

The background of the cover is a photograph of a pair of ornate, golden Thai doors. The doors are set against a dark background and feature intricate carvings of trees and foliage. The carvings are in a traditional Thai style, with a central panel on each door depicting a tree with fruit. The doors are framed by a golden border. The entire image is set within a red border.

# **TREASURES**

**FROM THE  
NATIONAL MUSEUM BANGKOK**

Selected by the  
**NATIONAL MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS BANGKOK**

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## 1 Siwamokkhaphiman Hall



*Fig. 1 Siwamokkhaphiman Audience Hall*

Siwamokkhaphiman Hall was built during the reign of King Rama I (r. 1782–1809) as the Front Palace's stateroom, for audiences and religious ceremonies. Initially, it was a small wooden pavilion without walls. Later, it was dismantled and replaced with a larger plastered brick structure. In 1887, during King Rama V's reign (r. 1868–1910), the hall was converted into the Royal Museum. During the time of King Rama VII (r. 1926–1935), it became the Royal Library, a repository for historic documents and ancient stone inscriptions. At that time, the high-pitched gable roof was added.

In 1967, Siwamokkhaphiman Hall was renovated to become the office of the Fine Arts Department's Division of Archeology and to house an exhibition on Thailand's prehistory at first, and from 1982 onwards, on Thailand's history. In 2015, the hall was once again modified to put on view the masterpieces of the National Museum Bangkok and to provide space for special exhibitions on Thai history and art.



## 2 Buddhaisawan Chapel

### 2.1 Phra Buddha Sihing



Fig. 2 Phra Buddha Sihing, 15th c CE, Gold-plated Bronze

*Legend has it that this image was created in Sri Lanka around 157 CE and was brought to Sukhothai in 1307. It was relocated various times before being brought to Ayutthaya. In 1767, following the fall of Ayutthaya, the statue was moved to Chiang Mai. In 1795, the image was taken from Chiang Mai to Bangkok by King Rama I, as war booty. To celebrate the newly elevated status of Pinklao as Second King, King Mongkut (Rama IV) presented the image to Pinklao. Ever since the image is the central statue of the Front Palace's chapel.*

Many interesting legends surround this serenely beautiful image of the Buddha seated in meditation. The statue is highly venerated in Thailand, being regarded as second in importance only to the Emerald Buddha. Each Thai New Year, the image is carried in procession to the Pramane Ground where the faithful may make merit by pouring lustral water over the statue.

Adding credence to ancient legends that the image may have originated in Sri Lanka is the fact that the hands of the image are in meditation pose, unusual in Thai art but common in Sri Lankan images. However, the statue incorporates Thai characteristics of the Lan Na and Sukhothai styles: the former includes the lotus and stamen decorated base; the latter in general features that include the legs in a gently folded position, as well as the Sukhothai flame above the ushnisha.

## 2.2 The Murals

The dim, cool interiors of Thai temple buildings are frequently embellished with mural paintings that depict a fabulous world of gilded palaces and pavilions, town and country landscapes in which dwell a multiplicity of beings, both real and mythical. Deriving from ancient religious texts and incorporating both Buddhist and Hindu beliefs, the tradition of Thai mural painting has an extensive history.

Architectural remains of ancient former kingdoms provide elusive hints that paintings were employed both inside and outside religious structures. The devastation wrought by time, climate, and man's destructiveness have allowed the preservation of mere fragments, fragile relics of earlier traditions of Thai mural paintings. Surviving the destruction of Ayutthaya (1767) are some fine but relatively few examples of religious manuscripts and wall paintings. However, with the establishment first of Thonburi, and then, of Bangkok in 1782 as the capital of the new Chakri Dynasty, the arts of peace flourished. In the ornamentation of the many temples built over succeeding decades, the art of Thai mural painting reached new heights of artistic religious expression and beauty.

Traditionally, the painting of religious scenes was regarded as an act of merit, a religious offering, and in the main, produced by anonymous artists. Temple murals were not conceived as mere decorations but served a didactic purpose: to teach both monks and lay people moral lessons through vividly graphic narrative scenes. Most frequently portrayed are events from the last life of the historical Buddha, or from the Jataka Tales, the Buddha's former lives, which embody the many virtues towards which people should strive.

Certain conventions are constant throughout Thai mural painting to enable the devotee to recognize scenes of significance. From the multitudes of figures crowding the landscape, the Buddha is easily recognizable by his golden skin and red robes. Royal personages, bejewelled and serene, are delineated in graceful stylised postures that reflect the arts of shadow play and the masked dance. Humbler beings going about their daily business are considerably less refined in appearance and realistically depict the life of ordinary people of the times. Depending on the occasion, gods and celestial beings fly here and there, while demons, sacred serpents and lithe mythical creatures, half-human half fabulous beasts, merge with the foliage or float improbably on strange oceans. This blending of the real and mythical gives Thai painting its particular charm, and also reflects traditions of Buddhist and Hindu cosmology, which peoples the known world with beings from various celestial regions, allegories for states of being attained through meritorious rebirth and spiritual excellence. In Thai mural tradition, this easily recognizable vocabulary of beings has been relatively constant, but their arrangement and emphasis have varied depending on the style favoured at the time, and the materials available. During the Ayutthaya period, wall paintings were generally pastel in tone, on pale backgrounds, as the paints were made from natural earths, minerals and plants. Rows or registers of Buddhas or celestial beings predominated, with miniature vignettes here and there adding to the general effect. During the Bangkok period, a layout encompassing these traditions as well as more recent innovations evolved. With paints imported from China, vibrant colours and an abundance of gold embellishment against a dark background exemplify the best traditions of Bangkok period mural painting.



*Fig. 3 The Wedding of King Sudhodana and Princess Mahamaya, 18th c CE, Bangkok period*

*Highlighted by a characteristic red zig-zag, within a royal pavilion, guests and musicians are assembled for the wedding of King Sudhodana and Princess Mahamaya (at the centre to left and right), the future parents of the being who will become the Buddha.*

The layout common to most Bangkok period temples is clear in the impressive late 18th century murals in the Buddhasawan Chapel. Within the chapel, from above the windows to the ceiling, are registers of celestial beings and converted demons paying graceful homage to the teachings of the Buddha. Panels between the windows feature a multiplicity of religious scenes from the life of the Buddha. Minute and detailed descriptions of the everyday life of the people blend with scenes of religious significance. Events within the panels are divided by architecture, landscape and the occasional spectacular zigzag device that highlights in red a particularly important event. A total lack of perspective in the Western sense, a hallmark of classical Thai mural painting, adds to the charm and almost shadow play quality of the whole. Depicting peripheral and main events in the life of the Buddha, such scenes are repeated in temple buildings past and present all over Thailand, with varying degrees of refinement and skill.





