



The SUPPORT Arts and Crafts  
International Centre of Thailand  
(Public Organization)



Types of Handicrafts

# Pakaoma Roi See – Pakaoma



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**Pakaoma** is a multi-purposed, homespun cloth that Thai people use in their daily life. Pakaoma is woven into a rectangular, with the width of approximately 2 Sorks, and the length of approximately 3 – 4 Sork. (Sork is a unit of measurement of Thailand, 1 Sork is roughly equal to an arm length, from the wrist to the elbow.) Normally, Paakaoma is made with the small checker pattern, with various colors. Pakaoma is known by many names in Thailand, depend on the regions. Such variety also covers Pakaoma’s colors and pattern, which are varied to the popularity of individual region.

**Pakaoma** coexists with the life of Thai people for ages. Pakaoma serves various purpose, can be used by every people of every age. For example, men wear Pakaoma on their shoulder, use a waistband, wrap it around their heads, cover the floor with it before sit on it, wear it as loincloth, wear it as bath robe, etc. Women wear Pakaoma over their upper body, use it to make a hammock for children, etc. Pakaoma can be used for many other purposes to today; and though the people’s lifestyle may change with time, value of Pakaoma remains. Nowadays, people usually buy Pakaoma and use it as gift and souvenir. Some people use Pakaoma as Pa Rap Wai (a piece of cloth use for receiving gifts and offerings) in various auspicious ceremonies, such as, the wedding. These applications of Pakaoma reflect is cultural value that remains firmly in the current tradition and lifestyle of Thai people.

On the other hand, ‘**Pakaoma Roi See**’ (Pakaoma of Hundred Colors) is a type of Pakaoma that is really popular among the people who use Pakaoma in their life. This is because Pakaoma Roi See is more colorful than typical Pakaoma, and contains novel patterns. Pakaoma Roi See is a unique product from Ban Norng Kao Village of Kanchanaburi Province. The colorful beauty of Pakaoma Roi See comes from combination of multi color threads into each piece of Pakaoma. Pakaoma Roi See contains so many attractive, over hundred, colors in it, hence the name, Pakaoma of Hundred Colors.



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## Pakaoma: unique identity that reflects craftsman' wisdom and ability

Prominent characteristic of Pakaoma lies in its unique patterns, which are different region to region. Some regions make Pakaoma with multi-color or single-color dyed cotton, some make it with naturally dyed thread, some make it with high quality silk, some make it with colorful synthetics threads made in industrial factory, etc. Pakaoma weaving is therefore a handicraft that can be found in every region of the country. Pakaoma is an ordinary product that, in the past, every household must have, and used for various purposes.

Thai Pakaoma is normally made in rectangular, with the width of approximately 2 Sorks, and the length of 3 – 4 Sorks. (Nowadays, measurement of Pakaoma's width and length is normally in meter. Of course, some other units of measurement can be used for measuring the width and length of Pakaoma, specifically different from region to region.) Normally, Pakaoma is woven with small checker pattern, and multi colors thread, or single color thread. Pakaoma is known by different names in Thailand, according to where there are made. The colors and patterns of Pakaoma are also different, pertaining to the local community's preference as well. For example, Pakaoma from the Central is normally made with checker pattern, while Pakaoma made in the Northeast is normally in Laiad pattern (smaller checker pattern), etc.



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## Unique identities of Pakaoma from different communities

Pakaoma from different communities has different, unique identities, for example.

**Pakaoma of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province:** its prominent characteristic is the checker pattern, in the size of approximately half an inch, with alternate, two-tone color scheme, that orients lengthwise to both ends of the cloth, such as, red and white, red and black, white and blue, etc.

**Pakaoma of Chainat Province:** this is made with artificial silk, Toray thread (Polyester), and cotton. Nowadays, this type of Pakaoma is mostly made from Toray thread, with checker, stripe, or square pattern. Prominent products of this type come from Nern Kham Sub-district of Hin Ta District; and they are known as ‘Pakaoma Ha See’ or Pakaoma of Five Colors, namely, red, yellow, orange, green, and white. Pakaoma Ha See is woven with the same technique used for producing Mudmee Silk, that is, dyeing the cloth that is divided into sections by rope.

**Pakaoma of Lop Buri Province:** Ban Mi District is one of the largest manufacturers of homespun cloth in Thailand. Original characteristics of homespun cloth made from Ban Mi District are unique, such as, the patterns of Lai Sai Pla Lai and Lai Ta Mong. This is because the people in Ban Mi District are descendants of Thai Phuan People that immigrated from Lao. Pakaoma of this community is made with beautiful pattern and color; and it is homespun cloth of high quality.



