2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Sangkhalok, inter-generational heritage of science and art.

Destination Name: (include any state, province or region)
Mueang Kao Sukhothai
Country: Thailand

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Position: - Managing Director of Designated Area of Sukhothai and Kamphaeng Phet province or DASTA 4
- The committee and joint secretary of Destination Management Organization of Mueang Kao Sukhothai

Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

☐ Localizing the destination supply chain
☐ Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
☒ Culture & Communities
☐ Environment & Climate
☐ Nature & Ecotourism
☐ Tourism Reset & Recovery

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DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced
What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice? Click to add your text

Mueang Kao Sukhothai, literally translated as “Old Sukhothai City, located in the heart of the ancient Sukhothai Kingdom, originally, under the prosperous regime of the Phra Ruang Dynasty’s era. As in this era, works of arts have been crafted with ingenuities and craftsmanship of the ancestors. This inheritance of combining science and art has been more than 700 years from ancestors. Also, its present-day location is now Sukhothai Historical Park. Mueang Kao Sukhothai was declared as a World Cultural Heritage in 1991 and became globally well-known as the city where the candle burning festival is annually organized.

Recognized as one of the most important exported goods, the traditional pottery, the so-called “Sangkhalok”, has been a cultural heritage expressing the wisdoms of the ancestors varied and passed on from generations to generations, from towns to towns, from a kingdom to another, and from the past to the present. Undoubtedly, Sangkhalok ceramic ware represents itself with a variety of aspects including Aesthetic Value, Economic Value, and Cultural Value as it is still a local good and unique souvenir with a local identity.

The problematic issue in the early era was the popularity of the Sangkhalok ceramic wares as “antique” in great demand back then for over 100 years ago. As a consequence, the Sangkhalok ceramic wares were exported from their area of origin consistently until there were fewer left. As the reputation and popularity grew drastically back then, the Sangkhalok ceramic wares have been smuggled out for sale without any conscience. Moreover, people and local authorities reported the crimes with illicit excavations of antiquities especially the Sangkhalok ceramic wares around the areas of ancient crossdraft (Thu-riang) kiln. Since then, the government agencies and ministry have made efforts to solve the issue to preserve the national treasure.

Also, the issue of the Sangkhalok ceramic wares in the later period is when the later Sangkhalok ceramic wares became the local handicrafts which were reproduced in similar appearances with the original ancient Sangkhalok. The issue arose when the era changed, the traditional Sangkhalok was unable to meet the diverse needs of tourists due to the perception of Sangkhalok wares as products purchased for collection purpose, not for daily use. Therefore, tourists may find it difficult to deeply appreciate the cultural values lied within Sangkhalok. Nevertheless, the new generation and the local youths may not realize the true value of Sangkhalok ceramic wares especially in terms of their beauty and historical backgrounds of the art.
Methods, steps and tools applied

How was the good practice implemented?

Government agencies are trying to solve the problem of smuggling Sangkhalok wares and selling them by exporting them from their area of origin especially oversea illicit antiquity trading. To prevent the acts of illicit antiquities, strict law enforcement is required. The Fine Arts Department allowed the person who had the possession of Sangkhalok ceramic wares or other antiques to return it to them without any charge by legally registering Sangkhalok as an antique. However, there is a need to notify the law regulators that the possessor has changed.

As for the public sector, Mr. Somdet Phuangphaen, who truly cherished the charm of Sangkhalok and had the eyes on the important issue of ancient Sangkhalok illegally excavated from the area of their origin since he was in his childhood. Therefore, he was concerned about the local heritage of his motherland and hoped for the future generations to have the opportunity to learn about Sangkhalok wares. Since then, he initiated a self-study on the process of crafting Sangkhalok ceramic wares along with the processes of claying, glazing, firing, shaping, and patterns until he is the specialist of Sangkhalok manufacturing by developed and applied with modern firing techniques. Mr. Somdet also sought local artisans to collaborate and made his knowledge and skills of handcraftsmanship transferable to local art artisan students. Consequently, He decided to establish all-in-one Sangkhalok learning center in order to pass on his knowledge and skills of handcraftsmanship to new generations to preserve and retain the existence of Sangkhalok to be further crafted newly and creatively into something fashionable.

At that time, Sangkhalok became famous among artwork collectors and tourists. As he received attention from government agencies, he was asked to showcase his collections of works to sell nationally across Thailand. Nevertheless, Mr. Somdet Phuangphaen had tried to make Sangkhalok globally known by creating master piece with various methods of productions of Sangkhalok. Also, he was invited to exhibit at international conferences. Since then, it was his ultimate aims for knowledge and skills of handcraftsmanship and productions of Sangkhalok to be passed on to the next generation. “Sangkhalok” has also appeared in the province motto of Sukhothai revised in 2004. Even though Mr. Somdet Phuangphaen’s Sangkhalok manufacturing business was closed, new Sangkhalok manufacturers were continually emerging.

