Visitors can also enjoy themselves, practicing molding and decorating the pottery items. Pottery skills were passed down to the people of Dan Kwian by Mon-Khymer ancestors, who migrated across the Mae Kong river to this area. Originally, these skills were used to make housewares, and later used to make decorative arts.





 **Highlights**

The arts of Dan Kwian are particularly distinctive, because they are made from earth which possesses a rich, natural shine, without the need to use a glaze. Moreover, when you tap the pottery, it has a deep, vibrant and satisfying echo! This is because the local earth has a significant amount of iron ore. The ore melts and blends into the earth when the pottery is fired; creating very strong, durable, and glossy pottery. The potters of Dan Kwian proudly affirm that their earth is different to elsewhere. It is fine, soft, and holds water well. It is also a deep red color, from the natural iron and bronze deposits. After firing, the pottery becomes extremely strong. Usually, it is not glazed, but fired at a temperature of approximately 800 to 1150 Celsius, resulting in dark red and brown hues.





production process

At Dan Kwian, you can observe three stages of making crafts: i) Preparation of raw materials, ii) molding and sculpting the objects, and iii) decorating the pottery with designs. Preparing the earth begins with pounding the earth to a fine powder, sieving impurities from the earth, and mixing it with sand.

The earth is soaked until it is sticky, and sieved one more time to make it even finer. Next, air bubbles are removed, by kneading the earth into a smooth mixture. Dan Kwian pottery is usually molded by hand, with a potter's wheel, requiring great skill and imagination. Sometimes, molds are also used.

The colorful designs are painted, sculpted, carved and imprinted into the pottery, while the earth is still damp, before the pottery is sent to the kiln. Some ready-made designs are also imprinted, after the pottery has been fired.

The pottery is fired at a temperature of approximately 1,280 Celsius, taking 10-12 hours.

The final stage of the process, before the products can be sold, is to check the quality of the products. Dan Kwian pottery is not limited to household objects like jars and bowls. The potters have designed a variety of different decorative objects, used to beautify homes and gardens, as well as hotels and resorts. There are also a huge range of small, cute, and inexpensive souvenirs.



Exquisite pottery
and ceramics



 contact information

Dan Kwian OTOP village is open from 08.00 to 19.00 every day. More than 400 shops line both sides of the street. Visitors to Dan Kwian Homestay, Chock Chai district should call +668 7396 4001 or +668 7877 7644. Or, Alternatively, contact Nakhon Din pottery group, by calling Khun Mith Singhtalay on +668 1730 9269. Close by, a recommended spot is Thep Wittayakom temple and Dhamma Garden, which is Asia's largest ceramic mosaic shrine (made with over 20 million pieces of mosaic), depicting Tripitaka, Buddhism's sacred texts. Tel. +668 1828 7616 or visit www.watbannrai.com

 Awards

- Exceptional product of Nakhon Ratchasima;
- Community Products Standard;
- 2 and 3 star OTOP in 2010;
- The Best Provincial Trade Zone of Thailand;
- Ministry of Commerce Award 2010.

Saving Samut Sakhon's glowing, golden signature



Benjarong porcelain, Samut Sakhon province

Background

If you would like to travel back in time to experience classic, elegant, Thai culture, **Benjarong Don Kai Dee village** is the place to visit! The village is full of unique, Thai, arts and crafts. From the entrances of peoples' homes, to their back gardens, every home glows with golden, Thai treasures. Traditional Thai houses literally overflow with finely crafted, Benjarong arts; transporting visitors back in time, to the reign of Rama 5. Moreover, anyone worried that Benjarong is a little too expensive will think again...and wish they had visited earlier! Many of the arts on sale in Don Kai Dee village also have modern designs, which are highly useful in daily life. Yes, this is the place to find that special tea cup or coffee cup, which you have always wanted...You will not be disappointed.



The story behind Ban Don Kai Dee is as inspiring as the products are beautiful. The professional artisans who make these exquisite arts used to work as laborers in the factory of one of Samut Sakhon's original producers of Benjarong pottery. Many of them were relatives. They learned their skills from Thai and Chinese artists who were invited to the factory. In 1989, the factory experienced a financial crisis, and was forced to close. The workers decided to form their own artisans group, to conserve, continue and adapt Benjarong arts. They established the Ban Don Kai Dee group, and went on to develop many unique designs. Benjarong products were selected for special recognition by the OTOP program, and are now well known internationally. In 2007, the inspiring efforts of the local artisans lead to a Thailand Tourism Award as an outstanding tourism community, from the Tourism Authority of Thailand.





Benjarong is recognized as one of Thailand's most valuable and ancient arts, and a symbol of Thai identity. Historically, the fine porcelain was found exclusively in the Royal, Thai court. Originally, these enamel design techniques had their roots in China, dating back to the Ming dynasty (1426-35). During the reign of King Prasat Thong (1630-1655), a Thai artist traveled to China to oversee production of new designs, in Thai style. Some Benjarong was produced in Fukian and Guangdong provinces. Benjarong pottery from Jingdezhen province was also popular in the royal

court, because of the fine quality of work, and skills of the artisans. The distinctive gold designs used the same enameling techniques as traditional Benjarong, decorated with paint which contained pure gold. This style was highly fashionable in the Qing dynasty, during the reigns of the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors (1662-1736). In Thailand, this corresponded with the reign of King Narai until the reign of King Thai Sa, during the Ayutthaya period. During this period, many pieces of gold ceramics were also ordered from Japan. The style was also highly valued during the reign of Rama II (1809-1824).

The word Benjarong is derived from the word **'benja'**, meaning five and **'rong'** meaning colours. The original five colors were black, white, yellow, red, and green. In addition, secondary colors are used, such as pink, mauve, and brown. Don Kai Dee village is Thailand's most highly recognized benjarong community; known for recreating traditional Thai designs, and creating new, modern designs, with fine attention to detail. It is also recognized for its history



of cooperation among villagers. Khun Urai Danguem is the president of Ban Don Kai Dee benjarong Group. He relishes telling his story. From humble beginnings as a ceramics factory worker, Khun Urai was promoted to the Benjarong department. He has now passed on his skills to many young people in the community. Today, the community is one of the most famous places in Samut Sakhon, and community members are able to make a good living from Benjarong. The village has customers from around the world, including Thailand, Switzerland, Korea, and Japan.

Highlights

The highlight of Benjarong from Don Kai Dee village are fine designs, including patterns which were popular in the courts of Rama II and Rama V. In addition, the artisans have created many innovative designs, which celebrate Thai culture and traditions. For examples, pottery is decorated with scenes from traditional Thai theatre, floating markets, and Thai New Year celebrations.

Production Process

Benjarong is a type of ceramics, made from porcelain. The production process is similar to other ceramics. The distinctive feature is how enamel is used to create designs. The work begins with preparation of the earth, then molding and firing the porcelain. The artists begin to decorate the objects with beautiful, golden patterns and designs. Next, the pottery is



allowed to dry. After that, the artists paint other colors inside the gold designs. The paint should be neither too thick, to avoid risk of flaking; nor too thin, to avoid pale colors. The painted objects are coated in enamel, and fired again, which strengthens the porcelain and fixes the colors. The gold ink used to decorate these arts costs 30,000 Thai Baht (almost \$1,000 USD) for a small pot. Many of the other decorative colors are also imported. Working with such precious materials requires exceptional craftsmen, with a fine eye for



detail. For this reason, the most elaborate designs are expensive. Benjarong crafts are highly sought after, in Thailand and overseas. These genuine, fine arts have contributed significantly towards international recognition for Thailand's rich artistic and cultural heritage.



Awards

Ban Don Kai Dee benjarong village was awarded 5 star OTOP status in 2003; a prize for being an Outstanding Tourism Community in 2007 and many other prizes, which testify to the outstanding quality of benjarong in Ban Don Kai Dee community



Contact information

Don Kai Dee community, Krathum Baen district, Samut Sakhon province welcomes visitors who are interested to experience local life, and learn about benjarong production. Visitors can see demonstrations, practice painting benjarong pottery, and even stay overnight in a local homestay. For more information, visitors should contact Khun Urai Benjarong, president of Don Kai Dee Benjarong Group, at **Don Kai Dee Tourism Group Information Center**, 32 Moo 1, Sakhon Nakhon municipality, 74110. Tel. +66 3447 3480 / +668 1861 4626.



Carving Lanna's wooden masterpieces

Baan Tawai, Chiang Mai province



Background

When the ancient, northern Thai, Lanna Kingdom is mentioned, most peoples' thoughts will automatically drift to Chiang Mai, contemplating famous landmarks like Doi Suthep temple and Doi Inthanon National Park. Similarly, when discussing shopping in Chiang Mai, many people will immediately think of Chiang Mai's first and best known handicrafts village, **'Baan Tawai'**. Baan Tawai is an exceptional artisans' community, with a distinguished reputation for wood carving, in Thailand and overseas. In addition to master wood carvers, many other arts and crafts are made in Baan Tawai, making the community a fine place to lose oneself for the day, among the warm fragrance of wood and the quintessential ambience of historic northern Thailand.





The word **'Tawai'** means to **'give offerings'**. Baan Tawai's name comes from a legend that the village is located in the spot where local villagers once came to welcome and make offerings to HRH Princess Camadevi, on the occasion of a royal visit from Lamphun. The modern history of Baan Tawai, as a wood carving community, is built on the lives of three, elder artists: Paw Nan Daeng Pantusa, Paw Jaima Inkaew, and Paw Huen Pantusat. These three 'Paw,' or 'founding fathers' originally traveled to work and study wood carving at Normsin shop, Wualai community, Chiang Mai Gate, in 1957. Later, the three men returned home to share their skills. This gradually led to Baan Tawai becoming Chiang Mai's most celebrated, wood carving community.



Baan Tawai is Chiang Mai's biggest and best known wood carving community. The majority of local community members have been wood carvers for over 40 years. The wooden products on sale in Baan Tawai are very diverse, including sculptures, sacred statues, home decorations, wooden furniture, and smaller souvenirs such as key rings, photo frames, and book-stops. There are a spectrum of prices, and many shops offer retail and wholesale rates. There is also an impressive crafts center, which is the pride of Hang Dong district, and nationally famous. The Community Development Organization (CDO), under the Ministry of the Interior, considers Baan Tawai to be a leading example of OTOP production in Thailand. Baan Tawai was also the first community selected to pilot the OTOP tourism village program, by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand.





Highlights

Baan Tawai crafts are handmade, with skills which have now been passed between generations. The original wood carvers of Baan Tawai learned their skills in Chiang Mai. They brought work home with them, to do in their village. These, master craftsmen passed on their skills to the young generation, and also took their products to sell in Bangkok. Eventually, customers began traveling to the village. Baan Tawai grew into Chiang Mai's most famous wood crafting community, which is flourishing today.

Baan Tawai is a center of trade, cultural exchange and education. The village showcases the achievements of Lanna craftsmen. Most of the vendors in Baan Tawai are family businesses; with family members making the crafts. Most of the wood crafts are beautiful, delicate carvings. Shops selling Baan Tawai crafts begin to appear along the road, as far as four kilometers from the village. These crafts are hugely popular for decorating homes, restaurants, hotels and resorts across Thailand and overseas.





Contact information

Baan Tawai welcomes visitors from 09.00 to 20.00 every day. Visitors can watch Baan Tawai artisans carving in their shops and homes, and buy crafts directly from the artisans who made them. **The Baan Tawai Tourism and Commerce Centre** is located at 90, Moo 2, Baan Tawai, Khun Dong sub district, Hang Dong district, Chiang Mai. Tel. +668 1882 4882. The website is www.baan-tawai.com.



Production Process

Initially, the carvers sketch their designs onto blocks of wood. They use different types of chisels and knives to carve extraordinarily detailed and eye-catching sculptures. The wood carvers use sandpaper to smooth the edges and sometimes coat the final carvings with lacquer.



Awards

Baan Tawai is a high quality crafts community. Many of the shops in Baan Tawai have been awarded between 3 and 5 star OTOP. Baan Tawai has received prizes from the Department of Industrial Promotion and a Community Products Award.

Nearby tourist attractions include Wat Chedi Luang Worawihan, where visitors can see the impressive city pillar and the largest stupa in Chiang Mai, which was built during the reign of King Saeng Muang, of the Mengrai dynasty. Another highlight is the stunning Naga staircase, considered to be the most beautiful example in northern Thailand.

Inspiring artisans of Yuwa, Sanpatong

Traditional wood carving, Chiang Mai province



Background

Elephants have been a symbol of Chiang Mai and Thailand for centuries, and remain one of Chiang Mai's official symbols. Many Thai crafts reflect this special, historic relationship with elephants. When traveling to Sanpatong district, passing along the road to Yuwa sub district, visitors have the chance to visit a community with a fascinating history of wood carving. Most people in this area have continued to follow traditional agricultural livelihoods, farming, planting rice, tending orchards and growing highland crops. Others work as wage laborers, or merchants. However, local people also have a very interesting, part-time occupation... Wood carving. The founding father of this tradition was Paw Khun Yuwa. This has made Yuwa well known in Chiang Mai. Yuwa peoples' skills and wood crafts perfectly reflect their earthy, natural way of life, culture and traditions.





Highlights

The work of **Gue Lae Luang Wood Carvers Group, Yuwa community**, reflects Lanna Thai lifestyle: people living with nature. The most popular carvings are touching scenes, illustrating the century's old relationship between northern Thais and elephants. These skills have been passed between generations for over one hundred years. Visitors can also observe men and women, of many ages, expertly continuing these wood carving traditions, bringing wood to life with their charming, vibrant scenes.

Production Process

Initially, the carvers begin by deciding exactly what shape or scene they wish to carve. Next, using threads, they transfer the design onto a wood block, covered in glue. They pat the wood with a massage press, which is covered in fine white powder and leave it for a while. Next, the carvers pull off the threads, revealing a clear, crisp pattern, to guide the wood carvers.



