



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



Types of Handicrafts  
**Painted Silk Ikat**  
(Pha Mai Taem Mii)



**Painted silk ikat** (*Pha Mai Taem Mii*) employs a technique of dyeing silk threads before weaving which is the distinctive knowledge of Northeastern Thai people. It is a handicraft that features patterns by painting color onto silk threads on Hong Mat Mii (a Mat Mii tightening tool). A weaving process is similar to Mat Mii weaving. The difference is on painting color onto silk threads instead of tying silk threads and dyeing. The patterns achieved are more exotic and modern than those from a traditional Mat Mii making process.







## Painted Silk Ikat: Identity that reflects wisdom and knowledge

Painted silk ikat is made by coloring silk threads before weaving. Both chemical and natural colors are used to paint fabric. The production of painted silk ikat is almost similar to ikat weaving. However, the traditional tie-dye process of ikat is not employed, which makes it easier and takes less time to finish each piece of painted cloth.

Painting and drawing a pattern can be done on a same piece of work. Patterns are unique as they can be created based on imagination. This makes a product look quaint, modern and attractive to the current market.



Producing painted silk ikat is all done by hand. It takes less time as a traditional process of tying and dyeing threads (Mat Mii) is eliminated. Weavers can paint various colors onto silk threads on Hong Mat Mii (a Mat Mii tightening tool) on the same piece of cloth. New patterns can be added and created according to weavers' imagination.



Painted silk ikat is considered as an identity of Baan Hua Fai silk ikat weaver group, in Chonnabot District, Konkaen Province. It shows the creativity and development in its sophisticated painting, no color bleeding and trendy design, especially when it is compared to original ikat. The quality is also improved to satisfy customers. The design itself looks more fashionable that can attract customers in any ages and genders.



Painted silk ikat by Baan Hua Fai is unparalleled and unique because of its creative patterns and colors. It can suit both traditional and contemporary culture, and that make this painted silk ikat charming and fascinating.

The painted silk ikat that shows the strongest identity is Sin Mai Phu Tai from Kalasin Province (made by Master Kummuang and Master Samchai). It has had norm in design creation. In short, it usually has black or dark background. Patterns on the foreground have been made by tying plus painting, and inserting one or more horizontal yarn (weft) between each yarn binding during weaving process.





## Background of Painted Silk Ikat

Fabric decorating technique is an indigenous knowledge that has been passed down from generations to generations. Mat Mii or ikat is one of those techniques used to create beautiful patterns on fabric.

Creating patterns on fabric becomes the art of harmony. Silk production processes are complicated and time-consuming. New patterns and techniques have been created for consumers. For example, original silk ikat was developed into painted silk ikat. This is Northeastern Thai wisdom which presents exotic handicraft from imagination.

The first attempts to make painted silk ikat started long time ago. At that time, paintbrush was made from bamboo. However, the bamboo was

quite hard and that made the pattern not delicate enough. Later, normal paintbrush and batik colors were used instead to create beautiful pattern on silk. The technique was also quite similar to batik technique in the South of Thailand.

Colors, made from natural ingredients from the community, are painted on silk thread before weaving. That became painted silk ikat which is unique and can be found only in Baan Hua Fai, Chonnabot District, Khon Kaen Province.



## Making process of painted silk ikat

The most important step is painting on silk yarn or 'Taem Mii'. This starts from tying silk yarn with plastic rope and put it on a frame called *Hong Mii*. Untie the rope and paint the yarn. In the past, people used bowl as palette and bamboo as paint-brush. Common colors were red, green, blue, and yellow. After painting, leave it dry and untie the rope. Move the painted yarns to the wheel. Then, wind the silk from wheel to bobbins, and start weaving.

Traditional weaving process and preparing silk yarn are still used today.

### Silk making process

First, add cocoons in boiling water. Boil until they expand, and silk is unbound from them. Next, reel the filament one by one. Use tongs to gently press silk in the water to stay together. Pull the silk and pass it through a wooden hole and a spinner. Finally, put it in a container carefully in order to avoid being tangled.

### Bleaching

Washing out the silk yarn will get rid of sericin and dirt. Each silkworm breed takes different time. Start from boiling water and add silk bleaching solution. Divide raw silk yarn in to groups and hang it on loops. Organize and spread the yarn. Then, dip it in the water and pull it up. Repeat this step for at least 30 minutes. Check if the silk thread is in the desired shade. Leave it cool in the sun. After that, squeeze out the extra moisture. Rinse with water until it's clean. Then, pull it hard to make it straight. Leave it dry in shady area.

### Bleaching

Now the silk yarn is bleached, dry and ready for spinning. Two devices are necessary: drive wheel (made from bamboo and rope) and bobbin. During this stage, weavers use hand spinner to wind the silk from wheel to bobbin. If the yarn is torn, it can be repaired now.







### Preparing silk bindings

This step requires a Hong Khon Mii or a rectangular frame (size 60-80 cm X 102 cm). The purpose is to divide silk yarn into groups (bindings). First, tying yarn at the bottom of the frame. Rotate the frame so that the yarn will be wound on to the frame group by group. It can be done from the bottom to the top or vice versa. Each binding has the same amount of yarn, except the first and the last that will have only half amount of the others. The number of bindings depends on ikat pattern. Normally, it must be an odd number between 21-65. Tie each binding with plastic rope.