*Fig. 4 Detail of Fig. 3*

*Seated below and to the right of the king are the Hindu gods, Brahma, with four faces, and Indra coloured green.*



*Fig. 5 Detail of Fig. 3*

*Musicians at the wedding.*



*Fig. 6 Gautama, 18th c CE, Bangkok period*

*Rejecting extreme asceticism, Gautama, having eaten to restore himself, casts his food bowl in the waters of a river, at the bottom of which is depicted the palace of the 'naga' king, guardian of rivers*



*Fig. 7 Dying Buddha Attaining 'Parinirvana', 18th c CE, Bangkok period*

### 3 Phra Tamnak Daeng (The Red House)



*Fig. 8 Interior of the Red House*

With his ascension to the throne as the first ruler of the House of Chakri in 1782, King Buddha Yotfa Chulalok the Great, Rama I, established Rattanakosin as a new centre of the kingdom. King Rama I allowed his two elder sisters to reside in the new Grand Palace by constructing the Tamnak Khiaw (Green House) and Phra Tamnak Daeng (Red House). The latter belonged to Princess Srisudarak.

Upon ascending the throne, Rama IV granted royal entitlement to enthrone his brother Pinklao as the Second King, who was to reside in the Front Palace. By his command Phra Tamnak Daeng, having been used by his mother before was moved to his new residence.

During the reign of Rama VII, the Front Palace's royal buildings were redesigned to house the National Museum Bangkok. Phra Tamnak Daeng had deteriorated. Queen Sri Savarindira, understanding its value as a wooden royal building, privately funded its restoration by the Department of Fine Arts. Upon completion of the restoration, Phra Tamnak Daeng was moved to its current location.

## 4 Maha Surasinghanat Building (South Wing)

### 4.1 Asian Art – Room 401



*Fig. 9 Cham Art, 11th-12th c CE, My Son, Vietnam*



*Fig. 10 Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Sho Kannon), 12th-14th c CE, Kamakura, Japan*

Archaeological evidence discovered throughout Asia suggests human settlement on the continent since prehistoric times. Many civilisations including the Mesopotamia Civilisation in West Asia, the Indus Valley Civilisation in South Asia and the Ancient Chinese Civilisation in East Asia developed and flourished, leading to cultural exchange along prominent trade routes such as the land and maritime Silk Roads.

Trade routes paved the way for the exchange of religions, beliefs, languages, arts, and technology, which led to the adoption of the existing culture. For example, new religions merged with indigenous beliefs, while folk materials and aesthetic views merged with new artistic styles, creating hybrid cultural identities.

The artefacts in the Asian Room comprise mostly religious icons, predominantly of Buddhism. These works were collected for veneration, religious functions and practices, and later transferred or donated to the National Museum Bangkok. After the museum's renovation in 1967, the Maha Surasinghanat Building was built, allowing artefacts from India, Tibet, Nepal, China, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar to be displayed in a single room. Viewing them together enables visitors to develop a new understanding of the evolution of the region's various religious iconographies, and to appreciate further the diversity of religious antiquities found in Thailand on display in other rooms in the museum.



#### 4.1.1 Indian Influence



*Fig. 11 Buddha Dispelling Fear, 1st-6th c CE, Gandhara, Shist*

Thailand's location, situated in the middle of trade routes linking India and China, influenced Thai culture from the 4th c CE. From the 6th to 9th century, the Indo-Khmer style and the Indo-Javanese style (Srivijaya) influenced the rendering of images of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, their consorts, as well as of Ganesha and the naga, found in the Indianized states of the southern Peninsula at Takua Pa and Chaiya, and in the Central Plains at Si Thep and Dong Si Maha Phot. Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists from the surrounding countries were influential in Thailand's adaptation of artistic styles from India from the early Gupta to the later Chola schools of art. These styles were reflected in iconography, themes, stances, treatment of faces, drapery and jewelry, and in the fine quality of craftsmanship. Works in stone, in bas-relief, high-relief or in the round, bronze, terracotta, and stucco, sometimes from India, Java or Cambodia, but often locally made were installed in brick or stone Hindu and Buddhist shrines. Thai-made pieces range in size from small votive tablets to life-size or larger portrayals of Hindu gods, linga, the Buddha, bodhisattva and other Buddhist deities.



Fig. 12 Buddha *Dispelling Fear*, 1st-4th c CE, Mathura, Red Sandstone



Fig. 13 Buddha *Performing the Eight Great Miracles*, 9th c CE, Pala, India



*Fig. 14 Bejeweled Buddha Subduing Mara, 9th c CE, Pala, Bodh Gaya, India*



*Fig. 15 Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, 9th c CE, Pala, India*

## 4.2 Prehistory – Room 402

The prehistoric world of Southeast Asia has developed into one of the most dynamic areas of interdisciplinary study in the region. The discovery of the renowned Ban Chiang civilisation in the late 1960s became a catalyst for excavations and academic study, and whilst advances in dating technology have revised the initial dating framework for this period (to c. 1550 BCE - 500 CE ), its initial discovery was a global sensation that ushered in a new era of interest in the ancient past.

Excavations at Ban Chiang provided evidence of a sophisticated society of agriculturalists, animal breeders, potters and, in later phases, of a skilful bronze and iron production. It is likely that this new technology arrived in Thailand with the migration of southern Chinese who entered the region and settled in the fertile plains. However, it is not out of the question that internal discoveries helped propel this social transformation.

Throughout the centuries of continuous settlement in Ban Chiang elegant ceramics were produced, many with their distinctive curvilinear designs and sigmoid motifs. When these early discoveries are put into context with subsequent excavation sites across mainland Thailand and into the peninsula, a vivid picture of prehistoric Thailand begins to emerge.

The incredibly rich site of Ban Don Ta Phet (400-200 BCE) was discovered by chance during excavations at a village school in Kanchanaburi Province in 1975. Burials contained significant distinctions in wealth and provide us with some of the highlights of the Museum's prehistoric collection. Nearly 300 bronze bowls were excavated, some produced in difficult-to-work high tin bronze. The designs are similar to those found in India and may have been imported into Thailand, although some argue that the sheer number of the Ban Don Ta Phet bowls suggests a local or peninsular source.

