



## Meaning relationship between the original Ban Chiang pottery pattern stamps and modern auspicious patterns

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### Abstract

The study investigates the relationship between the original Ban Chiang patterns and modern auspicious patterns in terms of meaning. The qualitative method was used to collect and analyze data. The sample or information source of Ban Chiang clay rollers and Ban Chiang pottery pattern stamps includes a curator and a storekeeper of the Ban Chiang National Museum and a local person well-informed in Ban Chiang. Results revealed that the Ban Chiang patterns are similar to modern auspicious patterns mainly in the use of animals; nature; fruits, trees, and flowers; objects, utensils, or artificial designs; and belief as symbols.

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### Introduction

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2015) revealed that one of the factors influencing tourism in Thailand that continuously increases the number of tourists is special interest tourism. This form of tourism is relatively new and aims to meet the need and interests of tourists, such as medical, adventure, religious, conference and exhibition, and sport tourism (Trauer, Ryan, & Lockyer, 2003). Special interest tourism is associated with a wide range of tourism activities in Udon Thani. To illustrate, ancient tourism mainly denotes traveling in historical tourist attractions, such as the Ban Chiang National Museum and Phu Phra Bat Historical Park. Religious tourism pertains to dharma tourism, such as Wat Phothisomphon temple and Khamsanod temple. Moreover, other forms of tourism include food, eco-, and shopping tourism.

The researchers conducted interviews with sellers of goods and souvenirs to identify issues related to tourism and maximize the many tourist sites in Udon Thani and yearly increasing number of tourists. The interviews revealed that souvenirs lack representation of Udon Thani, which is considered a serious problem, because souvenirs serve as a reminder of the places visited by tourists (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2015). Furthermore, souvenirs are important mementos of events in such tourist attractions (Wilkins, 2010). If souvenirs lack representativeness in conveying the Udon Thani identity, then consumers and tourists will become uninterested in buying them.

Many types of souvenirs can be found in Udon Thani, such as pottery, local hand-woven fabrics, basketworks, and sweets. The Ban Chiang antiques depict an interesting method of applying patterns to create identity for various community products. The curator of the Ban Chiang National Museum further informed that the Ban Chiang pottery pattern stamps (hereinafter *BC Stamp*) feature more than 200 patterns with shapes that are very similar to a mold. Therefore, the study investigated the BC stamps, which may be used as a model for creating new community products in the form of souvenirs from the province of Udon Thani.

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To address the lack of representation in souvenirs from Udon Thani, the study aims to explore solutions for developing tourist attractions in Udon Thani. The study follows the concept of Sangchumnong (2019) who asserted that tourist attractions that can meet the needs of tourists will benefit the creative economy. The researchers extended the result of a doctoral dissertation entitled “Ban Chiang pottery pattern stamp: Integrated into design of commercial products” (Rerngwannasak, 2014). The result was used to investigate the meaning relationships between original Ban Chiang patterns and modern auspicious patterns. The study hopes to apply the BC stamps to souvenirs and convey the identity of Udon Thani to tourists. Moreover, applying the BC stamps in souvenirs can preserve and render souvenirs memorable for tourists and promote sustainable tourism development in Udon Thani. This notion conforms to the concept of Tepsing and Boonprakarn (2019) who adapted the art and environment of the Tham Khao Roop Chang Temple to meet the needs of tourists and preserve the natural environment, which are positive aspects for sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, the study aims to examine original BC stamps from the Ban Chiang National Museum and from the United States, which returned 554 prehistoric artifacts to Thailand, to analyze and duplicate suitable patterns. Such patterns will be used to design future products. Based on the analysis and duplication of patterns, the researchers strongly believe that this study contributes to create a new knowledge of patterns that can be applied in community products, create alternatives for tourists when buying souvenirs, promote a means to create income for the community, increase the capability of the community product model to create a variety of products using the unique BC stamps, and increase the value of local materials and products.

## Literature Review

The previous literature indicates that the Ban Chiang clay roller (hereafter *BC roller*) and pottery pattern stamps have three types of patterns, namely, line, geometric, and natural.

