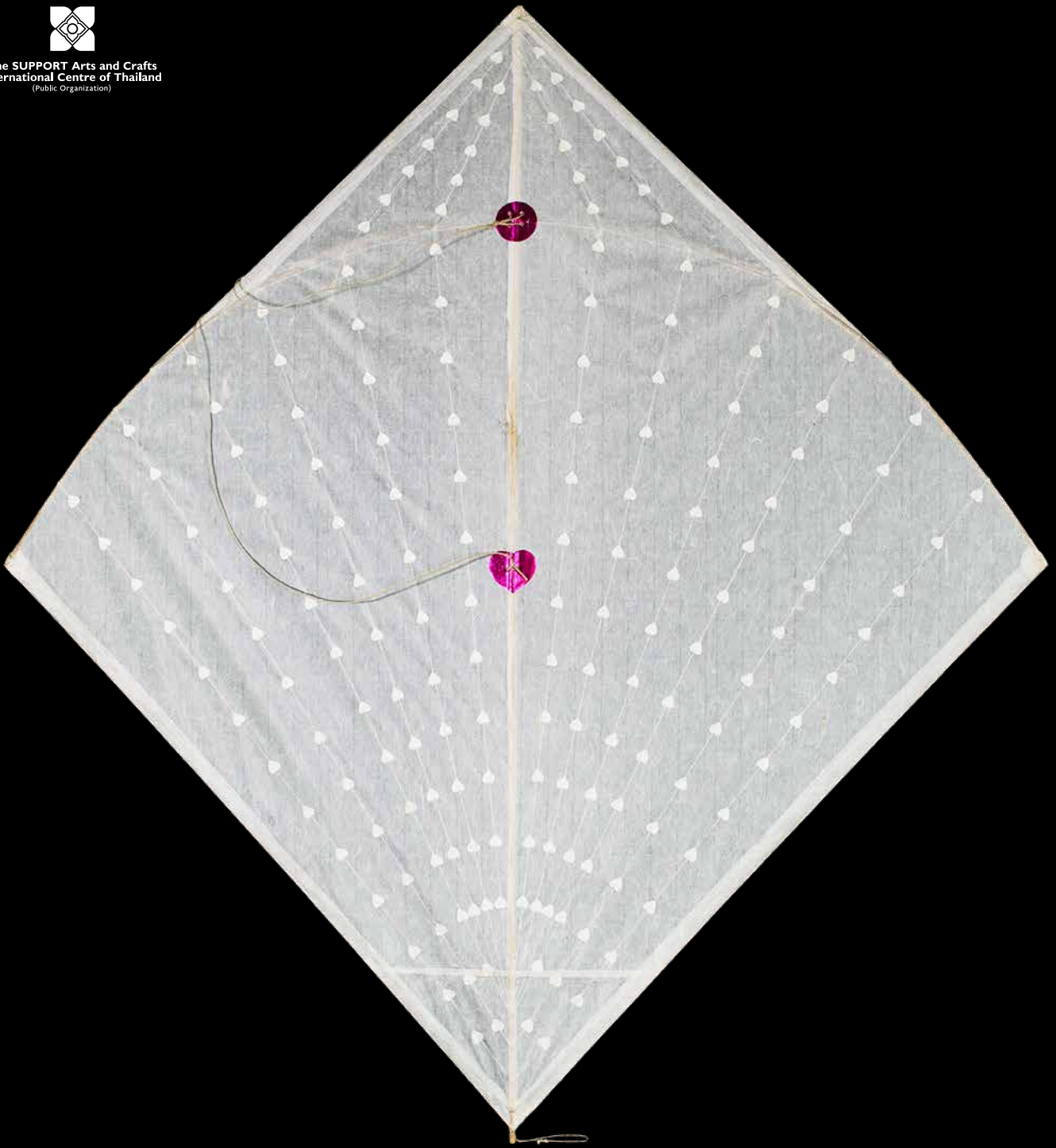




The SUPPORT Arts and Crafts  
International Centre of Thailand  
(Public Organization)



## Types of Handicrafts

# Pak Pao Kite



“Kite” is a familiar word for all Thai people who have been familiarized and experienced this toy since they were young children, no matter who they are, commoner, official, or even the monarch. This is because kite is a toy and a recreation that spreads to every region of the country. Thai people learned to play kite for over 700 years. Thai people would probably learn to play kite since the time of Sukhothai Kingdom, and continued to the day of Ayutthaya Kingdom and Rattanakosin Kingdom. During the time of Rattanakosin Kingdom, kite is a very popular recreation, especially in the reign of Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua, King Rama V of Siam. His Majesty supported kite playing as a form of sport, and arranged kite contest and competition. The most important kite completion is competition of ‘Chula Kite’ and ‘Pak Pao Kite.’”