Large numbers of glass beads were found at the site, as well as carnelian, agate, rock crystal, and jade. As the site itself has no trace of glass production it is understood that a large proportion must have been imported from India. As we find the taste for carnelian and agate jewellery growing it is reasonable to assume that Indianized culture accompanied these objects, and it is possible that the wonderful lion pendant of orange carnelian from the second phase of occupation at Ban Don Ta Phet represents some of the earliest traces of the spread of Buddhism into mainland Thailand. The emergence of the lion motif is linked to the spread of Buddhism as the lion is one of the early aniconic representations of his teachings. A two-headed animal ear ornament of pale green nephrite was also found and is almost certainly an import from coastal Vietnam.

The pattern that emerges from the study of this extraordinary period of this extraordinary period of history is that from 500 BCE onwards, Thailand was linked east and west with a major maritime exchange route that brought knowledge of metallurgy and exotic ornaments as well as religious and social influence. We can assume therefore that the seeds of the succeeding Thai civilisations were already sewn at the dawn of the first millennium of the Christian Era. A period that was until relatively recently considered a cultural void, was in fact a time of complexity and growth that produced beautifully crafted objects that today provide us with tantalizing glimpses of the ancient past. Multidisciplinary scientific study is



uncovering vital new information every year and we can only assume that our understanding of prehistoric Thailand will continue to expand.



*Fig. 16 Ceramics, Ban Chiang*



*Fig. 17 Bronze Bowl, Ban Don Ta Phet*





*Fig. 18 Ear Ornament, Vietnam (?), Nephrite*

#### 4.3 Mon / Dvaravati (6th – 11th c CE) - Room 403

The collapse of the Funan Empire in the mid-sixth century permitted the emergence of many independent polities throughout Southeast Asia. One of these entities was called Dvaravati. It had developed from prehistoric and historic societies in present-day Central Thailand that had assimilated aspects of Indian culture brought to them through trade. Today, this Mon / Dvaravati polity, which flourished from the 6th to 11th century, is considered Thailand's oldest kingdom. This fascinating civilisation is also recognized as the earliest Buddhist culture in the region; the centre from where Buddhism spread to other parts of the country. Hubs of Dvaravati culture were Nakhon Pathom, Lopburi and U Thong. The term Dvaravati is also used to describe an art style that flourished from the 7th to 11th century throughout almost the entire area of present-day Thailand.

Important sites of Dvaravati architectural remains and art objects include Nakhon Pathom, U Thong and Khu Bua in the central area, Si Maha Phot to the east and Muang Fa Daed in the Northeast. To the south, Dvaravati culture penetrated as far as Songkhla. The most northerly site of Dvaravati influence was Haripunjaya (modern Lamphun) which persisted until the late 13th century.

Little is known about the political organisation of Dvaravati. It was most probably a 'kingdom' which consisted of a group of cities loosely linked together by cultural and family ties. What we do know of Dvaravati derives mainly from the vast amount of superb sculpture which remains. Archaeological evidence suggests that the majority of the people of Dvaravati were Mon and the language they spoke was Mon, which is related to the Khmer language and several other dialects still spoken throughout Southeast Asia. Judging from the finds, the predominant religion was Hinayana (Theravada) Buddhism, though Mahayana Buddhism was also practised. Some finds of sculptures of Hindu gods indicate that Hinduism was followed too.

The Mon were highly skilled artists who excelled in stone sculpture, stucco and terra cotta architectural decoration, and, to a lesser degree, bronze work. Their art style was mainly influenced by the Gupta and post-Gupta styles which flourished in central and western India between the 4th and 8th centuries CE.

However, the facial features of Dvaravati Buddha images exhibit pronounced local elements - a large face, curved eyebrows joined at the bridge of the nose, prominent eyes partly closed, a broad nose, and full and well-defined lips. The hair is in large spiral curls with a cylindrical ushnisha. In contrast to earlier, Gupta-influenced images which display a tribhanga curve of the body, later Dvaravati images exhibit rigid symmetry. The body stands in an erect posture on a lotus pedestal; both hands perform the same mudra; the outer robe covers both shoulders and clings closely to the body, giving an impression of nude asexuality; both sides of the robe are identical.



*Fig. 19 Wheel of the Law with Deer, 7th-8th c CE, Mon / Dvaravati, Stone*

*A considerable number of Wheels of the Law have been found in the Nakhon Phatom region and western Thailand. These wheels, often accompanied by a reclining deer, are symbolic of the ever-expanding Buddhist doctrine, set in motion by the first sermon the Buddha preached in the Deer Park in Sarnath, India.*

Seated Buddha images are either in Indian style (with legs crossed or folded) or in European style (with legs hanging down). A distinctive contribution of Dvaravati sculpture is the large free-standing Wheel of the Law, an aniconic symbol of the Buddha's first sermon. Although they are found in India as well, where they symbolised the Chakravartin, or Universal Emperor, their occurrence in Southeast Asia is limited to Dvaravati areas. Decorated with floral patterns which show Gupta influence, these wheels were erected on high pillars and placed in temple compounds.



*Fig. 20 Buddha image (detail of full-length statue), 7th-8th c CE, Mon / Dvaravati, Limestone*

*The serene face of this Buddha image still shows traces of lacquer. The facial features are typical of Dvaravati images.*



*Fig. 21 Head of Buddha Image, 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> C CE, Mon / Dvaravati, Terracotta*



*Fig. 22 Human Face, 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> C CE, Mon / Dvaravati, Stucco*



*Fig. 23 Buddha Preaching, 8th-9th C CE, Dvaravati, Bronze*

*This image reflects the regard for symmetry which was to prevail in later Dvaravati images.*



