



Sacred Arts of Thailand

เที่ยวศาสนศิลป์แผ่นดินไทย



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เที่ยวศาสนศิลป์แผ่นดินไทย

In the peaceful Kingdom of Thailand, not only has Buddhism been deeply rooted but also other various religions and beliefs have blossomed. Patrons of each religion, with their strong faith and dedication, adorn their religious places with splendid arts. Each religion has its own uniqueness. Arts, in the sacred places, therefore, serve not only a pure aesthetic purpose, but also fulfill the human spirit.



Elegant Temple in the Grand Palace

The monarchy has been a revered institution in Thai society. Since the past, the traditional role of the Thai king has been as both religious and secular leader. Through the centuries the king has been the patronage of Buddhism, the main religion of the country.

A piece of the evidence showing the king as the centre of both the administration and religion is Wat Phra Si Sanphet. In the reign of King Boromatrailokanat of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, he ordered to construct a royal temple in the royal palace to house Phra Si Sanphet, the most sacred Buddha image of that time. In the temple, different from other temples, there was only the Buddhavasa or sanctuary precinct for performing religious rituals; therefore, no monks were in residence.

After the downfall of Ayutthaya, Rattanakosin was established as the capital of the country. The king in the early Rattanakosin era borrowed the layout of the royal palace of Ayutthaya to build the Grand Palace and temples. Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram or Wat Phra Kaeo was constructed in resemblance to Wat Phra Si Sanphet of Ayutthaya, as the country's most revered Buddhist temple.

Since the temple is in the Grand Palace, delicate and exquisite arts are used in decoration. To honour the monarchy, the highest institution of the nation, symbols representing the king; such as, Garuda and royal emblems are also used in decoration.



Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo)

Temple in the Grand Palace

Location : Grand Palace, Na Phra Lan Rd., Bangkok

Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram, is the official name of Wat Phra Kaeo or Temple of the Emerald Buddha. The name of the temple follows the name of the most sacred Buddha image enshrined in the temple. The plan of Wat Phra Kaeo, located in the Grand Palace compound, as well as the palace itself followed that of the royal palace of Ayutthaya. All magnificent buildings in the compound are worth studying for their traditional Thai architecture and works.

The most important building is the ubosot which enshrines the venerated Emerald Buddha. Decoration in the ubosot reflects the belief of a divine king that the king is an incarnation of Vishnu or Narayana the Hindu God, to help the people. The king is believed to also represent Indra, the Supreme deity of the gods.

The ubosot was constructed in the traditional Thai style. The roof is adorned by Cho Fa, Bai Raka and Hang Hong. The pediment, the triangular piece over the front door, is gilt wooden work portraying Narayana astride his mount, half-man half-bird Garuda. If a Garuda or Narayana astride a Garuda found

in any temple, they cite that the temple was built or renovated by the king. The base of the ubosot is decorated with a row of Garudas holding Nagas, the great serpent. This is the symbol that the ubosot is in heaven.

The arch over three entrance doors of the ubosot features a gilded miniature multi-tiered spire decorated with glass. It is associated with the prasat form. The ubosot walls are glazed tiles decorated with magnificent Kanok motifs.

The cloister surrounding the ubosot depicts the Thai traditional mural paintings of the Ramakian, the Thai version based on Indian epic of the Ramayana. The story emphasises the divinity of the king. The main theme of the epic is about the powerful Narayana or Vishnu who incarnates as Rama to help his people. The king's duties are the same as the ones of Narayana.

The other prominent building is the Prasat Phra Thep Bidon or Royal Pantheon. At first, King Rama IV intended to construct the building to enshrine the Emerald Buddha, but when it was finished in the reign of King Rama V the Great, he found that the chapel was too small and inconvenient for religious rituals. Therefore, the building was used to house other sacred images. It later caught fire and was renovated. When the renovation was completed in the reign of King Rama VI, the building was used to house the life-size statues of the former kings of the Royal House of Chakri.

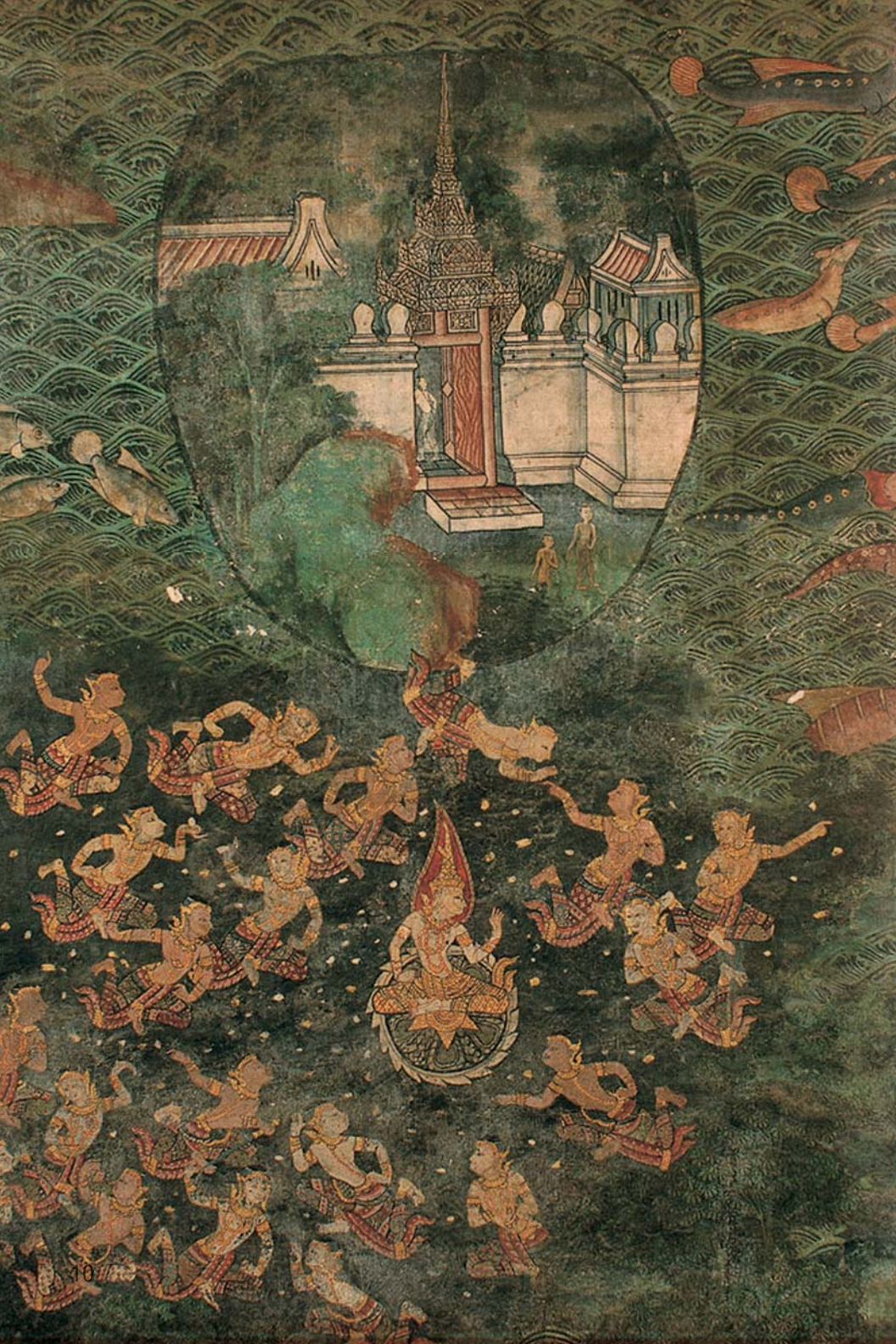
Other interesting objects are yakshas, the giants. They act as Dvarapala or Thavaraban, door guardians, protecting the temple from evil spirits. Unlike giants in other temples, these yakshas stand facing the ubosot in order to guard the Emerald Buddha enshrined within. All the giants in the temple are characters from the Ramakian.

Open daily from 08:30-15:30 Hrs. except on the royal ceremony days.

Tel. 0-2623-5500 Ext. 3100.

Entrance fee is 400 Baht.

Visitors should dress politely- no shorts, no sleeve-less T-shirts, no flipflops.



Buddhist Cosmology in Thai Arts

Trai Phum, the Buddhist cosmology is the Buddhist vision about the Earth and the universe, cycle of rebirth, hell, and heaven. Since it plays a significant role in Thai way of living, we can find it in murals or layouts of buildings in many temple compounds. They are teaching aids that help remind the people to do good deeds so that they will, in the next life, be born in the good world.

Trai Phum means the Three Spheres. The universe consists of three spheres: the Sense Sphere, the Form Sphere, and the Formless Sphere. Humans are born and reborn in these three Spheres due to the deeds they did in past lives.

The Sense Sphere, the lowest world of all three, is the world where Indra, angels, humans and animals live. The Form Sphere, the happy world without Karma, is the world of brahmas, the higher devas, who still have a form. In the murals, the form is represented by an oval shape on the throne in heaven. The Formless Sphere is the world for formless brahmas who only have a spirit, in murals signified by flames floating in heaven. However, above these worlds is Nirvana, the extinction of all defilements and suffering. Therefore, the murals in the back wall of the presiding Buddha image often portray the Buddhist cosmology to show that when the Buddha was enlightened and passed through Nirvana, he was above these three spheres.

Buddhist cosmology, on the other hand, is the way to explain the universe in ancient times. It explains that the universe is round with Mount Meru as the centre. On Mount Meru stands the Tavatimsa Heaven, the dwelling place of the God Indra who governs the universe. Over the heaven revolve the Sun, the Moon, and the stars in the sky. Mount Meru lies in the vast ocean surrounded by seven mountain walls called Sattaboriphan and seven seas. In the ocean are four continents. Jambudvipa, the continent in the south is where the Buddha was born and is the dwelling place of humans and animals.

On the base of Mount Meru lies the Himavanta Forest, the home of mythical creatures; such as, Kinnari. Under the universe lies hell.



Wat Suthat

Temple with Buddhist Cosmological Layout in the Centre of the City

Location: Bamrung Mueang Road., Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok

Wat Suthat was constructed in 1807 in the reign of King Rama I the Great of the Royal House of Chakri. Though he gave the name Wat Maha Suthawat to the temple, the people called it Wat Phra Yai - the temple of the giant Buddha image-following the presiding Buddha image, Phra Si Sakayamuni, enshrined in the ubosot of the temple. The completion of temple was done in the reign of King Rama III. He renamed the temple, Wat Suthat.

The layout of the temple was set following the Buddhist cosmology. While Bangkok is considered the universe, Wat Suthat, in the centre of the universe, is Mount Meru. The name Suthat is correlated to Sudarsana, the name of Indra's city in Tavatimsa Heaven on the peak of Mount Meru.

The buildings in the compound represent the four continents in the cosmology. The main wihan, situated on the double base, looks elegant. The pediments on both sides portray Indra on his Erawan elephant. Murals in the chapel depict Tavatimsa Heaven and also the scene of Buddha in the heaven giving Dharma to his mother. Enshrined in the main wihan is Phra Si Sakayamuni, the largest Sukhothai bronze Buddha image in Thailand. Around the wihan are animal figures and bonsai trees to imitate the Himavanta at the base of Mount Meru.

Out from the main wihan stand four-cardinal wihans representing Wiman or castles of the cardinal deities. There are six-storeyed Chedis in the Chinese style around the wihan representing castles in the heaven. The Chinese pavilion in the north is assumed to be the castle of Indra, the ruler of the gods in Tavatimsa Heaven.

The ubosot is located at the point of Jambudvipa in Buddhist cosmology, the continent that has the Sun and the Moon. Therefore, the decoration on the front pediment portrays the Sun deity on his chariot harnessed with simha - lion - while on the back is the Moon deity on the chariot harnessed with horse. The murals in the ubosot depict the ones practicing virtues to be enlightened. The building is the largest architecture constructed in the reign of King Rama III.

All the buildings are surrounded with cloisters which represent the seven mountain-walls surrounding Mount Meru.

Open daily from 08:00-18:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2224-9845, 0-2222-6935.

Entrance fee is 20 Baht.

Visitors should dress politely, no shorts, no sleeve-less T-shirts.



Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn)

Sacred Pagoda in the Centre of the City

Location: Wat Arun Sub-district, Bangkok Yai District, Bangkok

The main pagoda of Wat Arun on the Chao Phraya River bank is a significant pagoda of the Rattanakosin era. The pagoda constructed in prang architecture is considered as a masterpiece of the Rattanakosin style. The prang was built with a layout and decoration to symbolise the centre of the universe following Buddhist cosmology.