However, Sangkhalok wares are still known only to those who favor them. It is not well-recognized by new generation of tourists. Many government agencies, therefore, came up with transformations of traditional products to be more varied in promoting Sangkhalok to meet the diverse needs to reach new customer or new tourists. By painting and using the black brush strokes that are the signature of the Sangkhalok especially local fish and flora, for example, Sangkhalok’s patterns are diversified to create souvenirs such as t-shirts, water glasses, silver jewelry, cloth bags and etc.

Apart from that, non-local scholars have foreseen and paid a close intention to the potentials of the Sangkhalok that exceptionally represents the identity of local Sukhothai. Therefore, the procedure for registering intellectual property as a geographical indication (Geographical Indications: GI) was carried out to indicate the uniqueness of handicraft products with a deep connection with the local. And to represent the historical and cultural values on the Sangkhalok patterns, DASTA and government agencies have provided the educational training to the craftsmen to initiate any recreational activity.
for tourists to learn and sculpt or paint on their own whether on pottery, t-shirts or other materials as customized DIY works and souvenirs. Additionally, DASTA has encouraged a number of Sangkhalok’s manufacturers in the local community to join hands in organizing the Sangkhalok Street of Art by using broken pieces of Sangkhalok to decorate the 1.5-kilometer wall as an art work. More importantly, the local government also organized an honor ceremony to award plaques to craftsmen, artists, and heirs of manufacturers of Sangkhalok. The national government agencies also honor and pay respect to the teachers of Sangkhalok production and their descendants to inherit the legacy.

In 2020, Sangkhalok production has been included in educational curricula of the handicraftsmanship for local educational institutions from elementary to secondary education with its goal for young people to learn, appreciate, and cherish the cultural legacy and local heritage of Sukhothai leading to an alternative career path in the future.

And in 2021, there was an idea of traditional patterns on the ancient Sangkhalok wares to be analyzed by the cooperation of the local and experts on plant and fish species. As this cooperation could help us to indicate and identify flora and fish species on the patterns of Sangkhalok wares that associate with the species in the old era with nowadays. This project aims to aware to preserve and restore present-day ecosystems by address the declining in biodiversity. Apart from that, a serious effort must be made to raise the awareness among local people about culture and natural resources in tourist attractions. In short, the Sangkhalok production process and Sangkhalok patterns are considered as intangible heritage that the local people must be aware of its value and importance. The local must face the risk of this cultural wisdom of being vanished from time to time. Therefore, inherited by Sangkhalok production process and Sangkhalok patterns as a local career path is the starting point in establishing the heart of Sangkhalok conservation. And further creatively formed, Sangkhalok conservation must also receive the supports from the government in terms of handcraft skills, marketing, tourism activities, and educational curricula and to honor those who contributed to Sangkhalok conservation. Consequently, this will lead to positive impacts on the local economy and society.

**Key success factors**

What helped you tackle the issues? Click to add your text

1. **Economy aspect:** Sangkhalok products are One Tambon One Product (OTOP) that the government promotes them by doing the marketing and encourage Sangkhalok manufacturers to enter the value chain, such as in tourism sector, as seen in a souvenir product and further potentially developed into a cultural tourism activity. And when Sangkhalok wares manufacturing becomes a creative tourism activity, not only entrepreneurs or manufacturers can benefit from this recreational tourism but tourists are also encouraged to experience hand-on creative-based and DIY activities. Moreover, local dessert is an additional service that entrepreneurs can offer to the tourists as another approach to distribute income to the local.

2. **Social aspect:**

   (1) the production of Sangkhalok is a household industry not intended to be mass reproduction. Local manufacturers and entrepreneurs make their own decisions based on sufficient production according to the economic philosophy of His Majesty the Late King Bhumibol of Thailand and based on prioritizing happiness over amounts of money that may affect a simple, unhurried life style. Also,
various government agencies joined hands in supporting the local add must respect the rights of the community according to these sufficient economy principles.