#### 4.4 Lopburi / Khmer (9th-15th c CE) Rooms 404, 405

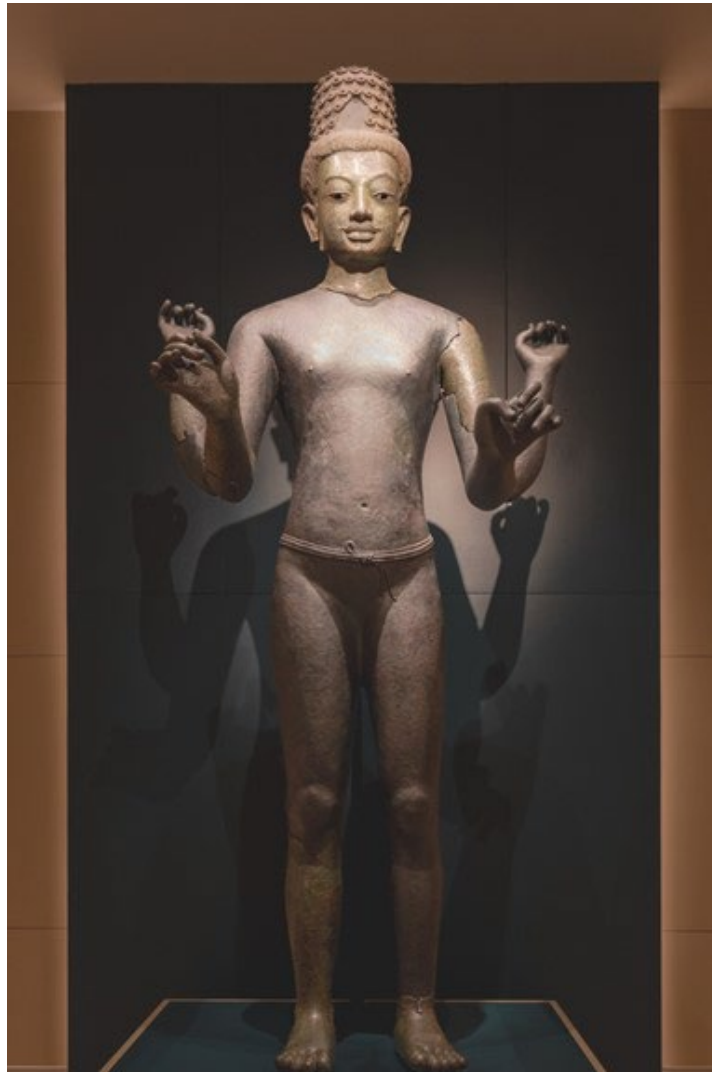


Fig. 24 Bodhisattva, 8th-9th c CE, Khmer / Kompong Prae, Bronze

*The colossal statue bears testimony to the spread of Mahayana Buddhism and expertise in metallurgy in the Khorat Plateau.*

Flourishing during the 9th to 15th centuries, the Khmer Empire expanded its commercial and political sphere to become the most powerful state in Southeast Asia. Initially, fundamental Hindu beliefs influenced Khmer architecture, sculpture and rituals. Over time, however, rulers began to mix Hindu cosmology and astrology with Mahayana, Tantric and Theravada Buddhist beliefs.

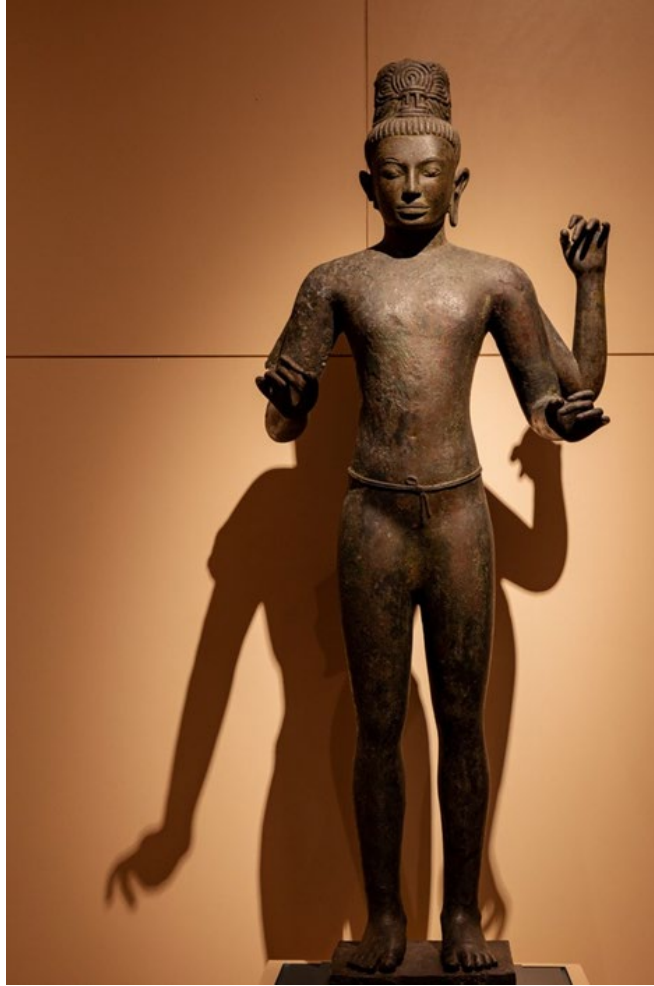
During King Suryavarman's reign in the early 11th century, a complex system of symbolic artistic structures and elements was implemented in Lopburi, an annexed Khmer administrative capital and Theravada Buddhist polity, thus merging Dvaravati art with Khmer designs. During the reign of King Jayavarman VII (1181–1215), rest houses and roads were built, facilitating travel and control over the vast empire. Numerous Khmer settlements were established, and many monuments were built throughout

Thailand. A millennium after the decline of the Khmer Empire, the shadow of its former grandeur is still omnipresent in Thai art and architecture today.

The art of the Khmer in Thailand has often been called Lopburi Art. This designation has been given to indicate that the art was not merely the creation of the Khmer from the Angkor area but that of the local peoples as well, who introduced new stylistic ideas of their own and left their distinctive imprint.

The sculpture of the Khmer was meant to be viewed in the round. The bodies of the early images are especially well articulated. The anatomy is presented correctly, carefully, sensitively, and naturally. This is the case with the 8th- 9th century bronze four-armed bodhi- sattva in Fig. 24, one of the many Mahayanist deities from Prakhon Chai on the Khorat Plateau in Northeastern Thailand. Not only is the youthful body finely delineated but the face and headdress show a master's hand. Of the same period is the magnificent bronze head of yet another Mahayanist deity, thought to be Maitreya, the future Buddha, although the stupa which probably once adorned the elaborate headdress to indicate Maitreya (Fig. 23, 26) is now missing. The 70 cm height of the head gives an indication of the tremendous size of the bronze image and the technical as well as artistic capabilities of the creators.