The main prang, built in King Rama III's reign style, represents Mount Meru, the centre of the universe, guarded with the four statues of Indra on his elephant, Erawan, on four sides of the second terrace. This is to symbolise that the pagoda is Tavatimsa Heaven, residence of Indra, the deity who looks after the universe and guards the Chulamani Pagoda which houses the relics of the Buddha in heaven. The three-levelled base of the pagoda decorated with yakshas, monkeys and deities, the mythological creatures, on the different levels also signify the prang as Mount Meru.

On top of the prang is a Noppasun-nine pronged ornament-decorated with a crown. The crown, taken from the presiding Buddha image in Wat Nang Nong, Thon Buri, was installed during the ceremony in the reign of King Rama III.

Surrounding the main prang stand four smaller prangs representing the four continents: Jambudvipa, Purvavideha, Aparagodaniya, and Uttarakuru, in the cosmology. The smaller prangs are constructed in the same style as the main one but in the niches stand the deity on the horseback. The deity is believed to be Phaya Chakra on his horse to spread dharma to the four continents. The base of each prang is decorated with mythical Himavanta creatures; such as, half-bird, half-human, Kinnari, Simha, etc.

Therefore, ascending the main prang of Wat Arun is as if one ascends Mount Meru to worship Chulamani Pagoda in heaven.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2466-3167, 0-2465-7740.

Entrance fee is 50 Baht.

Visitors should dress politely, no shorts, no sleeve-less T-shirts.



Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram or Wat Pho

Centre of Dharma, Centre of Knowledge

Location: Sanam Chai Road, Phra Borommaharatchawang Sub-district,
Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok

Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram was founded in the Ayutthaya period under the name of Wat Photharam. The temple is, at present, known as Wat Pho. King Rama III who made the major restoration, wanted the temple to be the centre of learning both in Dharma and general knowledge. The prior was revealed through the layout of the buildings in the compound while the latter through the decoration of the walls and pillars.

The layout of the buildings was designed following Buddhist cosmology. The elegant ubosot constructed in the centre of the area surrounded by cloisters and buildings signifies Mount Meru. The four great chedis in the cardinal directions represent the four continents the same way as the ones in Wat Arun. The deity in each prang holding a knife is believed to be Chatulokaban, the Lokapala deities who guard the four cardinal directions. While the wihan enshrining the Reclining Buddha in the western courtyard signifies parts of the Jambudvipa continent, the birthplace of the Buddha and the dwelling place of human beings.

Both the ubosot and wihan are constructed in the traditional Thai style with Cho Fa, Bai Raka and Hang Hong as ornaments decorating the rooftops. The pediments are decorated with glass in the favourite floral pattern of the reign of King Rama III. The Reclining Buddha was built in his reign to remind the people of the prosperous period of the Ayutthaya era. The feet of the image are decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay showing 108 lakshanas or auspicious signs.

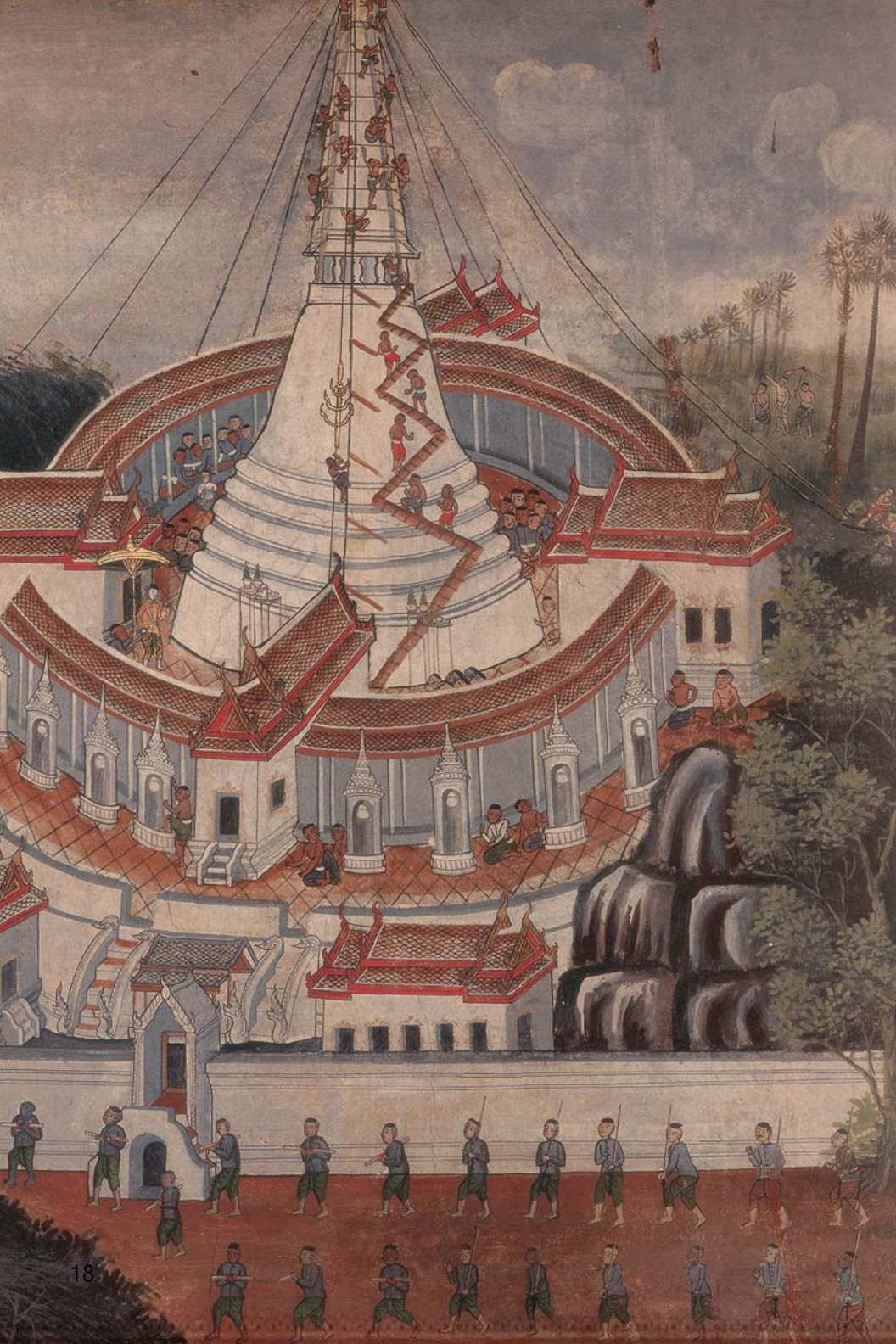
The walls and pillars of the pavilions are decorated with inscriptions and diagrams on various subjects; such as, traditional medicine, literature, language, culture, and sculpturing. All this knowledge was collected and presented to the public, so that traditional knowledge could survive the pressure of foreign knowledge rushing in during his reign. Wat Pho then is dubbed as the first university of Siam.

Open daily from 08:00-18:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2226-0370, 0-2224-9095, 0-2221-9449.

Entrance fee is 100 Baht.

Visitors should dress politely, no shorts, no sleeve-less T-shirts.



Phrathat Chedi: Pagoda of Faith

A chedi is one of the significant Buddhist structures. With meaningful sizes and designs, it is a landmark of the city. The word chedi in Thai language has its root from Pali, Jetiya, which means **“monument of reminding”**. A chedi normally enshrines relics of the Buddha. However some chedis contain ashes of royalty or valuable subjects.

The chedi enshrined with relics of the Buddha is called **“Phrathat Chedi”**. In Theravada Buddhism, after the Buddha entered Nirvana, his relics were distributed to various Buddhist cities. They built chedis to enshrine his relics; therefore, a chedi has been considered as architecture that represents the Buddha. A chedi is normally built on high ground. There are two reasons for this. One is the local belief that high ground is a sacred place. The other is the belief about Chulamani Chedi on top of Mount Meru in Tavatimsa Heaven.

At first, a chedi was constructed outside the town. Later, in the 10th-11th Buddhist centuries, influenced by Hindu and Mahayana Buddhism, a chedi was built in the centre of a city to represent Mount Meru, the centre of the universe.

Some chedis were constructed to mark the border between two states while some with the co-operation of peoples in the different countries. They helped to reduce confrontation between peoples of different countries but the same faith.

Though Phrathat Chedis might be built for different reasons, they have all been, from past to present, a centre of faith that holds Buddhists as one.



Phra Borommathat Chedi, Wat Phra Mahathat Worawihan

Sacred Pagoda of the Southern Region

Location: Tambon Nai Mueang, Amphoe Mueang, Nakhon Si Thammarat

Phra Borommathat Chedi of Nakhon Si Thammarat was the centre of the Lankavamsa sect of Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka. It was constructed by the co-operation of worshippers in the region. Every year, there is a ceremony of offering a robe to tie around the Chedi. This shows the highest faith of the worshippers to the Phrathat that houses relics of the Buddha.

The Ceylonese-style chedi, bell shape on a square base, shows the ties between Nakhon Si Thammarat and Sri Lanka. There are many chronicles supporting that Nakhon Si Thammarat was the centre of the Lankavamsa sect in this peninsula. It is believed that this style of chedi was first constructed here and then spread to other areas; such as, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Si Satchanalai.

The original huge bell-shaped chedi underwent restoration in the Ayutthaya period. Some ornaments; such as, ring spire was of the Ayutthaya style.

The chedi is believed to have been constructed in the reign of King Sithammasokarat with the help of the surrounding cities to enshrine the tooth relics of the Buddha. According to chronicles, the relics were taken to Sri Lanka by a prince and a princess of Thonhaburi. Unfortunately, their boat sank near Sai Kaeo Beach where they buried the relics. However, according to archaeologists the chedi was built around the 12th century.

The faith of the worshippers from the various regions can be seen from the artefacts offered to worship the chedi including gold and silver models of the Bodhi Tree. These artefacts are collected and displayed in the temple's museum.

The important annual ceremony is offering a robe to tie around the chedi. In the reign of King Rama II, this was made on Visakha Puja. Later in the reign of King Rama IV, the ceremony was also celebrated on Magha Puja. The ceremony is believed to be influenced by India with a belief that the highest merit making is to make merit before the Buddha or those representing him; such as, the Buddha image or chedi.

Open daily from 08:00-16:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-7534-5172

Visitors should dress politely.



Phra Pathom Chedi

The First Chedi in Siam

Location: Tambon Phra Pathom Chedi, Amphoe Mueang, Nakhon Pathom

Phra Pathom Chedi is the largest chedi in Thailand. King Rama IV believed that this was the first chedi in Siam which was built in 278 BC the same period as King Asoka the Great of India who sent monks to spread Buddhism in Suvarnabhumi. Therefore, he gave the name Pathom Chedi which means “**the first chedi**”. However, it was found later that the chedi was in fact constructed in the Dvaravati (6th-11th centuries) period, so it is not the first one in the kingdom.

The original chedi was built in similar to the stupa of Sanchi in India. An additional prang was later constructed on the top in the Sukhothai period. The mural painting in the wihan depicts the cross-section of the original chedi. King Rama IV, when in the monkhood, found the chedi which had been abandoned for a long time. When he ascended his throne, he ordered the renovation by encasing the original one by a bell-shaped chedi in the Ceylonese style. This largest chedi has a perimeter of 235.5 metres and 120.45 metres high. The restoration was completed in the reign of King Rama V the Great. He put the crown, symbol of King Rama IV, on the spire of the Chedi. In the reign of King Rama VI, Phra Ruang Rotchanarit, one of the sacred Buddha images, was installed in the northern wihan.

Phra Phathom Chedi is situated 2 kilometers outside Nakhon Chai Si (the ancient Nakhon Pathom). Prof. Srisakra Vallibhotama, a leading Thai anthropologist and historian, cited that in the 6th-7th centuries Theravada Buddhism liked to build a chedi outside the city to be convenient for worshippers from many places to make merits. Building a chedi in the centre of the city was an influence of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism.

Open Daily from 07:00-20:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-3424-2143

Visitors should dress politely.



Phrathat Si Song Rak

Symbol of Friendship

Location: Wat Phrathat Si Song Rak, Tambon Dan Sai, Amphoe Dan Sai, Loei

The elegant cubical lotus bud chedi constructed at the Thai-Lao border symbolises the strong bond of the Ayutthaya and Lan Xang Kingdoms to defend both kingdoms from the same enemy: Burma.

