



The SUPPORT Arts and Crafts  
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Arts and Handicrafts

# Brass Basketry Handicraft (Brass Weaving)



Normal basketry utilizes bamboo, water hyacinth, Yan Lipao or other raw materials that exist in the nature and the local area to create products, using the craftsmen's ability and proficiency. Craftsmen in each local community are normally bound to the community's surrounding environment, which is integrated into their basketry wisdom and became basketry products that are used in their daily living. The knowledge and wisdom in basketry is continuously improving, as the craftsmen continue to produce better, finer, and more delicate basketry products, from the past to today.

However, there is other kind of basketry that uses completely different material, to create valuable and beautiful workpiece. Such branch of basketry uses brass plate, which is cut into brass thread, to create basketry products with interlacing technique, such as, Kraboong (widen basket), Krajard (flat basket), basket, vase, etc. This branch of basketry is known as 'Brass Weaving' or 'Brass Basketry Handicraft.'

**Brass Weaving** is a form of basketry that uses brass thread as material. It requires advance level of craftsman's ability and proficiency, extreme delicacy and endeavor, in order to produce 'brass basketry', which is a very unique product. Nowadays, there are very few craftsmen of this art left.





## Brass Basketry Handicraft: the unique identity that reflect the craftsman's wisdom and ability

Brass is a composite material made from copper and zinc. Brass's property is quite similar to gold, as it has high resistance against rust. During Bronze Age, brass was believed to be the strongest metal. Human knew and utilized brass since the pre-historical era, and used this material for making tools, equipments, household's accessories, etc. The belief that brass is the strongest material is also inherited to this day.

Brass Weaving is a branch of handicraft that expanded itself from the base wisdom of bamboo and rattan basketry, which were used for producing many equipments, such as, Kraboong, basket, Krajard, Chalorm (round bamboo basket), creel, bamboo fish trap, bamboo hod, etc. Brass Weaving maintains basketry product's characteristics and develops new weaving technique for using brass as weaving material and using interlacing as the main design. This is because brass thread isn't quite flexible as bamboo, which is far softer. The art of Brass Weaving is quite a developed one, where more colors are added to the products; instead of using just brass as raw material, nowadays, craftsmen insert thread of other metallic materials, such as, nickel or aluminum, in order to provide unique - novel colors or designs to the products.

Moreover, the brass itself is a shining - reflective material, and the result brass products thus have unique shine, reflection, and gold-like color in them.

Brass Weaving requires some level of proficiency, delicacy and meticulousity. If any finished product is found to be defected or not beautiful enough, in order to rectify the faulty product, the workpiece must be break down and re-built. Doing so can potentially damage the brass thread. Therefore, craftsmen must product each workpiece with utmost care and great attention to the detail, and thoroughly and delicately perform every procedure, from start to finish.

Creation of brass basketry handicraft has one unique characteristic, namely, the use of brass thread to weave together, using interlacing technique. The brass threads must be tightly woven together; the threads must be straight and not bent. After the weaving is complete, the craftsmen will attend to other detail, in order to make sure that the brass threads are finely aligned and that the workpiece is done with suffice delicacy.

There are not many available designs for Brass Weaving, where some of the normal designs for basketry are applied to Brass Weaving. This is because the brass thread is hard to bend and it is quite strong. Brass thread is not as easy to weave as bamboo or rattan, and therefore, limited designs are available for Brass Basketry Handicraft, such as, Lai Kat Song Sen (2-thread interlacing design), Lai Chalorm, Lai Kradoad, Lai Khaolarmtad, Lai Pubdork, etc.



## Brass Weaving Manufacturing Technique

First, the craftsman has to prepare the brass thread. Only brass thread with enough elasticity in it should be picked, or the craftsman may use 'ripe' brass thread that has been roasted over fire that is more durable and flexible. Ripe brass thread is softer for weaving, in comparison to 'raw' brass thread. It is easier to weave and to form the workpiece, and the finished product will be more durable and capable of maintaining its form.

### Preparing brass thread

- Flat brass thread (Tork); before using brass thread in weaving, the thread should be straighten and flattened. This can be done by cutting the thread to the length of 20 meters per thread, bind one end with nail to a tree and use pliers to straighten to thread by pulling the thread. The result is straight and flat brass thread. Meanwhile, round brass thread can be used immediately, without the need to straighten.

- Twisted thread; this is used for weaving sparse design or for the basket's edge, in order to provide better dimension to the workpiece. Twisted tread is made by twisting the brass thread, by binding the brass thread to motor's core, turn on motor's switch and let the motor run and twist the tread. Remove twisted thread and straighten it a bit before use.



Twisted thread

- Weaving; brass thread must be placed with appropriate tension, not too tight or too flabby; screwdriver can be used to adjust the design while weaving, in order to produce beautiful, nice and tidy design.

Caution: do not allow brass thread to be exposed to water before coating the tread with coating solution; as it may cause stain on the thread.



## History of Brass Basketry Handicraft

The history of Brass Weaving started from Mr. Wanit and Mrs. Sroi Thammapatip, villagers of Ban Klong Koot Mai, Mueang District of Chachoengsao Province. They were craftsmen who created products from brass plate. One day, a foreign customer asked them to weave him a brass bread basket. The couples thus tried cutting brass plate and pressing it into thin thread, and used brass thread to weave the basket, as they would usually do with bamboo stripe. Eventually, they created a 6-inches bread basket as per customer's request. Afterward, the couple developed the technique of using brass thread to create product, which eventually became 'brass weaving' that is widely recognized nowadays.