Much of the Khmer sculpture is of stone. An outstanding example is the figure of Uma, the wife of the Hindu god Shiva (Fig. 27). She is presented as a youthful figure with braided hair and firm breasts. The upper part of her body is left uncovered as is usually the case with statues of Khmer feminine figures. She wears a long-pleated sarong with a U- shaped top at the front, typical of the style of the 11th century, often called Baphuon style after the type site in Cambodia. The extremely finely wrought statue of a Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhist deity seen dancing with one leg poised high in dramatic action (Fig. 29) is probably half a century later. Vajrayana Buddhism often called Tantrism, had come to Thailand from India via Cambodia by the 10th century and had made significant inroads in the art of Northeastern Thailand by late Baphuon and early Angkor Wat times (1110-1175). The style of the period is indicated by the male somphot, or loincloth, with the U at the front and a butterfly bow at the back. The figure wears a diadem and has a conical headdress.



*Fig. 25 Bodhisattva, 9th c CE., Khmer / Kompong Prae, Bronze*

*In Mahayana Buddhism, images of 'bodhisattva' represent saint-like beings to whom devotees may pray.*



*Fig. 26 Detail of Fig. 24, 8th-9th c CE, Khmer / Kompong Prae, Bronze*

*The intricate headdress of this 'bodhisattva' may originally have featured a 'stupa', which would identify the image as Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future.*



*Fig. 27 Uma, 9<sup>th</sup> c CE, Khmer / Baphoun, Stein*

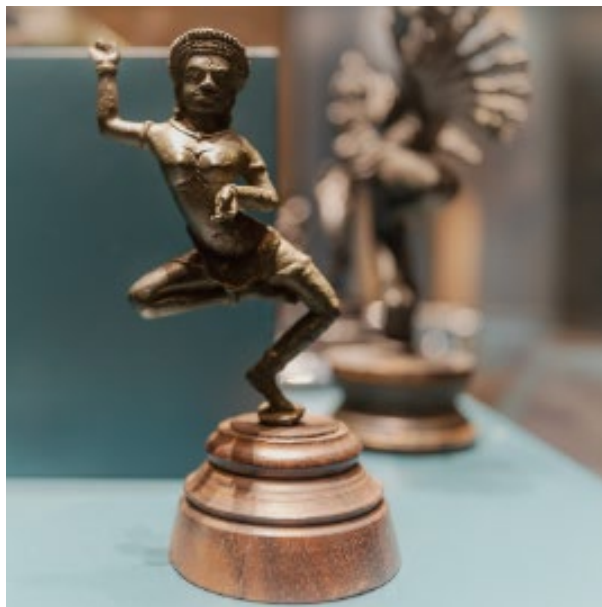
*Consort of the Hindu god Shiva, this beautiful stone Figure provides us with a glimpse of the feminine fashions of the time.*





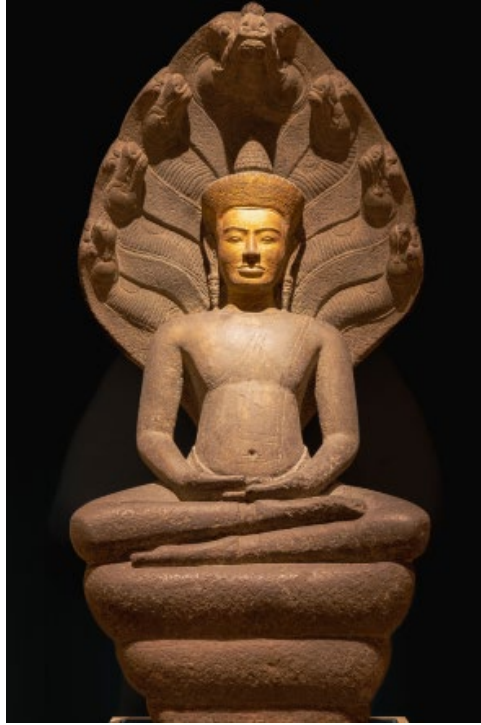
*Fig. 28 Hevaraja, 12th – 13th c CE, Lopburi, Bronze*

*Hevaraja is the personification of enlightenment in Tantric Buddhism.*



*Fig. 29 Deity, 13th c CE, Lopburi, Bronze*

*This Tantric Buddhist deity dances to stamp out ignorance in the Universe.*



*Fig. 30 Crowned Buddha Protected by 'Naga', 12th c CE. Khmer / Angkor Wat, Stone*

*Austere and regal, this image represents the Buddha as a universal ruler.*



*Figure 31 Crowned Buddha, 12th-13th c CE, Lopburi, Bronze*

*Dressed in royal attire, this image performs the gesture of "Dispelling Fear". The palms of the hands are decorated with the Wheel of the Law.*

Buddha images of the Baphuon and following periods were often depicted seated upon the coils of the great naga Muchalinda, with the serpent's seven-headed hood providing protection above. Unlike Mon / Dvaravati art, where the heads are outward looking, the heads of the Khmer-influenced nagas look upward to the central head. Crowned Buddha images were popular: an excellent example is the Angkor Wat period statue found at Wat Na Phra Men in Ayutthaya (Fig. 29). This regal looking Fig. of stone wears long ear pendants and has a conical ushnisha decorated with lotus petals.

The Buddha image in Fig. 30 has been decorated with many of the ornaments of royalty. He wears not only a crown and long ear pendants but armlets and an elaborate necklace and belt as well; in affixing such decorations the sculptor was reinforcing the concept of the Buddha as a universal emperor. It is thought that initially, the Khmer decorated their images with real jewellery but as time went by the sculptors placed the adornments directly on their creations.



Fig. 32 Lintel, 12th-13th c CE, Khmer / Baphuon, Stone

*Lintels ornamented doorways to Khmer temples. The scene depicted on this lintel symbolises the recreation of the universe after it has suffered cyclic destruction. Reclining on an aquatic creature, the god Vishnu dreams of the ideal universe. Flanked by two celestial beings and seated on a lotus emanating from Vishnu's navel, is the four-faced god Brahma, the Creator, whose task is to put the dream into effect.*

Hindu deities also were of tremendous importance in Lopburi Art as is indicated by the crowned Angkor Wat period image of the Hindu god Vishnu dominating a lintel that once capped a doorway of a Khmer temple. During the Angkor Wat period, scenes depicting stories were very popular decorations for lintels. On the lintel in Fig. 32, Vishnu sleeps on an aquatic animal floating on the primaeval waters. The universe has been destroyed and he is dreaming an ideal vision of what the new universe should be. From his navel rises a radiant lotus and from this lotus emerges Brahma, the Creator, at the centre, with a deity on each side. At Vishnu's feet are his two consorts: Bhumi, the goddess of the Earth, and Lakshmi, the goddess of Fortune.



