



Tobacco Farm Conservation Project, Kaomai Lanna Resort, Sanpatong, Chiang Mai Thailand



Introduction

Kaomai Lanna resort is a unique resort where the visitors not only find joyful stay in the real tobacco curing barns but they also have great opportunities to learn about its history, along with experience the local community's culture, tradition and lifestyle.

Kaomai Lanna is located in Sanpatong district of Chiang Mai, a rich cultural city in the north of Thailand. Sanpatong is 22 kilometers south of Chiang Mai town. Yet Sanpatong is not recognized as the main tourist spot, it has a many interesting stories of its own: history, culture, tradition and unique lifestyle of local people.

Kaomai Lanna is created as a community-based resort, operating under the principles of environmental and community sustainability. The resort was built based on the balance between the nature and the culture: 18 tobacco curing barns were nicely renovated from the total long aged 48 barns into 36 lively guestrooms. Inside the barn, the rooms are decorated in Post- Lanna style with antique Thai – Burmese colonial antique furniture. The resort is surrounded with tropical shady towering trees, varieties of palms and bamboo, leafy fruit trees and wild flowers.



Feel the green at Kaomai Lanna Resort

The Tobacco Farm Conservation Project features the unused tobacco curing barn can be conserved restored and converted to be a charming unique resort, and how Kaomai Lanna Resort conveys local culture and tradition to the visitors through the buildings and other activities from the resort.

Project scope of the conservation

Since 1944, tobacco act was issued, announcing that the cigarette industry would become a state monopoly, 6 years later the tobacco farm was started, and tobacco played the important role in Northern Thai lives

60 years ago, the tobacco industry in the northern part of Thailand reached its peak, and tobacco farms and tobacco curing barns flourished. In Sanpatong, many locals planted tobacco and sent the tobacco leaves to dry them at the barns. Normally, the tobacco curing barns owners would support the farmers with the tobacco seedlings and fertilizers. Some locals also worked in the tobacco plants. Sanpatong locals' lives were closely related to the tobacco industry.



Tobacco Farm

However, time passed and things changed. In 1986, the tobacco curing barns faded from the northern part of Thailand, replaced by orchards and real-estate projects. Most of the barns in north of Thailand were removed and destroyed, but one farm owner decided that at least few structures from the old days should be remained.

Mr. Thawat Cherdasirakul, the tobacco farm owner since 1980(2526) continue to develop the 48 rai of land, although the tobacco industry moved out from the area in 1995 (2538). Being garden lover, Mr. Thawat keeps the long aged shady trees. In the beginning, it was planned to be the place for the family to spending weekend together.



Old Barn



Renovated Barn

In 1997, Mr. Thawat converted the barns to be guestrooms to welcome friends and relatives. He planned to build 4 model rooms from 2 barns. After rechecking the structure, he decided to keep the entire old brick layer and rebuild the new structure inside the outside layer.

3 year later, he began to convert more 16 barns located in the same zone into 32 lively guestrooms. The land gradually transformed into a peaceful garden and became what is now our unique resort in northern Thailand.

The project is focused on the restoration and converting the 18 tobacco barns to be 36 guestrooms and also centered on how to make the buildings to be harmonious with the natural surroundings.

Later the idea of adopting the policy in the sustainable tourism management which concerns Traveler-friendly, Nature-friendly and Local community-friendly literally came in action.

Articulation of heritage values and significance

The buildings recapture the flourished time of tobacco industry in the northern part of Thailand. Back to 70 years ago, more than 500 farmers grew tobacco serving Tung Siew tobacco plant, and more than 50 workers rode their bicycle to work there everyday.

The tobacco plant's owner first prepared the tobacco seedlings, pesticide and fertilizer for the farmers. While the farmers invested in the labor and time to grow tobaccos, until the tobacco is mature enough to sell. The farmers took the tobacco leaves back to the plant and sold them to the plant owner.

The tobacco curing barn used heat to dry the tobacco leaves. It took 7 days to dry the leaves. That made the plant workers work 7 days a week as well. The tobacco industry was incorporated in the local people in Sanpatong at that time.



Tobacco Leaves are hung in the barn



However, after other modernization came, many tobacco farmers decided to sell their lands, along with the high tobacco production cost in Thailand, comparing with the tobacco industry cost in China, there were not enough tobacco leaves to feed the barns. Thus the tobacco industry was faded away from the North of Thailand area. The local people in the tobacco industry changed their occupation into growing fruits and even selling their properties for real estate projects.

So the only reminder of the tobacco flourish era in the north of Thailand area is the barns. They recaptured the life of the local people in the northern part of Thailand and also mirrored the history of the tobacco industry and the way of life of local people in North of Thailand, including Sanpatong area.

To convey the value and significance of the history and lifestyle of local people in Sanpatong, we renovated the barns into the guestrooms and planning on opening the Northern Thai tobacco industry exhibition. Along with telling the story about the past time's community, we invite guests to experience nowadays' Sanpatong people lifestyle by joining "Kaomai Lanna Community Sharing Program" which includes the bicycle tour around the community and culture exchange between school children in the area.

