

Photo Essay: Thailand's Salt Farming 2022 First Water Ceremony

"Gong of Hope"

A reflection at one of the most colourful and auspicious events for Thai salt farmers in SamutSakorn. Please be seated comfortably as a guest and join this sacred ceremony through the lens of Prin Chotiprasidhi.



This massive 5,000-acre array of salt farming pans in SamutSakorn has been allocated to many families of local farmers since 1938. Salt farming is probably one of the world's cultural heritages that is disappearing, threatened by both commercial and climate change.



The First Water Ceremony is to celebrate the first stream of water let into their well-grounded salt pans. This beautiful ceremony is hosted by the community of local salt farmers, combining both Buddhism and Brahmin values and practices.



Buddhist prayers are chanted and echoed in harmony by leading monks, salt farmers and their guests. This auspicious chanting sequence has communicated a sense of collaboration and togetherness.



The Brahmin sacrifice is the most colourful scene in this ceremony. All sacrifice items, desserts, fruit, liquor, milk and cigarettes are placed in arrays to communicate a certain meaning of their own. The sacrifice to the holy spirit is believed to drive away any bad luck.



The first plowing act symbolizes the beginning of the season. A group of strong young farmers strike the tool on the muddy ground of the pan, following the pace of the chanted Brahmin rhymes.



“Gong!!!” The gong sound echoes across the arrays of salt farming pans, followed by cheerful claps and bright smiles on the faces of hundreds of salt farmers. The gong is the sign of the new beginning of the year’s salt farming season and also represents good luck for a season full of sunshine with no off-season rainfall.