To carve an elephant :

- I) First, cut away excess wood using a saw;
- II) Use progressively smaller chisels to first remove blocks of wood, and then gradually carve the shape of an elephant;
- III) Start with the elephants' body, before moving on to carve its head and tail;
- IV) Gradually smooth the wood with a file, and use fine, artisans chisels to remove small blocks;
- V) Using a copper brush is best for texture;
- VI) Smooth necessary areas using wood filler or wood glue;
- VII) Finish off the fine details using a nail file;
- VIII) Use sandpaper to polish and smooth the surface of the carving;
- IX) Coat the carving in oil to increase shine and color.





Awards

Wood carving is very much alive in Yuwa community. Creative new designs are being continually imagined and created. New community members are keen to learn wood carving skills, responding to demand from an increasing number of customers and orders. Some of the customers are Thai and international visitors, buying individual pieces. Other visitors are shopkeepers, who buy carvings to sell on to their own customers in the city. Community members still live simple lives. Their crafts have not become so popular, that Yuwa's way of life has fundamentally changed. Nevertheless, this part time job gives local people a creative outlet, and places the community firmly on the map for visitors. Indeed, while wood carving in Yuwa reflects a simple life, the community has been awarded 4 star OTOP status, and regularly sends orders inside Thailand and overseas.

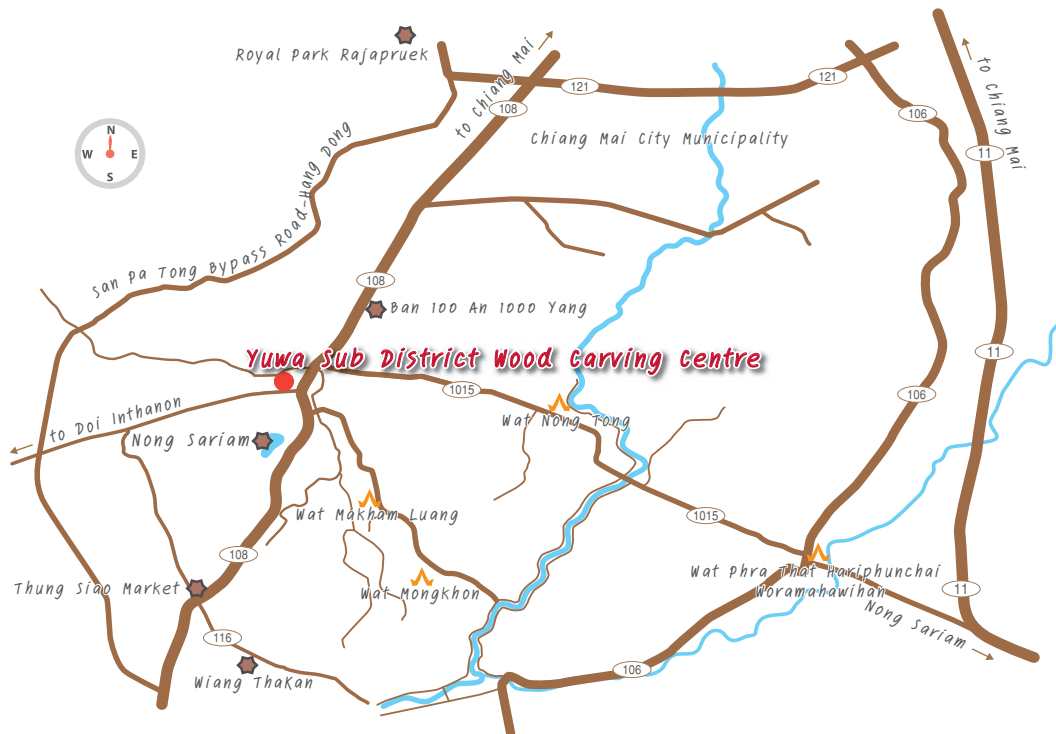


Wooden crafts



Contact information

Visitors can watch wood carving and choose wooden products at the **Yuwa Sub District Wood Carving Centre**, Moo 4, Gue Lae Luang village, Yuwa Sub-district, Sanpatong district, Chiang Mai province. The centre is open from 08.00 to 18.00. Tel. +66 5302 8080. For further information, call Khun Anan Moonmuang (Group President). Tel. +668 7174 4658.



Theptaro wood... auspicious and fragrant futures

Wood carving community, Theptaro Thumley, Trang Province



Background

The story of Theptaro is a story of land and sea, auspicious wood and auspicious marine life... According to southern Thai legend, **Theptaro wood** came from a tree which belonged to a powerful water spirit. Dugong (a type of sea cow) represent love and luck. The folk of Trang province have woven these two local legends into **'Handicrafts of the Dugong Region'**; carving wood statues, including dugong, from the roots and stumps of theptaro trees.

Theptaro is a local tree in Trad province. The fragrant theptaro wood is considered auspicious due to its fragrant scent. Southern Thais believe it brings joy, progress and peace to whoever owns it. The tree's fragrant roots have made it the material of choice for carving Buddhist statues, dragon statues, and various sacred objects of worship. The bark of the theptaro tree is also used to make frankincense. The sweet tips of theptaro leaves are often dipped in chili paste.



Even the wood itself is valued as an herbal medicine, which can cure stomach complaints and asthma, and fortify the blood. Moreover, the scent of the tree is able to repel insects, termites, ants and mosquitoes.



Highlights

The highlight of these products is the unique theptaro wood, which is fragrant and considered to be auspicious. Most of the carvings produced by the theptaro wood carving community are decorative statues of sacred beings and various animals. The best known carvings are of dugong, which are a symbol of Trang province. In addition to carvings, the group also sells wooden dishes, tea and coffee sets, decorative boxes, and other art objects. Designs are etched using fire hardened steel, including traditional benjarong patterns, which are becoming very popular among tourists and other visitors to the community.

Theptaro souvenirs are useful and attractive, starting from as little as 20 Baht. For instance, a key ring, with a gentle dugong, will keep you smiling all day, and makes a perfect souvenir. The scent of Theptaro wood will also drive away insects. Theptaro oil can be used to treat insect bites and burns, and relieve the symptoms of colds, nasal congestion and allergies. Finally, buying these products helps to support the new generation of Trang youth, who are trying to keep their local wisdom alive!

Production Process

Wood carvings are made by: i) Cutting the Theptaro roots into blocks. ii) Drying the wood for approximately 3-4 hours, until it is dry. This is because theptaro wood contains oil, which makes the wood very difficult to sand if it is not dry first. iii) Sanding the wood with coarse sand paper. iv) Using a craft knife to etch and carve the design. This work requires a skilled, careful and patient wood carver. v) Setting the carving upright and leaving it to dry for 1 to 3 hours. vi) Sanding the carving again, using fine sand paper. vii) checking the quality of the work. viii) Packaging the carving for sale.





Theptaro wood carving group received OTOP certification in 2001. Now, the group has been awarded 5 stars, and their carvings have been selected as one of the Best Products in Trang province. The group also received A Prime Minister's Award for their achievements developing outstanding products, and successfully exporting to Europe. In 2005, Theptaro group received a Community Products Award from the Ministry of Industry, recognizing products which reflect the local area. The group regularly sell their products to tourists who visit Lae Cave, Kop Mountain and other, nearby attractions in Trang province, such as Pak Meng beach. They have had an excellent response from tourists. This has also encouraged them to conserve the ancient thiptaro trees, through tree planting activities, encouraging the young generation to become motivated about reforestation.



Tourists can observe carving every day, from 09.00 to 18.00, and learn to make their own dugong key ring, as a souvenir of visiting Trang!



For further information, contact

Theptaro Rewat Wood, Youth Group Against Drugs (Lae Cave and Kop Mountain), 78/1, Moo 1, Khao Kop sub-district, Huai Yot District, Trang. Contact Khun Rewat Banton/ Tel. +668 1895 0832 / +669 3620 3153.

Theptaro Product Group Tum Lae Khao Kop, 78/1, Moo 1, Khao Kop sub-district, Huai Yot District, Trang. Contact Ajarn Suphap Ponkan. Tel. +668 9158 3453 / +668 3757 4321.



There are also many opportunities for adventure in Tum Lae cave, and Khao Kop mountain, which were recognized as Unseen Thailand. Trang province is also home to an astonishing sea cave, Tum Morakot. This is beautifully illuminated by light from outside the cave, turning the water emerald green, and really feels like another world.

Trad also offers many fantastic, white sand beaches, including Bak Meng, Jao Mai, Koh Hong and Koh Kradan.

For more information, call the Khao Kop Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO) at +66 7527 1808 and the Trang Tourism Coordination Center at +66 7521 5867.



Heritage of creative, local crafts

The fine rattan baskets of Mahason village, Lopburi Province



Background

The inspiring **'Wichit'** (fine art) rattan weavers of Lop Buri blend traditional, local knowledge with innovation. Their designs faithfully reflect the peaceful rhythm of rural Thailand, with an eye for detail reflecting strong, Buddhist faith. The artists also experiment with new designs and patterns, which excite and capture the imagination.

'Ripe colored bamboo' and **'scented rattan'** are local plants, which are found throughout the area. Their flexible fibers were commonly used to weave baskets for use at home, or to carry gifts when visiting friends or relatives. The particularly fine work of baskets from the Mahason area has caught tourists' eyes. Mahason





artisans have a talent for observing various types of house ware, and recreating these designs in rattan, in exceptional detail. The depth of concentration invested by the artisans bestows their work with an almost meditative quality. The artisans have also faithfully reproduced traditional designs of baskets, rice pots and other objects used by their ancestors. The result is fine art which celebrates people, their history and an enduring connection with the natural world.

Chalor Tonthongkhum, President of the Wichit Rattan Basket Weaving Group, explained that rattan weaving is a traditional skills in Mahason. She learned the skill from her Aunt Sriwitun during her childhood. She gradually developed her skills, and then passed these skills on to local youth, and other interested villagers. So that these skills would not be lost to future generations, Mrs. Chalor decided to establish a cooperative: **'Wichit Rattan Basket Weaving Group'**. Today, the group weaves a wide variety of strong, durable, colourful rattan products, based on techniques which have now been passed down for over 100 years. Conservation of these techniques, alongside creativity and continual innovation, have resulted in the many memorable designs of **'Wichit Rattan Baskets'**.

Highlights

The unique signature of **‘Wichit Rattan Baskets’** lays in artisans’ skills adapting traditional textiles designs, such as ‘Pikun lom’ and ‘Yokmanee’ to rattan weaving. The group has also adapted traditional Thai Puan and Lao Ikat designs to rattan. The results are exquisite patterns, celebrating Thai arts and identity. Rattan products are available in a variety of shapes, including square, hexagonal, octagonal, oval, round and cradle designs. Some of the best loved designs include “Butterfly”, “Malisorn”, “Baan Suen”, “Sunflower”, and “Thai Black Pepper.”



Production Process

The production process is: i) measure and cut rattan strips. Use 25 inch strips for the base of the basket, 26 inch strips for the rim of the basket and 26 inch strips to make handles. ii) Cut 24 strips of 25 inch, rounded bamboo. iii) Coil the rattan at the base into an oval, and nail it into shape. Do the same for the rim of the basket. iv) Nail the bamboo strips at equal intervals between the base and rim of the basket. v) Wind rattan bands around the center of the basket frame, between the base and rim of the basket. vi) Attach the basket handles (using nails). vii) Paint the basket and wait for it to dry. viii) Decorate the basket by weaving additional rattan strips around the bamboo and basket handles until the basket is finished. The next stage is to glaze the basket. Firstly, apply a light glaze to fix the shape, and dry the basket. Then, apply a second glaze to protect the basket from mold and insects, and ensure tough, durable baskets.



contact information

According to Mrs. Chalor, every stage of the process is important, from selecting the right materials through to checking quality. Concentration and effort are the key ingredients!

Visitors can watch demonstrations and try their hand making a simple basket, to take home as a souvenir, every day between 09.00 and 18.00. **Wichit Rattan Basket Weaving Group** is located at No.15, Moo 6, Mahason sub-district, Ban Mi district, Lop Buri province, 15110. Contact Kru Chalor Tonthongkhum. Tel. +669 0425 2751. Nearby, is an Ikat weaving center, of the Thai Puang people. Demonstrations and products are also available. Tel. +66 3647 1904 / +668 7006 1897. Finally, don't miss the important local attractions 'San Phra Kan' and 'Phra Prang Sam Yod.'

Awards

In 2003 and 2004, Mahason Wichit Rattan Weaving Group won OTOP Awards, and in 2006 the community group was recognised as one Thailand's best 5 Star OTOP producers.

Bamboo weavers, on the banks of Mae Nam Noi

Bang Chao Cha village, Ang Thong province



Background

Guests in Bang Chao Cha can enjoy exploring beautiful, backcountry roads by bicycle or by local tractor. Along the way, you will see men and women working together, weaving bamboo products, in the shade of their homes. Originally, local people wove bamboo pots, baskets and fish traps. Gradually, they began weaving more diverse items for household use and to give as gifts. These include charming miniature baskets, and modern, stylish, ladies' handbags. The weavers weave various shades of bamboo to create delicate and detailed patterns.

Bang Chao Cha is a small sub-district, which is scenically located on the banks of the Noi river, in Pho Thong district, Ang Thong province. Recognition by the OTOP awards program has given Bang Chao Cha a deserved reputation for expertise in bamboo weaving. These bamboo products were originally designed for use by local farmers. The government supported the villagers to establish a village crafts group, and diversify their products.

Bang Chao Cha was an important settlement during the Ayutthaya period. Nai Cha was a village leader who joined forces with the people of Wiset Chaicharn and Baan Bangkrachan to fight the Burmese

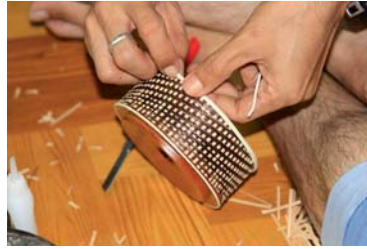


at Bangkrachan. After the war, **Bang Chao Cha community** was established, in honour of Nai Cha. Most community members are farmers. Bamboo weaving is a supplementary occupation. The villagers plant a species of fast growing bamboo, and continue traditional bamboo weaving skills. The designs of Bang Chao Cha are detailed and beautiful. The villagers are also talented at adapting their designs to meet customers' demands. This has enabled them to sell bamboo weavings internationally, and to become a model Thai community for rural, occupational development.