The adaptations

In 1997, the idea of converting the barns to be the guestrooms to welcome friends and relatives came into Mr. Thawat Cherdasatirkul, the tobacco plant owner. As the pilot project, two model rooms from two barns. After rechecking the building structure and consulting with architects and engineer including the northern craft men, he decided to keep all the old brick as the wall layer and rebuild the new structure hiding inside. It took two years to complete.



Three years later, more sixteen barns were also renovated into thirty-two lively guestrooms. In total, there are thirty-six guestrooms renovated from eighteen barns. However there are about 30 untouched barns left.



Each restructured barn was converted into two-storey separated rooms. Being aware of the environment concern, the building materials are mostly reused such as some of the woods were taken from old house including the wooden doors and windows. Inside the barns, two storey rooms are decorated in Post- Lanna style, furnishd with antique Thai – Burmese colonial antique furniture.

Around the resort area, many preserved decades-aged tropical shady trees, palms and varieties of bamboo varieties including nature grown flowers are surrounded. There are two ponds remained from the past, it was used as the main water source of the plant.

Several old structures from the past are still left in the resort, including the old tobacco plant supervisor's house, which is now the spa outlet. Several preserved houses and cottages can be found in the resort area; Thai Lanna old house currently used as the textile outlet and 4 ancient Karen houses.



Spa House

The methodology of the restoration Techniques and Materials

The conceptual idea of the project was to find the right solution to change the barns to be the guestrooms based on “remains the atmosphere of the tobacco curing barn and disappear architect to harmonious with the nature. We preferred to use local construction material products and hired the local construction craftsmen.



To renovate the barns, the project team was concerned about the materials which would be used to reconstruct and adaptation. Such materials needed to be harmonious with the buildings. The materials used in the building are bricks and roofs, old wood from the old wooden house around the area and ceramic tiles from Lampang ceramic factory.

The renovation process started with placing the window and the door holds into each brick layer of each barn along with laying the new corrugated roof on top of the barn like the old days. For the interior construction, we at first tried with H Beam structure. However, due to over budget issue, we switched to concrete structure. The concrete was used for the strip footing and as the floor with the technique “one way slap on joint with beam”. However, the difficulty was the differences of the size of the barns, which made it hard for the construction plan and design. Besides, the gypsum board was used for the panel because of the light weight and anti-inflammation.

The windows used were in different style; most of the windows were collected from the old wooden house in Chiang mai and from Myanmar. Most of the doors were also from Myanmar. Such doors and windows were collected by Mr.Thawat, who gradually bought them since when there were not much interest in them. Every room's door lock were designed in the same style as the traditional Thai house's



Windows of our guestroom

During rainy season, the brick wall of the barn can absorb a lot of water, which can add moist to the structure of the building and can cause mold and unpleasant smell. To avoid that, apply transparent matte coat on the brick wall to block the rain water.

Energy saving



"Laundry drying green house hut"

We planted "ton teen tukae" commonly known as "creeping fig" around with the renovated barn to decorate the brick layer walls. It not only makes the buildings look harmony with the surroundings, but it can also help cooling the guestrooms. This can tremendously help saving the energy by reducing the use of the air condition.

Our specially designed "Laundry drying green house hut" was inspired from a method of the tobacco curing barns. It helps us saving the energy by replacing the use of machines. It only takes two hours for a king-size bed sheet to dry in the morning.

Contribution to community's cultural continuum



Currently, the resort is a community-based resort operating under the environmental and community sustainability principle. The focus is to create connection between the nature and culture. The tobacco curing barns show our connection with our community. Many neighbors have their ancestors working or being related to us. Although the tobacco business is now changed to resort, Kaomai lanna resort team always feel that we are Sanpatong community's member.

Hiring local people

From the old day, the tobacco industry played significant role in local Sanpatong people. Many local people worked in the tobacco industry. When the tobacco industry was faded from the north of Thailand, many people needed to change their jobs and lifestyles. Some travel to Chiang Mai town to work. Setting up the resort creates several jobs for the neighborhood community. Hiring the local people is the resort's policy

"We also wanted to provide employment for the tobacco farmers who had worked with us previously – so now our staff here is now our own families" Thawat Cherdasatirakul, the owner said.

Some staffs used to work as farmers before. They had no stable incomes but increasing expenses.

"When they apply the job here, we don't hesitate to employ them to look after our gardens and kitchen gardens in the resort. We can get the professional in this field and also we can help them to get a job which they can get a stable salary in each month". Thawat Cherdasatirakul, the owner said.

Events and Activities



Children Art Exhibition

Kaomai Lanna always wants to help and support the community. We do not want Kaomai Lanna Resort as the common resort, solely with business purpose while taking advantage from the community. Because most crews at Kaomai Lanna are local, we always trying to come up with ideas on how to make their lives better. Thus, we began to focus on the community's problem. Later, Kaomai Lanna set up a project called "*Kaomai Lanna and Our Community*" which is the project for supporting local culture or anyone who is in need in the community. The activities are arranged differently in each year.

