

SIKKI WEAVING

HISTORY & SIGNIFICANCE Since hundreds of years, in the region of Mithila Bihar, Sikki grass has been an integral part of living of women. A girl's skill in five crafts, including Sikki, used to raise her demand as bride in the village and these use to go as part of the dowry.

TOOLS The main tool used for making Sikki products is a 5-6 inches long needle-shaped iron object with a rounded head for grip, called Takua. Women also use very thin knife (choori) for splitting and scissors (kaichi) for cutting the sikki. Teeth are also used at times.

FINAL PRODUCTS Products like masks, containers (Jhappa), trays (Mauni), small boxes (Pauti), bowls (Gumla), flower baskets (Saji), coasters, bangles, toys, 2D-3D figures of animals and gods and goddesses are produced using Sikki.

SIKKI GRASS Known as golden grass because of its colour, Sikki grows in wet and marshy areas around rivers and ponds in north Bihar. It is cut from the fields and then dried in the Sun. It is often dyed. Artisan buy these from the local market.

PROCESS After drying, the grass is sliced and shaved with knife or by teeth. To make it pliable, it is soaked in water and is then coiled around Munj grass. Takua is used to create tiny gaps where the grass is inserted and pulled from the other end.

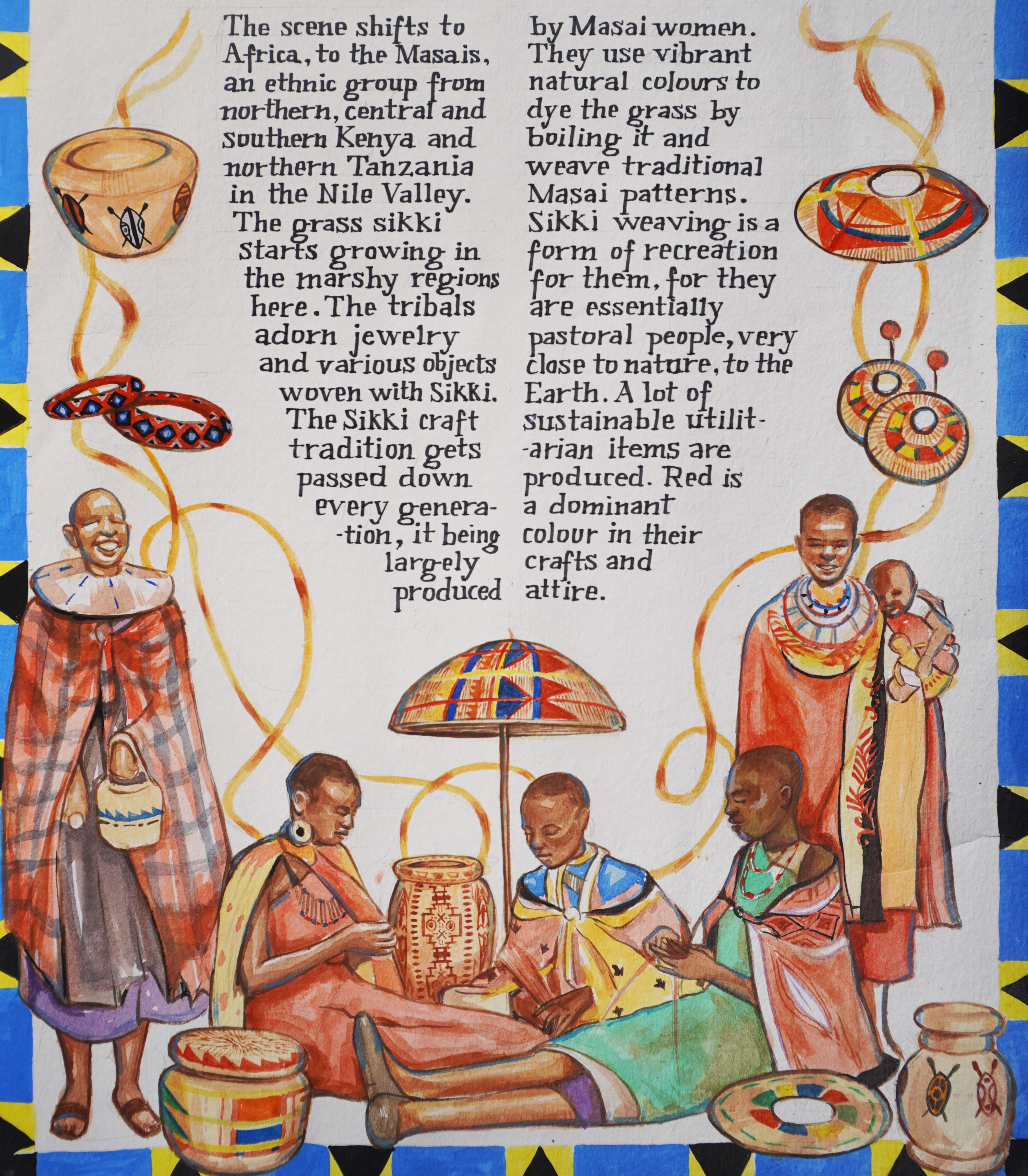
MARKET Sikki crafts have a price range from 15-500, depending on its intricacy, so many women in Mithila started sikki craft as a full time occupation. They participate in fairs and exhibitions to sell and make a living.



IF SIKKI GREW AROUND THE MASAIS

The scene shifts to Africa, to the Masais, an ethnic group from northern, central and southern Kenya and northern Tanzania in the Nile Valley. The grass sikki starts growing in the marshy regions here. The tribals adorn jewelry and various objects woven with Sikki. The Sikki craft tradition gets passed down every generation, it being largely produced

by Masai women. They use vibrant natural colours to dye the grass by boiling it and weave traditional Masai patterns. Sikki weaving is a form of recreation for them, for they are essentially pastoral people, very close to nature, to the Earth. A lot of sustainable utilitarian items are produced. Red is a dominant colour in their crafts and attire.



FUTURE OF SIKKI

The Sikki Craft tradition has lived on for decades now. It has passed down generation after generation and has retained all of its inherent qualities. Moreover, advanced methods of growing the grass in abundance are developed. Different coloured grasses with improved tensile and elastic strength are obtained. New faster tools are invented to make the process of weaving easier so that it can be mass produced. The grass, because of its sustainable nature, becomes

a popular option for making everyday objects like tables, chairs, hair bands, cups, slippers, etc.

It is also now easier to explore different forms out of this material. As a result, the market for this grass grows steadily.

These goods are available and sold in and outside of Bihar. It replaces unsustainable materials like plastic from household and work places. New fabric from Sikki is also developed and is worn by people of all kinds, to protect from cold and rain.

More people get equipped with the skills of sikki weaving.

They use needle guns in place of traditional 'Takua' to weave this golden grass.