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**Pakaoma of Ratchaburi Province:** it is mostly made into 2 patterns, namely, checker patter and fish eye pattern. Pakaoma of Ratchaburi is recognized as beautiful, cheap, and durable product, and in the name of ‘Pa Tor Ban Rai.’

**Pakaoma of Surin Province:** nowadays, homespun cloth of Surin is prominently made in Khwao Sinarin Village of Khwao Sinarin District. People of Surin Province usually wear Pakaoma during the provincial festival; and Pakaoma plays important role in their life, from the moment of their birth to the day they die, Pakaoma is always relevant. Pakaoma of Surin Province is usually made with checker pattern, in dark red or green. Surin People also maintain Pakaoma as heirloom, where elderly people will pass on their Pakaoma to their children, before they die.

**Pakaoma of Maha Sarakham Province:** the most renowned Pakaoma of Maha Sarakham Province comes from Ban Norng Hin Village, Koak Kor Sub-district, Mueang District. Its unique characteristics is Pakaoma made by hand-weaving, and dyed with natural dye, with modern pattern, such as, Lai Soi Dork Mark.

**Pakaoma of Khon Kaen Province:** it has unique – graceful characteristics that combine creativity into unique pattern of Pakaoma from Khon Kaen Province, namely, Lai Mi Kong. Lai Mi Kong is the master – ancient pattern of homespun cloth made from Khon Kaen, which focuses on the color of purple, red, and green, the original colors of Pakaoma of Khon Kaen Province. It is also woven with triple heddles, and therefore, its texture is very firm.



**Pakaoma of Phrae Province:** it is mainly produced in the area of Mueang District, Soong Men District, Song District, and Rong Gwang District. Pakaoma from Phrae Province is woven with ‘Jok’ (a weaving technique) at the edge of the cloth; and hence known as ‘Pakaoma Mee Cherng.’ (Pakaoma with foot’) The ‘Cherng’ or ‘Foot’ (bottom edge) of the Pakaoma is made with Jok technique, which adds additional pattern into to cloth. Pakaoma of Phrae Province is usually made with checker patter or general geometry pattern; while pattern of the bottom edge is normally made with animal images, in accordance with the belief, culture, tradition of the craftsmen, such as, Lai Nok (Bird), Lai Charng (Elephant), Lai Mah (Horse), etc.

**Pakaoma of Nan Province:** weaving exists among people of Nan Province for a very long time. They inherited this handicraft from their ancestors, as depict on the mural of Poomin Temple. Pakaoma of Nan Province is known as ‘Pa Ta Koang’, and mostly made with cotton. The cotton is made manually, from spinning, dying with extracted color from woods, such as, Mai Glad, Pradoo (Pterocarpus macrocarpus), Ma Glue (Diospyros mollis), Teak’s lef, etc. Originally, Pa Ta Koang was mainly dyed with red and black. However, more classical colors are introduced to this products, including, green, blue, and brown, and colors of the nature. The bottom edge of the Pa Ta Koang is, sometimes, made with Jok technique, with the patterns of



#### **Pakaoma Roi See of Kanchanaburi Province:**

Kakaoma Roi See is one of the most popular Pakaoma products among consumers. It is a unique product made in Ban Norng Khao Village of Kanchanaburi Province. Pakaoma Roi See has colorful design, novel pattern, and silk-like shiny texture. It is easy to maintain, can be wash with normal washing method without losing its color. It is comfortable to wear, as it is made from artificial threads. It is a high quality product, made with the combination of patterns and colors from the weaver's imagination, and the local wisdom from weaver's ancestor. The uniqueness of Kapaoma from Ban Norng Khao Village is homespun cloth made from high quality artificial threads of hundred colors. That is, if one will take a close look at each piece of Pakaoma Roi See, one will see that it is woven with threads of different colors, for both the horizontal and vertical threads. It is quite impossible to identify the main color of the cloth. This is the result of craftsman's imagination that alternates the colors of the threads while weaving, in order to create such as a unique – attractive product. Pakaoma from Ban Norng Khao Village is therefore very eye-catching, and now known as 'Pakaoma Roi See' (Pakaoma of Hundred Colors.)