In the past, Brass Weaving was used for producing various appliances, such as, Krajard, basket, Kraboong, vase, trash bin, etc, for using in hotel and household. Brass Basketry is also a popular choice of appliances for luxurious household, such as, wealthy person's home. This is because brass appliance is valuable, prestigious and beautiful workpiece. In the past, the people believed that those who have brass appliances in their households were considerable rich and prestigious.

Afterward, brass basketry became more popular. People usually used them as souvenir for various auspicious ceremonies. However, time passed, and the gold grew more expensive, so as brass. As a matter of fact, the price of brass has grown many times over. As a result, aluminum is used as substituted raw material for brass. Aluminum plate is mixed into brass basketry for producing souvenir, and set of products of different colors of aluminum's silver and brass' gold are mixed together into a set, such as, silver and gold Chalorm, or silver and gold Soom (Coop trap), which are believed to be sacred objects that invite gold and money (Silver in Thai also denotes money), and auspiciousness to the owner.



## Manufacturing process for making brass basketry handicraft

### Materials and equipment for making brass basketry handicraft

- Round brass thread (Weaving thread)
- Flat brass thread (Tork)
- Thong Pling brass thread
- Twisted brass thread
- Mold
- Hammer
- Rust cleaning solution (Chromix)
- Nitric acid solution
- Silicone solution, for coating workpiece
- Wire cutter and pliers
- Buffalo horn hammer and metal hammer
- Scissor
- File





Forming the structure



Forming the main structure



Weaving to create designs



Folding wires

## Manufacturing process for brass weaving

Forming the base structure by cutting flat brass thread to desired size, place the threads on flat floor at equal interval, interlacing horizontal thread with vertical thread (or vice versa) until the desired size of base structure is attained.

Forming the main structure by interlacing round brass thread with flat thread of the base, continue upward and form the desired shape of the workpiece.

Adding the design; the craftsman will insert the design from his imagination onto the workpiece by alternating the threads until the desired design is attained.

Folding flat brass; once the desired size of workpiece is attained, craftsman will fold the excessive portion of flat brass thread, placing the fold on anvil and hammer the fold.





Cutting the workpiece' edge; the edge of workpiece will be cut to improve the workpiece' strength, and to finish the workpiece. Two pieces of flat brass threads of the same size will be bent and assembled to the edge of the workpiece, once piece for outer rim and the other for inner rim. Several round brass threads will be used to bind the workpiece' edge, at equal interval, approximately 2.5 centimeters from each other. The process is repeated until the basket's edge is completely bound. Pliers will be used to tighten the binding round brass threads.

Attaching the handle; some workpieces, such as basket, require handle. The handle will be made from bending flat brass threads to the desired size, both ends of the thread will be inserted into the basket, and the thread will be bound by round thread.

Cleaning the workpiece; after the workpiece is completely assembled, it will be cleaned with nitric acid solution, in order to clean any remaining materials off the brass, and to give glowing yellow to the brass. The workpiece will be cleaned with water, and then coated with Chromix solution. And then the workpiece will be cleaned with water again, and then coated

with silicone solution and leave under sunlight for an hour, until the workpiece is completely dried and shining. In any given day with dimmer sunlight, the workpiece may be left under the sun for more than 3 – 4 hours, or until it is completely dried.



Cutting the edge



Attaching the handle



## Development of Brass Basketry Handicraft

Brass Basketry Handicraft is developed and based on the other handicrafts, where techniques of other handicrafts are applied to create new workpieces, such as, the arts of pottery, bamboo and rattan basketry, silk products and household appliances, etc. These techniques and knowledge were developed and applied to Brass Weaving, in order to produce beautiful and attractive brass products that are admired and sought after by many people, whether for the purpose of collecting, or to decorate their home.

Types of Brass Basketry products that have been maturely developed, and are well known among Thai and foreign customers are, for example:

- Household appliances, such as, basket, tray, Krajard, tissue box, trash bin, etc.
- Household accessories, such as, lamp, vase, etc.
- Souvenirs and gifts, such as, tiny basket, business card box, pen holder, etc.
- Applied workpieces per customer's demand; where the craftsman produces creative workpiece by applying his imagination to customer's order.





## Maintaining brass basketry product

Brass basketry products are normally made with preventive procedure against discoloration. Therefore, brass basketry products should be cleaned by dried cleaning solution and dusting. In case of severe dirtiness, brass products can be cleaned by specialized cleaning solution for silver ornaments, general detergent, and dish washing soap or Tamarind solution. After a workpiece is cleaned with cleaning solution, it must be dried under the sunlight or heat.

## Brass Basketry Handicraft: A disappearing handicraft

Brass Basketry Handicraft requires skillful and creative craftsman, in order to produce and develop the products, and to keep up with demands of both domestic and foreign customers. Its uniqueness is sustaining brass basketry handicraft's popularity at the present.

Since Brass Basketry Handicraft is a very complicated procedure, whether in finding raw material or manufacturing process. Nowadays, knowledgeable and proficient craftsmen in this art are diminishing. There are almost no serious inheritors of this craft. Though the craftsmen of brass basketry of Tha Kai Sub-district, Mueang District of Chachoengsao Province still active in the field; they are possibly the last craftsmen of this art. Eventually, 'Brass Basketry Handicraft' may disappear from Thai society.





*Information sources and referenced documents  
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*Interviewing. Miss Nichapat Akkaraamorntham,  
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