Highlights

The most popular products from Bang Chao Cha are ladies handbags, woven from bamboo and rattan. The group has developed a wide range of designs, from traditional Thai designs to modern fusion designs.





Production Process

There are 10 stages to produce a basket. The main stages are preparing, dyeing and weaving the bamboo and rattan strips; weaving and decorating the objects; adding fabric; and varnishing. The artisans use a variety of crafts knives, chisels, awls and saws to make their products. The main materials are bamboo and rattan, wooden beads, silk and rubber. Initially, they check the wood carefully and separate it by hardness and age (younger wood is softer). The wood is cut into thin strips and dried. The weaving process is difficult, requiring patience and an eye for detail.

i) First, the artisans weave the base of the basket. When weaving the base, the artisans carefully select strips with a constant width, from end to end. ii) In the past, artisans crafted baskets with a square base. The new generation have been creative and successful, crafting baskets with attractive octagonal bases. iii) After crafting the base, the artisans begin weaving the body of the basket. Beautiful patterns emerge by weaving

bamboo and rattan strips, of different ages, levels of dryness and colours. The artisans can weave traditional Thai designs, people's names, and place names into their products. iv) The base is attached to the body of the basket. v) The stand, handles, rim, etc. are further decorated with rattan. Artisans sometimes decorate baskets with single strips of rattan, and sometimes woven patterns, using 3, 5 or more strips, in harmony with the central design. vi) The basket is smoked, using slightly damp straw, until it takes on a yellow hue. vii) The basket is dyed. viii) Additional rattan strips are added, for further decoration (e.g. the rim, base or handles). ix) Thai silk and other types of textiles can be used to line and decorate the baskets, making them even more beautiful. Sometimes, sponge or gauze is used to pad the baskets. x) Finally, the baskets are varnished with lacquer. This brings out the rich colours, keeps the baskets looking fantastic for many years, and protects them from mold and insects.



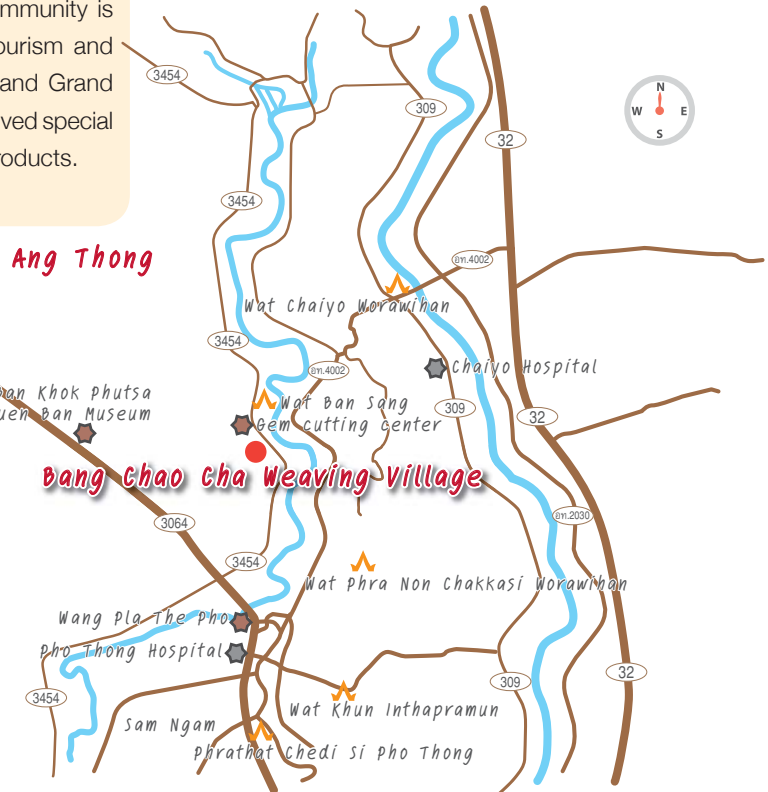
Awards

Bang Chao Cha's products are international standard, 5 star OTOP products. The community is also recognized as a national level ecotourism and agro-tourism destination. Under the Thailand Grand Invitation project, **'Kantok tea tables'** received special recognition as outstanding 5 star OTOP products.



Contact information

Tourists can visit the **Bang Chao Cha group** every day, from 10.00 to 16.00 to see demonstrations and learn about bamboo and rattan weaving. The address is No.10, Moo 8, Bang Chao Cha sub district. Tel. +66 3564 4473. Or, call Pu Yai Trirat on +668 0020 0447. Visitors can also visit Pornchai Village Learning Center and Weaving Museum. Contact Khun Pornchai Boonruen. Tel. +668 9045 3678. This village also has an interesting museum with exhibits of many household goods, made from bamboo. It is possible to enjoy a ride on a local tractor, admire scenic views along the banks



of the Noi River, and visit local fruit orchards. Homestay accommodation and study tours are available. The best known tourist attraction nearby is Luang Por Yai, at Muang Temple, Wiset Chai Chan district. According to local beliefs, paying respect to this sacred Buddhist statue will lead to a successful career.

Songs of past and future, to bamboo's rich resonance

The Isaan music village, Tha Rua village, Nakhon Phanom Province



Background

The melodious sounds of the **'kaen'** (*bamboo pipes*) and **'pin'** (*like a local banjo*) are embedded in Isaan (North Eastern Thai) spirit and identity. One of Thailand's most famous communities for crafting these instruments is Tha Rua community, in Na Wa district, Nakhon Phanom province. Here, artisans produce an orchestra of instruments, catering for real musicians, children and shoppers! Stepping into the village, one immediately feels a joyful ambience, and hears a cacophony of instruments being blown, played and plucked: tested for the perfect Isaan pitch. Different households are experts at crafting particular musical instruments. Prices for a simple **'Kaen'** or **'Pin'** start from approximately 500-1,000 Baht. The unmistakable sound of the **'kaen'** comes from its free reed, which is similar to western instruments like the accordion and harmonica. **'Kaen'** which are made with a copper free





reed usually cost around 2,500 Baht. **'Kaen'** with silver free reeds are even more expensive, and need to be specially ordered. Miniature instruments and fun gifts start from as little as 10-100 Baht. The village name, Tha Rua, means **'port'**, which is a playful comparison to a merchant ship. Tha Rua is the largest musical instrument crafting village in north-east Thailand; and also the site of Thailand's first Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Center, established in 1977. The main occupations of local people are agriculture, silk weaving and making musical instruments.

Highlights

Tha Rua community members inherited a tradition of making musical instruments which is now over 100 years old. Initially, local artisans only made **'Kaen'** pipes. Later, artisans began making **'pin'**, and **'bong lang'**, a deep and distinctive drum kit. One very interesting highlight of Tha Rua is that local artisans have also developed specially tuned **'Kaen'**, tuned to standard notes, so that they can be played alongside western musicians.





Production Process

To make an excellent quality **'Kaen'** requires small sized bamboo, which is often imported from Lao PDR. The craftsman cuts 8 bamboo pipes to an appropriate length for the size of **'Kaen'**, which they wish to make. These pipes are divided into sets, heated over a fire to straighten them, and polished with sand paper. The artisans make holes in each pipe, to insert the free reed, using sharp, red-hot needles which prevent the fragile bamboo pipes from splitting. Free reeds are made from copper, bronze, or silver ingots, which are hammered wafer thin, and cut into lengths of 1-2 cm's, which vibrate when wind passes. If the reeds are not flat enough, the Kaen will not be loud. To make the **'Kaen'** as loud and melodious as possible, the artisans further polish and flatten the reeds with a local variety of wood, **'mai khiam'** (dipterocarpaceae), and a unique, powder mixture. The middle of the Kaen is enforced with teak wood, wrapped with rattan and lacquered to strengthen the instrument.

Another popular instrument is the **'woad'** (*pan pipe*). The **'woad'** is made in a similar way to the 'kaen.' However, the pipes are arranged in a circle. The musician rotates the instrument while blowing it, to play a tune. In addition to traditional instruments, very popular electric **'pin'** are also produced in Tha Rua. These Isaan icons are usually decorated with a carved Naga serpent head. Artisans are able to carve approximately three of these per day, charging approximately 300 Baht per carving, or 900 Baht per day, which is considered to be an excellent salary.

Almost every home has a raised first floor, and local people craft these instruments in the shade beneath their houses. At the community center, it is possible to observe how the various instruments are made, and even have a go! Many local youth have learned how to make musical instruments and also organize musical performances for visitors. Shoppers can buy instruments, silks and souvenirs at the Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Center.



Awards

The artisan communities which have made Tha Rua famous for Isaan music are located in villages (Moo) 1, 2 and 8, Tha Rua sub-district, Na Wa district, Nakhon Phanom province. Tha Rua is now one of Nakhon Phanom's top OTOP tourism villages. Musical instruments crafted and sold in Tha Rua have received a 4 star OTOP award and been recognized with a 2012 Thai Community Products Standard. Alongside musical instruments, Tha Rua is also well known for producing superb quality, 5 star OTOP silk products, which have received multiple Royal awards.



Close to Tha Rua, tourists can also visit Phra Thad Prasit Stupa temple and Phra Thad Prasit Stupa. This temple is considered particularly auspicious for people born on Thursdays, and has an interesting museum, about the tribes of the Mekong river basin.



Contact information

Tourists can visit **Tha Rua**, observe artisans crafting musical instruments and enjoy shopping, from 08.00 until 18.00 every day. Local community tour guides and homestay services are also available. Contact Mr. Jumrong Saensuriwong, Chief of Tha Rua sub-district. Tel. +668 1288 9062, +66 4253 3505.



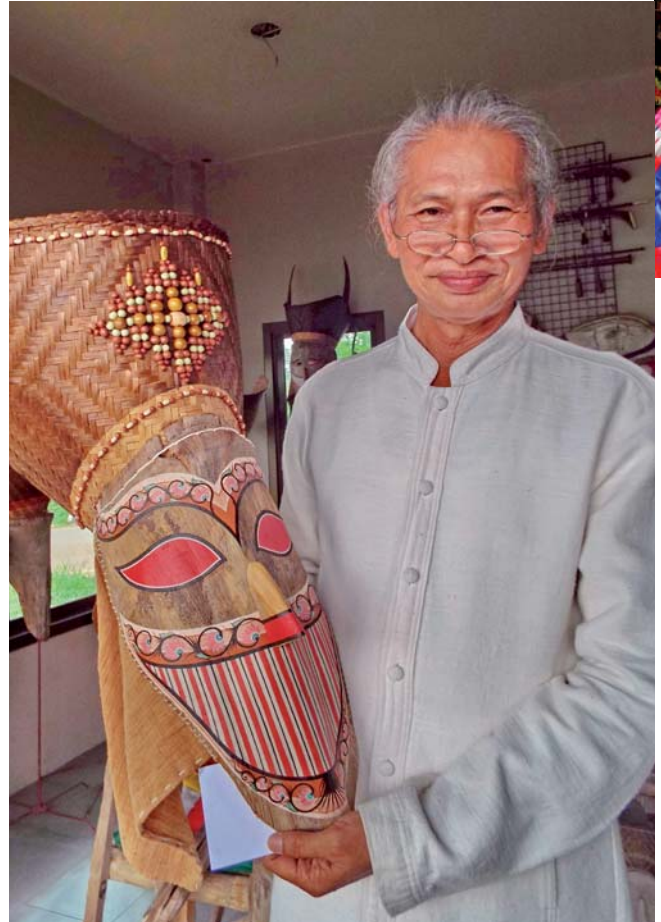
Warmly welcomed, by Dan Sai's good spirits

Phi Ta Khon, Loei province



Background

If you are in north east Thailand at the end of Buddhist Lent, you may be lucky enough to meet a procession of cheeky, cheerful **Phi Ta Khon** spirits, dancing along the street, showing off their funkier moves! The best places to meet Phi Ta Kon are the annual **'Boon Luang'** festivals, in Dan Sai and Na Haeo districts, Loei province. The Phi Ta Kon tradition originated in festivals held between the 7th and 8th months of the lunar calendar, when revelers would dress up in colorful masks with eye-catching features such as long noses and large eyes. The popularity of Phi Ta Kon has inspired local artisans to craft statues, masks and other Phi Ta Kon souvenirs.





Highlights

The heads of the Phi Ta Kon masks are made from bamboo sticky (glutinous) rice steamers. The rim of the steamers are turned up, to resemble the brim of a hat. The face masks are made from dry, coconut leaf sheaths, cut into mask shapes, with holes cut for the eyes. Finally, the celebrants carve a long nose from soft wood. The masks are decorated with oil paint and natural colors, such as turmeric, limestone and ash. The friendly ghosts' costumes are stitched into an eye-catching mosaic of cloth patches, hung with small bells to add excitement and sound when dancing. The people of Na Haeo community, Dan Sai have also created a center, for visitors who are interested to learn more about the Phi Ta Kon and would like to make their own brightly painted masks as souvenirs.



Production Process

There are 5 stages to making a Phi Ta Kon mask and costume. i) Select an appropriate coconut leaf sheath to make the mask face and attach it to the sticky rice steaming basket. ii) Cut eye holes into the mask, and attach the nose onto the mask. iii) Paint an undercoat onto the mask, to flatten the coconut sheath surface and make it easier to paint. iv) Cut three pieces of cloth and stitch these to the left, right and back of the sticky rice steaming basket. v) Make the costume with the same type of cloth, and decorate your costume as colourfully as possible!



 Awards

Phi Ta Kon masks make particularly charming souvenirs, whether brought from local artisans or made by oneself! Buying Phi Ta Kon masks helps to keep Loei's ancient traditions alive and creates useful opportunities for elderly villagers, who are able to use their traditional knowledge to improve their livelihoods and help to support their families. Phi Ta Kon masks have been recognized with a Community Products Standard, and an Outstanding 5 Star OTOP award, in 2003. Local artists in Loei province are continually experimenting with creative new designs, which are proving very popular with visitors to Dan Sai. The original Phi Ta Kon masks were quite short with limited decoration. Now, every year, the Phi Ta Kon masks are becoming more colorful and eye catching!