**There is also Pakaoma Ta Juk;** another unique – original product from village of Nong Khao Village. It is an application of basketry technique to weaving technique. The most prominent patterns made with Ta Juk technique are Ta Yok and Ta Juk. The technique horizontally adds additional patterns into the middle of the cloth, and then vertically adds another pattern into the middle of the piece. This technique creates a very distinct characteristic to the pattern. The size and number patterns of Pakaoma with Ta Juk Pattern from each loom will be varied, pertaining to the craftsman initial setting





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## of Pakaoma

Based on some hypotheses from many researches, the word ‘Pakaoma’ is not genuine Thai word but originated from Persian word, ‘Kamar Band’. The word ‘Kamar’ mean waist or lower body and ‘Band’ means ‘binding, fastening, or strapping.’ Combination of two words means ‘belt, cloth wrap around one’s waist.’ The word ‘Kamar Band’ also appears in other languages as well, such as ‘Kamarban’ in Malay, ‘Kamar Band’ in Hindi, and ‘Commer Band’ in English, which mean the waistband of a tuxedo, a cloth for formal dinner party.

From various sources of information, we now learn that Pakaoma was widely used for a very long time. Thai people learned to use Pakaoma since the 16th Buddhist Era, or back to the time of Chiang San Kingdom. During this period, the female would wear Pa Thung (Tube Skirt) and the male would wear Pa Kian Ew (Waistband), a piece of cloth that Thai people received from the culture of Tai Yai People. (Tai Yai people wore Pakaoma as headscarf.) Thai people back then perceived the utility of Pakaoma, and used it as well, but as waistband instead of headscarf. Pakaoma had various usages back then, it can be used to wrap around luggage for carrying during journey, or to place over the ground for sleeping, or to wear as bath rope, etc.



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The evidence that suggests that Thai people started using Pakaoma during the time of Chiang San Kingdom was found from the murals in Phumin Temple of Nan Province. Another evidence was found from the picture that depicts how man and woman dress during Ayutthaya Era, from a book of paintings known as ‘Tri Phum Samai Ayutthaya.’ (The Three Realms during the Time of Ayutthaya Kingdom) This book was created back in the early of 22nd century. It depicts how the people of Ayutthaya wear Pakaoma over their shoulders, belly, or wear it as Joang Kraben (a form of loincloth wearing.), or wear Pakaoma in front of their chest and let the ends lay behind their back. During the time of Rattanakosin Era, both men and women used Pakaoma for various purposes. Pakaoma was no longer prominently used by men, and neither use as an accessory

For Pakaoma Roi See of Ban Nong Khao Village of Kanchanaburi Province, production of homespun cloth in Ban Nong Khao has a very long history. Women of Ban Nong Khao would usually weave their own cloths, when they were free from farming. These clothes were used in their home, as gift for other people, or as offering in the religion ceremonies and festivals. In the past, the people of Nong Khao wove homespun cloth using Ki-ew (Waist loom) and Ki-mue (Hand-loom). Method and technique of weaving were normally passing on in each family. Nowadays, such knowledge is being taught at the home of master weaver of the village. The most popular homespun cloth from Ban Nong Khao is Pakaoma Roi See, a unique product that is comprised of multi-color threads and attractive pattern.



## Pakaoma and belief

People use Pakaoma in their daily life, in the religious rituals, such as, Buddhist ordination ceremony. Before attending the ordination ceremony, Nak (a person who about to be ordained as a monk) will use Pakaoma to pay respect and goodbye to the elders. The monk also enchants Pakaoma with spell, and gives it to a person that is leaving the monkhood, so that person can wear Pakaoma instead of monk rope. Therefore, Pakaoma is the first auspicious dress to the newly layman who leaves the monkhood. In wedding, the bride will weave and present Pakaoma to the groom, along with 1 set of cloth, so he can wear them in the morning after the wedding, during the ritual of offering food to the monk. Pakaoma is also used for decorating the home of the newlywed.

During religious ceremonies, while the people attend sermon at the temple, men can wear Pakaoma over their shoulder, or pay respect by Grab (a form of paying other people respect, using both hands, on the ground in front of other person) over Pakaoma. Women can either wear Pakaoma, or use it to pay respect by Grab as well.



## Method for creating Pakaoma

**1. Plad Lord or thread spinning;** this process transfers multi color – artificial thread, which is packed in skein from the factory, to quill; using ancient tools known as Nai and Rawing. The craftsman will attach the thread with Rawing, and spread the thread so it will not tangle together. Other end of the thread will be attached to the quill. The quill is then assembled to the Nai's core, and the craftsman will turn the Nai's wheel with his right hand, while his left hand supports the thread to run horizontally into the quill. Once a quill is full, another quill will be inserted, and this process will continue. Nowadays, thread spinning is done using electric motor, which saves the time and labor. Normally, thread spinning is completed by old craftsman, and as a hobby during free time.

