

Thread *tales*



Lotus Fibre

I M P A C T

P R O C E S S

R E L E V A N C E



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Before we begin

If there are five things we would like you to remember about the Lotus fibre, they are those highlighted below.

We hope you are feeling curious about the fascinating world of this ancient thread. If you would like to go into further detail, we will see you in the next few pages!



The texture is raw yet soft. The fabric is thermo-insulating, water-resistant, and breathable.



The Lotus grows naturally, without pesticides or fertilizers.



From harvest to weaving, the process is hand-led, electricity-free and zero waste.



The production process follows an age-old technique and involves a large part of the local community on the Inle lake.



The Lotus has a strong symbolical, cultural, and religious value in Asia, where it is associated with purity, regeneration and resilience. It used to be employed to craft robes for Buddhist monks and the royal ranks.

this way
to find
out
more

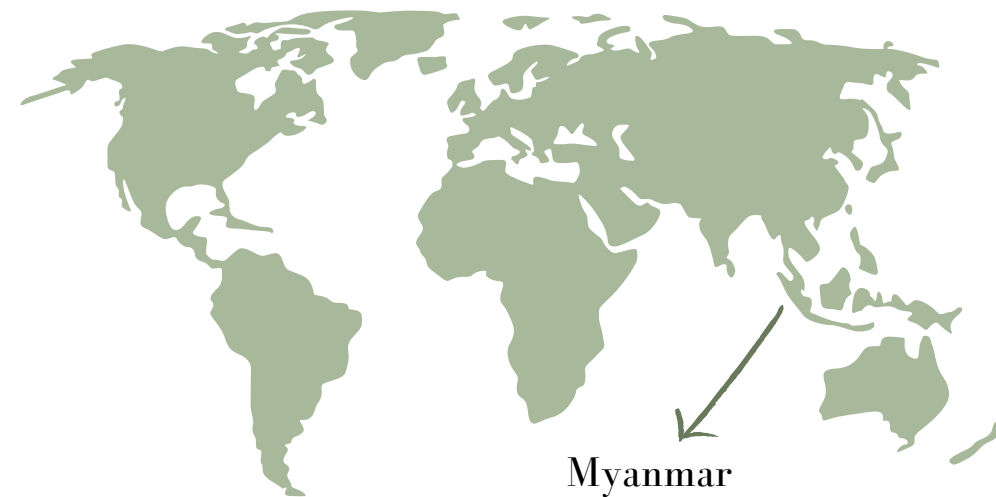


THE INLE LAKE AND ITS PEOPLE



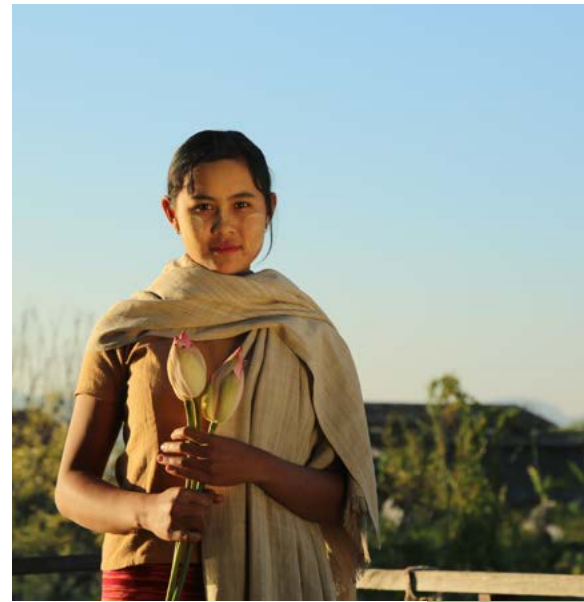
The Inle Region

Nestled between two mountain chains in the heart of Myanmar, the Inle lake unfolds across a surface of approximately 250 square kilometres. Sprinkled amongst the stilt-huts, the eye catches glimpses of water grasslands, vegetable gardens and floating farms. This water basin accounts for a large majority of the Lotus fibre production in the region.



The Intha People

The locals call themselves *Intha*, which means "children of the water". The production of the Lotus keeps a majority of the community busy for six months a year, with the exception of the weavers, whose work in the workshop from harvest to harvest. During the remainder of the year, the rest of the community works on the floating farms, in their land fields, and goes fishing.



O U R P A R T N E R

We are proud and privileged to have established a solid relationship with the local workshops and their community of Artisans.

Our bond is founded on mutual trust, passion for the ancestral Lotus weaving technique, and the deepest respect for the Inle lake's precious ecosystem.

English is not so wide-spread in the region, but thanks to a few key members of the community, like Nay Win (shown smiling on his boat), we are able to keep an open flow of two-way communication with the workshops. This enables us to be agile and transparent.

The weaver community and the workshop are like being part of a big family.

- Nay Win

1.



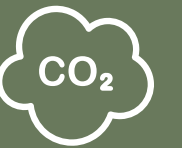
2.



3.