In the past, Amphoe Dan Sai was the area between the two kingdoms: Ayutthaya and Lan Xang. During that time, Burma was a very strong state trying to influence these two kingdoms. King Chakraphat of Ayutthaya and King Chaiyachet of Lan Xang made a pact of mutual respect and defence between the two kingdoms. They built Phrathat Si Song Rak in 1560 on a high mound near the Man River on the border of their kingdoms. There was a stone inscription reading **“This chedi is constructed to mark the territory of the two kingdoms. The generations to come must not violate and dispossess territory of the other.”**

Though no relics were enshrined in the chedi, the vow made by the two kings has made this chedi highly revered since that period. At present, the chedi is in Thailand, however, worshippers from Lao PDR still cross the border to worship the chedi and to visit their relatives.

Phrathat Si Song Rak is constructed in the local Thai-Lao Buddhist architecture. The cubical lotus shape is the unique style of Lan Xang.

Open daily from 07:00-17:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely and avoid wearing red clothes as red symbolises violence.



Phrathat Choeng Chum

Chedi in the Lan Xang Style

Location: Wat Phrathat Choeng Chum Worawihan,
Tambon Phrathat Choeng Chum, Amphoe Mueang, Sakon Nakhon

The Lan Xang style chedi was constructed over a former Khmer temple. The construction was related to the chronicles about the commemoration of the Buddhas' Footprints. According to the chronicles in the northeastern region, there were footprints of the 3 Buddhas in the past on stone. When the present Buddha came to give dharma to people in Mueang Nong Han (Sakon Nakhon province at present), the fourth footprint was visible.

The Buddha foretold that Phra Ariyamettrai or Maitreya, the next Buddha will come and fix the fifth footprint on this same stone. However, later the stone sank into water. Phaya Suwannaphingkan, the ruler of Nong Han, constructed the laterite chedi on the point where the stone sank.

The archaeological evidence shows that the original of Phrathat Choeng Chum constructed in the 10th-11th centuries was a Khmer stone sanctuary, temple in Brahmanism. Later in the 13th century, Lan Xang had influence over the area, the chedi was modified; the body was of the Khmer style with a cubical lotus bud of the Laotian style at the top. At the back, a wihan was built connecting with the chedi to enshrine Luang Pho Phra-ong Saen, a sacred Buddha image of Sakon Nakhon. Since the chedi and wihan are connected, worshippers are able to pay homage to the presiding Buddha image and the chedi at the same time.

Phrathat Choeng Chum is 30 metres high. This brick chedi, similar to Phrathat Phanom, is in a cubical lotus bud shape on multi-layered base, a unique style of Lan Xang.

Open daily from 07:00-17:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely.



Phrathat Si Chom Thong

Phrathat which Temporary Enshrines the Buddha's Relics

Location: Wat Phrathat Si Chom Thong,
Tambon Ban Luang, Amphoe Chom Thong, Chiang Mai

Normally a relic of the Buddha is enshrined permanently in the Phrathat. But this is not the practice at Phrathat Si Chom Thong. The relic is housed in a wihan and is taken out for worshippers to make homage in the annual ritual ceremony of sprinkling holy water around June.

The chedi is assumed to have been constructed in the 16th century to house the Buddha's relics. This is the symbol that Buddhism was rooted in Chiang Mai about 500 years ago. The chedi seen today was renovated in the reign of King Rama V the Great by Burmese craftsmen. The small bell shape on a three-layered circular base standing over an indented square base is a chedi in the Lanna style. The base is decorated with lotus petals similar to Phrathat Haripunchai. The style was popular during the 16th-17th centuries.

The unique of this chedi is that the Buddha's relics are not enshrined inside the chedi but in a five-tiered Mondop in the main wihan. The Mondop would be taken out for worshippers who, since in the past, have offered valuable artefacts. In the reign of Phrachao Chet Ton, the Mondop was taken from Chom Thong to the city of Chiang Mai for people to sprinkle water.

Open daily from 08:00-16:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5334-1093, 0-5334-1664.

Visitors should dress politely.



Phra Borommathat Chaiya

Srivijaya Chedi in a Chaiya Mahayana Buddhism Temple

Location: Wat Phra Borommathat Chaiya Ratchaworawihan,
Tambon Wiang, Amphoe Chaiya, Surat Thani

The temple was once a Mahayana Buddhism temple which was later restored and changed to a Theravada Buddhism temple. The architecture is of the Srivijaya style influenced by Java or Indonesia.

Phra Borommathat Chaiya is the Srivijaya style chedi. The mondop style chedi was modelled after Chandi Mendut of Java. The square stupa standing on a rectangular base is ornamented with delicate stucco designs. In the four corners of the raised platform are diminutive round brick Ceylonese-style chedis.

It is assumed that originally, the place was only a small temple in Mahayana Buddhism. Later in the Ayutthaya period, the chedi was renovated to enshrine the Buddha's relics so the chedi became more important. The ubosot and wihan were also built in the compound. There were many renovations after that, but the main one was in the reign of King Rama V the Great which took 14 years to complete with the co-operation of Buddhists in the area.

It is believed that the Buddha images installed in the archway to the room in the chedi were built to replace the images of Mahayana Bodhisattava Avalokitesvara.

Open daily from 07:00-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-7743-1090, 0-7743-1402.

Visitors should dress politely.



Phrathat Doi Suthep

Chedi on the High Mountain: the Belief about a Sacred Mountain and Centre of the Universe

Location: Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, Tambon Suthep, Amphoe Mueang, Chiang Mai

Phra Borommathat on the high mountain signifies the Chulamani Chedi on the top of Mount Meru in Tavatimsa Heaven. This is the chedi for people born in the Year of the Goat.

The significant chedi on Doi Suthep was constructed in the 14th century when Lanna King Kue Na received the Buddha's relic from Sukhothai. The relic had miraculously self-multiplied. One was enshrined at Wat Suan Dok. The other piece was put in a box on a back of the auspicious elephant. The elephant was left wandering. It climbed up Doi Suthep then stopped at the point where the chedi was later erected. The octagonal chedi on an indented base with 20 corners as seen today was restored in

1538 showing the late Lanna style architecture (about the 16th century); bell-shaped chedi on multi-layered square base. The chedi was sheathed in rose gold plates, the mixture of gold and copper.

The chedi is especially for pilgrims born in the Year of the Goat. The belief that the Lanna people should visit the chedi associated with their birth year might have occurred in the reign of King Rama V the Great, as assumed by an academic of Chiang Mai University. The king implemented the centralisation of power to Bangkok so that the power of local rulers was lessened. Therefore, the belief of paying homage to zodiac chedis was created to unite the Lanna people residing in Lan Xang, Siam and Burma. However, this theory is still not widely accepted by other academics.

Open daily from 06:00-19:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5329-6000

Visitors should dress politely.



Phrathat Lampang Luang

Universe in the Wiang Complex

Location: Wat Phrathat Lampang Luang,
Tambon Lampang Luang, Amphoe Ko Kha, Lampang

The architectural layout and decoration of the Phrathat Lampang Luang compound signifies the universe. In the past, this temple was the centre of religion called “**Wiang Phrathat**” that laymen had to give themselves and their cattle to take care of the chedi.

The legend told that relics of the Buddha enshrined in the chedi were parts of the right forehead, throat and a lock of hair. The chedi is built in the Lampang style, a mixture of the Sukhothai and Lanna styles. The base is in the Lanna style while the dome in the bell shape is of the Sukhothai style. The chedi standing in the back of the main wihan is surrounded by smaller wihans in each cardinal corner. All are encircled by a wall. The entrance arch called Pratu Khong is adorned with fine plaster depicting the Himavanta features. It signifies the doorway from Earth to sacred land with Mount Meru (chedi) as the centre.

The layout of the temple is designed following Buddhist cosmology. The chedi represents both Mount Meru and Chulamani Chedi. Small wihans signify the four continents, and the main wihan is Jambudvipa where the Buddha came to give Dharma to the people. The presiding Buddha image, Phrachao Lan Thong, represents the Buddha. The sand courtyard around the chedi and wihans represents the ocean surrounding Mount Meru.

The compound stands on the hillock encircled by a small town called “**Wiang**”. The town with Phrathat Chedi as the centre is called “**Wiang Phrathat**”. In the past, the people had the duty to protect the temple. Even in times of war, they were not drafted into the armed force but had to do this duty. Wat Suan Dok in Chiang Mai is also “**Wiang Phrathat**”.

The temple is also the centre of magnificent Lan Xang crafts of the 15th-18th centuries. Lanna style murals in Wihan Nam Taem depict “**Makha Manop-the birth of Indra**” and Dharma Tale of “**Nang Samavati**”. These rare original Lampang style murals are works of Burmese artisans in the 19th century.

Open daily from 07:30-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5324-8604

Visitors should dress politely.



Phrathat Phanom

Sacred Phrathat of Thais and Laotians

Location: Wat Phrathat Phanom Worawihan,
Tambon That Phanom, Amphoe That Phanom, Nakhon Phanom

This highest revered place of Thais and Laotians has been renovated many times in many periods. It has changed from a Khmer prasat to a cubical lotus bud chedi of the Lan Xang style.

The present chedi was constructed over the former ruined one in 1975. According to a chronicle, the chedi housed the breast relic of the Buddha.

The chedi is the Lan Xang style, a square prasat body topped with a cubical lotus bud. The body is decorated with stucco in the Phum Khao Bin (lotus bud) design. Carvings on the four sides of the body of the chedi and Khmer style pillars indicate that the chedi was originally a Khmer prasat which was redecorated by adding the spire when Buddhism spread in the area. Several restorations have been made after that. The Lan Xang style was conducted in the time of “**Phrakhru Phon Samet**” - a Laotian monk.

According to Prof. Srisakra Vallibhotama, a well-known anthropologist, the area of Phu Kamphra on the bank of Mekong River was a free zone which was under the authority of neither Vientiane nor Champasak. The area was also used as a transportation route by people of different nationalities. Therefore, the chedi was constructed to be the centre of faith for Thais, Laotians, and people of other nationalities. Though at present, the chedi is located in Thailand, many Laotians come to worship. The chedi is still their sacred site no matter on which country it stands.

Open daily from 07:00-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-4254-1051, 08-7948-2016.

Visitors should dress politely.



Graceful Revered Buddha Images

A Buddha image is the reminder of the Buddha. Artists put their best effort, as a religious service, to construct the images; therefore, their works are graceful and gain the faith of devout Buddhists.

In Siam, Buddha images were first constructed in the Dvaravati period, about 1,000 years ago and have been constructed ever since. The appearance and style of the images vary according to the historical periods. They are a good reflection of the country in each period. The images created in the time when people had a good and peaceful life were designed showing compassion and serenity. In the prosperous period, abundant images and large-size images were constructed.

The prominent character of Thai Buddha images is that the images look different from an ordinary human. The design is to create the image to be close to an ideal human as possible. 32 characters of the Great Man; such as, beautiful head and perfect body are shown.

Most of the images are covered by gold leaf to represent the halo from the Buddha's body, aura of one who overcomes all defilements.



Phra Phuttha Chinnarat, Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat Worawihan

Graceful Buddha Image

Location: Tambon Nai Mueang, Amphoe Mueang, Phitsanulok

Phra Phuttha Chinnarat is praised by art historians as one of the most beautiful Buddha images ever constructed in Siam. The image has been enshrined in Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat since the Sukhothai period. It is considered the palladium of Phitsanulok.

Phra Phuttha Chinnarat is the bronze image in subduing Mara posture. The image is 3.72 metres in height and 2.85 metres in width across the lap. This beautiful Sukhothai style image expresses serenity and compassion. The Sukhothai style is considered the most beautiful Buddha image style; the

characteristics include an oval face, arched eyebrows, a long slender nose, gentle smile and beautiful body. Since the image is so beautiful as if constructed by deva, there is a legend that the image was cast by the God Indra. The image is the model for many other Buddha images in Thailand.

There is no evidence of its construction period though the image is highly revered. It is estimated that the image was constructed around the 14th century in the late Sukhothai period. This is because the construction of such a beautiful image should be the work of the highest skilled artisans. Compared to Phra Si Sakayamuni in Wat Suthat, the image should be constructed after that since the techniques used were much more developed.

Phra Phuttha Chinnarat has been highly revered by kings and Buddhists in every period, so both the image and the temple have been renovated and looked after through the time.