*Fig. 33 Radiating Avalokiteshvara, 13th c CE, Khmer / Bayon, Stone*

The Angkor Wat period was followed by the Bayon, named after the huge Buddhist complex at Angkor Thom built by the great Khmer King, Jayavarman VII (1181-1219). That remarkable ruler was about 55 to 60 years of age when he ascended to the throne. He had become a firm adherent of an obscure Tantric cult worshipping a trinity consisting of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and the feminine deity, Prajnaparamita, the goddess of transcendental wisdom. Unique statuary of this trinity began to appear throughout Jayavarman's expansive realm with facial features expressing contentment and inner peace. Often thought to represent a portrait of Jayavarman VII, the faces are characterized by a sweet, introspective smile, downcast eyes and a pensive look. One of the most significant of these images is that of the radiating bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Fig. 33) who represents compassion and is an emanation of Amitabha, the Cosmic Buddha of the Western Paradise.

The statue of the Buddha Amitabha is in the headdress. The upper part of the bodhisattva's body is entirely covered with tiny images. More images adorn the ankles and toes like bands of anklets and toe rings. At the centre of the chest and in the region around the waist are seated crowned Fig. s, apparently female and probably representing Prajnaparamita. The statue radiates hope and protection in every direction and looks down upon mankind with compassion and mercy. Spiritual projection is put above any physical consideration or anatomical correctness.





*Fig. 34 Garuda, 13th-14th c CE, Lopburi, Bronze*

*This magnificent chariot fitting represents the half-man, half-bird, Garuda, the mount of the Hindu god Vishnu.*



*Fig. 35 Guardian Lion, 12th-13th c CE, Khmer / Bayon, Stone*

*Lions were considered guardians of the Buddhist teachings, and their images were placed at temple doorways.*

In the art of the period animals and birds are often depicted since they play meaningful roles in popular beliefs. The Garuda is a huge bird with broad wings; capable of high flight and full of courage; as such he represents the sun. His eternal enemy is the naga, who lives in the oceans and thus indicates the waters. Together they suggest fertility. The bronze Garuda in Fig. 33 was used as a fitting for a chariot.

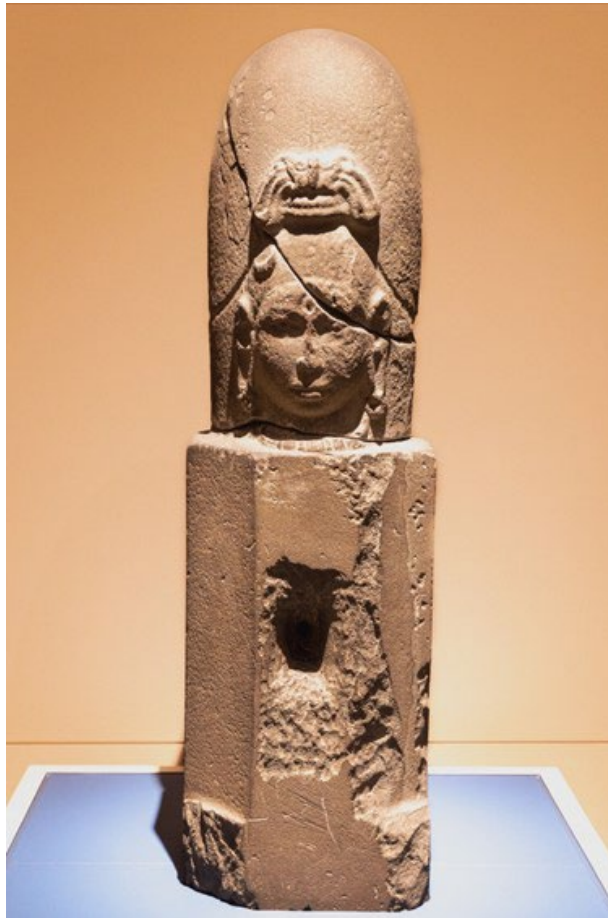
The Buddha has often been described in leonine terms since the lion is the most powerful and noblest of the beasts. Lions were often used to adorn Khmer temples. Those of the Bayon period, like the stone lion in Fig. 34, are distinguished by their V-shaped vests and their very toothy, broadly smiling mouths.



*Fig. 36 Buddha, 13th-14th c CE, Lopburi, Sandstone*

After the death of King Jayavarman VII, the Khmer began to lose their hold both militarily and artistically. The design of the post Bayon Buddha image (Fig. 36) perhaps presages the imminent freedom of the Thais. The facial expression is still very gentle, but the eyes are open and very much aware of the surroundings. The long shoulder flap and line of the robe over the arm suggest a renewed influence from Pala India via Cambodia. The ear lobes are long as if they once had jewelled earrings dangling from them. The 'ushnisha' is formed of lotus petals. Most significantly, there is a broad band on the forehead, a feature that would become synonymous with the forthcoming U Thong and early art of the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya.

#### 4.4.1 Hindu Gods



*Fig. 37 Ekamukhalinga, 6th c CE, Peninsular art, Stone*

*Found at Chaiya (Surat Thani Province), this phallic representation of Shiva derives undoubtedly from an Indian prototype and displays the stern face of the god.*

Because of its geographical position midway in the Southeast Asian region, ancient Thailand served as a gateway for Indian trade with Cambodia and regions further north as early as the 3rd to 5th centuries CE.

That certain widely dispersed areas developed as prosperous Indian trade entrepôts is evident in the discovery of particularly fine Indian-influenced sculptures dating from the 6th to 9th centuries in the southern regions of Thailand, such as at Takua Pa (Phang Nga Province), and at Chaiya (Surat Thani Province), as well as deep within the interior, at Dong Si Maha Phot (Prachinburi Province) and at Si Thep (Petchabun Province).

Sculptural representations and emblems of various Hindu gods have been found. These include the god Shiva, usually represented by the linga (phallic symbol), the earlier dated ones being carved in a realistic manner whereas the later ones are more stylised, and may have the face of the god carved on them (ekamukhalinga).

In archaeological findings, the images of Vishnu, or his avatar Krishna, predominate. These beautiful images are imbued with a dynamic masculine grace and differ profoundly from the traditionally serene and static images of the Buddha.

Images of the multiple armed Vishnu found in the South were carved either in high relief against a back support slab or in the full round. In the latter case, support was provided by the legs and robe flap at the base, and perhaps by the club that the statue held, as suggested by vestiges of it still visible on the base (Fig. 38).