Contact information

Visitors can watch a demonstration of how to make a Phi Ta Kon mask, and also try their hand making a mask every day, from 10.00 to 17.00 at **Phon Chai temple and museum**, Dan Sai district, Loei province. The museum includes many, fascinating exhibits charting the evolution of the Phi Ta Kon masks. Another highlight is the **Phi Ta Kon Mask Group**, located at 102, Moo 8, Dan Sai sub-district, Dan Sai district, Loei province. Contact Ajarn (teacher) Apichart Khumkasem, Tel. +668 3352 7404, +668 9574 7805, +66 4289 2237. To get the most from your visit, it is highly recommended to begin with a visit to the Phi Ta Kon museum at Phon Chai temple, which is approximately 82 km's from Loei municipality. Here, you have the chance to see a colourful collection of masks, big and small! There are also plenty of opportunities to enjoy shopping for your own Phi Ta Kon masks. Nearby, is the Phra Thad Si Song Rak stupa, built during the Ayutthaya period, which symbolises the warm relationship between Thailand and the Lao PDR. Please note that visitors should avoid wearing red when visiting this temple.



Enriching bamboo crafts, with an eye for the finer details

Phanat Nikhom weaving, Chonburi province

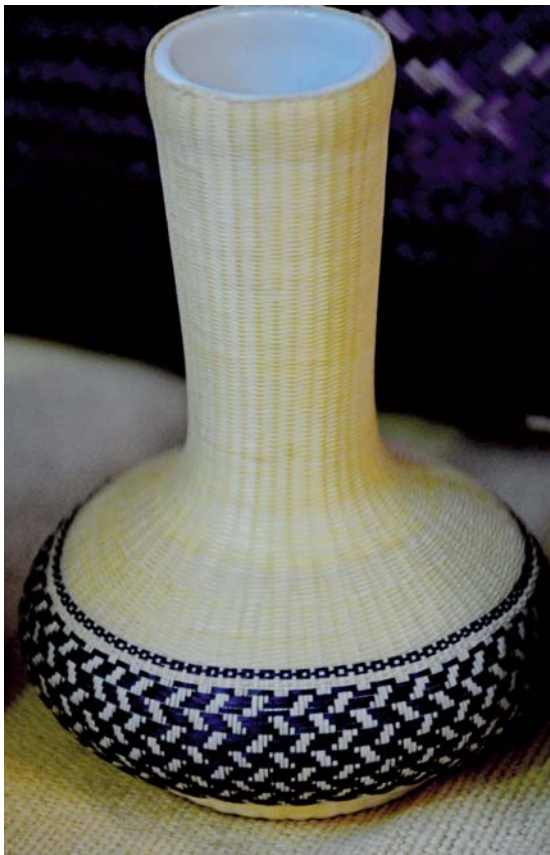


Background

With beautiful beaches and bright lights, Chonburi is well known as an exciting destination, day and night. There are also opportunities to buy international export quality crafts at very reasonable prices at **Phanat Nikhom district**. In fact, this is home to the world's biggest bamboo weaving, souvenirs center, where it is possible to learn about Thai and regional bamboo weaving! The history of bamboo weaving in Phanat Nikhom is as old as the community itself, with a history dating back to the reign of Rama III. At that time, the area was covered with bamboo forest. During their free time, the villagers enjoyed weaving various household objects from bamboo. Nowadays, bamboo is used to make a wide range of products and gifts, including a range of baskets and bags, of different shapes and sizes. Prices range from 10 Baht to 10,000 Baht, depending on the size and level of craftsmanship.

Highlights

Bamboo products of Phanat Nikhom are distinguished by simple designs, reflecting Thai arts and identity. Classic designs which visitors should request to see include **'Pikul'**, **'Dao Lom Duen'** and **'Chit Ta Maew'**. In addition, new designs are continually being developed, to meet customers' needs. Most of the products are designed for home decoration, and decorated using entirely natural colours. They are dyed from roots, bark, seeds, fruits and other natural sources. Using natural dyes, artisans are able to produce a wide variety of colours, including yellow, orange, dark green, blue and mauve. While browsing, visitors can observe artisans making bamboo products. The artists work with great concentration, but often look up to greet visitors with a smile.



The products of Phanat Nikhom are made from carefully selected, glossy bamboo. Local bamboo grows across the district. It is strong and hard wearing, environmentally friendly, and proving a big hit with Japanese customers! Visitors to Phanat Nikhom can also join a program to learn bamboo weaving skills, beginning with simple, cross-weaving designs which anyone can do. The next learning stations teach gradually more complex patterns, which can be applied to a wide range of textiles, bamboo and rattan products, from handkerchiefs to bamboo baskets.



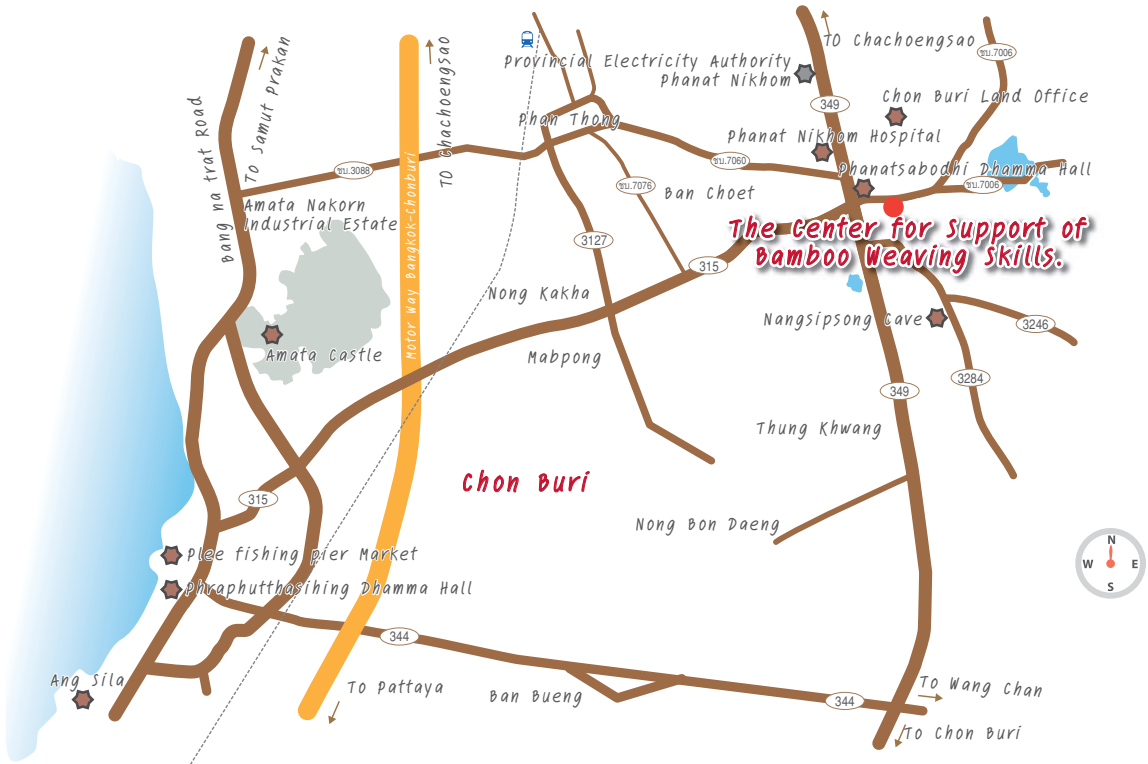
Production Process

First, cut the bamboo to the required lengths, using a very sharp, bamboo crafting knife. For the most delicate designs, bamboo must be cut into very fine, thin strips. Bamboo strips can be rounded, by pulling them through a metal plate, with small holes, which are cut to the exact size required for the needed pattern. Bamboo patterns are created by weaving small, colourful strips, backwards and forwards, between broader, vertical and horizontal bamboo strips. These strips can be widely spaced, or close together, depending on the desired pattern.



Awards

With support and assistance by The Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen, which aims to conserve traditional Thai skills and arts, Phanat Nikhom community members have been able to produce excellent, 5 star OTOP products.



Contact information

Tourists can watch a demonstration and try their hand at bamboo weaving every Monday to Saturday, from 08.00 to 17.00, at Baan Khun Pranee Borribun, **the Center for Support of Bamboo Weaving Skills**. This is located at no. 36 Inthasa Road, Phanat Nikhom sub-district, Phanat Nikhom district, Chonburi, 20150. Tel. +66 3843 6213. Visitors can also contact Khun Somchanok Borribun, **'The Biggest Bamboo Weaving Group'**. This is located at No. 60, Chanamnuay Road, Phanat Nikhom district, Chonburi, 20140. The center is open daily from 08.00 to 17.00. Or, contact Khun Pranee Moonpla. Tel. +66 3846 1180, +668 6017 2450.

Visitors to this area shouldn't miss visiting beautiful Bang Saen beach. Fantastic seafood is available, and an evening walking street offers many opportunities to shop for handmade products (Friday to Saturday).

Elegance woven in fine ferns of the south

The pride of Nakhon, Nakhon Si Thammarat province



background

HRM Queen Sirikit observed the importance of crafts made from Thai **'Lipao'** (lygodium) fern, which grows abundantly, all year round, in the wet climate of southern Thailand. 'Lipao' is easily found in southern Thai rubber plantations, and villages. High levels of rainfall give 'Lipao' a particularly sticky sap, which is excellent at repelling insects. The word 'Lipao' is

thought to refer to the Malay word **'libu,'** meaning gecko, because the ferns' delicate leaves resemble geckos' tiny feet! 'Lipao' is a green, climbing, fern. When fresh, the fern is a bright green colour. When dry, it is brown. The length of the fern vines are approximately 1 to 2 metres. Local people use 'Lipao' to weave various kinds of products, known as **'Yan Liphao'**.



Highlights

Nakhon Si Thammarat province has many skilled 'Lipao' (lygodium) weavers, and many community groups make excellent quality 'Lipao' products. Each group has its own signature designs, which have together elevated 'Lipao' weaving into a firm 5 star OTOP product in Nakhon Si Thammarat. When choosing lygodium products, a good indicator of quality is that the artisans have selected vines which are well proportioned. If vines are carefully chosen, weavings will be flat, without waves or bumps. Delicate patterns (using thinner vines) are considered to be better quality. It is also a good idea to check the quality of stitching. Popular products include handbags, shoulder bags, phone cases and baskets. Gold and silver decorations are used to add value to 'Lipao' products. Several groups offer tourists the opportunity to see a demonstration of 'Lipao' products being woven.

There are two main types of 'Lipao' products. The first are 'closed' products, with lids. These products are made by coiling the front and back sides of the fern vines, which creates distinctive patterns. Only 'Lipao' (lygodium) and rattan are used. 'Open' products are polished, with woven designs similar to those used with textiles.



There are two main techniques to weave 'Lipao'. Products like bags and hats are woven, using a frame. Products such as bracelets, hairbands, etc. do not require the use of a frame. After the products have been woven, they are varnished. A very popular design is to line 'Lipao' bags using gold, brown, navy blue or red cloth. Some bags also have a small mirror attached, inside the lid of the bag. The bark of the vines are split into strands of similar width and length, and polished until they are smooth and beautiful, with flat surfaces. This process softens the lygodium strands. The strands are too soft to hold the shape of bags and other decorative objects. The shape is fixed, by weaving bamboo and rattan into the structure of the bag.

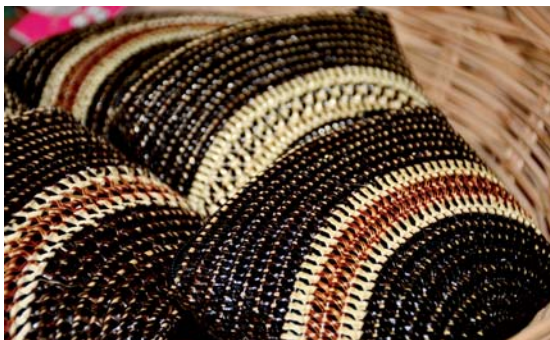
Production Process

The production process is: i) Make a rattan frame for the desired product. ii) Whittle the 'Lipao' (lygodium) vines to the desired size, by pulling the vines through a metal plate with holes which have been cut to the correct size. iii) Weave the vines around the rattan frame. The products can be decorated with lids and flaps.



Many community groups in Nakhon Si Thammarat province make excellent quality lygodium products. Each group has their own particular skills and signature design features. For example, Hang Petch Thong Boonyarat, and Baan Nong Bua Lipao Weaving Group, in Nakhon Si Thammarat municipality, produce outstanding lygodium products, which have been awarded with 5 star OTOP status.





contact information

Visitors can watch a demonstration of how to make lygodium products, and buy products every day from 09.00 to 18.00, at the **Lipao Weaving Group**, 131, Moo 1, Phra Monkut village, Pho Sadet sub district, Muang district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province. Contact Khun Puangsri Chusuwan. Tel. +66 7532 0756, +66 7534 8165, +668 9866 4110.

Or, contact the **Yan Lipao Decorative Flower Group**, which is located at 144, Moo 7, Na Khian, Nakhon Si Thammarat province 80000. The group chairman, Khun Boonyanuch Chusuwan, can be contacted by phone at +668 0889 8637. Visitors to Nakhon Si Thammarat shouldn't miss visiting Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan temple, located in the heart of the city, with an impressive chapel '**Wihan Luang**' and a museum of priceless, and sacred Buddhist relics.

Passing down our earthy, southern arts

“krajud” of Huai Luk, Suratthani province



Background

Southern Thailand is well known for weaving beautiful and durable products from ‘**krajud**’ grass, including colourful mats, baskets, bags, picture frames, pillows and fans. The ‘krajud’ products of Huai Luk village have a special charm, which has been passed between generations. ‘Krajud’ is a type of sedge, similar to papyrus. It also grows in Madagascar, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, peninsular Malaysia and Borneo. ‘krajud’ is a green rush, usually growing to a height of 1 to 3 metres, which grows in wetland and flooded areas.