In the reign of King Rama V the Great, he once planned to move the Buddha image to Bangkok. But when he considered that the image had been the auspicious image of Phitsanulok for a long period of time, he cast a replica of the Buddha image to be installed in Wat Benchamabophit-the Marble Temple- instead.

Open daily from 06:00-21:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5525-1649, 0-5525-8966.

Visitors should dress politely.



Phra Phuttha Sihing, Wat Phra Sing Worawihan

The Most Beautiful Lanna-style Buddha Image

Location: Tambon Phra Sing, Amphoe Mueang, Chiang Mai

Phra Phuttha Sihing is the most beautiful Lanna style Buddha image that is the model for Buddha images in other big cities; such as, Bangkok and Nakhon Si Thammarat. During the Songkran Festival in April, the Buddha image is taken from the wihan for Buddhists to sprinkle water.

Phra Phuttha Sihing, in subduing Mara posture was constructed in the 13th-14th centuries in the early Lanna style, also called early Chiang Saen style, which is without influences of Sukhothai. The characteristics are a halo in the form of a lotus bud, large hair curls, round face with a smile, a prominent chin, short end of the outer robe over the left shoulder, seated cross-legged showing both feet.

Phra Phuttha Sihing is enshrined in “**Lai Kham**” Wihan. The wall behind the image shows gilded designs on a red background. This makes the image look more graceful.

With the beauty and the sanctity of Phra Phuttha Sihing, the image is a model for many of other Buddha images enshrined in many major provinces. Other two venerated replicas are enshrined in Phra Thinang Phutthaiwawan, Bangkok and in Ho Phra Phuttha Sihing, Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5327-3703, 0-5327-6221.

Visitors should dress politely.



The Crowned Buddha Image, Wat Na Phra Men

Buddha Image in Royal Attire

Location: Tambon Tha Wasukri, Amphoe Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya,
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya

Phra Phuttha Nimit Wichit Maramoli Si Sanpet Borommatrailokanat is the presiding Buddha image enshrined in the ubosot of Wat Na Phra Men. The crowned Buddha image in subduing Mara posture is 6 metres in height and 4.5 metres in width across the lap. It is cast of bronze covered with gold leaf.

The image shows characteristics of the late Ayutthaya (King Prasat Thong) style: curved eyebrows, pointed nose, Singhara nut liked lips and is in royal attire complete with crown, earrings, necklace, chest, and arm ornament. The crowned Buddha image is assumed to represent the Buddha when he dealt with Jambupati. The image looks serene, majestic, and powerful consistent with the concept of construction.

The crowned Buddha image was first constructed in the Haripunchai period with a concept to teach people to reduce one's arrogance. When the Buddha met King Jambupati, who claimed himself as the most powerful and the wealthiest emperor of all, he transformed himself into a mighty king with his attire much more beautiful and elegant than Jambupati. Witnessing the Buddha in all his majesty, Jambupati accepted the dharma and became a monk. The Buddha image of Wat Na Phra Men is believed to have been constructed following this legend.

Open daily from 08:30-17:30 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely.



Phra Phuttha Maha Mani Rattana Patimakon (the Emerald Buddha), Wat Phra Kaeo

The Emerald Buddha, the Palladium of Siam

Location: Phra Borommaharatchawang Sub-district,
Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok

The Emerald Buddha or Phra Kaeo Morakot is the palladium Buddha image of Thailand. It is believed that the image is the Rattana or jewel of Indra. Therefore, when King Rama I the Great established Bangkok, he bestowed the name of his new city “**Rattanakosin**” - the city that enshrines the jewel of Indra.

According to legend, the image was constructed in Sri Lanka in 43 BC. However, the appearance and style of

the image, round face and no knot on the head, indicates that it was the work of Lanna, also called Chiang Saen, artisans of the 15th century. The characteristics show the influence of Sukhothai. The Buddha image, made of green jadeite not emerald, looks outstanding.

In the past, the Emerald Buddha was moved to enshrine in many cities. The image first appeared in Chiang Rai in 1436. Then it was installed in Lampang, Chiang Mai, Luang Phra Bang, and Vientiane. King Rama I the Great, when he was Somdet Chao Phraya Maha Kasat Suek, returned the Emerald Buddha to Siam. He first installed the image in Thon Buri. When he ascended the throne, he moved the Emerald Buddha to be enshrined in the ubosot of Wat Phra Kaeo.

King Rama IV wrote about the legend of the image that the Emerald Buddha stays in the country in which the king is a devout Buddhist only. The image is the palladium of the country and brings peace and fortune to the land. After the image was enshrined in Bangkok, the country became peaceful and prosperous.

The Emerald Buddha is the most revered Buddha image of Thailand. Three times a year, corresponding to the changing seasons, the king or his liaison changes the clothing of the image. The ceremony is set in the 1st waning day of Lunar Months 4, 8 and 12 (around March, July, and November).

Open daily from 08:30-15:30 Hrs. except on royal ceremony days.
Tel. 0-2623-5500 Ext. 3600.

Entrance fee is 400 Baht.

Visitors should dress politely, no shorts, no sleeve-less shirts.



Mural Paintings: Works of the Masters

In the past, Thai people were devout Buddhists. They always made merit and attended religious rituals. A devout Buddhist artist considered his work as a religious service. Therefore, many works in various fields of arts were created with the best effort of the artists.

Mural paintings are one of the magnificent works. The murals in the ubosot, wihan or Sala Kan Parian (preaching pavilion) depict the Buddha's life, Jatakas, and folk tales. They are used as teaching aids to teach Dharma to laymen visiting the temples. The beautiful and delicate paintings reflected the artisans' efforts to their works.

Kings also had the same belief, so they not only constructed the temple, but also gave support to all artists. Under the royal patronage of the kings, artists could work with all their efforts to create wonderful works of art. Some created their own styles while some blended local techniques and styles into their works.

Though murals in the temples depict repetitive contents, the Buddha's life, Jatakas, and Buddhist cosmology, an artist has used different expressions, quality of the painting, colours and techniques to create the style of his own.

The murals also exhibit the way of life in each period: costumes, housing, customs, and ceremonies. One charming character of Thai murals is that, though the murals are in sacred places and depict revered scenes, some artists exhibit a broad lustful humour in the corner of the paintings, an indication of the artists' sense of humour.



Wat Suwannaram Ratchaworawihan

Vying of Two Master Painters

Location: Near Khlong Bangkok Noi, Bang Khun Non District, Bangkok

The reign of King Rama III was the “golden age” for mural paintings. It was because the country was in a peaceful period and King Rama III built a lot of temples. He, then, gave support to many painters, so there were many of masters in his reign.

Wat Suwannaram temple on the bank of Khlong Bangkok Noi is the temple that depicts a collection of classic works by master painters of the reign. The most important paintings of all are murals depicting two Jatakas: Nemi and Mahosadha. These are vying works of two highest skilled artists of the reign: Khru Thong Yu and Khru Khong Pae.

Mural paintings in the ubosot of the temple are a traditional Thai style-the style of the late Ayutthaya era to early Rattanakosin. Over the windows on both sides depict **“Thep Chumnum-gathering of celestial beings”**. The panels between the entrance doors facing the presiding Buddha image depict the Buddha’s life. Over the doors is the huge and distinct painting depicting the victory of the Buddha over Mara. Mara tried to obstruct the Buddha from attaining enlightenment. The Buddha asked for **“Mae Phra Thorani”** - the Mother Earth Goddess to be the witness of good deeds he had done in his previous lives. She wrung water from her hair and Mara and his army were all drowned. The scene implies for Buddhists that patience can overcome everything, so one has to be patient to overcome defilement.

Between the windows depict 10 Jatakas-last ten lives of the Buddha. The most outstanding ones are on the left side of the presiding Buddha image: Nemi Jataka and Mahosadha Jataka. The Nemi Jataka is assumed to be the work of Khru Thong Yu. His work used very delicate lines. The scene King Nemi ascending to heaven to preach deities is very neat. The Mahosadha Jataka is assumed to be the work of Khru Khong Pae. Though the composition is not as good, the paintings vividly exhibit chaos in the battle scene between Mahosadha and his enemy’s army. The expression on each man’s face is very lively. Since Khru Thongyu and Khru Khong Pae were masters of that time, they were invited to paint in many temples; such as, Wat Bang Yi Khan, Wat Arun, Wat Daowadueng Hongsaram. Unfortunately, the murals in most of those temples are in a bad condition, the finest ones are murals here and in Wat Bang Yi Khan.

Open daily from 08:30-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 08-8829-9946, 0-2424-1673, 0-2434-7790-1.

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the murals is forbidden.



Wat Phra Sing Worawihan

Murals Telling the Story of Chiang Mai

Location: Tambon Phra Sing, Amphoe Mueang, Chiang Mai

Wihan Lai Kham of Wat Phra Sing enshrines Phra Phuttha Sihing, the revered Buddha image of Chiang Mai. Moreover, it contains the interesting mural paintings illustrating two folk tales: Sang Thong and Suwannahong. These murals are not only telling a story but are also a reflection of the society of various nationalities in Chiang Mai at that time.

Sang Thong is the folk tale that emphasises on being good than good looking. Though the painter used colour and gilding techniques similar to the ones in the Central Region, he exhibited the costumes and way of living of the Northern people. Moreover, the mixture of styles; local, Burmese, and Chinese, creates the uniqueness of the paintings. Various nationalities can be seen through the costumes. The painting shows the king in Burmese attire, noblemen in Central Thai costumes while the local people dressed in traditional Northern clothes. The princes coming to the ceremony dressed in Tai Yai clothes. The palace is Burmese architecture. These all reflect the society of Chiang Mai at that time.

Suwannahong is the tale of lovers who have to struggle with obstacles before finding happiness. The paintings are less beautiful but are still interesting. The scene when the kite of Suwannahong is stuck on the top of Ketsuriyong's palace is worth seeing.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5327-3703, 0-5327-6221.

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the murals is forbidden.



Wat Phumin

Seeing the Tai Lue Way of Living through Murals

Location: Tambon Nai Wiang, Amphoe Mueang, Nan

Wat Phumin is located in the Tai Lue community. Phrachao Suriyaphongpharitet, ruler of Nan captured and herded Tai Lue from China to settle in Nan since 1856. In the four-portico wihan, apart from the four presiding Buddha images facing the 4 cardinal directions, the mural paintings by the Tai Lue artist, Nan Bua Phan, are also a unique Nan style. The setting of the mural is that of the culture and everyday life of the Tai Lue people.

The murals depict the life of the Buddha and Khatthana Kumara Jataka: the orphan who overcomes his own inferiority. The Department of Fine Arts assumes that these murals were painted during the last renovation in 1867 in the reign of King Rama V the Great.

The prominent works are supposed to be painted by Nan Bua Phan. His characters have a round face, curved eyebrows with gallant eyes. The characters show expression on their faces, which is distinctive from the traditional Thai style that shows expression through actions.

The famous scene is **“Pu Man Ya Man”**, a man whispering to the ear of a woman. The man has tattoos on his body, from belly down to the thigh which was popular among Lanna men. This mural is on the western wall next to the door. The other famous painting depicts a group of men and women in their typical costumes. The women wear a Burmese silk longyi, while other women in the paintings wear a Tai Lue style sarong.

Other paintings show the daily life of the people. One portrait shows a western missionary. This is a reference to the arrival of the French in Nan.

Open daily from 08:00-18:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5471-0935

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the murals is forbidden.



Wat Bowon Niwet

Allegoric Dharma in Realistic Murals

Location: Bowon Niwet Sub-district, Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok

The mural painting from the late Ayutthaya era to the early Rattanakosin era is “a traditional Thai mural painting” style. They depict mostly the life of the Buddha and Jatakas. In the reign of King Rama IV, there were two factors that had influence on mural paintings. One was the coming of Westerners and rationalism. The other was the establishment of the new Buddhism sect, the Dhammayutika Sect. The Sect emphasised more on science than supernatural belief. The realistic painting became more popular. The most celebrated artist in this new style was Khrua In Khong.

Khrua In Khong was a monk-painter. He had never been abroad. He studied by himself, from the Westerners’ paintings, Western techniques, light and shade, dimension, foreigners’ clothes, and way of living. Added with his imagination, his paintings showed Western figures and buildings, windmill, junks and horse

racing in a contemporary style. He was very close to King Rama IV when the king was in the monkhood before ascending to the throne and established a new sect. Khrua In Khong, as a royal artist, painted many temples of the Dhammayutika Sect. His masterpieces are murals in Wat Bowon Niwet Wihan.