**2. Tung Lai (Pattern Setting);** this process setups the pattern, where the craftsman will arrange the thread onto specified spots on the pattern setting equipment, which is known as 'Mah Tung Lai.' Mah Tung Lai is a wooden rail, with quill holder. (Hence, it is also known as quill rail or quill holder. For ancient method of weaving, similar equipment known as Mah Sakon is

used for this purpose.) Once calculation of the pattern's length and color pattern is completed, the quills will be place on the rail, from right to left, in accordance with specified pattern.

**3. Kon Dai (Dimension Setting);** this process setups the width and length of the vertical thread, using a tool called 'Mah Tung Lai', 'Mah Kon' (which is known in some areas as 'Lek Kon' or 'Lek Tagron'), and Krabork Joong Dai (Thread Guiding tube) Kon Tai is a process that setups the vertical threads to spread at the specific width of the targeted cloth. It is a part of pattern setting process. Once the threads are set for specific patterns, the craftsman will pull threads from multiple quill together, using the thread guiding tube, which is made from bamboo, and guides these threads to the pole of Mah Kon. At the end of each side, these threads will be bound to the post on Mah Kon of that side.



**4. Rum Woang;** (Tread Collecting); this process collects threads from the quills on Mah Tung Lai onto the craftsman's fingers. It is a part of Kon Dai process. After first round of Kon Dai process is completed (outbound) with every post, along the length of the targeted cloth, the craftsman must perform Rum Woang process once. The process starts from collecting all threads, using one's fingers, from the quills on the Mah Tung Lai, onto the craftsman's right thumb. The threads must be collect consecutively, from top to bottom, and from left to right. Once all threads are collected this way, it is count as one round of Rum Woang. In order to weave 50 pieces of cloth, the craftsman must perform Rum Woang process 8 times; and 10 times for weaving of 80 pieces of cloth. The craftsman will then perform the second round of Kon Dai (inbound) on every post, and return to the starting point on Mah Kon. This will complete 1 round of Kon Dai. The craftsman will complete this process over and over, until the cloth of targeted length is acquired. Then the craftsman will remove the threads from Mah Kon, then braids the group of threads that have been wove with Kon Dai process into a chain of threads; in order to prevent these threads from tangling together, and so they can be easily removed later, for the next step.

**5. Roi Fun Wee or Sord Fueam;** this process inserts the group of threads from the above process of Kon Dai, into the slot in a tool called Fun Wee or Fueam. This tool is in the shape of rectangle, and made out of wood or metal. It has a row of dense bars, similar to a

comb, that serves as the slot for inserting vertical threads. Fun Wee of Fueam is used to press the horizontal threads, which have been interlaced into vertical threads, tightly together. This tool comes in different sizes, with different density of the bars; which determine numbers of the vertical threads. For example, for size 61 Wee, in a space of 1 inch, there will be 31 bars in a row. Two threads will be inserted into the slot, or space between bars, and therefore, there will be total 62 threads on the length of 1 inch. There are also Wee of lower sizes, such as, Size 32, which has 32 bars per inch. The different sizes of Fun Wee dictate the result texture of the cloth. This is, the smaller the size, the rougher the cloth's texture will be. The vertical threads will be thinner as well. On the contrary, using Fun Wee of higher size provides more fine texture of the cloth. Craftsman chooses the size of Fun Wee per the desired thickness of the cloth. The tools used for this process are Wee of Fueam, and Ko r Rub Dai (which is known in some communities as Mai Kwak) that are made from bamboo. Nowadays, craftsman instead use metal ruler for this purpose.

Roi Wee is a process of inserting the threads into Fun Wee of Fueam. This process requires 2 persons to complete: one craftsman for pushing the threads, who will collect a group of threads from Rum Woang process and transfers them to Kor Rub Dai that the second craftsman is holding. Second craftsman will pull the thread, using Kor Rub Dai, into Fun Wee individually, until every thread is pulled into the Fun Wee's slot.



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**6. Wee Kep Muan;** this process spreads threads that have been previously collected and braided into Fun Wee or Fueam, and transfers the threads to cloth roller. This process requires 2-3 craftsmen to complete. The tool used for this process is Mah Wee, which is used for stretching the threads. On one end of Mah Wee, there are pedals for operating the tool. (Some people call these pedals Rahat Thak Dai) Another tool used for this process is Mah Tap (some call it Mah Copy), which is used for stretching the threads for combing; and Mai Muan Pah, for rolling the threads into tidy tight role; Fun Wee, Kanat (two sticks used for separating upper thread and lower thread, in order to prevent tangling), and Mai Riaw (some call it Mai Kew.)