NO WATER WASTE
OR POLLUTION



REDUCED EMISSIONS



NO TOXIC WASTE



NO RESOURCE WASTE



COMMUNITY SUPPORT



SAFE, MEANINGFUL WORK

The Harvest

The flowers grow naturally on the lake or are farmed and harvested in independently managed allotments of the Inle lake by the locals. No pesticides or fertilizers are used, as the lake is a source of food and religious practice. The harvesters pick the flowers aboard traditional oar-powered wooden canoes.

Yarn Spinning

A fibre similar to spider silk is extracted by hand from the stalk of each flower. During the extraction process, the stalks are snapped in half and skilfully twisted to coil the fibres together and pull them out without breaking them: this is an extremely delicate procedure that local women pass down from generation to generation.

Hand-weaving

The yarn is then woven on hand-operated looms. Although workshops were originally run by men, our partner communities include many women. When the loom is not set up in their own homes, our workshops provide a safe space for our Artisans to work and engage with peers.

4.



The Dyeing

Whilst we prefer to use the fibre in its natural colour, when we dye it we employ natural pigments according to the traditional process. It takes about 70 litres of water to dye one meter of fabric. To save water and avoid pigment discharge, the same water solution is used over and over again until all pigment is exhausted before it is reintegrated into the lake. This may result in differences in colour shades, which the locals consider part of the beauty of the unique beauty Lotus.

5.



Post Production

There is no waste resulting from the production of the Lotus fibre. The leaves are dried to make local tea and the fresh ones are used for wrapping food. The flowers are offered to Buddha or used for decoration. The buds are eaten as a local speciality. The remainders of the stems are used as natural fertilizers and for the production natural dyes.



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E D U C A T I O N +
W O R K O P P O R T U N I T I E S



We work with over 200 Lotus makers. Most of them belong to families who have been in the trade for generations and the workshops are like large families.

The new generations are increasingly interested and involved in the craft. In most cases they learn on the job, all together in the workshop, but more formal training opportunities are also offered by the Master Weaver.

The production of the Lotus requires skill and practice and is a well sought-after profession in the community. The craft is at the heart of the community from a cultural, social and financial level and it is a privilege for Thread Tales to contribute to the preservation of this ancient technique.



The Lotus is associated with purity and regeneration, and for centuries the plant has been used for nutrition and health purposes.

Different parts of the plant are used to promote coagulation, soothe digestive tract discomforts, and ease inflammation (especially skin conditions). In traditional Chinese medicine, Lotus seeds are known as Lian Zi Xin and are used to treat nervous disorders, insomnia, and cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension and arrhythmia. Mixed with honey, a powder of lotus seeds is useful in treating cough.

Ayurvedic medicine suggests that the healing properties of the source plants are preserved in their derivative fibres, and can be absorbed into our body through contact with our skin.

As of yet, there is no scientific evidence to corroborate the principles of this ancient proto-medicine, although there is some research suggesting that detrimental chemical contaminants in manufactured clothes are absorbed into the skin*.

Therefore the idea that wearing Lotus fibre may help with headaches, heart ailments, asthma, and lung issues or to absorb free radicals and inhibit fat production may not be as far-fetched as it seems. Early research is being done into the validity of these claims.

Nonetheless, the Lotus is recognized for its UV-ray resistance, thermo-regulating properties, and its ability to generate negative oxygen ions, which contribute to overall physical health.

On a psychological level, it is believed to promote feelings of calm, peace, and clarity, maybe a positive form of conditioning linked to the strong symbolism that permeates its source.

*Ref: Environ Sci Pollut Res Int
(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6133113/#>). 2018; 25(25): 24629-24638.
Published online 2018 Jun 17. doi:
10.1007/s11356-018-2448-6
(<https://dx.doi.org/10.1007%2Fs11356-018-2448-6>)





What are the disadvantages of Lotus fibre?

Raw material collection to yarn spinning and weaving is completely handmade, so the process is time-consuming and expensive. Preferably, the Lotus fibre would be woven within twentyfour hours to prevent the potential weakening of the fibre. However, timespans can be widened by properly storing the yarn and then wetting it before weaving it.

What is the future potential of the Lotus fibre?

Being an upcoming fibre, it can be effectively blended with any natural fibre available. Functional clothing can be obtained by mixing the Lotus fibre in the required percentage with stronger fibres. The fabric lends itself for different types of weaves other than plain weave, and yields excellent results when matched with varying surface ornaments techniques.

As seen in the previous section, the Lotus fibre is ideal for ayurveda manufacturing (a practice that involves dyeing the fabric with pigments herbal infusions). Finally, research is currently underway to explore the potential of employing microwave irradiation and solutions of hydrogen peroxide for a swifter extraction of the fibre with promising results.

Lotus Fibre

During our travels, we have spent many hours with the people of the Inle Lake, understanding their traditions and reverence for the rare Lotus plant and building special and privileged relationships. Sitting alongside them, we have observed the creation of this beautiful fabric, emerging from wooden tools and incredibly skilled fingers; a fabric fit for the Buddhist Monks and Royals of Myanmar.

We hope you enjoyed following us on this brief journey across the past, present, and future of the Lotus.

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Lotus Fibre

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