### Painting

Paint the yarn wound on the frame with natural dyes. Leave it dry and rinse with water.

### Spooling

Wind completely dry yarn into spools. Arrange them in the correct order. Weave them into beautiful fabric.





Today, there are more than 400 new designs for painted silk ikat. The most popular designs are rose, tiger and Nam Fong Nuai which is adapted from an ancient pattern.

Painted silk ikat is often used for making dress, shawl and scarf. It can make incomes for villagers in Baan Hua Fai whose earnings are mainly from agriculture. Target customers are admirers of contemporary and modern silk fabric, both in Thailand and in foreign countries, such as Japan.





Today painted silk ikat has been improved its design to be more fashionable. It has been promoted to the youth in the community in order to encourage them understand the production processes, learn and love local wisdom, preserve their own culture and promote painted silk ikat to the world.

Painted silk ikat is a combination between an indigenous knowledge of Northeastern ancestors and unlimited imagination of weavers that can be expressed through the fabric. It can be found in almost every community in the Northeast. Silk is a handicraft truly created by local wisdom. Each design is elaborated. Both silk ikat and painted silk ikat have their own values. They are splendid and worth to be preserved. Another important thing is they are legends of Thai silk passing from generation to generation.





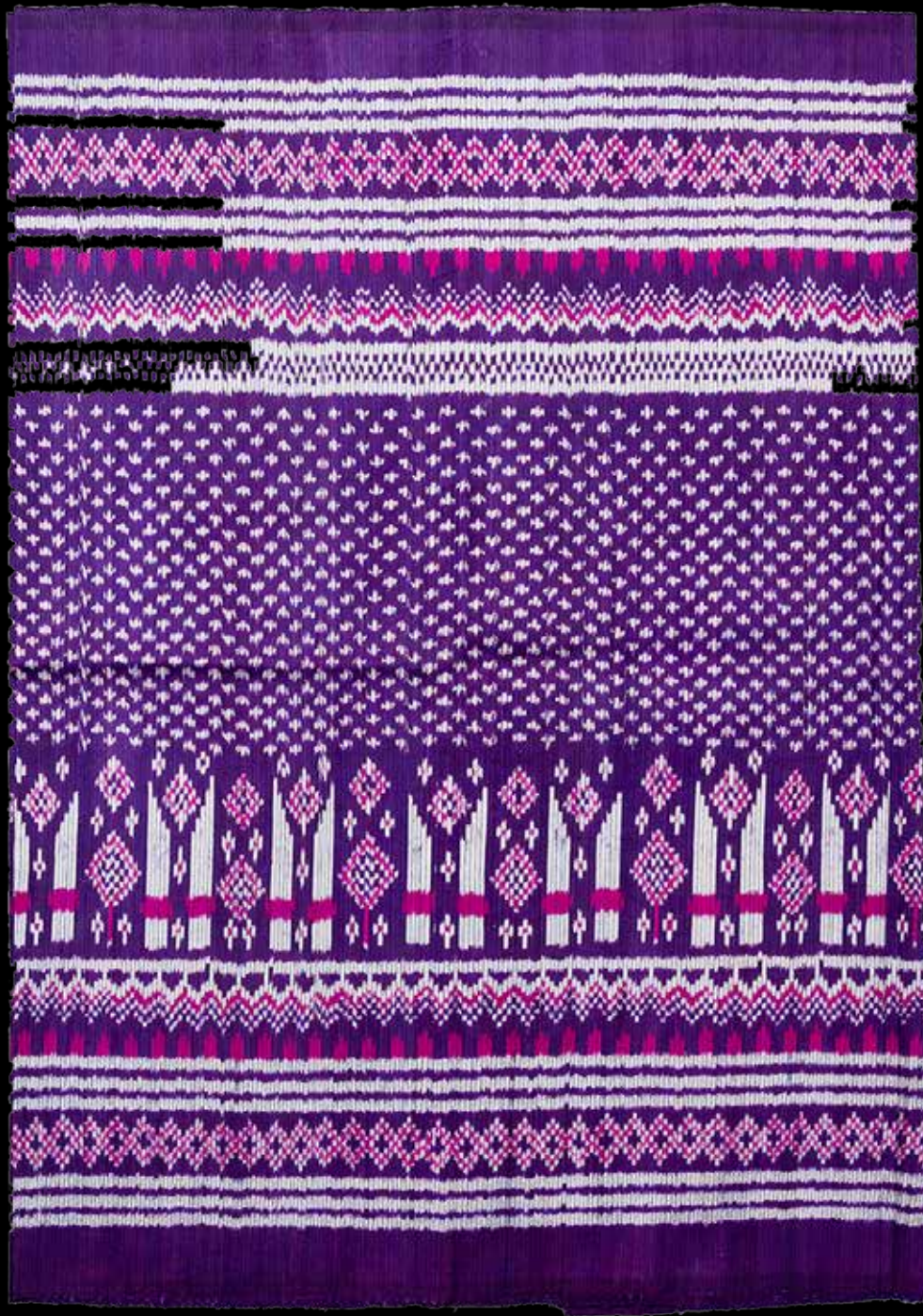












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