‘Krajud’ products are colourful and skilfully woven, southern Thai products. ‘**krajud nu**’, are particularly

sought after, rounded reeds. They are dyed and woven into intricate designs, which gradually reveal their complexity. Frames are used to shape ‘krajud’ products. Huai Luk Woven Handicrafts Community Enterprise registered as a community enterprise in 2006, in order to preserve the art of ‘krajud’ weaving for future generations. The group have developed over 300 distinct products, including bags, hats, document cases and many other products. The group continually creates new designs and products, which has earned them loyal customers in Thailand and overseas. The group is also considered a best practice example of community management.





Highlights

According to Khun Chaiyawud Daengma, the group began from her interest in making ‘samuk’, woven baskets, which southern Thais have traditionally used to carry betel nut. These baskets have a distinctive lid and cloth. Subsequently, Khun Chaiyawud began creating more diverse, intricate products, based on traditional, Southern Thai patterns. For example, ‘Luk Kaew,’ which is considered a quintessential southern Thai design. The group also developed more contemporary designs, such as the ‘L’ design; and experimented with various decorations, using wooden beads, buttons, silk, leather, and other materials. Products which are not dyed are painted using decoupage techniques. The result are eye-catching products, spanning a range of traditional to modern styles.



Production Process

The ‘krajud’ process begins in the wetlands and swamps, behind Huai Luk village. The folk of Huai Luk, Phun Phin district, Surath Thani province cut ‘krajud’ from these swamps, and:

- i) Cut the reeds to the desired lengths.
- ii) Soak the reeds in muddy water, mixed with earth from anthills, or clay. This softens and moisturises the reeds.
- iii) Dry the reeds thoroughly.
- iv) Flatten the reeds using a heavy weight (e.g. a cement roller).
- v) Dye the reeds.



Awards

In 2010, products from Huai Luk were awarded with 4 star OTOP status, from the Community Development Department, Ministry of the Interior. In 2011, Huai Luk was certified with the Community Products Standard from the Ministry of Industry of Thailand. The community also received the product standard from the Cooperatives Promotion Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.



Contact information

Tourists can observe production and buy 'krajud' products in Huai Luk every day, between 09.00 and 18.00. Contact Khun Chaiyawud Daengma on +668 1892 4677. **The Huai Luk Woven Handicrafts Community Enterprise** is located in Phun Phin district, Surat Thani province. From Chumporn, follow highway 41, past Lang Suan and Chaiya districts, into Surat Thani. Then, take route 401. After passing Bo Krang village, turn right and you will arrive at Huai Luk.

Before going home, it is recommended to visit Rattana Kosai hot spring (also known as Tha Sathorn hot spring), which is located in Bo Krang village, Tha Sathorn sub-district. The hot spring water is 70 degrees Celsius. There is no entrance fee. There are pools to soak ones' feet and to bathe, a children's' playground and accommodation. This site is under the responsibility of Surat Thani provincial administration. Call +66 7729 4094 for more information.



Engraving the fine arts of Wualai Silver crafts of Sri Suphan Temple

Chiang Mai province



Background

Nowadays, Wualai road in Chiang Mai is best known for its bustling **‘walking street,’** where local vendors gather to sell a huge range of creative, handmade arts and crafts. However, Wualai’s reputation as one of Chiang Mai’s most significant crafts hubs was actually established many years ago. The people of Wualai community are renowned as master silver smiths. They forged their skills at the crossroads of a deep faith in Buddhism, love for art, and sense of duty to family and history. When stepping foot into Wualai community, one can still hear the ring of hammers falling on metal, which have echoed through these historic streets for generations. Wualai’s stunning silver



work can be admired in intricate silver and aluminium carvings, which adorn Sri Suphan’s Temple chapel, elevating it into a globally unique, Lanna style, fine arts masterpiece.



Sri Suphan Temple dates back to 1500, and the reign of Phra Muang Kaew of the Mengrai dynasty. The temple contains a stupa enshrining highly sacred, ancient Buddhist relics. In 1994, **Phra Kru Phitaksuthikul**, the 9th abbot of Sri Suphan temple and local community members, undertook restoration of the temple chapel. Local community members contributed their silver crafting skills to the renovation, by decorating the chapel with fine, silver and aluminum carvings. These depicted stories and teachings from the Buddhist scriptures, and illustrated the history of Sri Suphan Temple and Chiang Mai city. This renovation also marked a renaissance of interest in preserving the traditional skills of silver carving. In 2007, the Sri Suphan Temple Lanna Arts Group was established, along with a learning center to develop silver crafting skills. This project received support from the National Office of Buddhism and the Kanchana Phisek Non-formal Education Center, to help ensure that the skills of Wualai community would be preserved for future generations.





Highlights

The extraordinary silver carvings of Sri Suphan Temple make an important contribution to the history of Buddhist and Thai arts. Many, outstanding artists work here. Close to the chapel, students can learn about and practice traditional, Lanna silver crafting techniques. These courses are provided by master craftsmen, free of charge. Visitors may also catch site of novice monks learning traditional, silver carving techniques.



Production Process

i) First, design the carving. ii) Melt the silver (or other metals such as copper or aluminum). Either hammer the silver flat, or shape it as required. iii) Etch an outline of the carving design onto the silver. Alternatively, a more traditional method is to draw an outline, using a sticky mixture of tree sap, earth and oil. This is then dried in the sun. Carve the design and burn off any residue of the mixture. iv) Polish the carving.



Awards

Sri Suphan temple exemplifies Chiang Mai's creative economy, and is a **'must see'** for people who love arts and crafts. Wualai community members worked together to preserve and celebrate local skills. As a result, they were able to reinvigorate the local community economy. In addition to admiring silver crafts, visitors can also buy exquisite silver decorations, jewelry and functional items. The Sri Suphan Temple Community Enterprise shop is the center for selling products made in the Wualai community. The center received 3 star OTOP status in 2012, and was certified by the Ministry of Commerce **'Buy with Confidence'** standard in 2004.



Contact information

The Lanna Handicrafts Group is located in front of Sri Suphan Temple, at No.100 Wualai road, Haiya sub-district, Muang district, Chiang Mai 5010. Tel. +66 5320 2751, +668 6420 0984.

Shining in the shade...

mulberry paper umbrellas, Bo Sang village

San Khamphaeng, Chiang Mai province



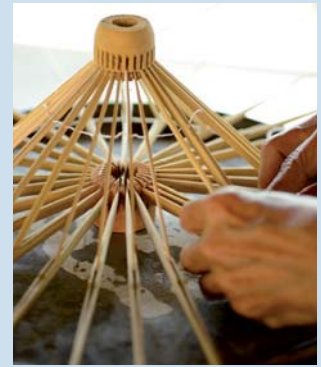
background

Beautiful girls, smiling shyly from beneath the shade of brightly painted umbrellas are an iconic image of northern Thailand. **Bo Sang village**, San Khamphaeng district, Chiang Mai province is Chiang Mai's most famous destination to see umbrellas being decorated, and buy an umbrella as a souvenir of a journey north. It is even possible to personalize designs, for example, by painting a name or message onto the umbrella. The village has become so famous, that an annual umbrella festival is now held in Bo Sang every January.

The umbrellas of Bo Sang have been a symbol of Chiang Mai for generations. According to some histories, the development of painted umbrellas can

be traced back to Tai Lue people, who emigrated from Yunnan province, in Xishuangbanna, China. Others tell a charming story of a Buddhist monk, who set out from Bo Sang to spread the teachings of the Buddha. Months later, on his return to Thailand, he brought back umbrella making skills from Myanmar, and he passed these skills on to local people in Bo Sang.

The original umbrellas had a bamboo frame, and a mulberry paper canopy. They were made as gifts, to offer to the temple on important occasions. Local people then began producing the umbrellas for sale. They gradually adapted to market demand, creating many new, colorful designs. Nowadays, there are three main types of umbrella, made with satin, cotton and mulberry paper canopies. They are all made in the same way.



Highlights

Paper umbrella canopies are prepared by soaking mulberry bark for 4 to 24 hours, and then boiling it with ash for a further 3 to 4 hours, until it is a pulp. Wash the pulp until it is clean and then pound it. Next, soak the pulp again, stir it and dry it on a grill of the desired size. When the pulp is dry, it can be carefully lifted from the grill. 40*60 cm's is the usual size of paper sheet to make an umbrella. The shaft and ribs of the umbrella are usually made from flexible, hard-wearing bamboo, while the handle is usually carved from soft wood.



Production Process

- Cut wood to make the shaft of the umbrella, and bore holes to attach the different sections;
- Cut and shape the umbrella ribs and stretchers. The bamboo should be thin, strong and flexible;
- Using a screwdriver or an awl, mark and pierce holes in the ribs and stretchers of the umbrella;
- Arrange the bamboo ribs in a circle, around the umbrella shaft. Carve slots into the stretchers, and attach the stretchers to a sliding rider. This will enable the stretchers to be pulled taught (so that the umbrella will open) and to be released (so that the umbrella will close);



- To assemble the umbrella, slot the ribs into the stretchers. Attach cords to each stretcher, which can be pulled taught to open and close the umbrella;

- Attach the canopy of the umbrella. The umbrellas can be waterproofed by coating them several times with a local recipe lacquer, which is blended from a mixture of powders and wood saps;

- Paint and decorate the umbrella. Use oil paints, or natural dyes including red clay and ash. Popular designs include scenic views, flowers, and animals. Most of Bo Sang's artists have no formal education in art. They were taught by family members, since

childhood. Despite humble beginnings, hundreds of families across San Khamphaeng district are now employed making umbrellas. Bo Sang village works with 8 other villages in the area. Different families are responsible for producing different sections of the umbrellas. For example, community members in San Phra Chao Ngam village produce the tops of the umbrellas. Community members in Aon and Nong villages make the frames of the umbrellas, etc. Finally, umbrellas are assembled and painted in Bo Sang. Waste wood shavings are used to make bamboo charcoal.



Awards

In 2009, Bo Sang umbrellas were registered with a Global Indication (GI) Label, for Doi Saket district. San Khamphaeng district also received a Seal of Excellence in South East Asia award from UNESCO, recognizing the significance of Bo Sang's umbrellas to Thai arts and culture, and environmentally friendly production techniques.



Contact information

Visitors can admire how the legendary Bo Sang umbrellas are made, every day from 09.00 to 18.00. Contact the **Bo Sang Senior Citizens Occupational Support Group**. Tel. +668 4687 3373, +668 1179 3536 and +66 5333 8324, +66 5333 8687. Or contact **Bo Sang Umbrella Industry Center** from 08.30-17.00. Tel. +66 5333 8195; +668 1998 6000. www.handmade-umbrella.com. No visit to this area would be complete without a stopping at the glorious Royal Rajapruek Park. This incredible park has over 500 species of flowers, and stunning examples of architecture from around the region and world. It is open from 08.00 to 18.00. www.royalparkrajapruek.org

Thailand's mountain folk arts Chiang Mai dolls making center,

Chiang Mai province



Background

The Chiang Mai Dolls Making Center and Museum is an extraordinary collection of over 50,000 dolls, from Chiang Mai and overseas, and a must see for doll fans! You will find dolls dressed in their finest costumes. These include traditional Thai and ethnic minority costumes, and well known characters from Thai legends and theatre. It's also a good place to learn about the unique traditions and cultures of ethnic communities from every region of Thailand. International dolls come from ASEAN, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and US.

The Chiang Mai Dolls Making Center and Museum was established in 1986, by **Khun Yuthana Boonprakong**. Initially, it was a production center for



exporting dolls. Later, the museum was constructed, next to the factory. Finally, a souvenir shop was built in front of the factory. Visitors can see dolls being handmade in the factory.



Highlights

Ajarn (teacher) Yuthana Boonprakong was inspired by his mother and grandmother to establish the museum; as a way of collecting, celebrating and preserving the stories and costumes of different tribes and cultures. Initially, the museum presented collections of dolls dressed in Thai, Lanna Thai and hilltribe costumes. The dolls were presented alongside miniature replicas of household and agricultural equipment, used in these peoples' real, daily lives. After this, Ajarn Yuthana began searching for and collecting dolls from around the world. Exceptional, eye-catching exhibits include dolls dressed as characters from the Ramayana legends, including battling giants. The museum is a fascinating destination to see dolls from Thailand and overseas being faithfully reproduced, by hand.





The museum is constructed as a beautiful, wooden, Thai house, divided into four sections. The first section displays costumes from every region of Thailand, scenes of traditional Thai games, dolls from around the world, pantomime characters, puppets, and dolls in modern dress. The second section is designed in an 'L' shape. It displays costumes and decorations worn by ethnic groups around Thailand, including Tai Lue, Hmong, Karen, etc., with information about their customs and lifestyles. The third section is designed in Lanna style, and presents the lifestyle of people who lived in the Lanna kingdoms, in the past. Exhibits include typical bedrooms, and kitchens where traditional 'kantok' tables laid with northern Thai foods are displayed. The final area of the museum is a gift shop, selling Thai and international dolls, which are believed to be lucky.



Production Process

The artists make different parts of the doll's body, such as the head, torso, arms and legs, and then assemble the dolls. Sometimes the dolls heads are made from ceramics, and sometimes from other materials. The clothes are designed to replica real clothing, with different sections stitched carefully together.