The first activity of the project is "*Children art exhibition*" under the theme "Lanna through My Eyes" which was already completed at the end of January 2008. The exhibition displayed 37 pieces of Lanna arts created by children from various schools in SanPatong district. All exhibited arts were on auction and all incomes were turned into 5 scholarships for the poor students from HIV/AIDS affected families in from most in need schools in Tambon Baanglang. The scholarship ceremony was held on January 19th, 2008.

On Christmas Eve and New Year party, we arranged the charity party under the project called "Kaomai Lanna & Our Community". Our hotel guests not only enjoyed several performances from children in the local community, but they supported the community through donating the money as the scholarships for the poor children in the community.



Community Individual Travel Package

Our package focuses on a community tour which our hotel guests will have a chance to learn the local lifestyle, cultures and tradition along with exchanging cultures, knowledge to the local children. Kaomai Lanna's package includes art & craft workshop, adventure program tour and local temples tour.

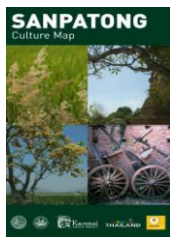


To convey the value and significance of the history and lifestyle of local people in Sanpatong, we renovated the barns into the guestrooms and planning on opening

the Northern Thai tobacco industry exhibition. Along with telling the story about the past time's community, we invite guests to experience nowadays' Sanpatong people lifestyle by joining "Kaomai Lanna Community Sharing Program" which includes the bicycle tour around the community and culture exchange between school children in the area.

The programs contribute to community development and improve quality of lives of Sanpatong residents .Our goal is to keep the cultural and natural heritage with an emphasis on the involvement of the community and to encourage our guests to respect the beliefs. A part of all income from this package "Kaomai Lanna & Community" project will be donated as the scholarships for the poor children who come from affected HIV/AIDS family in Sanpatong area, where more than 700 HIV/AIDS patients resided.

Sanpatong folk life Map



This Map is made from the co-operation among Sanpatong district office, the office of Sanpatong culture centre and Kaomai Lanna Resort. It is an ongoing project that aims to introduce the tourist the art cultural attractions and provide them information about the other interesting tourism spots in the area to the visitors .The map shows many interesting places also many contexts such as history, culture, art & craft, architected building values or religious details.

Newsletter

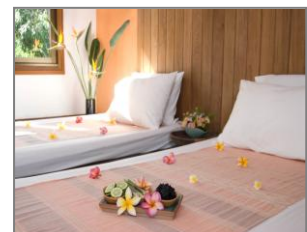


Every 2 months , the newsletter which are published in Thai and English are released to guests and villages ,s offices in Sanpatong area to keep both visitors and locals updated about Kaomai Lanna activities and what's going on in their communities.

The Impact of project conservation practice and policy

In the past, Sanpatong was famous for the sticky rice "Sanpatong sticky rice" and the tobacco. But nowadays we promote the tourism and create several jobs for the younger generations. They can have opportunity to work close to their home.

Besides, Kaomai Lanna resort is only resort in Thailand with the preservation of the tobacco curing barns as the hotel guest rooms. Likewise, the tobacco trading house is now the resort storage. The tobacco plant's supervisor house has been redecorated into a spa house adopting the concept of the local wisdom of health care such as scrub ingredients, massage skills etc.





Kaomai lanna is so called a green resort with the eco friendly concept. We would like to share the global awareness of saving energy. This concept has been the resort's nowadays policy, which all the staffs are aware of.

Provision for future use

Our aimed is to get more of the local community involvement and to bring the people's interest in art, culture, nature and old heritage site, along with expanding more activity zone for children/adult. These are what we currently are working.



Tobacco lifestyle exhibitions: we will change more tobacco curing barns, which were left in our area, into a museum. The museum will exhibit the history of tobacco industry in the north of Thailand. . We hope that the museum will be another knowledge center for the local community especially for the young generations to understand the lifestyle of their ancestors, who were greatly involved in the tobacco industry.

The artist studio: this is also our future plan. We will use a number of the unused barns to renovate them to be a suitable place for creating an inspiration for the artist to work on their master piece.

Hotel Facilities: we plan to add more unique design guestrooms idea for the family, which will be renovated from the unused tobacco drying barns. Also, one unused tobacco curing barn will be converted to be a pool room.

Community art and Culture center: Kaomai Lanna resort plans to be a community art and culture centre. The staff in the resort and the hotel guests will be invited to be teachers who will teach and do activities with the community children and the visitors. The activities and knowledge can be in different subjects in each Saturday or Sunday such as Mathematics, English or Art and culture. Thus, the children will have a chance to learn further and exchange culture and joining the activities. This will help them improve themselves in what they are interested in.

English language course for local children center: We plan to encourage the local children to study and practice their English skill. The local children can study with the volunteer hotel guest foreigners so they will have opportunity to practice their English with the native speakers. The hotel guests will also be able to study Thai or learning about the local culture.