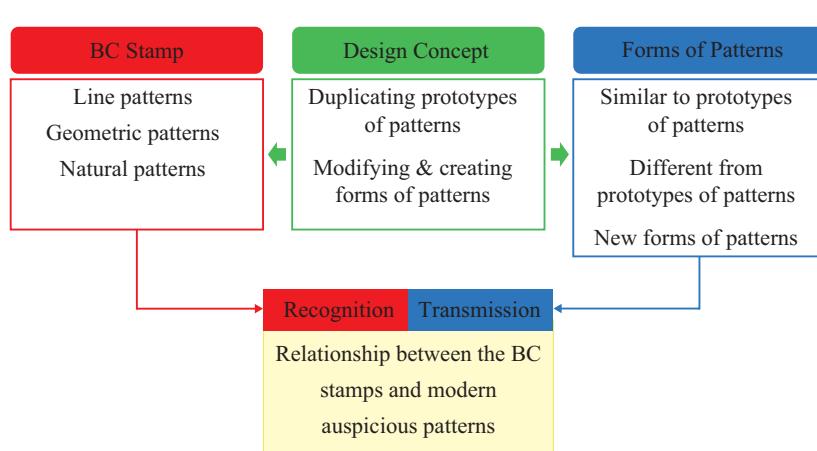
The total number of BC stamps is 243, including 231 surveyed and examined and 12 antique stamps. These BC stamps applied the criteria in separating the patterns proposed by Rerngwannasak (2014), which is related to Yoodee's (1972) definition of patterns. Yoodee (1972) also divided the patterns into three groups. The first is geometric patterns that imitate virtual shapes. Prehistoric geometric patterns include straight lines, curves, dots, circles, ovals, lozenge, spirals, chevron, triangles, lattice-signs, rectangles, and meanders. The second consists of animal patterns that originated from the Stone Age. The patterns are relatively basic, such that animals can be easily identified (i.e., cows, buffaloes, and snakes). The last group consists of human patterns according to Charoenwong (1973). The author indicated two types of Ban Chiang patterns, namely, natural and artificial. In contrast, however, Yoodee (1972) showed that human and animal patterns are combined with the natural pattern.

## Conceptual Framework

Navaratana Na Ayudhya (2009) referred to designing a suitable product that realizes the long-term effect of design. Such a product would be suitable for producers, consumers, and business organizations. An awareness of the natural materials, the production processes that use renewable energy, and the human labor of the design principles can be employed to investigate knowledge that can subsequently be applied to many forms of a product. The conceptual framework of the present study is shown in Figure 1.

## Methodology

The qualitative research method was used to analyze data from documents, books, articles, thesis, research, and the internet. The scope of the study was refined; coordination with relevant institutes was carried out; and data on BC rollers and BC stamps in the Ban Chiang area were collected and categorized.



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework of this study

## Participants

The study recruited three participants, namely, a curator, a storekeeper, and a local well-informed person. The curator and storekeeper informed the hypothesis of the history of the BC stamps, pattern accuracy, and means of connecting the relationship between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns. The local well-informed person and 12 groups of producers, which comprised three weaving producers, three basketwork producers, three pottery producers, and three food souvenir producers, conveyed the information that the patterns of the BC stamps can be adapted and applied in community products. The Ban Chiang National Museum was also the source of information on the BC rollers and BC stamps.

## Data Collection

The qualitative research method was used to collect data from documents, books, articles, thesis, research and the internet. The scope of the study was refined; coordination with relevant institutes was carried out, and data on BC rollers and BC stamps in the Ban Chiang area and sub district, Nong Han district, Udon Thani were collected and categorized. Moreover, the researchers examined the original BC stamps housed in the Ban Chiang National Museum and 554 BC stamps sent from the United States to Thailand.

## Data Analysis

The researchers investigated data from different sources of the main data group and examined methods of data collection through individual conversations. After obtaining data, the researchers categorized and analyzed the data in accordance with facts from antiques, documents, and field data to summarize important points about the BC stamps. To duplicate

and categorize the patterns, the meaning relationship between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns locally and abroad was analyzed.

## Result and Discussion

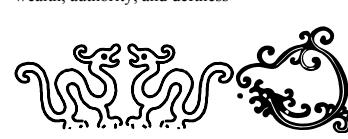
The relationships between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns are as follows.

The relationship is the association between Ban Chiang prehistoric patterns and modern patterns, which have similar characteristics and effect on thoughts, beliefs, and actions. To establish a relationship between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns in the community, the researchers chose countries that have similar characteristics of patterns with the prehistoric Ban Chiang era and affect the community products in Udon Thani. The countries have to be ones for which archaeologists have speculated that excavations from the Ban Chiang civilization have been found. The patterns are divided into two groups: patterns from Eastern countries (i.e., India, China, Japan, and Laos) and from Middle East countries (i.e., Egypt). Therefore, the researchers identified the relationship of patterns from five countries in total. Table 1 provides an analysis of the patterns.

According to Table 1, the relationship between the original Ban Chiang pottery patterns and modern auspicious patterns has five related patterns, including the use of animals; nature; fruits, trees, and flowers; utensils and artificial patterns, and belief as symbols.