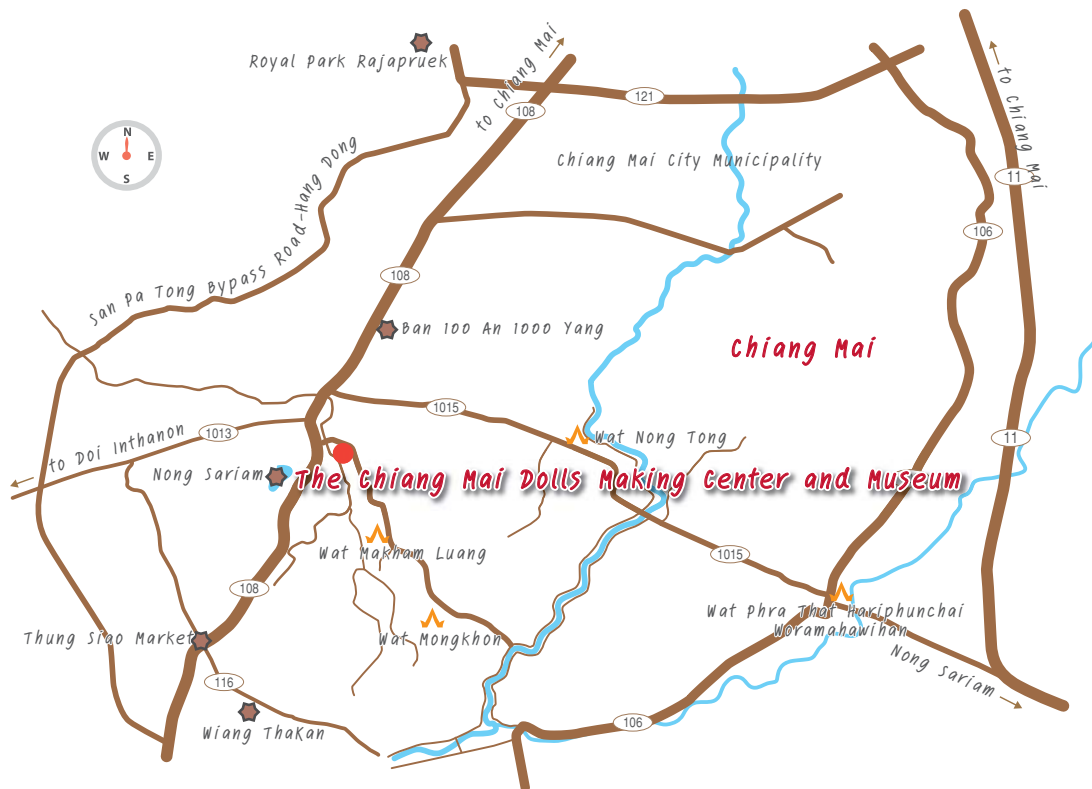
Awards

The Chiang Mai Dolls Making Center and Museum has impressed visitors for over twenty years, and created jobs and income for many local people. The center was awarded with a 5 star OTOP standard. The team have received several other national and international awards, and been invited to teach doll making to students in Thailand and overseas. A range of dolls are available to buy as souvenirs, including dolls dressed in traditional Thai and ethnic, hill tribe costumes. The center also sells a range of porcelain dolls.



 contact information

Visitors can visit the The **Chiang Mai Dolls Making Center and Museum** to observe the doll production process, and try their hand at doll making, free of charge, from 08.00 to 17.00. The center is located at no.116/2, Moo 9, Dong Khee Lek village, Makhm Luang sub-district, San Pa Tong district, Chiang Mai province. Contact Ajarn (teacher) Yuthana Boonprakong. Tel. +668 6198 1891, +66 5383 7229. www.chiangmaidollsmakingcenter.com. Close by, is the Baan Pak Nai Baisanee Monthon Payap Museum. This was established by community members to share and preserve interesting features of Lanna, wooden architecture, such as carved wooden gables. Contact Kru Daeng. Tel. +668 9755 0304.



Silver, stands the test of time In the shade of the Thai Sakura

Nan province



Background

Nan is a town resplendent with cultural and natural gems. Traditional designs, crafted by Nan's artisans, have been passed between generations for hundreds of years. Nan is renowned for delicate silver jewelry and ornaments. Nan is also the home of a very rare tree, the Thai Sakura, which blooms one time per year, in February, with a beautiful, pink blossom. The Thai Sakura can only be seen at Doi Phu Ka National Park.

Nan's heritage of silver crafts dates back to the era of King Rama V. During this time, Nan extended its territory. Many master silversmiths, goldsmiths, iron and copper workers settled in Nan. In the past, silver wares were highly valued by Nan's rulers. Tribute was often paid to princes in silver. Over time, Nan established a reputation as an important hub for silver crafts, with many unique and original designs. As Nan's importance waned, most of Nan's master artists were forced to leave Nan, in search of work elsewhere.

The Nan Chomphu Phukham (Thai Sakura) Silver Handicrafts Center was established to conserve the silver crafts of Mien and Hmong highland tribes, in Nan province. These tribes are famous for their beautifully decorated costumes. However, most people are farmers, practicing swidden agriculture. They are often faced with drought and insufficient farm land to support their families. Since 1972, Mien and Hmong artisans began promoting their handmade products, including silver wares, in Nan province. In 1992, a group of 52 people from several villages in Nan province created a group for silver and textiles artisans. The group established the Nan Chomphu Phukham (Thai Sakura) Silver Handicrafts Center to improve handicrafts production and marketing.



Highlights

Nan's artisans use exceptionally pure, 96-100% silver. Famous local designs include '**kratin puen baan**', '**thep phanom**', and '**sip song rasee.**' Designs are particular to specific clans, from southern China; specific artisans; or they hark back to Nan's court, influenced by the silver designs of the ancient Lan Xang Kingdom. Most of the designs are inspired by nature. Originally, many of Nan's designs were probably of Tai Lue origin. Conserving these designs relies on local artisans, with a deep knowledge of Buddhist arts and history.

Production Process

- Put the silver into a rounded, earthen crucible, and place it in a bellows furnace. The silver will slowly melt. Add a little charcoal ash to prevent the silver from sticking to the sides of the crucible. Prepare a shallow, clay mold. Pour paraffin into the mold, so it is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ full. When the molten silver is poured into the mold, the paraffin will keep the molten silver from dispersing. Then, leave the silver for approximately 5 minutes. Remove the ash dust and allow the silver to settle. You will be able to remove a silver sheet from the mold;

- Dip the silver sheet into a bucket of sulphur-water mix (mixed at a ratio of 2 bottles of sulphur per 6 tanks of water). This, sulphuric acid will help to remove any air bubbles in the silver. Next, dip the silver into tamarind juice to wash away any further impurities. Brushing the silver with a copper wire brush also helps to remove any remaining acid, and to brighten the silver;



- Hammer the silver into the required shape. While this is happening, the silver will cool and harden. Use fire to soften the silver enough to be able to continue shaping it.

- Engrave the silver, and then polish it with sand paper;

- Wash the silver in weak sulphuric acid for approximately 30 minutes, and polish the silver.

The Nan Chomphu Phukham (Thai Sakura) Silver Handicrafts Center is located approximately 2 km's from Bang Kha and Sripandon temples. The center was established to promote and improve the quality of Mien and Hmong silver crafts. Mien and Hmong people have a long history of expertise crafting silver.





Awards

The Nan Chomphu Phukham (Thai Sakura) Silver Handicrafts Center welcomes Thai and international tourists. It is a center for producing, demonstrating and selling silver and other handicrafts produced by hill tribe artisans and other community members throughout Nan province. Over 50 families produce handicrafts for the center. These delicate handicrafts have been recognized with 5 star OTOP status.



Contact information

The Nan Chomphu Phukham Silver Handicrafts Center is open from 08:00 to 17:00 hrs. It is located at No. 250, Moo 4, Chaiyasathan sub-district, Muang district, Nan province. Tel. +66 5471 0177. E-mail : phukhasilver@hotmail.com.

The glitter of ancient gold

The gold of Sri Satchanalai,

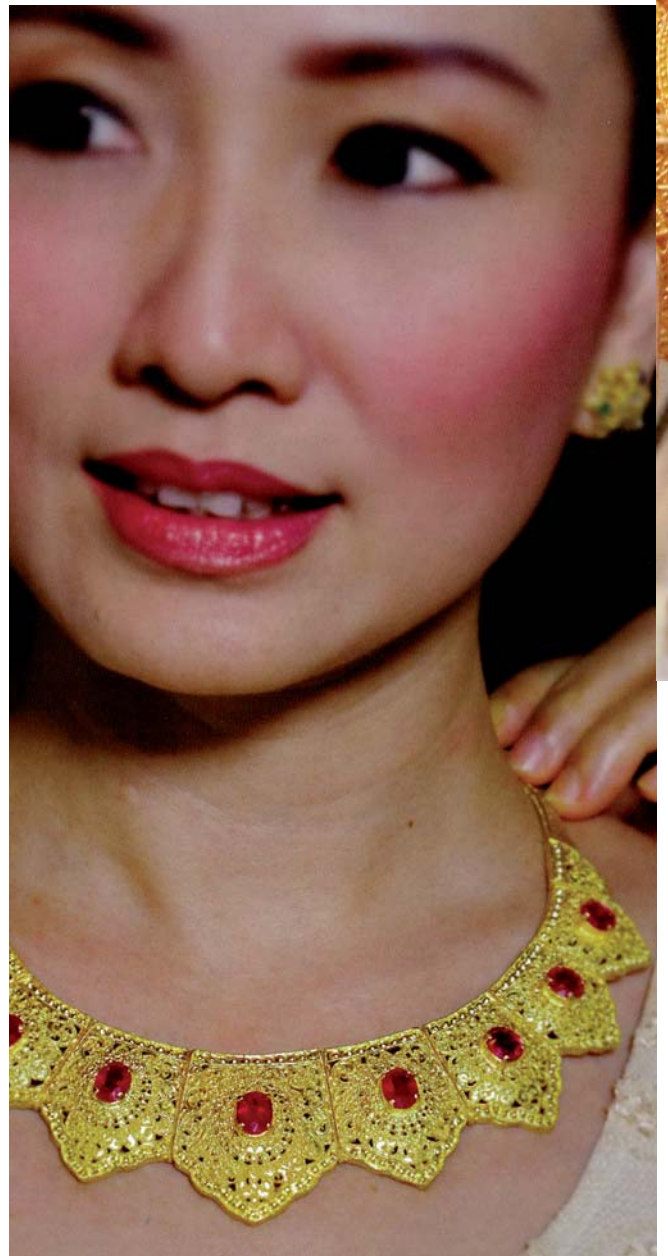
Sukhothai province



Background

In the past, goldsmiths searched for inspiration to craft gold treasures for the royal court. Goldsmithing is both an art and a science. Engraved designs on concrete chapel walls, and elaborate designs painted onto temple ceilings were the inspiration for the **'Goldsmiths of Sri Satchanalai,'** to create beautiful designs such as **'Nang Phayah,' 'Krua Walai'** and **'Na Moh.'** Every project was unique, based on personal vision and sense of place.

To reproduce the gold designs of Sri Satchanalai requires the finest goldsmiths. Fortunately, in Tha Chai and Sri Satchanalai districts, Sukhothai province, present day goldsmiths are continuing to practice their ancestors' legacy. The history of gold is always a fascinating story, linked to fantastic wealth. The gold of Sri Satchanalai reflects the glory of a **'Golden Age'** for Thai civilization, in Thailand's first capital, Sukhothai.





Highlights

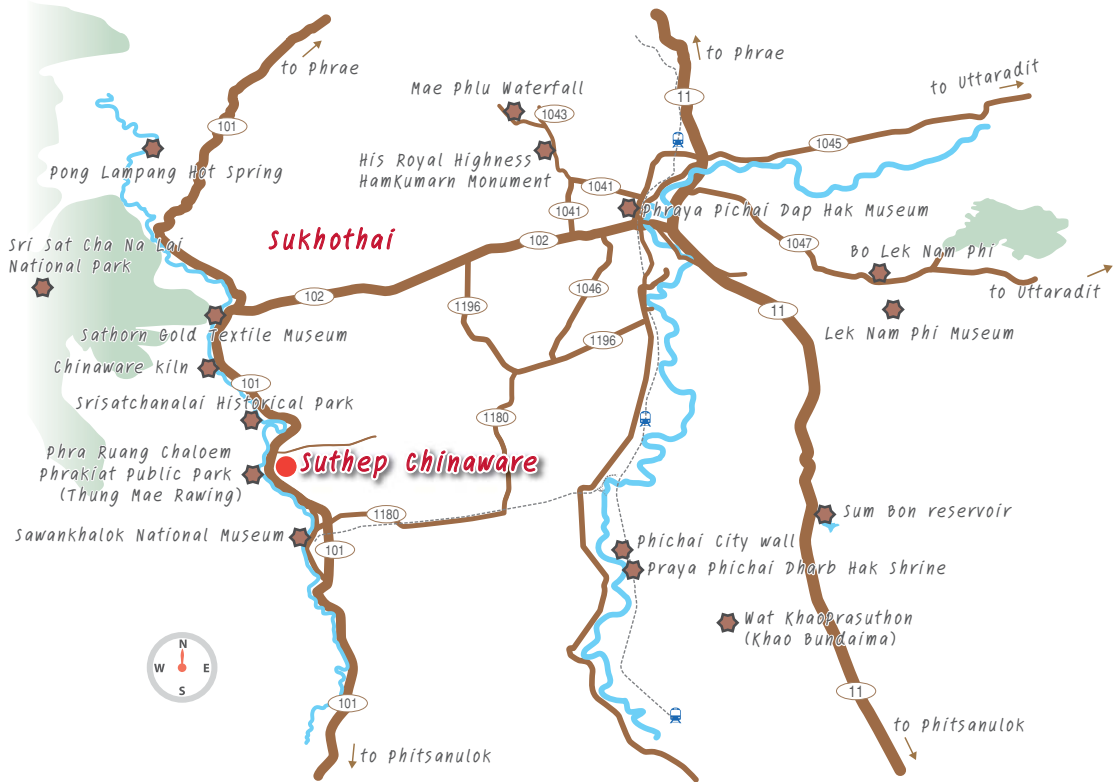
The gold of Sri Satchanalai is distinguished by exquisite, ancient designs and outstanding purity of 99.99%. It has a distinctive, rich colour, known as **'Champa'** gold. Goldsmiths craft the gold entirely by hand, without using modern machinery. Crafting gold requires physical effort, imagination, and additional time compared to machine finished jewelry. However, this additional difficulty endows Sri Satchanalai gold with a tangible charm. Sri Satchanalai gold is rarely used to make diamond jewelry. It is decorated, in the ancient Sukhothai style, with beautiful red, green and dark blue stones.