Thai Kite is existed in the country’s history since the ancient time. The most well-known, popular kites are ‘Chula Kite’ and ‘Pak Pao Kite.’ Though these kites were mostly made and played in the Central, they can be recognized as national kites of Thailand. This is because they represent the art and culture of Thailand. Playing kite was also a preferred sport among Thai monarch in the past. Previous monarch loved this sport so much, even arranged competition in front of the royal palace.





Pak Pao Kite is therefore one of Thai kites that represent the art of creating local toy, Thai culture, and lifestyle of Thai people in the past. Thailand's geography allows the wind to flow from the south to the north, during summer. This seasonal flow of wind is known as 'Lom Ta Pao.' Pak Pao Kite is therefore a prominent identity of the Central's preferred toy. In the simple structure of rhombohedron-shape kite, there are many sciences of handicraft, from the art of choosing bamboo that has the color of catfish's fat, especially the part of bamboo that is exposed to the eastern sunlight. The selected bamboo will be placed over fire and then splashed with water. This is a method of bending bamboo from local wisdom. During this process, the ancient craftsman will use a technique called 'Kluaa Jim Kluea' (An eye for an eye), that is, using one piece of bamboo to hold the piece that will be used as kite's skeleton over fire. The bamboo will be held over fire until it is thoroughly heat up. Next step is to whittle the bamboo until both ends are slender than the middle section. Doing so provides stability to the kite, so that the kite will not sway during flight. Another wisdom that can be seen from Thai kite is how to fasten the kite with string. The string of Pak Pao Kite will be made into a structure known as Niang (a section of string that is made in the form of lasso and connected to the main - pulling string) that sag below the main string. During competition, kite master will use Niang to attack Chula Kite, which will lose its stability and fall to the ground. Pak Pao Kite is able to fly swiftly in the sky, a fitting movement for its prestigious status as a national kite, and a respectable kite internationally.





## Pak Pao Kite: unique identity that reflects the craftsman's wisdom and skill

One of the most prominent – symbolic piece of Thai kite is “**Pak Pao Kite**” This reputation of this kite is well known, both domestically and internationally; even though it is mainly created and played in the central. Pak Pao Kite is recognized as national kite of Thailand none the less. This is because of Pak Pao Kite's unique characteristics that are distinctively different from kites of other countries, whether its shape and movement. Unique characteristics of Pak Pao Kite are, including, graceful shape and design, spectacular movement in flight, a creation of meticulous skill, etc. The player is able to control this kite with single string but it is able to move gracefully and swiftly through the sky. Meanwhile, in comparison to other, international kites, though those kites may be made with colorful designs, but the most they can do is simply floating. Not many kites can be controlled to move as swift in the air as Pak Pao Kite.

Pak Pao Kite is made with the structure of rhombus shape. Kite made for competition will be in the size of 34 and a half inch in width. (This is smaller than normal size of Chula Kite, which is normally wider than 80 inches.) Pak Pao Kite is normally built with bamboo skeleton, with quite rigid wings. Therefore, Pak Pao Kite needs to have longer tail as counterbalance. Pak Pao Kite also has a weapon called ‘Niang’, and it can fly swiftly through the air. Thai people can see Pak Pao Kite in every competition, where Chula Kite is always its adversary.



The string used for kite playing is called ‘Parn’ (Kite string.) This special string allows the kite to be easily controlled. Each control from the player will be translated and delivered to the kite immediately with this string. Nylon rope is not an optional choice for kite string. This is because delivers the movement to the kite quite slower. The technique for preparation of kite string is to make string with good toughness and elasticity, where each pull of the string can control the kite as readily as the player wishes.





