Papermaking technology, when combined with characters and printing technology, is regarded as one of the greatest inventions created by mankind. Hand papermaking originated in China around B.C.2-A.D.2, spread over a millennium, to Southeast and Southwest Asia through ancient trading routes. Almost all countries which have traditionally maintained hand papermaking are related with Buddhism, such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Tibet. According to old documents, the initial advent periods of papermaking to these countries can be estimated.

Papermaking is an art having scientific elements and its techniques are classified into two methods for dispersing pulp into mould, i.e., casting and scooping. The archetype of hand papermaking in Laos and the most sophisticated processes in Japan, Thailand and Myanmar were introduced to make clear its diversity and advance.

Among various kinds of raw materials for hand papermaking, paper mulberry (Broussonetia papyrifera and B. kazinoki) is one of the best because it easily forms soft and strong paper with excellent texture. It has a natural distribution in southern China, northern Myanmar, Laos, northern Thailand, Korea and Japan. As this plant gives splendid bast fibers, it was transplanted to various countries. In historic time, the slips for planting were brought into Polynesia and Indonesia (Java and Madura) by early migrants. In India, it was replanted in Dehra Dun. In the Philippines, it was brought to Mt. Makiling in the 1980s. In Japan, the hybrid of B. papyrifera and B. kazinoki has been produced for a cultivation crop in old days. Nowadays the cultivation of this plant started in various countries in Southeast Asia.