The murals in the ubosot of the temple can be divided into 3 groups: Allegoric Dharma, Buddhist rites and religious activities, and Chalabhijati. Allegoric Dharma murals are on the upper part of the wall. The paintings show the lives of the Westerners; for example, foreign buildings, windmill, junks, and horse racing. No Na Paknam, a famous Thai art historian praised that **“the paintings give the fantastic feeling”** and **“The perspective scenery creates a captivating atmosphere that only the genius can paint”**. The horse racing scene shows jockeys riding well-trained horses. The jockey represents the Buddha, the way of riding represents Dharma, and the horse is a monk. The monk has to be well-trained to overcome defilement. The murals depicting Buddhist rites and religious activities are in the lower part of the wall, the area that catches the eyes of worshippers coming into the ubosot.

Chalabhijati or 6 categories of mind are presented by different colours on the columns of the ubosot. The furthest columns from the presiding Buddha image are painted dark. The colours become lighter as they come closer to the Buddha images. It signifies that a human will have better mind when one gets near the Buddha through his teaching.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Visitors should seek permission in advance because the murals are behind the barrier.

Tel. 0-2282-8303, 0-2281-6427, 0-2281-5052.

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the murals is forbidden.



Wat Yai Suwannaram

The magnificent “Gathering of Celestial Beings”

Location: Tha Rap Sub-district, Mueang District, Phetchaburi

Mural paintings in Wat Yai Suwannaram are works of the late Ayutthaya period artist in traditional Thai mural painting. They depict the life of the Buddha and Jatakas. But the most attractive paintings in the ubosot are “**Thep Chumnum-gathering of celestial beings**”. The scene portrays the celebration of celestial beings when the Buddha attained his enlightenment. Though the paintings are fading, the graceful lines are striking. Prof. Silpa Bhirasri praised that “**the artists who could paint such works must be in the peak period of mural painting**”.

The artists painted the deities distinct from traditional works. They painted eyebrows and moustache using a kanok motif. Yakshas are fat men with frowning faces. These signify that deities have a good mind so they look elegant. The courage to break away from traditional works is the unique characteristic of Phetchaburi artists.

The motif designs between the 500 celestial figures are not repetitive. Some are floral designs, some are flames while some are birds. They are impromptu works guess the specialists. They are considered a collection of Thai motives.

Dvarapala-the door guardian and Lai Rotnam-the gilded and washed design-on column are also magnificent works that No Na Paknam, the famous Thai art historian, praised the artists as **“magic artists”**. These are one of the masterpieces of Thai mural paintings.

Open daily from 08:00-16:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-3241-2714

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the murals is forbidden.



Wat Matchimawat Worawihan

Mural Paintings of the Golden Age

Location: Tambon Bo Yang, Amphoe Mueang, Songkhla

Thai artists used natural materials; such as, soot, lime, and clay mixed with colour for painting. In the reign of King Rama IV, there was tempera paint from China and Europe. These made the colours in the paintings much brighter. An example is depicted in Wat Matchimawat. No Na Paknam praised the work here using wonderful colours with excellent space. The murals are comparable to Renaissance works of Western arts.

The life of the Buddha and Jatakas are the theme of the murals. Though artists might borrow scenery from Bangkok, rafting houses, and riverside pavilions looked alike the ones in Bangkok, the composition and bright colour used made the murals so striking. The scene of subduing Mara using the red background is so impressive. The gathering of celestial beings is also beautiful.

The local way of living is also portrayed. The murals show dwellers bathing in a canal, boxing, puppet play, Chinese opera, and the favourite play of the south. A marriage between a Chinese man and a Thai woman is the reference of the Chinese coming in Songkhla for trading. Men and women dress in Western style clothes, European buildings, and steaming boat in the paintings shows the influence of Western arts coming with colonialism.

Open daily from 08:30-18:00 Hrs.

Visitors have to ask permission from a monk to enter the ubosot. Visitors should dress politely. Touching the murals is forbidden.





Local Arts Telling Local Lives

Highly skilled craftsmanship has been developed in palaces and capitals of the kingdoms. These skills and techniques have been passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, works by royal artisans are magnificent with high techniques, superb skills, and good materials. However, there are also works created by local artists who, as devout Buddhists, dedicated their efforts as a religious service. These works, though not as magnificent compared to ones of royal artisans, have their own characteristics and are interesting.

The local architecture and arts tell many things about the locals: their belief, geography, and climate for instance. Take “**Sim**” (Isan dialect for bot or ubosot) as an example. It shows the Lan Xang art style—the reference of the influence of Lan Xang over the region. The building is small and made of cement with a wooden rooftop. This is because cement is strong but rare, only a small building is affordable. Wood is a material easily found in the region. Because of its small size, artists have to paint murals on the outside walls as well so that the people do not have to get into the limited area to see them. Moreover, women are not allowed to enter the bot, they, therefore, can appreciate the works. The eaves of the roof have to be low enough to protect the murals on the outside wall from rain.



Wat Mahathat Worawihan

A Collection of Stucco Works by the Masters of Phetchaburi

Location: Tambon Krasaeng, Amphoe Mueang, Phetchaburi

Phetchaburi has been the city of artisans, especially in the field of stucco work. A Kanok motif by Phetchaburi artisans looks so alive as if flapping in the wind. The temples in the city are adorned with beautiful stucco, especially at Wat Mahathat Worawihan. Apart from the chedi enshrining relics of the Buddha, the magnificent stucco works are showpieces of the province.

There are two factors that made Phetchaburi stucco famous. One is that they use jaggery as one of the mixtures. It prolongs the mixture from getting dry so craftsmen have time to mold or amend their stucco works. Secondly, the Phetchaburi artisans had learned techniques from the ones of Ayutthaya because Phetchaburi was an outpost town of the Ayutthaya kingdom. When Ayutthaya fell, their knowledge was still left in Phetchaburi. Some even call Phetchaburi “**Living Ayutthaya**”.

Wat Mahathat Worawihan is located in the centre of the town. Every building in the compound is decorated with stucco works of great artisans. Yaksha adorning the chedi is the work of Khru Pin Infasaeng, who created the stucco relief techniques. The Ramakian on the pediment of the ubosot is of Khru Khong Samli. The arch over the door of the main wihan are works of Khru Luang Kanmaporn. While in the pavilion are the works of two contemporary artisans. Moreover, there are stucco works telling the political incidents in different periods of time.

Open daily from 08:00-18:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the stucco works is forbidden.



Wat Pong Sanuk Nuea

Works of Khruba Revived by the Locals

Location: Tambon Wiang Nuea, Amphoe Mueang, Lampang

There is magnificent Lanna architecture in the temple compound, especially Wihan Phrachao Phan Ong-Wihan of one thousand Buddhas. This building was once abandoned and in poor condition. It was renovated by the locals using a traditional way to restore it to the original state. The renovated temple won the **“Award of Merit”** from UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2008 for outstanding preservation.

The original wihan was built in the mondop style but abandoned. About 120 years ago in 1886, Khruba Anochaiyatham renovated and redesigned it. The renovated wihan was a four-portico teak building. He installed inside the wihan 1,000 votive tablets which then became the name of it. The building was constructed in the Lampang architectural style, which was more delicate than that of Chiang Mai. Four Buddha images enshrined inside represent the previous and the present Buddhas. The 1,000 votive tablets represent Buddhas who came to give dharma to Buddhists. This implies that one should follow the path of the Buddha to overcome defilement. Other decorations show the universe in Buddhist cosmology, Mount Meru, and Himavanta Forest for example.

The wihan was left dilapidated again after the time of Khruba. In 2006, the academics from Chiang Mai University together with the locals renovated it again. They used traditional materials and technologies to restore the wihan. For example, they used Chat -cinnabar- to paint the building vermilion and decorate it with lead mirror. With their efforts, the work won the mentioned award.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-5435-0841, 08-7115-1094.

Visitors should dress politely.



Sim of Wat Sa Ket

Simple but Graceful Ubosot

Location: Tambon Nam Kham, Amphoe Suwannaphum, Roi Et

“**Sim**” is the Isan dialect for ubosot. It comes from a word “**Sima**” which means area for monks to make a ritual ceremony. Most of the sims are small buildings. This reflects the contentment of the locals. In Wat Sa Ket, there are two Laotian-style sims with wooden roofs decorated with local woodwork ornaments.

The sim on the left was constructed in the late Ayutthaya period when Thais and Laotians made their settlements in the area. The building shows the influence of the Lan Xang style. The solid windowless building with wooden rooftop is adorned with a Phuttan flower design on the pediment. The outstanding part called Ruang Phueng is decorated with Rahu swallowing Chandra. Rahu is believed to be the protector of the sacred building from abomination. Inside the sim is enshrined Luangpho Yai, a subduing Mara Buddha image by a local artisan.

The new sim on right-hand side was constructed to be an ubosot instead of existing one because the former was so old that the locals dared not perform an ordination ceremony in the building. The old sim was turned to be a wihan. The new sim was constructed between the reign of King Rama IV and Rama V the Great with the Lan Xang architectural style. The pediment is decorated with a shining sun design. This signifies that the mind of the one who follows dharma is as bright as the sun.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely.



Sim of Wat Photharam

Mural Paintings of Pure Faith

Location: Tambon Dong Bang, Amphoe Na Dun, Maha Sarakham

Mural painting in the northeastern region is called “Hup Taem”. The colours used came from local materials; such as, turmeric and indigo so the colours in the paintings have their own style. The murals of Wat Photharam both inside and outside of the sim depict the life of the Buddha, Vessantara Jataka, folk tales, and local ritual ceremonies. Though the techniques are not as high as the royal artisans’ works, they have their own attractiveness.

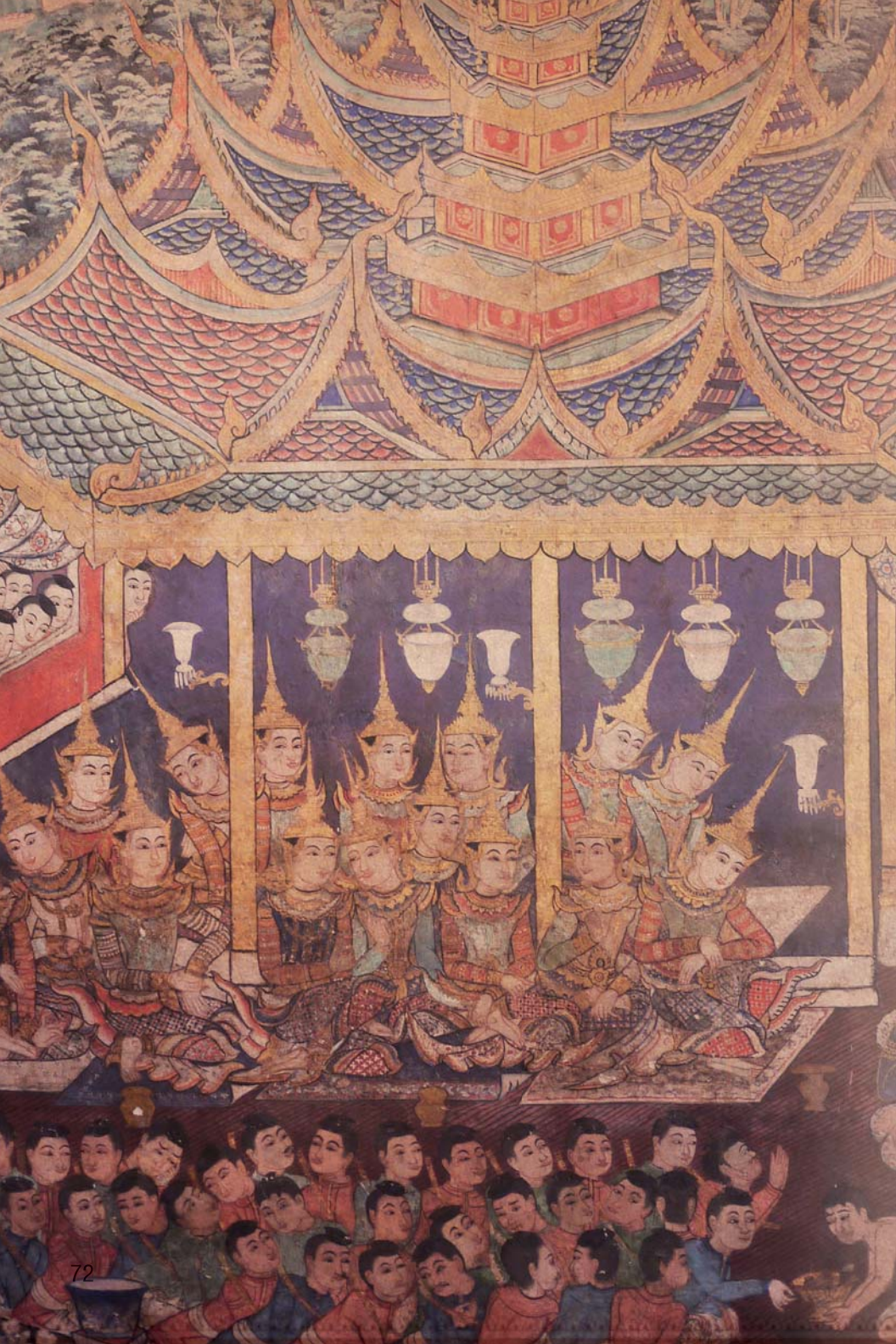
Only three important scenes of the Buddha's life are depicted: his birth, ordination, and attaining enlightenment. The Vessantara Jataka is the popular Jataka in Isan. This is because giving and sharing are the most important things in their lives. The local way of living and ritual ceremony; such as, merit making in the 4th lunar month are also depicted.