In the field of kite competition and gambling, Chula Kite is considered to be ‘Male Kite’ due to its movement, where Chula Kite flies widely all over the sky like a tough gangster. Chula Kite is usually pitched against Pak Pao Kite, which is considered to be ‘Female Kite’ due to its smaller size and swifter, more graceful movement. Pak Pao Kite is sometimes called ‘Mae Prak.’ Chula Kite will be equipped with ‘Jumpa’ and ‘Look Ding’, which are made of Ruak Bamboo. They are quite small, with the size of 4.5 inches, and they have hole in the middle for threading the string. Both ends will be chopped into prong-like shape, in the form of Champak flower. Chula Kite uses them as weapon to attack Pak Pao Kite, where the player will try to capture the Niang, tail and string of Pak Pao Kite. If player of Chula Kite can capture the above parts of Pak Pao Kite for more than 2 times, Pak Pao Kite’s movement will be severely limited.

Pak Pao Kite has a weapon called Niang (kite string that is made in a lasso-shape and connected to the main-pulling string) that hangs under the main string. During competition, Pak Pao Kite will use Niang to cover Chula Kite. This will cause Chula Kite to lose its stability and fall to the ground. Player of Pak Pao Kite must use his ability to control Pak Pao Kite, in order to accurately attack Chula Kite, while avoiding

Chula Kite’s attack, or getting pulled into the zone of Chula Kite.

Kite is, therefore, a part of Thai people’s lifestyle that can be generally seen all over the country. Kite making is both the science and art. Kite maker must possess the knowledge, experience, and skill; and must know how to select the appropriate raw materials and tools. For example, the perfect bamboo for kite making must be straight, light, tough, and durable. Other materials, such as, paper, plastic, cloth, and string or thread, must be appropriately selected as well. Production processes must be meticulous; which require unique technique from the kite maker. Skeletons of each kite are unique as well, thus the maker must possess the ability to produce the kite, the knowledge of how to play kite, and the land’s geography, climate and season. Nowadays, though the culture of kite playing is gradually fading, many government and private organizations are interesting in promoting the tradition of kite playing, whether by arranging kite exhibition, kite festival, as well as expanding their activity to international kite festival; in order to preserve and promote the tradition and culture that was originated out of the local wisdom of Thai people, and existed with Thai people for a very long time



## History of Thai kite

In the past, kite wasn't being play as a recreation only. It was an integral part of Thailand's history, for example, during the time of Sukhothai (1238 – 1438), there was a tale of Pho Khun Si Inthrahit, who enjoyed kite playing so much. One day, his kite was accidentally cut from the string, and fell to the roof of Phraya Uea. From his regret, Pho Khun Si Inthrahit even disguised himself as a common, and jumped over his palace's wall during the night, in order to retrieve his kite. But instead he found his true love, the daughter of that household. It was a really lovely romantic love story.

During the time of Ayutthaya Kingdom (1350 – 1767), under the reign of Somdet Phra Phetracha, kite was used in the war. When Phraya Yommarach (Sunk), the governor of the city of Nakhon Ratchasima rebelled against his kingdom, Somdet Phra Phetracha unsuccessfully sent his army to subjugate the rebellion twice. The generals of Ayutthaya Kingdom came up with a strategy to hang a pot of black powder under the kite, and use the kite to drop the black powder pot to the enemy's hometown and to start the fire. As a result, they subjugated the rebellion. The time of Ayutthaya is also a period of time that kite playing was very popular among the people, from the monarch to the commoner. Competition of Chula Kite and Pak Pao Kite was also created during this time, where the monarch would play Chula Kite. There was a record of royal law the prohibited kite playing over the royal palace, as they feared that the kite may clasp or damage the royal palace's structure. However, when any kites flew over his palace, the monarch would come after them. Kite competition also lead to gamble over the competition result since then.

In the chronicle of Monsieur Simon de la Loubère, the ambassador who lead the embassy to Thailand from King Louis XIV of France, in order to engage in a relationship with Siam, during the reign of Somdet Phra Narai the Great. He remarked about kite playing of Thai people in his chronicle, as follow: "It is a really popular activity among the royal family and noblemen. The kite of 'Siam King' appears on the sky for a total