(2) In Sangkhalok production process, making handicraft requires no gender division of labor and there is no discrimination between the male and female all the young to participate and practice their skills to be inherited. Such approach can be accounted for equality for all. The respect for community rights and equality is a principle of UNESCO in promoting and safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

3. Cultural aspects (protecting cultural heritage):
   (1) Thailand has a law enforcement to protect antiques.
   (2) Sangkhalok has been registered intellectual property as a geographical indication (Geographical Indications: GI) with the uniqueness that can be linked to locality.
   (3) Sangkhalok products are a part of the program to conserve and honor the intangible cultural heritage according to the preservation and development master plan of the Sukhothai Historical Park and the action plan for the creative city of Sukhothai crafts and folk art 2021-2025.

4. Environment aspect:
   (1) In the production process of the Sangkhalok wares, the broken or damaged Sangkhalok pieces that could not be sold have been used to decorate the shops and used to make arts on the community walls of Sangkhalok’s manufacturers. This is the way to recycle.
   (2) A Plan to identify the flora and fish species that appeared on Sangkhalok’s patterns adding a storytelling to the products or crafting as this will also help raise the awareness of the restoration of local flora and fish ecosystems.

5. Elements of a Creative City
   Sangkhalok are a cultural identity of Mueang Kao Sukhothai Destination. There are Sangkhalok to decorate as local architectural ornaments such as in important temples and visitor centers. These ambiances have inspired more amateurs in Sangkhalok’s manufacturer and entrepreneurs to constantly emerge not only the local but also within the province because of diversity and open Society. As a consequence, these ambiances increase the learning, exchange opportunities and develop the cultural heritage to stay retained.

Lessons learned
While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome?

By its definition, the word “sustainable” does not always mean if a problem is solved, there will be no more problem even we follow the patterns of sustainability guidelines. In fact, sustainability means the ability to withstand or handle for a certain period of time. When the era and people's lifestyles have also changed, new problems may arise.

As a great amount of illicit antiquities, Sangkhalok were smuggled out of the area of origin, local people came up with a strategy to alleviate illegal excavations by reduplicating the original Sangkhalok as these duplicated Sangkhalok compensated the needs of antique collectors and became a well-known local product for the tourists at that time. However, over a period of time, visitors traveling to Mueang Kao Sukhothai have been more diverse. As a result, the traditional shapes and forms of Sangkhalok ceramic wares that used to be fashionable is now no longer need anymore. If Sangkhalok manufacturers or entrepreneurs are not adaptive and accept any changes, they may not survive. Therefore, Sangkhalok manufacturers or entrepreneurs should be open-minded and willing to learn marketing in the new era by bringing the DNA or the cultural roots of Sangkhalok to further develop
and creatively reproduce new goods. This approach can regard as a cultural exchange to equip with new skills so that the traditional cultural heritage sustainably co-exists while also still gains economic benefits, known as Creative Economy.

The Local community plays an important role in production, preservation, safeguarding along with creating new intangible cultural heritage. This is how we have cultural diversity and rich in human creation.

Results, achievements and recognitions

1. At the present, with more than 10 local entrepreneurs of Sangkhalok manufacturing in Mueang Kao Sukhothai, together with non-local entrepreneurs, the common interest of these entrepreneurs is that they value the applicable potential of Sangkhalok ceramic wares to be further developed into other diverse products.

2. The entrepreneurs of Sangkhalok manufacturing can further develop and transform into a creative tourism activity that tourists can learn to sculpt and paint by themselves leading to the increase in revenue by providing services in this kind of recreational activity in addition to sale revenue. Currently, 6 manufacturers are providing and organizing these recreational activities in the Mueang Kao Sukhothai. Also, non-local manufacturers are providing the same services in this creative tourism.

3. The shape of the Sangkhalok’s containers has changed to be more versatile and functional in daily bases and other purposes. And the fish patterns have not only appeared on the clay containers but also on shirts, umbrellas, glasses, and other goods in order to meet various desired motifs of the tourists.

4. Adapting Sangkhalok to be the decorations can be related to tourism business. For instance, Sangkhalok wares can be modified and used as corridor lamps to decorate the local hotel area or else their patterns can be adaptive to decorate architectural buildings. These adaptations can financially support local handicraftsmen and amplify the expression of a clearer sense of place for certain destination.

5. The way of inheriting the Sangkhalok of Mueang Kao Sukhothai is one of a crucial key for Sukhothai to be selected as UNESCO Creative City Network for Crafts and Folk Arts for 2019.

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/One Drive) download URL.

Video: Sangkhalok, inter-generational heritage of science and art.
https://youtu.be/dgQqQupMt4U

Book: “Sangkhalok” Sukhothai Ceramic Wares, The Artistic Heritage from the Clay to Afar
http://online.anyflip.com/nvuau/zkgn/mobile/index.html

Brief of Sangkhalok in website: Sangkhalok, Value and Authentic of Phraruang Heritage