Two folk tales: Sin Sai and Phra Malai are painted vividly. The hell in Phra Malai is so horrible that people will be afraid of doing bad deeds.

Near the sim stands the Sala Kan Parian (preaching pavilion) in orange. Stucco works of decorated doors, windows, and roof reflect the artisans' effort to create the works with their faith.

Open daily from 08:00-17:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely. Touching the works is forbidden.





Burmese-style Temples in the North

There are numerous temples in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang and Mae Hong Son. In the past, these provinces were engaged under the Lanna Kingdom. It was bordered to the west by Burma in which many nationalities settled. The area was a trading centre, so people of different nationalities travelled by and some made settlements. They brought with them their art styles. Therefore, the influence of Burmese, Mon, and Tai Yai architectural styles is found in this area. In a Burmese-style temple, there is a building called “**Chong**” – a multi-function building. It is a wihan, Sala Kan Parian, and kuti at the same time. Its multi-tiered roof is decorated with zinc scrollwork. Also in the compound is a bell-shaped chedi in the Mon-Burmese style.

Apart from trading, logging was one of the important businesses. At first, it was a Burmese business. Later in 1887, British dominated the business but still used Burmese workers. These wealthy Burmese constructed or renovated many temples in the area using the Mandalay style. In addition, some Western patterns and materials; for example, coloured glass were used in their temples.



Wat Si Chum

Glittering Coloured Glass Designs in Pyatthat

Location: Thippawan Road, Si Chum Intersection,
Tambon Suan Dok, Amphoe Mueang, Lampang

Wat Si Chum, the large Burmese-style temple, was constructed by a teak merchant named U Yo in 1890. The Burmese believed that each tree had a guardian angel. When one cut down lots of them, one had to make merit for those angels by constructing a temple.

The doorways to the compound are decorated with an intricate miniature of a tiered spire in the prasat form topped with a multi-tiered umbrella. They are adorned with Burmese-style stucco works.

The “Chong” multi-functional building is decorated with magnificent one-hundred-year-old woodcarvings. The work fortunately survived the fire incident that occurred in 1992. It is believed to be the work of Burmese craftsmen working in Lampang. Cupid hiding in the carved work shows an influence of Westerner since Burma was a British colony.

Kuti, the other separated building is adorned on their ceiling with woodcarvings using animals and flowers to symbolise stars; for example, a rabbit for the moon and a peacock for the sun. Unfortunately, the building was destroyed by fire in early 2011.

The ubosot shows the characteristics of Burmese architecture called Pyatthat, a multi-tiered and spired roof architecture. The tiered roof represents Mount Meru-the centre of the universe. The ubosot enshrining the presiding Buddha image is decorated with splendid woodcarvings and glittering coloured glass designs as beautiful as if in heaven.

Decorating with coloured glass is assumed to have been influenced by Westerners in the early 19th century. U Shwe O, an important Burmese artisan, graduated from France and built a glass factory in Mandalay. Later, he was appointed as Burmese director of the glass department. This made coloured glass decoration widely spread in Burma and to the Lanna Kingdom.

Open daily from 08:00-16:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely.



Wat Chong Kham - Wat Chong Klang

Twin Temples Sharing the Same Wall

Location: Nearby Chong Kham Swamp, Amphoe Mueang, Mae Hong Son

Wat Chong Kham and Wat Chong Klang are constructed in the Tai Yai-Burmese style. They are in the same wall by the Chong Kham swamp in the centre of Mae Hong Son. At night, decorating with lights, the reflection of the two temples in the water is so beautiful.

Wat Chong Kham was built in 1827. The multi-tiered spire prasat architecture is of the Tai Yai style. It is believed that only a king or Buddha image can reside in the prasat.

The wihan enshrines Luangpho To, the large Buddha image cast by Burmese craftsmen. The characters of the image are a blissful face, red lips, and realistic looking robe.

Wat Chong Klang is famous for its painting on glass in the Burmese style, a collection of dynamic expressive teak statues, characters from the Vessantara Jataka and delicately carved marble Buddha image.

In Wat Chong Klang, the sacred and laymen areas are divided by levels of a platform. The highest level is the most sacred area used for enshrining a Buddha image. The lower level is a monks' dais while the lowest level is for laymen to make ritual activities.

Open daily from 08:00-18:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely.



Mahayana Buddhism

Chinese Temples and Shrines

Chinese merchants have come to Siam since the Sukhothai era. Later in Ayutthaya, some made their resettlement. When there was a revolution in China, a number of Chinese migrated to Thailand. The Chinese were diligent, hardworking, and good in doing business so they gradually attained wealth and prestige. Many Chinese married with Thais. The children of intermarriage were Thai-Chinese. They are now an ethnic majority and play an important role in Thai society.

The migrants built a Chinese shrine as a centre of their community and for spiritual practices. The shrine was constructed following their folk religions, Taoism and Confucianism. Inside the shrine are installed different deities with the most sacred one as the presiding statue. In Chinese temples built by Mahayana Buddhists, the Buddha image is enshrined as a presiding image while other deities are also installed.

Though there are many Chinese ethnic groups; Teochew, Hakka, Hokkien, and Cantonese, Chinese architecture and ornaments in shrines and temples are not much different. They have an influence from the southern Chinese art style. Auspicious symbols and colours used are believed to support better lives and fortune. The symbols are, for example, dragon, peacock, bats, eight Chinese saints, and Phuttan flower.



Wat Mangkon Kamalawat or Wat Leng Noei Yi

The Universe of Mahayana Buddhism

Location: Charoen Krung Road., Pom Prap Sattru Phai District, Bangkok

Wat Mangkon Kamalawat or Wat Leng Noei Yi was the second Chinese temple in Thailand. In 1871, King Rama V the Great gave the land to construct the temple for ritual making and to be a school for Chinese monks. The layout of the buildings in the temple is to model the universe of Mahayana Buddhism. Each building represents different levels from the Earth to the highest heaven. All are decorated with many statues of deities.

From the entrance to the wihan is the land of humans and animals. Entering the wihan is stepping into heaven, the residence of deities. In the wihan, four guarding deities, Chatulokaban, stand facing four directions to ward off evil spirits.

There are many deities in the wihan; each bringing different fortunes to worshippers' lives. For example, Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, enhances richness, Pae Kong, the old

millionaire couple, brings serenity, Kuan Yu, deity of Justice, helps ward off bad luck and bring prosperity, Cai Shen, god of fortune, brings good fortune, and Doctor Hua Tua brings good health.

At the centre of the temple compound, also the centre of the universe, stands the ubosot. Three Buddha images are enshrined. They are Amitabha Buddha, the highest of all Buddhas residing in heaven and helping people to nirvana. The second is Sakayamuni Buddha, the present Buddha who came to teach the Buddhists to overcome defilements and get out of their circle of rebirth. The third is Bhaisajyaguru Vaiduryaprabha, the Buddha who sweeps away illness. The three Buddhas can be identified by the objects clasped in their hands: the first holds a lotus, the second holds a crystal ball, and the third holds a pagoda.

On the left- and right-hand sides of the Buddha images stand 18 Arhats, group of men who achieved enlightenment through rigorous disciplines and ascetic practices. The statues of the 18 Arhats are the example that everyone can achieve enlightenment if they are patient.

Every building in the temple compound is decorated with beautiful symbolic ornaments. A dragon playing with a crystal ball on the roof is a guardian warding off evil spirits. A bat represents longevity. A peony represents dignity and wealth.

The temple is highly sacred. Buddhists throughout Thailand and even from China visit the temple every year, especially on special occasions; such as, the Chinese New Year.

Open daily from 06:00-18:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2222-3975

Visitors should dress politely. No photographs are allowed to be taken inside the temple.



Kiang An Keng Shrine

Delicate Woodcarvings in Hokkien Shrine

Location: Wat Kanlaya Sub-district, Thon Buri District, Bangkok

The Hokkien people migrated from Fujian, a province on the southeast coast of mainland China. They are one of the two first groups of Chinese people who migrated and resettled in Ayutthaya. They had since that time constructed shrines for their sanctities. Kiang An Keng is the traditional style of the Hokkien shrine. Since it is a Mahayana Buddhism shrine, Kuan Yin Bodhisattva is installed in the shrine. It is decorated with delicate woodcarvings. The shrine was elaborately renovated and in 2008 was awarded by the Association of Siamese Architects.

In the reign of King Rama III, the Hokkien renovated the original dilapidated shrine. The name Kiang An Keng means a serene place. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, the renowned historian, wrote to Prince Narisara Nuvatvongse, the renowned architect, that ornaments decorating the roof were magnificent. Decorated woodcarvings were beautiful and pictorial panels were one of the masterpieces. These works are, at present, still magnificent though fading.

A dragon playing with a crystal ball, statue of saints and great soldiers on the roof are for guarding the temple. The front wall is a bas-relief portraying a flower and auspicious animals. The three masterpieces of woodcarvings are on the tie-beam portraying the Three Kingdoms, the signboard of the shrine features a carving of a dragon and ventilation decorated with a dragon and altars. Pictorial panels portray **“The Three Kingdoms”**. Only black and white colours are left now, but are still interesting.

Open daily from 08:00-17:30 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely. No photographs are allowed to be taken inside the temple.



Lim Ko Niao Shrine

Shrine of Chinese-Muslim Relationship

Location: Tambon Anoru, Amphoe Mueang, Pattani

Lim Ko Niao Shrine is the beautiful shrine which reflects the relationship between the Chinese who came to settle down in Pattani in the Ayutthaya era and local Muslims.

There is the legend of Lim Toh Khiem who constructed Musjid Krue Se. He migrated to Pattani from Fujian province of mainland China and married the Pattani governor's daughter. He converted to Islam. Later, his sister, Lim Ko Niao came with another 70 Chinese to persuade him to return to his homeland. He denied because at that time he was constructing Musjid Krue Se. There was a rebellion at that time. Lim Ko Niao helped her brother fight for Pattani, but she failed so she committed suicide.

The locals appreciated her courage, so they constructed a shrine for her. People who paid homage to her tomb found a considerable fortune and those who were sick recovered from illness so she became a goddess. There is also a legend that Lim Ko Niao put a curse on her brother's mosque that neither he nor his successors would finish the mosque. But time proves that it is not true. Her image was originally situated in Ban Krue Se, the peaceful Chinese and Muslim community. Later, the image of Lim Ko Niao was moved to the Leng Ju Kiang Shrine in Amphoe Mueang to be convenient for the increasing devotees throughout the country and from abroad to make homage to their goddess heroine.

The shrine is constructed in traditional Chinese architecture adorned with auspicious symbols. For instance, on the roof is a couple of dragons holding the sun, altars, and pillars are decorated with a dragon, peacock, and Chinese saints. The colours used are mainly green and red representing dignity and fortune. There are other important deities in the shrine; for example, Cho Su Kong, deity of medicine and Chaomae Thaptim. Goddess Lim Ko Niao is on the altar on the left-hand side.

Open daily from 05:30-17:30 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely.



Christianity

Church: Symbol of Love and Faith

The earliest Roman-Catholic missionaries in Siam were Dominicans who came to Ayutthaya in 1567 in the reign of King Maha Chakraphat. Later other orders of Roman-Catholics and Protestants came to propagate Christianity throughout the country.

