

HANDMADE PAPER IN THAILAND

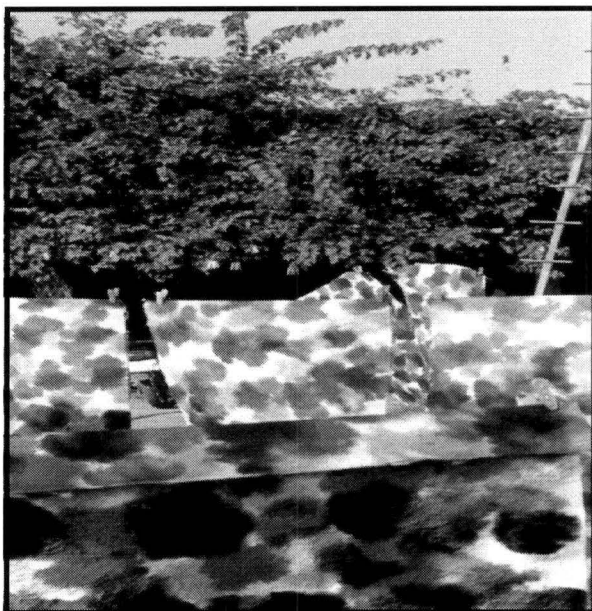
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WE HAD HEARD RUMOURS about fine quality handmade paper in Thailand before we came. With a little luck, we were able to find the source of much of this paper and to buy a large quantity of paper at very attractive prices.

While visiting the city of Chang Mai, we came across some examples of Thai mulberry bark paper in one of the market stalls. Most of the handmade paper which one sees in the markets in Thailand is made into albums or umbrellas. The tourist literature we saw never mentioned handmade paper at all. Neither does the Lonely Planet or other guides to Thailand. Once we saw this paper in the market, though, we started to try to find the places where it was made. After many enquiries, we discovered that there is a village about 20k outside of Chang Mai called Sankamphaeng. We found a map showing one of the paper factories, and hired a seelore (truck-style taxi) to take us to this village. Once we arrived in the right area, we discovered that there are many small paper-making businesses and one rather large one.



When Prime Minister Taksin visited Sankamphaeng recently, he stressed a new national economic plan wherein each village should specialize in a single product and raise the quality of the product to the point where it could be successfully exported. The village of Sankamphaeng was to specialize in paper-making as well as paper umbrellas and other paper products.



At the first factory shop we visited, we bought large pieces of mulberry paper (called SA-paper) of a weight suitable for book pages. When we asked about seeing the factory, they directed us a short distance away, where in the outdoors and under roofs without walls, paper was being made, both from mulberry bark and also from blends of cotton and recycled office papers. Electrical pulping machines and washing machines were being used, with the rest of the operations being done by hand. All paper was dried outdoors in the sun.

Subsequently we visited other paper-making facilities, and finally found the largest of the paper-making facilities in the area. This company was called HQ PaperMaker. HQ Group was established in England in 1990 as an importer and distributor of handmade paper and products from Thailand. In 1994 HQ Group Company was incorporated in Thailand to further develop handmade paper production facilities.

Siam Northern Paper Co is a large paper mill that was established in Thailand in 1995. The factory boasts a classic Fourdrinier mill with a capacity of 30 metres per minute. At the end of 1998 SNP started working with HQ Group to develop new ranges of speciality papers.

HQ Group currently employs 12 full-time management and 40 papermakers. SNP employs 10 full-time management and 80 staff.

HQ Group's Managing Director is Henry Quick, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts with academic qualifications including MBA, MA, BA Hons and DipM.

The papers available from HQ PaperMaker include 22 x 30in paper with deckled edges. This paper comes in three different colours (white, natural, and bamboo) and 3 different weights (80gsm, 120gsm and 160gsm). Also available is size 28 x 39in paper in white only in weights of 85gsm, 115gsm, and 145gsm. The white and natural papers are made from 100% mulberry and the bamboo is made from a bamboo and mulberry mix. Petal and leaf handmade papers feature a variety of flowers, leaves, and grasses that grow in the wild or are cultivated locally. International orders can be arranged through the HQ website: www.hqpapermaker.com.

