Pao Nang Yang / Blowing Rubber Bands

Site of Documentation

Ahka group, Tambon Mae Yao, Mueang District, Chiangrai Province

Description

*Pao Nang Yang* is a rubber band blowing game widely enjoyed by children from the Ahka communities in Northern Thailand. As it only requires couple of rubber bands, two players and the simple skill of blowing, it has become a popular way to pass the time both at school and at home.

Who Plays?

This game requires a group of two to three players. It is played by both boys and girls and is most suited to children aged between 5 and 12 years old.

Accessories/Equipment

This game is all about winning rubber bands and therefore this key item cannot be substituted with anything else. Rubber bands are often used in households to tie together multiple items or seal bags containing food. Light and cheap, they are found in abundance around the home or can easily be bought from local stores, making them a useful item for children to play with. Children prefer to play with smaller sizes of rubber bands, ideally those around 2 to 3 centimetres in diameter.
**Time and Place**

On average, a round of *Pao Nang Yang* will last around 1 to 3 minutes. Children are most likely to play the game during their lunch break at school or whenever they have free time with friends. The game can be played indoors throughout the year, no matter what the weather is. The game is best played on a large, smooth surface such as a flat floor or table, where there are no bumps or obstructions that could stop the rubber bands from being blown accurately.

**Skill, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player**

Children need to be able to blow their rubber band accurately to win the game. In order to do that, the best players are those that can take big, deep breaths and then using their mouths and cheeks, control the speed and direction of the air when they blow out. Most often, children learn this game from observing peers or older siblings and become good players through frequent practice.

**Popularity**

Ahka children play this game for fun and enjoy competing against each other to win the rubber bands. As the game can be played anywhere, it is played frequently. The game is found in many different regions throughout Thailand, the rules are the same, only the name is different. For example, Tai Yai children call it *Pao Nang Tong* and Lanna children used to call it *Pao Nang Wong*, although nowadays the game is known by the Akha name *Pao Nang Yang*. Akha children are the only ones to play it in small groups of three.

**History of the game**

The game was also played by members of the older generations when they were young, much in the same way as it's played today.
Preparation

1. If playing in a pair, participants must compete in a round of *Pao Ying Chub* to determine who will start the game. If there are three or more players, *Pao Ying Chub* can also be played to determine the order of play.

How is the Game Played?

Two Player Game

**Step 1.** Both players have to place their rubber band approximately 1 metre away from each other.

**Step 2.** Next, the first player using only their breath, will blow their rubber band as hard as they can in the direction of their opponent's rubber band. Once they have completed their turn, their opponent repeats the process, this time blowing their rubber band back towards the other player's band.
Step 3. The players both continue to take turns until one of their rubber bands is blown onto their opponents. The bands must overlap for it to be considered a win. Whoever manages to do this first wins the game and can keep the loser’s rubber band as a prize.

Group of Three Players

Step 1. Each player places their rubber band approximately 1 metre away from both of their opponent’s bands.
Step 2. Next, the first player picks either of their opponent’s rubber bands as a target. Using their breath they blow their rubber band as hard as they can in the direction of the rubber band. Once they have completed their turn, the next player repeats the process. Players are free to choose any of the player’s rubber bands as a target each time they take their turn.

Step 3. The players both continue to take turns until one of their rubber bands is blown onto their opponents. The bands must overlap for it to be considered a win. Whoever manages to do this first wins the game and can keep the loser’s rubber band as a prize.

Step 4. The loser is eliminated from the game and in the next round the winner plays the remaining player.
Rules

1. Each player can only blow their rubber band once during a turn. If they blow more than once, they lose the game and their opponent can keep their rubber band.

2. The player whose rubber band is blown onto their opponent's wins the game.

3. The loser is eliminated from the next round and the winner can keep their rubber band as a prize.