Western missionaries also brought with them new technology; for example, modern medication, weapons, photography, and building technologies. These helped gain prestige from Thais and then made some convert to Christianity.

Western-style churches built in Thailand used modern construction technology introduced and supervised by mostly European priests. Roman-Catholic churches are built elegantly and decorated with symbols of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Statues of Saints are also placed in the chapels. This is to show the faith of Christians in their God. Protestantism, instead, builds more simple churches because they believe God stays in their hearts so a holy ceremony can be conducted even in a small house.

In both Roman-Catholicism and Protestantism, the cross is the symbol of Jesus' love that he sacrificed his life to atone for humanity's sin.



Santa Cruz Church

The Church of the Holy Cross and Jesus' Love

Location: Wat Kanlaya Sub-district, Thon Buri District, Bangkok

Santa Cruz Church was constructed with a mixture of Neo-classic and Renaissance styles. It is a Portuguese Catholic church. The Portuguese have made their settlement in Siam since the Ayutthaya era. They supported King Taksin the Great to drive the Burmese out of the country. In recognition of their service, King Taksin the Great granted them a plot of land in Kudi Jeen community to construct a church. The day he granted the land was the day the Catholics celebrated the Feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross, so the church was named Santa Cruz (Holy Cross).

From the Thon Buri to the early Rattanakosin era, the Santa Cruz Church was the centre of propagating Catholicism and at the same time a centre of modern civilisation. Later, after

the centre of Catholicism was moved to Assumption and the construction of Charoen Krung Road, the important role of Santa Cruz was lessened.

The Santa Cruz Church seen today is the third version of the church. It was built in 1913 during the reign of King Rama VI. The dome building is adorned with the cross on the top. Underneath the dome are rose windows, they represent the love of God. Around the building is decorated with stuccos of grape vines. It represents Jesus' blood. He sacrificed his life for humanity.

Inside the church is a hall covered with a vault dome. The long nave represents the path Jesus walked onto the crucifixion. Over the windows are 14 holy pictures portraying the crucifixion. Above the pictures are stained glass etched with biblical images. Christians believe that the sunlight through stained glass represents goodness shining into the holy area.

The frontal altar is a sacred area for the priest. There is a crucifix in front of the vault ceiling with "ISH" (Iesus Hominis Salvator) in the centre. The pediment above the altar vault is decorated with stucco relief of the God's lamb.

The Mass is set every week. The bread and wine used during the Mass represent the body and blood of Jesus.

Open on Sunday from 08:00-10:00 Hrs. and 18:30-20:00 Hrs.

Visitors should ask for permission from the bishop in charge in advance.

Tel. 0-2482-0153-4, 0-2466-0347.

Visitors should dress politely. Attending Mass is allowed but bread and wine are for Christians only.



Samre Church

Simple but Elegant Protestant Church

Location: Charoen Nakhon Road., Bukkhalo Sub-district,
Thon Buri District, Bangkok

Protestantism came into Thailand in the reign of King Rama III. They believe in only Jesus, no other Saints, and that Jesus stays in their hearts not objects. Therefore, their church emphasises on simplicity. Only the cross is placed in the church. No other statue even of Jesus is placed.

The First Presbyterian Church was constructed in 1860 by American missionaries. It was the centre of protestant missionaries in the early Rattankosin era.

The current church is the second one constructed in 1910. It looks like a European house built in the Classical Revival style. The building has a terra-cotta roof and Thai style gable. The pediment is embellished with floral design stuccowork, a five-petalled flowers in the centre accompanied by two small four petalled flowers on the left and right. This adaptation of a rose window of Gothic style represents the love of Jesus. The numbers “1860” and “1910” are the years of construction of the first and present church. Over the door and windows are decorated with colourful stained glass. The church looks elegant though simple.

In the church stands the cross as a symbolic of Jesus. There are two clocks with Phra Kiao, royal emblem of King Rama V the Great, and HM royal initials carved on wood. It is assumed that King Rama V the Great gave these two clocks when the church was constructed.

Beside the church stands the belfry decorated with the same design as the church. The number “1912” is the year of construction.

Open on Sundays from 09:00-15:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2877-7287

Visitors should dress politely.



Atsana Wihan Mae Phra Bangkoet

The Virgin Mary Church in Gothic Style

Location: Tambon Bang Nok Khwaek, Amphoe Bang Khonthi, Samut Songkhram

The Nativity of Our Lady Cathedral, also called Bang Nok Khwaek Church, stands prominently on the bank of the Mae Klong River. It was the first Gothic architectural style Catholic church in Thailand. It was built in 1890 in the reign of King Rama V the Great. The church was designed by a French engineer and constructed by the locals, when free from their field work, under supervision of a priest. The high transept spire is designed with the belief of getting as closer to God as possible.

Advanced technology was used in the construction. Logs were tied as raft to make a strong base for the building. No piling was used. The temple was built of brick. The walls plastered with stucco mixed with black cane syrup to strengthen the wall.

A statue of the Virgin Mary is the presiding statue of the church. Windows decorated with stained glass display the story of Mary's virtue from birth. On the ceiling is the initial "M" for Mary.

The Virgin Mary was a virtuous woman who God chose to be the mother of Jesus. In the 4th century, Virgin Mary was worshipped by the Christians. This was the influence of the Romans who had various gods and deities. In the 16th century, she had a greater role among the Catholics since they wanted to diminish the power of the Pope. From that time, the Virgin Mary has appeared more on many Christian arts.

Open on Wednesdays to Sundays from 08:00-16:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-3476-1347, 0-3470-3219.

Visitors should dress politely. A guide is available if contact in advance. Attending Mass is allowed, but bread and wine are for Christians only.



Martyrs of Song Khon Church, Wat Song Khon

Memorial of Faith for the Seven Blessed Martyrs

Location: Tambon Pong Kham, Amphoe Wan Yai, Mukdahan

Wat Song Khon is the biggest church in South East Asia designed by the renowned Catholic architect, Dr. Ajaphol Dusitnanond.

In 1940, during the Franco-Thai war, the tense atmosphere spread in the provinces along the Thai-Lao border. There was a misbelief that Christianity was a French religion since most of the parish priests were French. It was also believed that Catholics were French spies. Therefore, the government ordered villagers to abandon their faith in Christ or else they might be executed. Villagers were frightened but they remained silent and steadfast. But in Song Khon, Siphong Onphitak and six companions (nun and laymen) were loyal to their Catholic Faith

and refused to abandon their God. They led the villagers to pray and strengthen their faith. Siphong was killed by the police while his 6 companions, all women, were shot in the cemetery, the holy forest.

In 1989, they were beatified by Pope John Paul II in Rome as the Seven Blessed Martyrs of Song Khon who died for their faith. The memorial ceremony is set on 16th December, the day Siphong, the first of the seven Martyrs was shot dead.

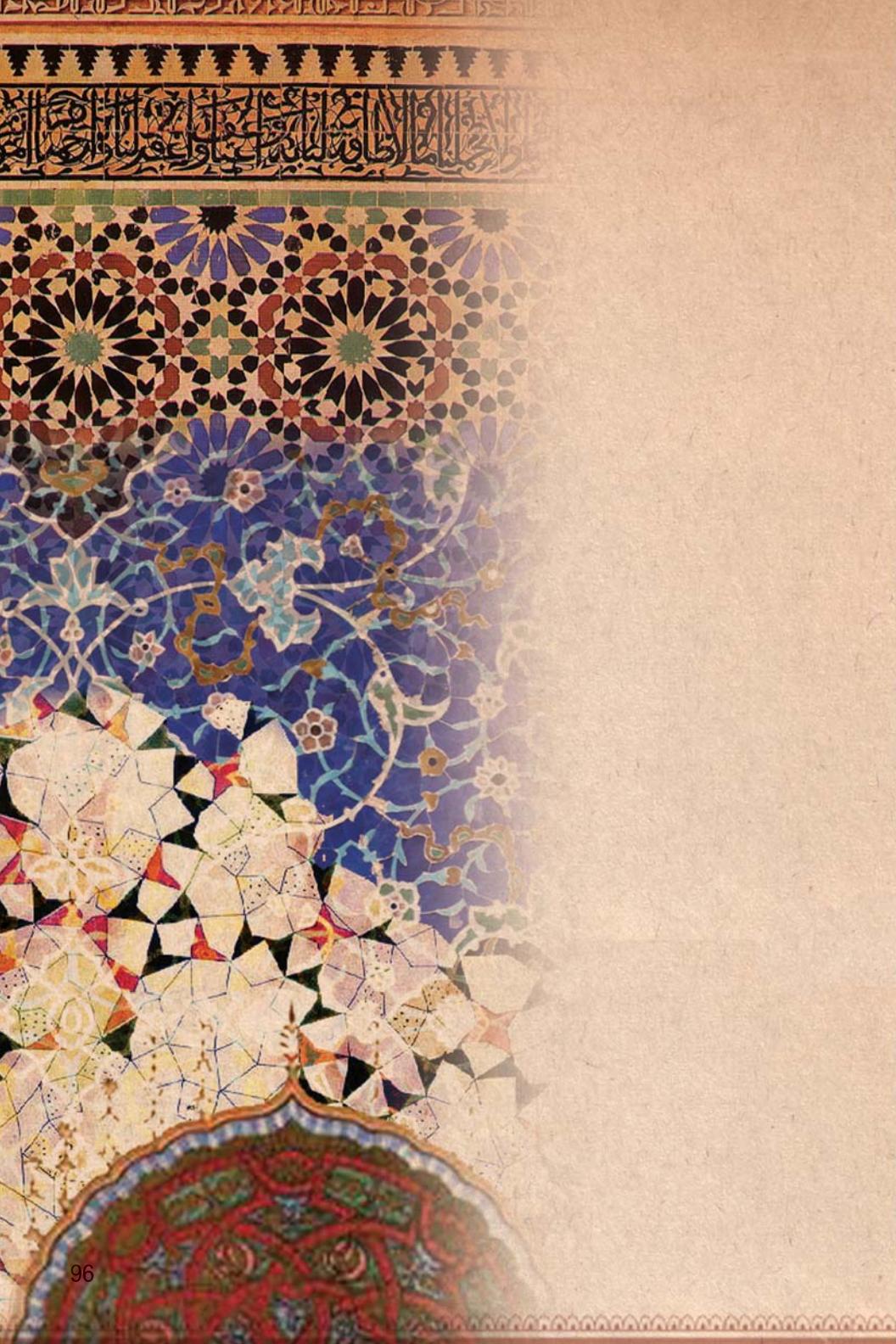
The huge modern sandstone architecture was built as a memorial of the Seven Brave Servants of God. The sturdy geometric architecture creates a warrior look that reminds people of their courage. The walls are made of translucent glass while the floor is marble. Coffins with waxed images of the seven martyrs and their relics are behind the altar for people to worship. The bas-relief on the curved wall around the building portrays their brave story. The back of the building opens to view the Mekong River. The church was officially opened in 1985. It was awarded in 1986 by the Association of Siamese Architects and in 2002 by the Asian Architects Association.

Open daily from 08:00-18:30 Hrs.

Mass is held on Sundays 07:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-4264-3522, 0-4264-3524.

Visitors should dress politely. Attending Mass is allowed, but bread and wine are for Christians only.



Islam

Masjid, the Door to the “House of God”

A place of worship for followers of Islam is called a Masjid or mosque. Masjid, an Arabic word, means “**place of worship**” or “**prostration in prayer**”. In some areas the word “**Sura**” is used.

Muslims, the follower of Islam, believe that a Masjid is not a public place but a House of Allah. Allah is the Arabic word for God. It is the place Muslims can approach Allah by praying. Masjid is not only where Muslims can come together for prayer (five times a day), but also a centre of information and education, both in religious and secular subjects.

Thai society consists of various origins and cultures, so there is a variety of masjid architecture in Thailand. It depends on the background of the constructors. For example, Masjid Bang O, a mixture of Thai and European architectural style, was constructed by a Persian businessman who often travelled abroad so he was influenced by European architecture. While some masjids, especially old ones, were constructed in typical Thai architecture. They looked like a temple or a palace because the constructors tried to build their sacred place with the best architectural style.

The Masjid with a dome and crescent moon and star shows the architectural development that uses more symbols.



Pattani Central Mosque

The Biggest Masjid in Thailand

Location: Tambon Anoru, Amphoe Mueang, Pattani

The Pattani Central Mosque was constructed with a government budget because the government realised the importance of Islam to Pattani and the other three southern provinces. The masjid is the centre for religious ceremonies to be performed by Thai Muslims in the South. The architecture is Western, with some similarity to the well-known Taj Mahal of India.