*Fig. 38 Vishnu, 6th-7th c CE, Peninsular art, Stone*



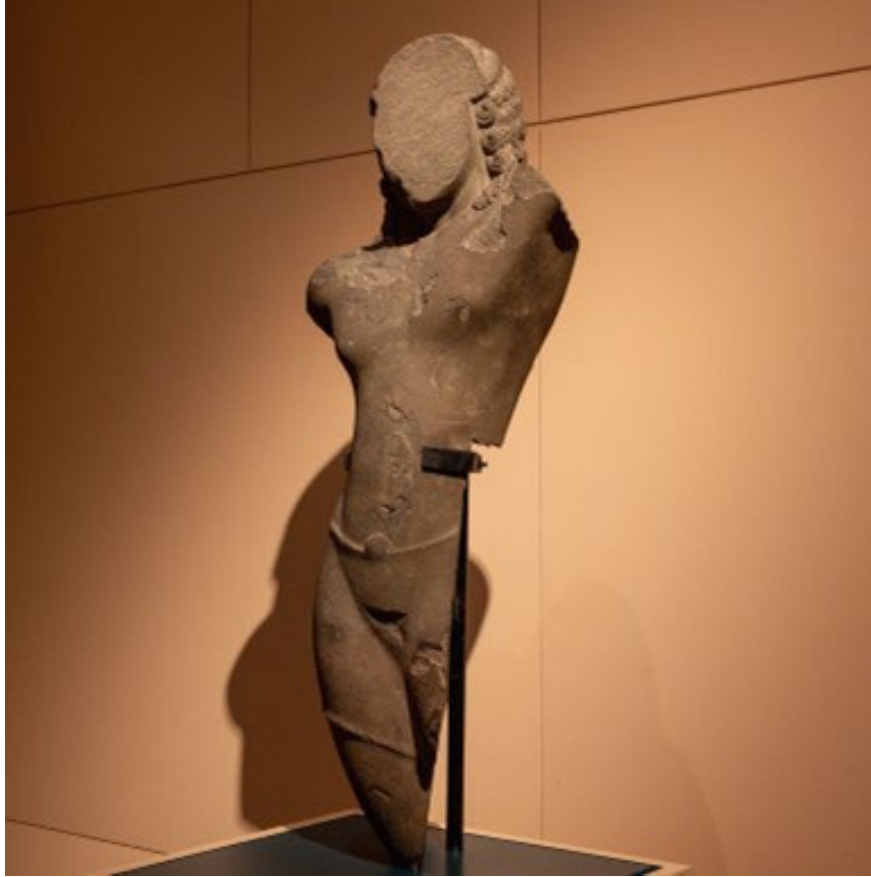


*Fig. 39 Vishnu or Krishna, 7th-8th c CE, Si Thep, Stone*

*The high headdress suggests this image, in a graceful 'tribhanga' pose, is Vishnu. However, the position of the upraised arm may indicate this is Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, upholding the mountain Govardhana to protect his devotees.*

Images of Vishnu or his avatar, Krishna, found in Central Thailand (Si Thep), differ from those of the Peninsula in aesthetic vitality as well as apparently technical innovation in their modelling, as the former appear to have been carved fully in the round, without any supporting structures. In contrast to the Peninsular images, these Si Thep images display the god clothed in the barest of coverings, with usually only the suggestion of a loincloth draped between the legs. The austere simplicity of the sculptures contrasts with the intricately curled coiffure of the images.

While the Peninsular images are generally symmetrical in stance and gesture, the Si Thep images have a daring and graceful asymmetry of posture, with the body in the sinuous S-shaped curve and the arms' disposition further enhancing this asymmetry. Presumably, because these images were carved without support, only torsos with partially intact arms and legs survive. Even so, their grace and vitality are undeniable.



*Fig. 40 Krishna Holding Aloft Mount Govardhana, 6th-8th c CE, Si Thep, Stone*

#### 4.5 Srivijaya (7th -13th c CE) – Room 406

According to inscriptions, a powerful empire known as Srivijaya, ruled by the Sailendra dynasty from Central Java, held sway in the Indonesian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula from the late 7th to the end of the 13th century. By the end of the last quarter of the 8th century, this Srivijaya empire appears to have expanded its power into Peninsular Thailand as far as the Isthmus of Kra, possibly to ensure the establishment of safe land routes for commerce between India and China, avoiding the Straits of Malacca, where piracy prevailed between the 6th and the 8th centuries.

The location of the Srivijaya capital itself is the object of much ongoing debate. Some scholars believe that it was based in Palembang in southern Sumatra, where five stone inscriptions dated to the last quarter of the 7th century have been found. Others believe it may have been in Southern Thailand, at Chaiya, where many antiquities have been unearthed. So far, however, only one stone inscription dated 775 has been discovered there. This inscription records the construction of Mahayana Buddhist monuments by the kings of Srivijaya and mentions a dynastic marriage between the royal house of Chaiya and the Sailendra or ruling dynasty of Central Java, thus cementing close relations between the two polities in the last quarter of the 8th century.

This Sailendra dynasty practised Mahayana Buddhism. Sculptural and architectural relics dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries found in Southern Thailand reveal that Mahayana Buddhism also predominated in the Peninsular region during that time.

The art of this period and region is known as Srivijaya after the name of this extended maritime kingdom. Its sculptures are varied, and the date attributed to each of them is tentative. Several artistic influences have contributed to this style. Before the 8th century, a distinctive Mon influence, coming from the Mon kingdom of Dvaravati in Central Thailand, is evident in early Srivijaya art. However, in the main, the art of Srivijaya bears a close resemblance to Indo-Javanese art, reflecting complex influences from India: Amaravati, Gupta and Pala. From the 11th century, when most of Central and Northeastern Thailand came under Khmer suzerainty, Khmer influence is also discernible in late Srivijaya sculptures.

Towards the middle of the 13th century, the Srivijaya empire began to break apart, possibly because of the consolidation of Chinese maritime supremacy at the end of the Sung dynasty (960-1279). In addition, as recorded in King Ramkhamhaeng's stone inscription of 1292, the new, powerful kingdom of Sukhothai in northern Central Thailand penetrated the peninsula as far as Nakhon Sri Thammarat, bringing the southern regions under its rule.