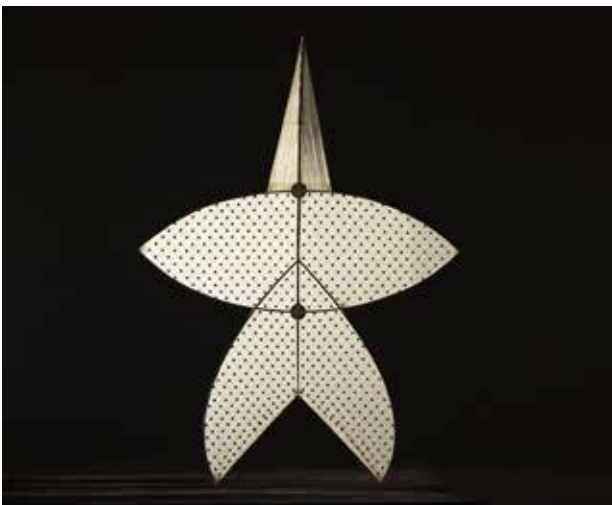
period of 2 month of that winter, where His Majesty assigned his peers to take shifts on holding the kite string at all times. While Somdet Phra Narai was staying at his palace, during the night, there were so many kites flying around the royal palace. Those kites were equipped with lamp and small bells that made ringing noise in the air."

During the time of Rattanakosin Kingdom, under the reign of King Rama IV (1851 – 1868), His Majesty allowed the people to play kite in Sanam Luang (The Royal Plaza). This event was recorded by the mural on the wall of Wat Ratchapradit Sathitmahasimaram, an important temple built during the reign of King Rama IV. There were also competitions of Chula Kite – Pak Pao Kite, for royal golden cup, at Suan Dusit Royal Palace, during the reign of King Rama V and King Rama VI.

Afterward, during the reign of Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua, His Majesty supported the creation of Kite Playing Association, in 1926. During this time, a book was written on the subjects of kite gambling, kite making, kite playing, and kite fighting, by Phraya Pirompakdee, the origin ancestor of Pirompakdee Family, the owner of the first brewery in Thailand. He was a master of Thai kite, and the judge of kite competition field.

After the Second World War, households were developed into concrete structure. Kite became a problem, as sometime it flew into power line and as a result, the player died from electrocution. Also, skillful kite makers were reducing in number. Kite playing, which was existed in Thai culture for over 700 years was thus disappearing. Kite playing became seasonal recreational activity, and can be found only once a year during 'Thai Kite Festival' at The Royal Plaza.

If we're going to tell story of Thai Kite that is existed in the country's history since the ancient time, the most well-known, popular kites are 'Chula Kite' and 'Pak Pao Kite.' Though these kites were mostly made and played in the Central, they can be recognized as national kites of Thailand. This is because they represent the art and culture of Thailand. Playing kite was also a preferred sport among Thai monarch in the past. Previous monarch loved this sport so much, even arranged competition in front of the royal palace.



## The tale that reflects lifestyle

Kite is one of the toys that the ancestors of Thai people created by modifying simple materials that were abundantly available from their surroundings. Kite's skeleton is made with bamboo and covered with paper. Kite is played by simply let it fly in the air by the force of the wind, under the control with string made from jute, hemp, or nylon. Besides playing the kite for fun, another aspect that is implied in this recreational activity is the fact that kite brings people in the community together, and allows them to work together on preserving Thai tradition and culture, and passing it onto the people of the next generation.

The method for kite making and kite playing is different, from one region to another, pertaining to the people's preference and the knowledge and wisdom that have been passed on from their ancient ancestors. For example, in the Northeast, the people usually play Wao E-ak, Wao E-lum, and Chula Kite. In the South, the people usually play Wao Pla, Wao Wong Duean, and Chula Kite. And in the Central, the people usually play Chula Kite, Pak Pao Kite, Snake Kite, and other creative kites that are made in the form of animals or symbols. However, the most prominent types of kites that have been found all over the country are Chula Kite and Pak Pao Kite. Though in details, these kites may be somewhat different from one region to another, however, Chula Kite and Pak Pao Kite can be considered as the symbol of Thai kite.



Moreover, the country's climate is quite suitable for kite playing. As a result of Thailand's geographical location, during the change from rainy season to winter, the cold and dry wind from China will travel to Thailand. This wind is called 'the Northeastern Monsoon', and it occurs every year after the harvesting period. During this time of the year, the wind will blow over the vast – empty paddy field. The people call the wind that blow from the north to the south as 'Lom Wao' (Kite Wind.) On the contrary, the wind that is most popular for kite playing blows from the south to the north, during the mid of summer. This wind is called 'Lom Tapao.' The people will create and play many kites all over the sky. The boys will bring kite to the girls as gift, or put their kite up so high in the sky, to call for the girls' attention. Sometimes, their kites were used in the fight against the kites of boys from other village. Only the village that had the most skillful and experience kite master would conquer kites from other villages.