The Masjid is a one-storey building topped with a big dome in the centre surrounded with multiple small domes. The domes are not only the landmark of the masjid but also help the resonance of prayer. The dome was the architecture of the Palestinians who wanted to get close to heaven. They first modelled the universe onto their tents or circular wooden buildings. Later, the Romans built a circular dome with brick and

stone. When the Muslims invaded Eastern Europe, they took this architectural design back and applied it with a masjid.

The finial of the dome is decorated with a crescent moon and star. The symbol is believed to have come from the deviating Arabic letter on the flag in the Crusade War which means "Victory". Later, the symbol was featured on the flags of several Muslim countries; such as Pakistan, Malaysia, and Turkey. There is also information stating that some countries use the symbol because Islam uses the lunar system.

Inside the masjid, there are no pictures or statues. Muhammad, the Prophet who revealed God's teaching, did not allow followers to create anything to represent Allah. The interior is decorated with arabesque and calligraphy from the Qur'an-the Holy Book.

On the two sides of the masjid are minarets. Originally, a minaret was a torch-lit watchtower to watch out for fire. Later, it was used by a muezzin to stand at the top of the tower and call Muslims to prayer at the five ritual times of the day. Sometimes it is called an azan tower. Though, at present, the minaret is not used for that purpose, it is still built beside the masjid. The architecture of a minaret is varied but has to be harmonious with the major dome of the masjid.

In front of the masjid are bathing facilities on the separate sides, for men and women, for wudhu-ritual washing. Muslims must be clean before they present themselves before Allah.

The Pattani Central Mosque shows the Thai administration in the far southern provinces.

Open from 09:00-15:30 Hrs. every day except Fridays
(day for prayer ritual).

Visitors should dress politely and wear trousers.

Non-Muslims cannot participate in Salat-the prayer ritual.



Bang O Mosque

Masjid of Khaek Phae

Location: Soi Charan Sanit Wong 86, Bang O Sub-district,
Bang Phlat District, Bangkok

The old masjid on the bank of the Chao Phraya River is one of the forefront buildings that had the influence of the foreign architectural style.

The Bang O Mosque was constructed as the centre of a Persian Muslim, who migrated from Ayutthaya after the downfall. They lived on Phaes or rafts along the bank of the Chao Phraya River so they were called “**Khaek Phae**”. Later, they built wooden houses and a masjid on the bank of the river and became a large community. They were good in sailing and log trading. In 1919, the present masjid was completed. The one-storey building made of brick and cement has a hip roof with eaves adorned with a gingerbread design, the popular design in the reign of King Rama VI and VII.

This masjid was designed by Mr. M. A. Gasem (later he became a Thai national and changed his name to Mr. Kasem Ittikasem). The architectural style was influenced by architecture in Penang, Singapore and Mecca.

Open daily from 06:00-21:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely and wear trousers. Non-Muslims cannot participate in Salat (prayer ritual). Visitors must have permission to take photographs. Contact Imam Madram Songsiri, Tel. 08-1931-8677.



Talo Mano Mosque

The Three Hundred Years Masjid

Location: Tambon Lubo Sawo, Amphoe Bacho, Narathiwat

Talo Mano Mosque, also known as Al-Hussein Mosque, is a 300-year old masjid built of wood in the Thai-Chinese style.

The Masjid is built 2 metres high above the ground. The original piles were made of Hopea log but at present have been replaced with cement footing. The floor and walls are made of big planks of Hopea wood. Above the doors and windows are decorated with fretwork of flower and leaf design.

The minaret, or azan tower, built in the Chinese style is topped with a traditional Thai double gable roof. The tiled roof is decorated with leaf and flower designs, similar to the roof ornament of a Buddhist temple. Parts of the wooden architecture are interlocked without nails according to the traditional Thai building technique.

Talo Mano Mosque shows the way of building a masjid of the early times; using local materials, concise but practical so that the locals could look after it.

Open daily from 08:00-18:00 Hrs.

Visitors should dress politely and should wear trousers.

Non-Muslims cannot participate in Salat (prayer ritual).

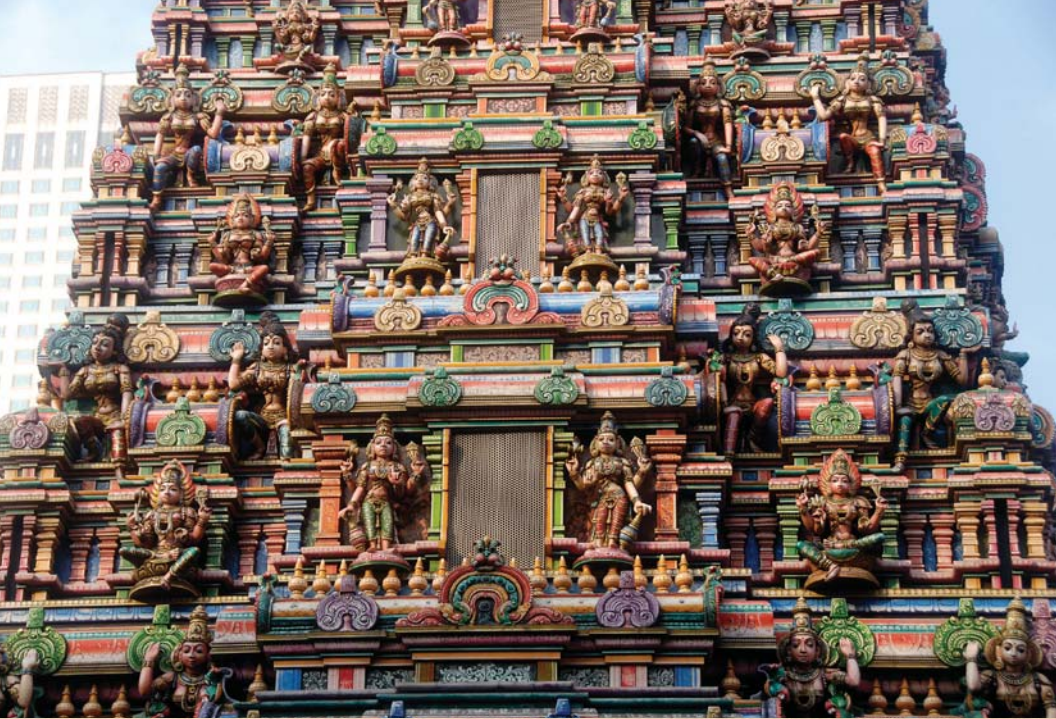


Brahmanism, Hinduism and Sikhism Arts in the World of Brahmins, Hindus, and Sikhs

Apart from a great number of temples in major religions, there are sacred temples of minor religions in Thailand. Though small in number, each temple contains its uniqueness and shows the faith in their beliefs. Their beliefs and faith are shown in the architecture and ornaments that are remarkable and interesting.

Stepping into these temples is like stepping into a new world. Neither architecture, culture, language used, clothing, nor ritual ceremony are similar. The architecture is influenced by the art style of the religious origins.

The strong ties of belief and nationality unite them as one. Other seems to be stranger in their holy land.



Wat Phra Si Maha Uma Thewi (Sri Mahamariamman Temple)

Worship Goddess Uma in Wat Khaek

Location: Silom Road, Silom Sub-district, Bang Rak District, Bangkok

Wat Phra Si Maha Uma Thewi was once a small shrine named Sri Mariamman under a tree in the Silom area. When Silom Road was constructed, the surrounding area was rice field and the nearby area, Bang Rak, was where Indians raised goats and cows. Later, it was developed to be a business area. Many Indian merchants had shops along the road. The small shrine became the centre of Hinduism. In 1895, to accommodate the rising number of devotees, a group of Indians decided to build Wat Phra Si Maha Uma Thewi on the present location using the Southern Indian style. The rituals in the temple were made by Indian Brahmins. So locals called the temple “**Wat Khaek**” - Temple of the Indians.

Hinduism originated in India. It is the successor of the Vedic religion. The Vedic religion worshipped many deities and

there were four varnas or classes: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. The text of rituals and beliefs is called the Vedas, but since it was taught orally, some teachings were lost. Brahmins played a key role in contacting the deities through administering rites and was the only class studying the Vedas. Since all important roles were performed by the Brahmins, some call the Vedic religion Brahmanism.

Other classes in society were not satisfied with the role of Brahmins who monopolised the performing of rituals so they tried to find intellect and philosophy rather than ritual. The new religion was called Hindu, the Sanskrit word Sindhu, the name of the river in the northwestern part of India. Hinduism believes in Brahman, the power which upholds and supports everything. The three Supreme Gods: Shiva, Vishnu or Narayana, and Brahma is called Trimurti. Later, from attraction to a particular god, Hinduism became classified into divisions. For example, Vaishnavism focuses on Vishnu, Shaivism focuses on Shiva.

Around the 5th century, the division of Shakti was formed. Shaktism focuses on the power of Goddess. The followers worship consorts of the three Gods: Lakshmi, Parvati (Uma) for instance, and their sons. In Wat Khaek, the Goddess Parvati or Uma, Shiva's consort, is worshipped. This belief goes together with the locals' belief of a local goddess.

The entrance gates of the shrine are painted with bright colours influenced by the Indian art style. Deities, adorned on the gates, are believed to protect the shrine and ward off evil. When the ceremony of consecrated water is held, ladders will be put on the doors so the worshippers can pour water onto these deities.

In front of the shrine is a lingam which signifies Shiva. In the main hall is enshrined the image of Phra Si Maha Uma Thewi (Goddess Parvati) as the centre of the shrine. The other two images are Prince Khandakumara (her son) and God Ganesh (her elephant-head son). He is the god of knowledge and success.

Open daily from 06:00-20:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2238-2007

Visitors should dress politely. Photographs are not allowed to be taken inside the temple.



Devasathan Shrine and the Giant Swing

Brahmin Shrine and Triyampavai Ceremonial Site

Location: Dinso Road, Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok

The Devasathan Shrine or Brahmin Shrine was constructed in the reign of King Rama I the Great according to the ancient custom of building a Devalaya-abode of the gods - in the city centre. After the construction of Wat Suthat, Brahmin, Phrakhru Sitthichai, asked the king to build the shrine and the Giant Swing in the same area to mark the success of the capital's construction. In the Devasathan are enshrined images of sacred Gods. In the main building is enshrined Shiva, the highest of all gods, and a lingam, the symbol of fertility.

The middle building enshrines Ganesh, the God of knowledge, success, and obstacles. The smallest building enshrines Vishnu or Narayana, the Preserver, the God who incarnates to help humans in critical time. In the shrine near the entrance is Brahma, the Creator.

The Giant Swing was built for the Triyampavai ceremony. The ceremony tells about the creation of the Earth. It was to celebrate the success of constructing a new capital. The ceremony was held annually on the 2nd lunar month to celebrate Shiva visiting the Earth and the Brahman New Year. The ceremony held at the Giant Swing was discontinued in the reign of King Rama VII. The ceremony is still, at the present time, celebrated in the Devasathan Shrine.

The original Giant Swing was in front of the Devasathan but in the reign of King Rama V the Great, he renovated and removed it to the present location, in front of Wat Suthat.

Devasathan is open on Thursdays and Sundays 08:00-15:00 Hrs.

Tel. 02-222-6951

Visitors should dress politely.



Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha

Sacred Shrine of Sikhs from Punjab

- Location: Chakraphet Road, Burapha Phirom Sub-district,
Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok

Most adherents of Sikhism in Thailand are Indians who emigrated from the Punjab region of India because of war and poverty. Gurudwara, the Sikh temple, means the door towards the Gurus. The most important one in Thailand is Guru Singh Sabha situated in the Phahurat area. The large building, constructed in 1979, is topped with a gold-plated dome in the shape of a lotus. It signifies that though Sikhs live in a world full of greed, anger and passion, one can maintain one's virtue like a lotus growing out from the mud. The building consists of many function rooms on different floors. The rooms are, for example, a room for keeping Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Holy book), meeting rooms, school, clinic, and kitchen. The free clinic and kitchen welcome everyone irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. Sikhs believe in equality, fraternity, and brotherhood. This belief is shown in the architecture that has no level; everyone has to sit on the same level. In the hall, a sitting place for devotees, ladies and men sit separately to maintain order and concentration in listening to religious prayers.

Open daily from 08:00-16:00 Hrs.

Tel. 0-2221-1011

Visitors should dress politely and cover their heads with prepared clothes.