The craftsman will stretch the thread from Fun Wee onto Mah Wee, and insert other the threads under Mah Tap, which stretch the thread. One end of the threads on Fun Wee will be inserted onto one end of the roller, on the opposite site of Mah Tap. The threads will be bound to the core of the roller. Kanat is then inserted between the upper thread and lower thread, and then twisted and bound both pieces of Kanat

together. The craftsman will hold left and right Fueam, and slowly move the Fueam outward, while trying to make it stay in a parallel line to the roller, which will allow the process to be done easily. The craftsman will inspect Fun Wee, and make sure that every slot of Fun Wee is holding the thread, and then sorts the threads, using his fingers to separate the threads and using the Fun Wee to comb the thread. The craftsman will adjust upper thread and lower thread to spread evenly, and make sure that they are not tangled. Other craftsman will role the thread over the roller's core, by stepping onto the pedals which turn the roller and reel in the entire threads into the roller.

Keo Takor Khao or Khao Hook (some people call this tool Khao or Hook); is a process of binding white thread to the threads in the roller, in order to sustain vertical threads in standing position. Weaving usually uses 2 sets of heddles, where each heddle controls the vertical thread to move up and down, and separates the upper thread and lower thread; in order to insert and move shuttle between them. Tool used for this process is Mai Kru or Mai Takor Khao.



**7. Kep Yok;** this is the last process for preparing the vertical thread, before putting the threads into the loom. Normal weaving will be done alternatively, with 1 upper weave (Yok) and 1 lower weave (Koam), using the loom.

Kee Kratook (loom with moving shuttle) is a tool from local wisdom that imitates industrial weaving process. The loom is made of wooden frame that allows the craftsman to sit on it with his feet down on the ground. Kee Kratook is quite similar to Kee Mueao (Hand Loom) or Hook Tor Pa; the difference is for Hand Loom, the vertical threads will be arranged vertically, but in Keeo Kratook, vertical threads will be arranged horizontally. Using Hand Loom, the craftsman must throw the shuttle back and forth, using his hand; while using Kee Kratook, the craftsman pulling the shuttle back and forth, using mechanical system. Therefore, Kee Kratook can produce homespun cloth much faster than Hand Loom. Kee Kratook is comprised of Fun Wee, Takor Khao, Mai Yiab Hook (some call this part Karn Yaib (Stepping Beam) or Tin Yiab (Pedal)), Karn Kwan (some call this part Karn Harb Hook), Sai Kratook (shuttle pulling cord, and thus the name of this loom), seat, roller, Mai Kway, vertical threads, shuttle rail, shuttle, and quill for shuttle's thread.

The following process is Kep Yok, where the craftsman will lift and hang the roller to the loom, hang the 1st heddle to the beam of the loom and the 2nd heddle to the loom's pedal at the bottom of the loom. When the craftsman presses on the pedals alternatively left – right, Takor Khao will be lifted and lowered, and in turn will separate the upper and lower threads. The craftsman will then pull the shuttle cord, and the shuttle will move through the separated vertical threads, along the rail. The craftsman will then pull Fun Wee or Fueam to inward, to press the thread from the shuttle





firmly against previous set of thread. Each time the shuttle move from one side to the other, the craftsman will repeat this process, until the desired length of cloth is acquired.

Nowadays, beside making Pakaoma and original homespun products, many communities also applied Pakaoma to other types of products, in order to add more value to local products, such as, shirt, skirt, trousers, bag, wallet, hat, tissue box, tissue case, doll that is used as towel hanger, in-door shoes, etc.

In community of Ban Norng Khao, original product and pattern of Pakaoma is improved with new patterns, such as, Lai Leelawadee, Lai Looksorn, Lai Mungkorn Karb Kaew, etc. These patterns provide novel and attractive look to Pakaoma.

There is also the new generation of designers, whose ancestors were weavers, who redesign Pakaoma as multi purposes product that matches demands of the new generation of people. Since modern consumers are closely related to digital equipments, thus Pakaoma is redesigned and applied for many other purposes that are consistent with the modern people’s lifestyle, a product that can be used by any and everyone. For example, Pakaoma is produced as notebook bag, soft case for smart phone and tablet, etc. Doing so alleviate the status of local wisdom to valuable – unique identity of Thailand on the international stage. Redesigning of Pakaoma links the manufacturers, designers, and customers together, and in turn expands the market of Pakaoma products to the wider public.

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