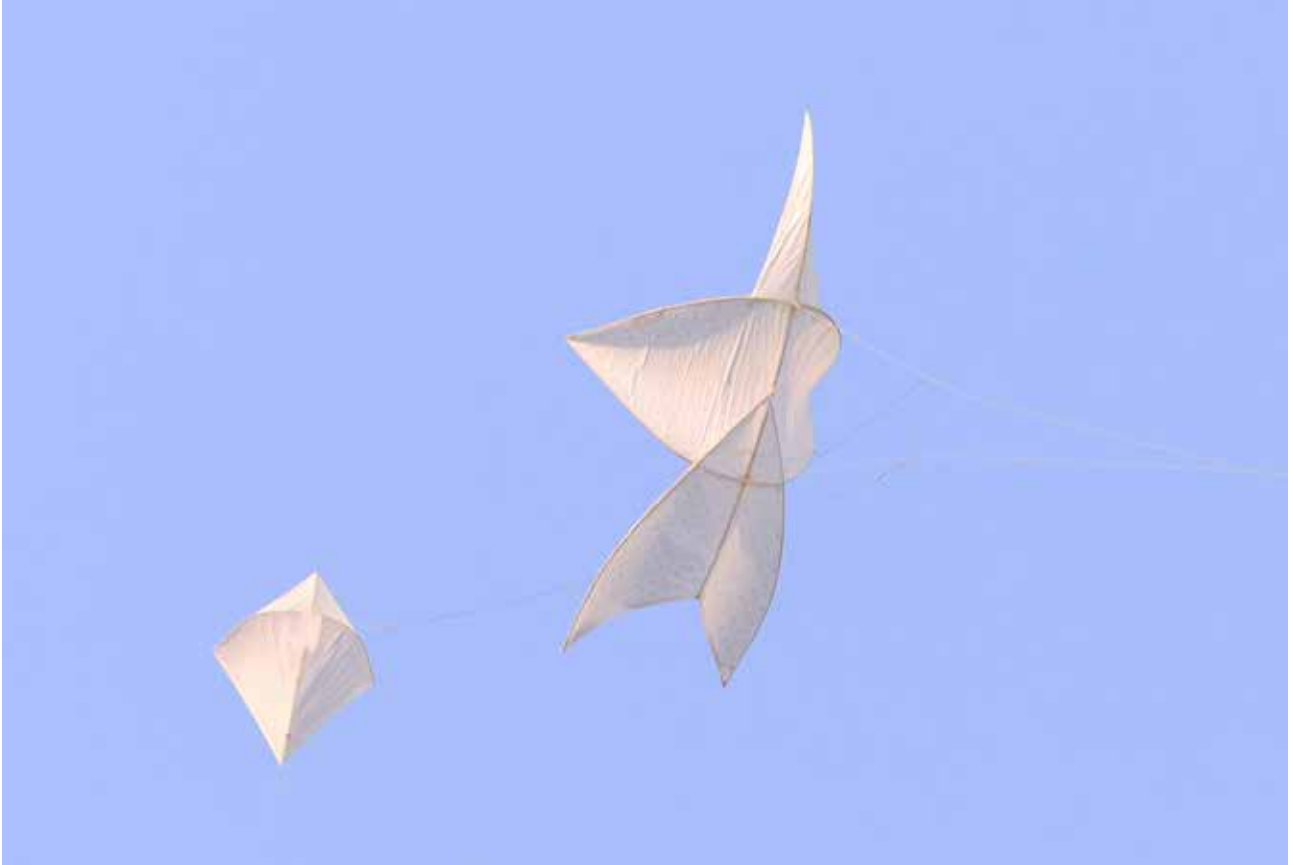
The older people would just put kite up in the sky and listen to the sound 'Dook Dui' it makes. Such sound was told to be the most beautiful sound



during the night sky, as beautiful as the song the divine sings to put to the people to sleep. The people below would feel relax and fun while they were working in the field. Kite was also believed by the people back then that it was a tool that calls for the good win or fortune.