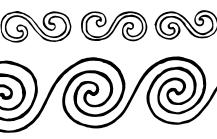
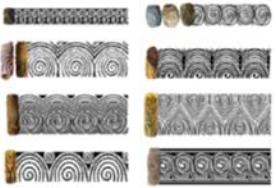
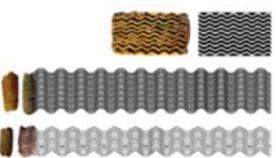
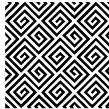
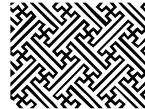
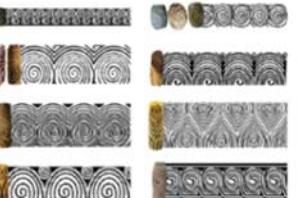
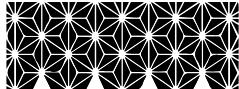
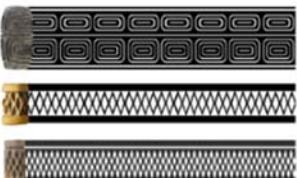
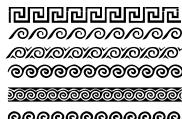
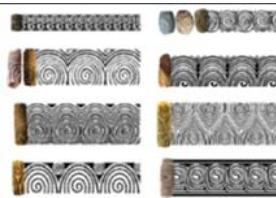
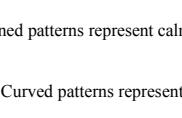
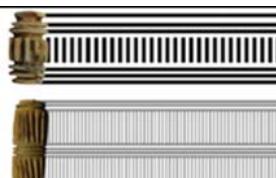
After comparing the five target countries, the study found the use of animals as symbols. For example, snakes have an auspicious meaning that represents power, protection from danger, knowledge, and land. Moreover, nature is used as symbols. For instance, spiral patterns symbolize plenty, happiness, good fortune, progress, and humility. Figure 2 illustrates a comparison of the symbols used among the five countries.

**Table 1** Analysis of relationship between the original Ban Chiang pottery pattern stamp and modern auspicious patterns in five countries

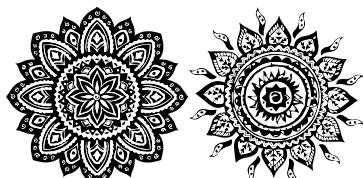
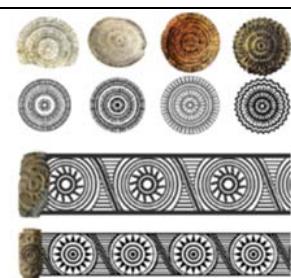
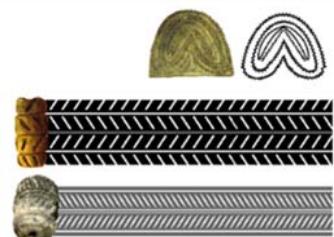
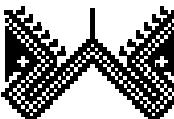
Joint relationship/countries		Auspicious patterns	BC stamps
China	Animals as symbols	Dragons represent perfection, creativeness, luck, wealth, authority, and deftness	
			
		Snakes are poisonous animals and believed to eliminate evil.	
		Turtles symbolize long life.	
		The pattern a turtle shell represents wealth and sustainability.	
			



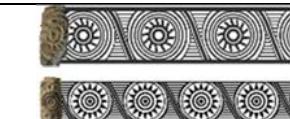
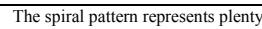
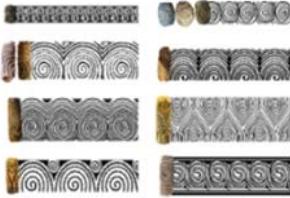
**Table 1** Continued

Joint relationship/countries	Auspicious patterns	BC stamps
	Nature as symbols Clouds represent happiness, peace, and good luck.	 
	Water symbolizes modesty and progress.	 
	Artificial patterns as symbols Key pattern represents return, rebirth, and infinity.	  
Japan	Animals as symbols; The animal figures used for decorations have similar characteristics to China, such as dragons (Chinese), unicorns, pheasants, and turtles.	 
	Nature as symbols Water represents modesty, softness, and progress.	 
	Sun represents life force and authority.	 
	Decorative patterns as symbols; Geometric, spiral, lined, and horizontal-lined patterns represent calmness and plainness. Vertical lined patterns represent stability. Curved patterns represent modesty and politeness.	 