Thong Samai village has played an important role in ensuring that Sukhothai gold designs have continued to be well known throughout Thailand, and internationally. Originally, 2 Chinese artisans arrived by boat from Bangkok, and used their gold making skills to start a new life in Sukhothai. They passed on their skills to Mr. Suer Wong Yai, who became skilled enough to make bespoke gold jewelry and open Thong Samai gold shop. Later, Mr. Som Samai learned how to reproduce ancient gold braiding techniques. He has since developed many beautiful designs, including hearts, **'dok pikul,'** water drops, and fish. Gold crafts are still made with traditional equipment at every stage of production, including melting, hammering, engraving and polishing.



Production Process

Initially, 99.99% pure gold is hammered into gold sheets, gold threads, or other desired shapes. The process starts with melting the gold. The artisans will stare, transfixed, at shooting jets of flame, while the gold separates into small pieces. After the gold has cooled and reformed, it is crafted into fine necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, etc.; or larger art and sacred objects, such as Buddhist statues.



Awards

Sukhothai gold was selected as an outstanding, regional level, 5 star OTOP product in 2003.



contact information

Contact **Baan Thong Som Samai**, 343/1, Moo 5, Tha Chai sub-district, Sri Satchanalai district, Sukhothai 64190. The shop is open for visitors to watch gold crafting from Tuesday to Sunday (closed on Mondays), between 08.00 to 17.00. Contact Khun Pramote Khaohin. Tel.+668 1785 8433, +66 5567 9095. For more information, please see www.somsamaigold.com. After seeing the goldsmiths at work, don't miss seeing original Sukhothai designs at Nang Phaya Temple, surrounded by forest and mountains, located inside Sri Satchanalai Historical Park. Here, you can admire Thailand's finest Sukhothai, 'walking' style Buddha image.

Inspired by traditional, Thai tales

Hua Khon village

Bangkok



Background

'Khon' is an epic drama. Colorfully costumed actors perform stories from the Thai Ramakien. Popular and recognizable characters include Hanuman, the monkey god. 'Khon' dramatic performance has been popular since the late Ayutthaya period. The reign of Rama VI was a golden age for Khon performance. Present day artists and performers continue to draw on the inspiration and skills of performers and artists from this time.

Vibrantly decorated, '**Khon masks**' are considered to be some of Thailand's most valuable works of art. The masks play a core part in celebrating the stories, color, skills and beauty of the Ramakien epic. They are a symbol of national pride. Sacred Khon masks are even worshipped by performers as 'master teachers', possessing supernatural powers. There are

two types of Khon mask. The first type, '**Por Kru**' are considered to be sacred objects. The second type of Khon mask are used during Khon performances. They include the masks of Hanuman the monkey god, Rama, Sita, Ravana, and other characters from the Ramakien story.



Nowadays, artisans make many types of Khon mask. These range from full size masks used for professional performances; to miniature masks, which make ideal decorations, gifts and souvenirs. A full size mask usually costs over 10,000 Baht. However, smaller gifts and replicas can be purchased for only a few hundred Baht. These products reflect Thai arts and culture; and help to preserve them for future generations. Decorating homes with Khon masks helps to keep traditional skills alive and to inspire new generations of Thai artisans.

'**Baan Khon Thai**' is an artists group which builds on the work of Mr. Somchai Luanwilai and Kru (teacher) Sith Kaewduangyai, a master craftsman, responsible for repairing Khon masks for the Department of Fine Arts. 'Baan Khon Thai' are leaders in preserving the arts and crafts of Khon masks. The center is committed to celebrating and conserving this priceless part of Thai life and culture. This is achieved through crafting performance masks; demonstrations, teaching; and offering a range of decorations and souvenirs. Students and tourists can learn how to decorate and paint Khon masks, while learning about Thai history and legends.



Nowadays, the use of Khon masks is not confined to artistic performance and worship as sacred objects. Many different sizes, designs and colors of Khon mask are produced for sale as souvenirs. These popular, meaningful, gifts are helping to preserve the value and skills of one of Thailand's most precious, creative arts.



Production Process

Crafting Khon masks is a fine art, which requires great skill and patience, as well as very detailed knowledge of Thai history and legend. Artisans who make Khon masks refer to their tradecraft as the '**Knowledge of 10 Arts.**' This refers to skills as diverse as pottery, sculpture, engraving, painting, gold crafting and glasswork. Master craftsman must be able to draw upon all of these disciplines. In addition, they must have the character traits of patience, concentration, detail, and great physical and emotional energy. To make Khon masks:

- i) Shape a pottery head from clay;
- ii) Cover the head with many layers of moist, mulberry paper squares. As you work, use a brush to flatten and smooth each layer, before continuing to the next layer. Then, leave the Khon head mask to dry for 4 days. Repeat this process three times, taking a total of approximately 12 days;
- iii) Remove the paper mask from the pottery head, by cutting it carefully into two halves. Then, stitch these halves together again, taking great care to ensure a smooth seam;



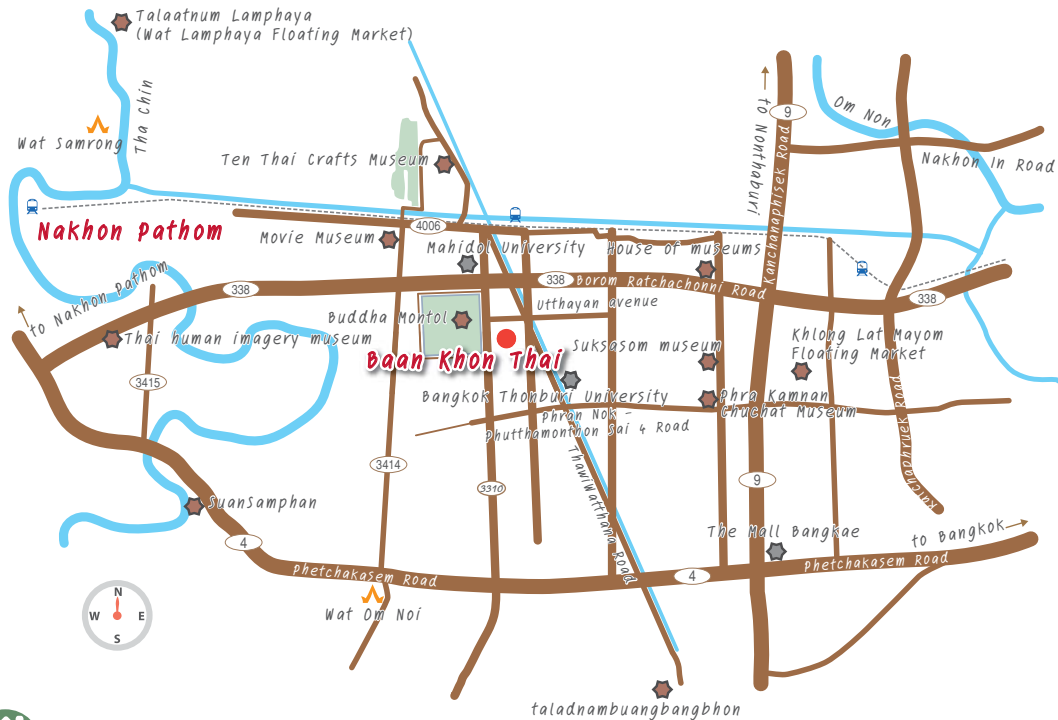
iv) A mixture of glue and sawdust is used to create features, such as eyes, mouth, nose, etc. Artists must work hard to ensure that each mask conveys an appropriate expression and mood, according to the character's role in the Ramakien story. Finally, the mask is covered with putty;

v) Decorate the Khon mask with gold, precious and semi-precious stones and glass. A special, highly adhesive mixture known as 'tuak rak' is used to stick decorations to the Khon mask;

vi) Finally, paint the Khon mask, adding details and patterns. Paint powder is mixed with acacia gum, which provides a smooth finish, contrasting beautifully with the gold and precious stones.

Awards

Ban Khon Thai was recognized with 4 star OTOP status, in 2003; and 5 star OTOP status in 2004. In 2005, Kru Somchai was proposed for a 7th Local Wisdom Teacher award (fine arts category). In 2008, Ban Khon Thai was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation in the Asian Awards of Excellence in Arts and Crafts, from the SUPPORT Arts and Crafts International Center of Thailand.



Contact information

Visitors can observe a demonstration and learn how to decorate Khon masks between Monday to Saturday, from 09.00 to 18.00. **The Baan Khon Thai Community Enterprise** is located at no. 23 Soi Cheroen Nakhon 9, Klong Ton Sai, Khlong San district, Bangkok 10600. Contact Khun Pupha Luann Wilai. Tel. +668 9669 8831, +66 2438 3127 and +66 2889 9961, +668 6990 0861. Website: www.thaitambon.com/bk/baankhon.htm.



Carving the craft road to Korat Niello masters of

Nakhon Ratchasima province



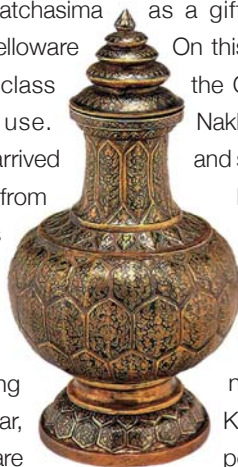
background

No visit to Nakhon Ratchasima is complete without walking along Tha Chang road, which has a massive collection of arts and crafts. One of Nakhon Ratchasima's most famous and historic products is niellaware. Niello is a black mixture of copper, silver and lead sulphides, used as an inlay on engraved or etched metal. It can be used for filling in designs cut from metal. There are two types of Thai niellaware: black and gold.





In the past, nielloware from Nakhon Ratchasima was very popular in the royal, Thai court. Nielloware was considered to be a beautiful, high class material, appropriate for royal family use. According to historians, nielloware crafts arrived in Thailand during the Ayutthaya period, from Portugal, when Portuguese ambassadors held audiences with the King. Knowledge of how to make nielloware arrived in Nakhon Ratchasima in 1518, and then travelled to Ayutthaya during the reign of King Narai the Great. Nielloware became so popular, that the Thai ambassador presented nielloware



as a gift to Louie XIV of France and the Pope. On this occasion, King Narai the Great requested the Governor of Nakhon Ratchasima to identify Nakhon Ratchasima's finest nielloware craftsmen, and send them to Ayutthaya to make these pieces.

During the reign of King Rama II, nielloware was highly valued by the royal court. The Governor of Nakhon Ratchasima was himself a nielloware craftsman, who proactively supported craftsmen to learn nielloware crafting skills. During the reign of King Rama V, nielloware was also extremely popular.



Highlights

Nielloware of Nakhon Ratchasima is engraved entirely by hand, without acid. Nakhon Ratchasima nielloware is renowned for a smooth, glossy finish, and deep black tone, without any tiny holes. Products include rings, necklaces, bracelets and various types of trays. Because hand-made nielloware products take between a week and a year to complete, prices are usually quite high: between 10,000 and 100,000 Thai Baht per piece.



Production process

First, the artisans carve a design into a silver object. Artisans carve these designs as deeply and clearly as possible. Next, the artisans coat the silver with niello amalgam powder (usually containing silver, copper and lead). Heat is applied. This dissolves the amalgam, which then sinks deeply into the design which is carved into the silver object. Finally, the objects are polished with a rasp, washed and polished again to a shine.





Awards

The Krueng Tom Muang Nakhon Group are highly recognized for their skills reproducing ancient nielloware designs, of consistently high quality. The group has been awarded with 5 star OTOP status. Learning the craft of nielloware is an arduous challenge, which usually takes between 7 and 10 years. This has dissuaded the younger generation from learning this art. However, despite challenges, the group continues to preserve the historic skills, and the artistic heritage of Nakhon Ratchasima. The time and effort which they put into crafting Nielloware justifies its high price, making it a particularly meaningful gift for home decoration, from Thailand.



Contact information

Tourists can visit the **Krueng Tom Muang Nakhon Group**, every day from 08.30 to 18.00. The group is located on Tha Chang Road. Tel. +668 9195 1991, +66 7534 2624, +66 6382 9960.

Bridging ancient wisdom and modern technology

Lacquerware of the Wichai family

Chiang Mai province



Background

In this age of high technology, the Wichai family have been remarkably successful exciting customers about traditional lacquerware. Their traditional Lanna arts, made with wood and bamboo, coated with lacquer and decorated with stunning mother of pearl inlay, silver and gold are **'must have'** products! The history of these crafts stretches back over 200 years. Lacquerware was an expensive and highly skilled craft. Lacquerware products were highly valued for use in religious ceremonies, as well as by the royal court and upper classes.

What makes lacquer crafts exceptionally eye-catching is the striking contrast between deep, black lacquer and bright gold inlay. In the past, popular products included functional objects, for home use. These included vases, jugs, trays, bowls, jars, and other versatile containers; and also larger, art objects.





 Highlights

Wichaikul Ltd. have been very successful designing attractive lacquerware products, which are well adapted to modern customers' needs and lifestyles. The company has introduced many design innovations, and increased production. The lacquer production process used to be very rigorous, with 17 stages, each taking approximately one week. This is

Today, lacquer goods are rarely used as housewares. Lacquer crafts have not been able to compete against cheaper alternatives, such as plastic, paper, stainless steel, etc. However, lacquer is still valued as a beautiful gift, to celebrate special occasions. In 2002, Thailand's Ministry of Culture became concerned that the art of lacquerware may be lost to Thailand. The ministry organized a project to bring together Thailand's skilled lacquerware artisans; and establish a lacquerware museum in Nantharam temple, Chiang Mai. The Nantharam Lacquerware Group was established. Wichaikul Ltd. assisted these producers to reach markets.





because lacquer takes several days to dry. As a result, a workforce of 30 people could only produce about 500 normal size objects or 3000 small objects per month. It was impossible for lacquer products to compete with plastics. There were also challenges caused by the fact that lacquer products sometimes flake after significant periods of use. Thus, it was difficult to export lacquer products.