Kite playing can also become a competition, whereas two types of kites, namely, Chula Kite and Pak Pao Kite, are usually pitched against each other. Such competition created so much excitement and amusement among the audience. This was because Chula Kite is far larger than its opponent, Pak Pao Kite, at least 2 -4 times larger. The audiences in kite competition will watch the match with excitement, which grew far more exciting, as these matches were regularly accompanied by Thai folk band. The band provided the theme song to the fight. During the reign of Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao, while Phraya Anuchitchaicharn was the judge of the kite competition field, a kite competition match took place. Chula Kite was placed over Sanarm Mah (The Horse Racing Circuit) and Pakpao Kite was placed over the wall of Suan Dusit Royal Palace, in the vicinity of Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall. During the competition, His Majesty arranged a band for Chula Kite's field, and another band for Pak Pao Kite's field. While both team were scrambling over the skin, these bands played theme songs as background. During the air fight, the bands would play Cherd Ching Song; when Chula Kite was attacking Pak Pao Kite, the band would play Ground Rum Song; if Chula Kite was trapped under Pak Pao Kite's Niang and about to fall down, the bands would play Oad Song. It was really fun event, and after the competition, His Majesty arranged a feast for the kite players, owners, and all related personnel.





Kite is therefore an integral part of Thai people's lifestyle that can be found all over the country. Kite making is a combination of both science and art, whereas the kite maker must possess the knowledge, experience, and skill to make a good kite. A kite master must know how to select the most appropriate materials for his kite, for example, the wood must be straight, tough, and light. Other materials, such as, paper, plastic, cloth, thread or string must be selected appropriately. Skeletons of each kite are unique as well, thus the maker must possess the ability to produce the kite, the knowledge of how to play kite, and the land's geography, climate and season.

Nowadays, kite competition can still be seen, such as, beautiful kite contest, creative kite contest, height contest of the kite, or even competition of 'Chula Kite – Pak Pao Kite' is still a popular activity. The rule of competition is the same that has been inherited from the past, that is, there will be two sides, Chula Kite will fly over the upwind area, and Pak Pao Kite will fly over the downwind area. The side that successfully forces the opponent kite to fall over their field, win the match.



Nowadays, though the culture of kite playing is gradually fading, many government and private organizations are interesting in promoting the tradition of kite playing, whether by arranging kite exhibition, kite festival, as well as expanding their activity to international kite festival; in order to preserve and promote the tradition and culture that was originated out of the local wisdom of Thai people, and existed with Thai people for a very long time.



## The method for making Pak Pao Kite

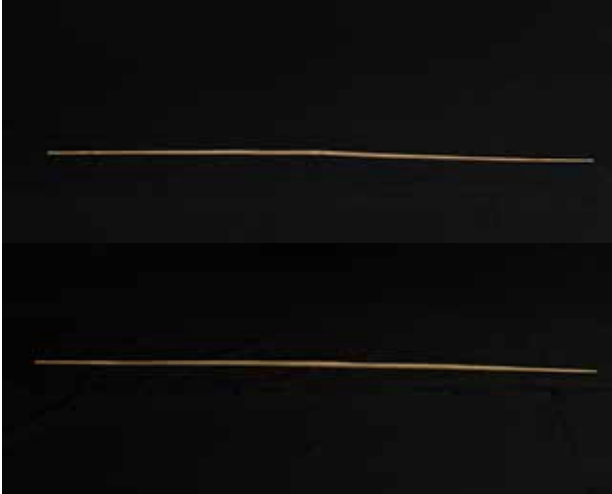
Making of a Pak Pao kite is an art that covers the proficiency and skill of many branches. From selection of the most appropriate raw material, that is, the bamboo must be straight and in good form, light and tough; the paper must be light and thin but also durable against the wind. The kite's structure must be in line with specification of the kite. The maker must have the required ability to both create and play the kite; must know the characteristics of the area, the climate, and the season. The craftsman must be patient, concentrated, meticulous, and mindful of his surroundings, especially while he is making a kite. The kite making processes must be done meticulously, as follow.

Choosing the bamboo for kite's skeleton; the bamboo must be dried, and has smooth skin. The craftsman usually choose Pai See Suk bamboo, as it provides wood with golden texture that is much stronger and tougher than other types of bamboo, with excellent flexibility against the wind. The craftsman will pick bamboo that is over 3 – 4 years old, as it can be whittled and turned into a beautiful kite's skeleton easily.

The bamboo will be dried under sunlight, then cut and whittled. The craftsman will not remove all the bamboo's shell. This is because the shell is where the bamboo's elasticity lies.

Bending and whittling the bamboo; these processes require some proficiency, in order to create a round bamboo stick in appropriated size. The bamboo joint must be completely whittled off, so the stick is thoroughly





smooth. A piece of hardwood will be chipped of and used as hook, in order to bend the bamboo. The bamboo will be bent by putting over a fire to soften the bamboo down, then bend it, and then treat it with cold water, in order to prevent the bamboo from returning to its original shape.