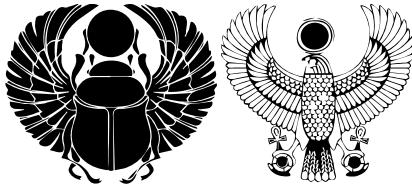
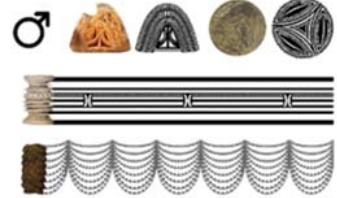
**Table 1** Continued

Joint relationship/countries	Auspicious patterns	BC stamps
India	The use of animals as symbols In Indo-European languages, snakes are called “naka,” and represent power.	 
	Cattle are believed to be a symbol of good luck to the family and agriculture.	 
	Nature as symbols; The sun represents power and truth of life.	 
	Fruits, trees, and flowers as symbols; Bodhi leaves represent the heart and enlightenment.	 
Laos	The use of animals as symbols Nakas or big snakes represent greatness and wealth. This pattern is most commonly used as a primary pattern.	 
	Buffaloes are important animals to plowing, thus they are symbols of plenty.	

**Table 1** Continued

Joint relationship/countries	Auspicious patterns	BC stamps
	Nature as symbols	Water represents humility, obedience, and progress.
		
		
		
		
		
		
	Belief as symbols;	
	The ancestral spirit pattern is a symbol of protection for travel in today's life or in the afterlife.	
		
		
Egypt	Animals as symbols;	
	Snakes are representative of Apep, the god of knowledge. Snakes are also the symbol of land.	
  		

**Table 1** Continued

Joint relationship/countries	Auspicious patterns	BC stamps
Nature as symbols; The sun is a sacred object that gives life and luck to people.		
Utensils or artificial patterns as symbols; Ankh is the symbol of good health, long life, men, and women.		

Type of patterns	CHINA	JAPAN	INDIA	EGYPT	LAOS
Trees Flowers Fruits					
Auspicious animals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nature	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Artificial patterns Decorative patterns Utensils	✓	✓		✓	
Belief					✓

**Figure 2** Summary of relationship between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns of the five countries

According to Figure 1, the original BC stamps have patterns associated with modern auspicious patterns and can be adapted to local product design. This notion conforms to the concept of Chen (2013) who combined auspiciousness with the design of modern clothes to produce unique products and meet the needs of the market. Therefore, analysis of the relationship between the original Ban Chiang pottery pattern stamp and modern auspicious patterns can make the products become unique and memorable, which supports the idea of Daradat (1996), who asserted that human beings are knowledgeable about beauty. They can arrange straight lines to be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and curved to enhance their beauty. Humans can combine many lines to create geometric figures. After having additional knowledge and skills, humans use nature as patterns in any country. In the aforementioned patterns, the context of patterns can be summarized in that the creations of prehistoric people were mainly inspired by nature, as evidenced by the sun pattern, the wave pattern, the animal pattern, and the plant pattern. These patterns were duplicated and modified to be suitable for the product. The BC clay roller has a cylindrical shape. Therefore, it can be used to roll on the material to create the patterns. The BC clay roller provides a continuous pattern, whereas the BC stamp provides a single one. The pattern of BC stamp therefore conveys the meaning in a straightforward manner. The meaning of auspicious patterns is elaborated on as follows.

Zi (2017) asserted that auspiciousness is related to happiness, stability, safety, and long life. Combining auspiciousness with the Ban Chiang patterns conforms to the concept of Tepsing (2005). The author summarized Chinese auspicious patterns as the most common use of animal, plant, nature, artificial, and color patterns. In terms of animals as patterns, dragons are the most common pattern because dragons symbolize perfection, creativity, agility, power, stability, and good fortune, and protectors and destroyers. As patterns, any kinds of plants represent gentleness and growth. Moreover, nature symbolizes happiness, peace, good fortune and humility. Color patterns indicate red as the color of life and as a symbol of the sun and Yang. Red and golden yellow represent power, glow, happiness, and good luck.

The belief accompanying Chinese auspicious patterns is associated with that of Japanese auspicious patterns. India and Laos have the most similar meanings of pattern with Thailand because India, Laos, and Thailand presumably have the same dominant religion. Therefore, a clear link is observed in the meaning of patterns among the countries. For example, snake patterns represent greatness and plenty (Arunothai, 2006). In Egypt, prehistoric archaeological evidence reveals a belief in auspicious symbols for animals and gender, which represent knowledge and plenty (Dadaradat, 1996).

## Conclusion and Recommendation

In connecting the relationship between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns, the study identified relationships in the patterns used by the five countries, namely, Laos, Japan, China, India, and Egypt. These relationships were noted to originate from the same prehistoric era of Ban Chiang and have influenced the model for the local product designs in Udon Thani. In summary, five patterns from the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns were related, including the use of animals; nature; fruits, trees, and flowers; utensils and artificial patterns; and belief as symbols.

The study recommends that the five common patterns between the original BC stamps and modern auspicious patterns can create unique local products and increase their product value. However, suitability should also be considered before production. Therefore, producers should carefully choose a suitable pattern for each product that sufficiently conveys its meaning to tourists.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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