Chakrit Suwanchomphu was the seventh generation of the Wichaikul lacquer legacy. He worked in partnership with the National Science and Technology Development Agency of Northern Thailand to develop an alternative, polymer resin lacquer, without chemical residue. This solved the challenges of timing and color flaking, and reinvigorated the 7th generation business. Moreover, lacquer products became available to a wider customer base, through products including eye-catching phone and tablet cases, thumb drives, and other trendy innovations. Wichaikul were able to develop new markets for lacquerware in countries including the US, France, Germany and Japan.

Production Process

Making lacquerware requires knowledge, skills and time. The process is:

- Make a frame for the product, using bamboo, or a lathed wood frame;
- Smooth the frame using sand paper, and plaster it with a mixture of lacquer and kerosene. Leave it to dry for 3 to 5 days;
- Apply lacquer again and wait until the object is completely dry;
- Apply lacquer paste, made from a mixture of lacquer, rice powder and banana leaf or rice husk ash. Dry and polish the object;
- Apply lacquer and wait for the object to dry. Repeat this 2 or 3 times, until the object is glossy;
- Engrave the desired design into the object and decorate the object with silver or gold.

Currently, Wichaikul Ltd. produce more than 100 different products, from a few hundred to tens of thousands of Baht. They have many customers in Thailand and overseas. They are also committed to community development, especially by encouraging local youth to develop lacquerware skills, so that they can continue the work of elder artisans. The company is also coordinating with the Forestry Department to plant lacquer trees, which would be sustainably managed by local community members as part of sustainable, local natural resource management.



 Awards

Wichaikul Lacquer was awarded as an outstanding, 5 star OTOP producer in 2009. The company also won the Chiang Mai Design Awards (CDA) contest, organized by the Chiang Mai University Science and Technology Park. This park is open to visitors from 10.00 to 17.00.

 contact information

Wichaikul Lacquer, 86 Tharam Road, Haiya sub-district, Chiang Mai province, 50100. Tel. +668 6657 2437, +668 6916 1424 e-mail: lacquerware@hotmail.com.

A new wind for traditional, Thai arts Nielloware of

Nonthaburi province



Background

Many of the young generation have not heard of nielloware. If they saw how nielloware products are made, they would undoubtedly be impressed by nielloware craftsmen, and admire their stunning gold and silver creations. However, it is a sad fact that these days, few young people are learning how to make nielloware. It is fortunate, therefore, that HRM Queen Sirikit established the SUPPORT Foundation, for promotion of traditional skills. The foundation has played an important role in reviving and conserving Thai nielloware skills for future generations, and helped to promote and protect Thailand's priceless cultural and artistic heritage.

Nielloware in Nonthaburi is the result of cooperation between local community members, who have passed on skills for generations, and co-exist like an extended family. Master craftsman, **Mr. Uthai Jeansiri** is president of the group, and a former nielloware teacher at Suan

Chitralada palace. He learned his skills from his uncle, who also inspired him with the importance of passing nielloware crafting skills onto the next generation.

Nielloware has been at the heart of Thai crafts since the Ayutthaya period, and has been popular during the Rattanakosin period. Crafting nielloware requires exceptional skills and attention to detail. Nielloware crafting begins by hammering silver into the desired shape, and engraving a design into the silver. This can be done by hand. Acid can also be used to engrave the design into the silver. Next, the artisans coat the silver with niello amalgam, which then sinks deeply into the design, which is carved into the silver object. When the surface of the object is equal and smooth, the artisans apply pure gold mixed with mercury paint across the surface. Heat is then applied, which causes the mercury to separate from the gold, revealing a stunning gold design.

 Highlights

Nielloware from Nonthaburi is distinguished by unique and secret production techniques. In particular, the craftsmen have spent years perfecting a niello amalgam which sticks cleanly to silver, and is very durable. The technique of engraving silver using acid is known as chuthathut. It was named after HRH Prince Naris, a highly skilled artist and scientist, who developed techniques to improve the efficiency of crafts production.



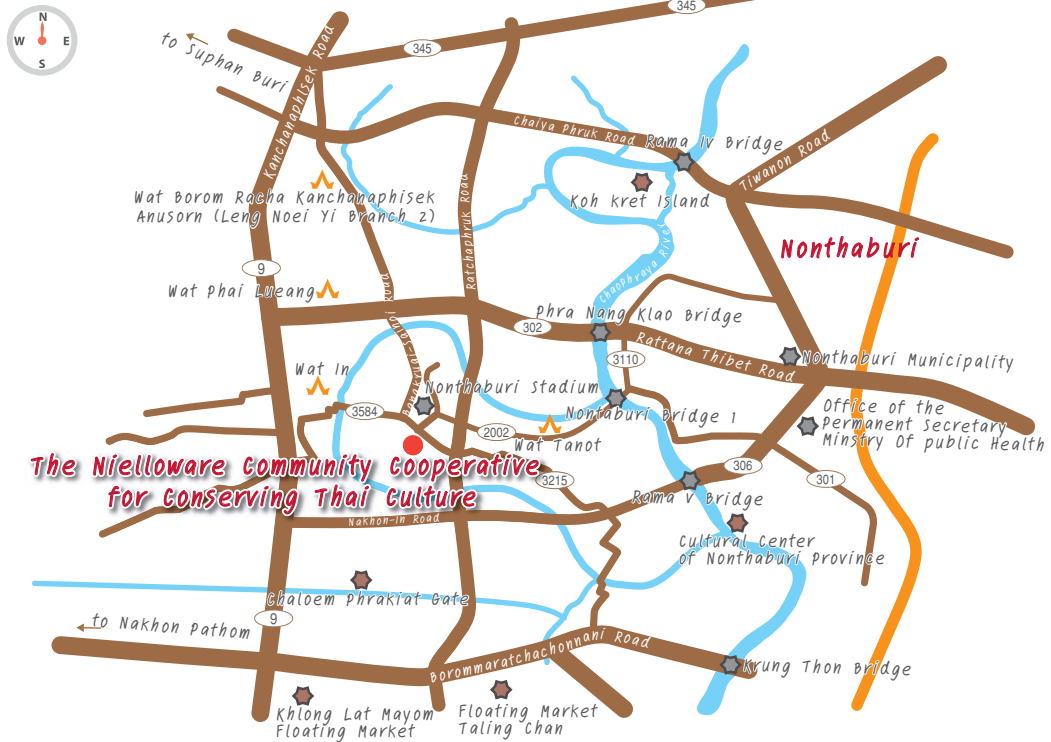


Production Process

To make nielloware, artisans need pure gold, silver pellets, acid, mercury and niello amalgam. First, pure silver is alloyed with mercury, creating 95% pure silver. This is harder than pure silver, which is too soft to engrave delicate designs. The silver is melted in a crucible and poured into a mold. Then, it is hammered into a sheet, which is cut into the required shape. The next stage is to engrave the design onto the silver. This can be done using two techniques. The first technique is using acid. This enables the artists to create extremely complex and delicate designs. The depth of engraving created by acid also helps to prevent small holes (imperfections) from being created in the finished work. The second technique is to use a chisel to engrave traditional designs by hand. Next, the engraved sections are filled with niello amalgam, using heat, until the surface of the jewelry is flat.



Then, they are polished. This completes the process of crafting silver nielloware. To make gold nielloware, replace silver with gold. Melt 100% pure gold together with mercury. Pound the alloy into a fine powder, and spread this onto the object. Use a low heat, which will dissolve the mercury leaving only pure gold. Repeat this process 3 times. Then, polish the object with a brass brush, to a fine shine.



 Awards

The Nielloware Community Cooperative for Conserving Thai Culture received a 3 star OTOP award in 2012.

 Contact information

The group is open to visitors from Monday to Saturday, 09.00 to 17.00. The Nielloware Community **Cooperative for Conserving Thai Culture** is located at 15/44, Moo 4, Soi Bang Krang, Bang Kluay-Sai Noi road, Bang Krang sub-district, Muang District, Nonthaburi province, 11000. Contact Group President, Mr. Uthai Jeansiri. Tel. +668 4359 7274.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand

1600 New Phetchaburi Road, Makkasan,
Ratchathewi, Bangkok 10400, Thailand
Tel : +66 2250 5500 (120 automatic lines)
Fax : +66 2250 5511 (2 automatic lines)
Website : www.tourismthailand.org

Northern Region

TAT Chiang Mai Office
(Chiang Mai, Lampang, Lamphun)
Tel : +66 5324 8604-5
E-mail : tatchmai@tat.or.th

TAT Mae Hong Son Office
Tel : +66 5361 2982-3
E-mail : tatmhs@tat.or.th

TAT Chiang Rai Office
(Chiang Rai, Phayao)
Tel : +66 5371 7433, +66 5374 4674-5
E-mail : tatchrai@tat.or.th

TAT Phrae Office (Phrae, Nan, Uttaradit)
Tel : +66 5452 1127
E-mail : tatphrae@tat.or.th, tatphare@gmail.com

TAT Pitsanulok Office
(Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Phichit)
Tel : +66 5525 2742-3, +66 5525 9907
E-mail : tatphlok@tat.or.th

TAT Tak Office
Tel : +66 5551 4341-3
E-mail : tattak@tat.or.th

TAT Uthai Thani Office
(Uthai Thani, Nakhon Sawan)
Tel : +66 5651 4651-2
E-mail : tatuthai@tat.or.th

TAT Sukhothai Office
(Sukhothai, Kamphaeng Phet)
Tel : +66 5561 6228-9
E-mail : tatsukho@tat.or.th

Central Region

TAT Bangkok Office
Tel : +66 2276 2720-1
E-mail : tatbangkok@tat.or.th

TAT Samut Songkhram Office
(Samut Songkhram, Nakhon Pathom,
Samut Sakhon)
Tel : +66 3475 2847-8
E-mail : tatsmsk@tat.or.th

TAT Phetchaburi Office
(Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi)
Tel : +66 3247 1005-6
E-mail : tatphet@tat.or.th

TAT Prachuap Khiri Khan Office
Tel : +66 3251 3885, +66 3251 3854, +66 3251 3871
E-mail : tatprachuap@tat.or.th

TAT Kanchanaburi Office
Tel : +66 3451 1200, +66 3451 2500
E-mail : tatkan@tat.or.th tourismkan@gmail.com

TAT Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office
Tel : +66 3524 6076-7
E-mail : tatyutya@tat.or.th

TAT Suphan Buri Office
(Suphan Buri, Ang Thong, Chai Nat)
Tel : +66 3552 5867, +66 3552 5880
E-mail : tatsuphan@tat.or.th

TAT Lop Buri Office
(Lop Buri, Sing Buri, Saraburi)
Tel : +66 3677 0096-7
E-mail : tatlobri@tat.or.th

Eastern Region

TAT Pattaya Office (Chon Buri)
Tel : +66 3842 7667, +66 3842 8750, +66 3842 3990
E-mail : tatchon@tat.or.th

TAT Rayong Office
(Rayong, Chanthaburi)
Tel : +66 3865 5420-1, +66 3866 4585
E-mail : tatoryong@tat.or.th

TAT Trat Office
Tel : +66 3959 7259-60
E-mail : tattrat@tat.or.th

TAT Nakhon Nayok Office
(Nakhon Nayok, Prachinburi, Sa Kaeo)
Tel : +66 3731 2282, +66 3731 2284
E-mail : tatnayok@tat.or.th

North-eastern Region

TAT Nakhon Ratchasima Office
(Nakhon Ratchasima, Chaiyaphum)
Tel : +66 4421 3030, +66 4421 3666
E-mail : tatsima@tat.or.th

TAT Ubon Ratchathani Office
(Ubon Ratchathani,
Amnat Charoen, Yasothorn)
Tel : +66 4524 3770, +66 4525 0714
E-mail : tatubon@tat.or.th

TAT Khon Kaen Office
(Khon Kaen, Roi Et, Kalasin,
Maha Sarakham)
Tel : +66 4322 7714-6
E-mail : tatkhkn@tat.or.th

TAT Nakhon Phanom Office
(Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon,
Mukdahan)
Tel : +66 4251 3490-1
E-mail : tatphnom@tat.or.th

TAT Udon Thani Office
(Udon Thani, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan)
Tel : +66 4232 5406-7
E-mail : tatudon@tat.or.th

TAT Loei Office
(Loei, Nong Bua Lam Phu)
Tel : +66 4281 2812
E-mail : tatloei@tat.or.th

TAT Surin Office
(Surin, Buri Ram, Si Sa Ket)
Tel : +66 4451 4447-8
E-mail : tatsurin@tat.or.th

Southern Region

TAT Hat Hai Office
(Songkhla, Phatthalung)
Tel : +66 7423 1055, +66 7423 8518,
+66 7424 3747
E-mail : tatsgkhl@tat.or.th

TAT Nakhon Si Thammarat Office
Tel : +66 7536 5158-6
E-mail : tatnksri@tat.or.th

TAT Narathiwat Office
(Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani)
and Betong District Tourism
Coordination Center
Tel : +66 7352 2411
E-mail : tatnara@tat.or.th, tatbetong@tat.or.th

TAT Phuket Office
(Phuket, Phang Nga)
Tel : +66 7621 1036, +66 7621 2213
E-mail : tatphket@tat.or.th

**Phang Nga Provincial Tourism
Coordination Center**
Tel : +66 7648 1900-2
E-mail : tatphangnga@tat.or.th

TAT Surat Thani Office
Tel : +66 7728 8817-9
E-mail : tatsurat@tat.or.th

Koh Samui Tourism Coordination Center
Tel : +66 7742 0504, +66 7742 0722
E-mail : tatsamui@tat.or.th

TAT Trang Office
(Trang, Satun)
Tel : +66 7521 5867, +66 7521 1058,
+66 7521 1085
E-mail : tattrang@tat.or.th

TAT Krabi Office
Tel : +66 7562 2163, +66 7561 2811-2
E-mail : tatkrabi@tat.or.th

TAT Chumphon Office
(Chumphon, Ranong)
Tel : +66 7750 1831-2, +66 7750 2775-6
E-mail : tatchumphon@tat.or.th



**Services Promotion Division
Tourism Product Promotion Department
Tourism Authority of Thailand**

1600 New Phetchaburi Road, Makkasan, Ratchathewi, Bangkok 10400 Thailand

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