Pak Pao Kite requires two bamboo sticks as skeleton. The spine must be thicker than the wing, and the wing will be approximately one fourth longer than the spine. The skeleton has an important role, that is, it must withstand strong wind. The kite maker will slowly whittle the stick from one end to another, until the end is thinner than the mid section, in order to provide stability to the kite. The wing must be thinner than the spine, so the kite is light enough and the wings are flexible enough. The wings that are weak enough will be flexible and the kite will be easy to fly; on the other hand, if the wings are too strong and rigid, the kite will not fly well and sway.

Kite binding; this process starts from dividing the spine into 5 sections then attach the wind at the length of one fifth of the spine length from the top. For the wing, the side with shell remain on it must be faced upward or forward. Cotton yard will be used for binding the wing to the spine; and nylon thread will use to create clove knot on the top of the spine, and then pull down to tie to the appropriate positions on both wings. If this section is too wide, the kite's head will be too large; and if this section is too narrow, the kite's head will be too small. Pull the thread upward a little bit, with equal lift on both sides. (This thread is called 'Sai Lang Hua.')

Use nylon thread to create clove knot at the end of the spine, and then pull the thread up and tie them to the end of the wings as before. (this thread is called 'Sai Lang Kraben.')





Validate the skeleton by using a thread as a temporary string. Hang the skeleton with a thread and see whether the skeleton is swaying to either sides or not. Try moving the nylon threads on both wings to the perfect positions. Examine the wind bearing capacity of the wings by placing heavy object over the spine from behind the skeleton, tie the ropes to both sides of the wing at equal width and pull the wing up from the ground for about a couple inches while the spine is still sitting on the ground. Use a ruler to measure the length from both ends of the wings to the ground. If any wing is lower than the other, that that side of the wing is too rigid and must be filed off until the equal length from the ground is achieved.

Attach paper to the skeleton; the paper must be attached on the back of the skeleton and use water glue, paste, or latex glue for kite made with plastic, and synthetic glue for kite made with cloth. In the past, special paper called 'Kite Paper' was used for making a kite. This was because this paper is light, transparent, and shiny. It added special patterns to the kite with cheap price. However, one disadvantage of the kite paper is that it is less durable than normal paper. Nowadays, the kite maker usually create kite with Sa Paper, which is made from the bark of Sa Tree, instead of Kite Paper. This is because Sa Paper is also light, transparent but more durable and flexible than Kite Paper. If it gets wet, Sa Paper can return to normal form once dry. It is easy to maintain and store, and it allows the kite to fly quite well, too.



Attaching the main – pulling string; the main string must be attached to the skeleton at two points. The first point is the intersection of the spine and the wing, and the second point is at approximately one third of the length of the spine, from the bottom end of the spine. The spot for binding the string should be chipped off a little bit, in order to prevent the string from moving. Both strings must be combined in a manner that creates an angle of approximately 15 degrees between the string and the skeleton. The main string must be of appropriate length. Attach tassels to both ends of the wing. The tail must be a piece of cloth with the width of approximately one inch and appropriate length. Try to fly the kite now; if it is swaying too much, extending the tail further. If the kite reaches its maximum point and then suddenly heads downward, the tail can be too light, or the angle of the main string is not appropriate, try to adjust the angle so it is not too wide or too narrow.

In order to fly a kite, a strong – steady wind is required, to create the lift under the kite, which must

maintain the angle of 45 degrees against the wind. But we cannot control the wind and we can only control our kite. The reason why a kite can fly is because when it is moving against the wind at a perfect angle, the air behind the kite will flow much faster than the air in front of the kite. Such difference in air speed causes reduction of air pressure under one side and thus creates lift on the other side.

A kite is therefore a creation that reflects combination of the science, art, and handicraft. The kite maker may paint his kites with beautiful colors, in Thai patterns or others. The kite maker may also create the kite in the form of animals or figures, and uses papers of several colors to create symbols on his kite. Further decoration of the kite's component, such as, wing's tassels and tail's tassel, will also provide additional aesthetic value and allow the kite to fly gracefully in the wind. Designing of a kite requires both the science and the art to complete. Therefore, the kite is a representative of Thai local wisdom. It also helps preserve the country's good tradition and culture. Therefore, we should help preserve and promote Thai kite to forever remain in our society.



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