



*Saling Kumram uses a spinning tool to soften raw silk yarn.*

Van zijdeworm tot zijden stoffen

Common threads

Ban Sanuan Nok in Buri Ram is keeping tradition alive with silk weaving

The silk woven cloth village of Ban Sanuan Nok plants the most mulberry trees in Huai Rat district, Buri Ram. The fresh leaves are the food of silkworms and of the people who use them to enhance their cuisine, and a few of the leaves are even bigger than the size of an adult's hand.

Ban Sanuan Nok has recently opened its doors for visitors to learn how to make silk cloth, from producing yarn to weaving in the traditional way.

"Sanuan Nok is named after a tree. According to folklore told more than two centuries ago, Ban Sanuan Nok was a dense forest where abundant sanuan trees grew," said village head Bunthip Karam, 43. "Although no one knows what the tree looked like, it was said that it was a large tree."

The story has it that in 1805, a skilful blacksmith named Dam moved from his hometown in Roi Et to settle in the area. He is the first person to name the village Ban Sanuan because of the trees.

Later, clay walls and moats were built as borders of the community. Time passed and the village grew bigger. Those who lived outside the walls called their community Ban Sanuan Nok (nok means

outside) and those who lived inside the old walls were known as Ban Sanuan Nai. Today only some parts of the old moats and walls remain, said Bunthip.

Locals in Ban Sanuan Nok speak the Isan dialect and Khmer language fluently. They are farmers who grow rice once a year for a living. In their free time, women raise silkworms to weave silk cloth for personal use.

In 2004, a team from the Huai Rat Office of the Community Development Department of the Ministry of Interior visited the village and initiated the establishment of a Silk Weaving Group to promote handmade silk fabrics. The group initially had a 10,000 baht investment and about 20 members to start producing silk for sale.

Their local pattern is known as hang krarak, meaning squirrel's tail, because the pattern is inspired by the bushy tails of the animal.

The pattern is made from two colours; yellow with red or yellow with green, imitating the two-tone black and brown of the squirrel's tail.

More authorities and academics joined forces to develop quality silk fabrics and living conditions in the village. They were Buri Ram Rajabhat University, the Queen Sirikit Department of Sericulture, Ban Sanuan Nok Municipality, Buri Ram Provincial Industrial Office and Buri Ram Office of Business Development.

The Community Development Department's Huai Rat Office saw that Ban Sanuan Nok had a potential for tourism. The department wanted to promote its Otop Village project to the people. The concept of Otop Village is to promote tourism in villages nationwide through "One Tambon One Product" (Otop) certified goods. It aims to create jobs and increase income for rural dwellers.

Before the villagers of Ban Sanuan Nok joined the Otop Village project, they visited successful Otop villages and homestay services to understand the concept.

"We found that their ways of living are simple and not much different from us. If they can do it, so can we," said the village head.

On July 17, 2013, the Buri Ram governor presided over a ceremony to introduce Ban Sanuan Nok as an Otop Village. Its highlight is to show visitors a traditional way of producing silk fabrics.

Those who visit the village can stay overnight through a homestay service. Many houses in the village, like other houses in rural areas, are raised-floor wooden houses although there are some houses that are made of concrete.

Locals use the shady space under their raised houses to raise silkworms or to weave cloth. Out of 150 families in the community, about 80 are members of the silk woven cloth group, said the group chairwoman Samroeng Kotiram.

The silk cloth is certified as a 5-star Otop product of Buri Ram. The products include plain coloured silk fabrics, mudmee (tie-dyed silk), hang krarak khu (two-tone squirrel's tail pattern) fabrics and pha khao ma (a chequered loincloth).

Two years ago, the silk fabrics generated almost 900,000 baht revenue for the village. Last year, earnings increased to 1.5 million baht.

"No one in our village had ever imagined that we could have earned more than a million baht from selling our silk fabrics. It was a happy surprise," she said.

With the success of the business, villagers introduced walking routes where visitors can learn and try the complete process of making silk and handicraft products. A few houses opened their doors for visitors to try weaving bamboo fans, making wooden bells for buffaloes and oxen or bracelets and necklaces by using byproducts from silkworms such as dry cocoons and rough short silk fabrics.

Last year, tourism generated up to 1.2 million baht for the community. Today the earnings from tourists and silk fabrics surpass the incomes generated from selling rice. The village also gets international tourists, especially from Europe. The community has English-speaking guides.

"We haven't changed our way of life to serve tourism. When tourists visit us, they will see and experience our simple way of life and tradition of handmade silk woven cloth as we used to in olden times," said Samroeng.

(Bron: *Bangkok Post*, 21 september 2017)



*Cocoons are left under the sun for a couple of days so the pupae die before the cocoons are boiled for silk yarn. Raw silk yarn is rough and needs to be spun to make it softer before being dyed. The villagers used both natural and chemical colours to dye the yarns. Karnjana Karnjanatawe*