*Fig. 41 Bodhisattva, 8th-9th c CE, Srivijaya, Bronze with silver inlay*



*Fig. 42 Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, 6th c CE, Srivijaya, Stone*

*Found at Chaiya (Surat Thani Province) by HRH Prince Damrong Rajanubhab in 1905. The image in Fig. 41 is thought to be Padmapani, a form of Avalokiteshvara. It is clear that the image was carved fully in the round and stood in the tribhanga pose. The scarf underneath the sacred cord depicts an antelope head, indicative of Avalokiteshvara.*

*Also found at Chaiya, this image of Avalokiteshvara (Fig. 42) is one of the earliest and most beautiful stone sculptures found in Peninsular Thailand. Modelled on the Indian Gupta and post-Gupta school, it has retained the 'tribhanga' pose or triple flexion of the body, the right hip thrust out and the left knee bent. The 'bodhisattva' wears a long 'dhoti' secured by a narrow belt. A Fig.*



*of the Buddha Amitabha in the lower part of the chignon, and the antelope skin hanging from the left shoulder, identify the Fig. as Avalokiteshvara.*



*Fig. 43 Buddha Protected by 'Naga', 1291 CE, Srivijaya, Bronze*

*Discovered at Wat Wieng, Chaiya (Surat Thani Province), this large bronze image is often called the Buddha of Grahi, the ancient name for present-day Chaiya. This is an interesting statue as the Buddha, seated in a folded leg posture on the coils of a 'naga', is in the position of 'Subduing Mara', and not in meditation as is usual when he is portrayed with the 'naga'. There is a five-line inscription in the Khmer language on the pedestal with a date now interpreted as equivalent to 1291. The 'naga' shows strong Khmer features, particularly in the style of the heads, while the plain cranial protuberance on the head of the Buddha, decorated with a 'bodhi' leaf, and the wide pleated end of the robe on the left shoulder, denote late Srivijayan development, seen in Peninsular Thailand in the 13th and 14th centuries.*

## 5 Praphat Phiphitthaphan Building (North Wing)

### 5.1 Lan Na (1266 – 1939) – Room 501



*Fig. 44 Buddha Images, Lan Na*

A theory that traditionally has been given considerable credence holds that by the 11th c CE, migrating Thai tribes had infiltrated and settled in regions of northern Thailand. By 1297, under the leadership of King Mangrai, a northern kingdom known as Lan Na extended from Chiang Saen through to Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang. Chiang Mai was established as its capital. The kingdom shared the Buddhist beliefs and to some extent the culture of the earlier Mon kingdom of Haripunjaya in the Lamphun region.

The art produced in this kingdom is the object of scholarly debate, as many influences have contributed to its distinctive qualities, including those from Haripunjaya, Angkor, Sukhothai, Sri Lanka, India, and Burma. Though there is much controversy over the origin and dating of northern Buddha images, this region can be said to have produced two characteristic types of representations. The first type is sometimes called 'Early Chiang Saen' after the town where many such images were found, whereas the second type has traditionally been known as 'Late Chiang Saen' or 'Chiang Mai'.

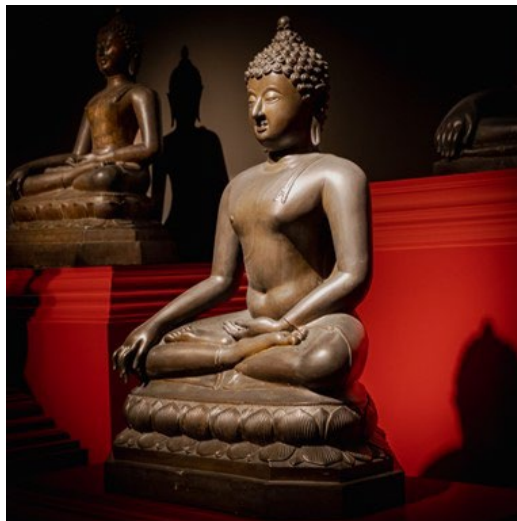
Images of the first type have a solidity of the body and give an impression of great strength and virile energy, with massive shoulders, the chest inflated as if with yogic breath, and a slim waistline. Typically, surmounting the conical ushnisha is a knob-like finial, perhaps a lotus bud or a gem thought to have derived from contacts with India. Below the prominent curl-covered hairline, the face is round and fleshy, almost sensual. The massive, almost corpulent body is clothed in a robe worn in the open mode, and the flap of the robe is short, ending above the left breast. The right hand touches the right knee in the mudra of 'Subduing Mara'. Adding to the impression of restrained strength, the legs are crossed, with the ankles locked in the full lotus position, the soles of the feet pointing upwards. Images of this type are invariably seated on bases decorated with lotus petals and stamens. This decorative effect further emphasizes the virile simplicity of the image itself.

The finding of more images of this type but with dates ranging from 1469 to 1565 inscribed on their bases has led to controversy as to whether the undated but putatively earlier images in the Chiang Saen style are in fact contemporaneous with these later dated images. However, some scholars suggest that the differences in aesthetics and modelling between the two types reflect a difference in time and that the dated images may have been derived from a Pala type in India that was popular between the 8th to 12th c CE. According to chronicles, devout Buddhists from the kingdom went to the great Mahabodhi Temple in India during the reign of King Tiloka in the mid-15th century. Perhaps the Pala- type Buddha images might have been introduced to Lan Na at this time.

From the mid-15th century onward, contact with Sukhothai led to Lan Na images being made slimmer of body. The face became more elongated and oval, and the Sukhothai flame rather than the lotus, in time surmounted the ushnisha. The short flap of the robe gave way to an elongated one that terminated above the waistline instead of the breast. Images with these characteristics are known as the 'Late Chiang Saen' or 'Chiang Mai' type.

During the 16th century, crowned Buddha images in royal attire appeared in Lan Na art. Generally, it was only in Mahayana Buddhism that images were crowned. As the kingdom followed the austere Theravada sect of Hinayana Buddhism, these crowned images are taken to represent the Buddha Shakyamuni in imperial disguise humbling the deluded and proud King Jambupati. This legend appears only in Southeast Asia.

The richness and grandeur of the Lan Na Kingdom, which flourished up to the Burmese conquest of the North in 1556, is also reflected in its handsome gilded miniature objects of art. Many such exquisite objects were unearthed from the many ruined chedi of Hod in Chiang Mai Province in 1960.



*Fig. 45 Buddha Image, Lan Na / Early Chiang Saen, Bronze*

*The Buddha seated on a lotus pedestal performs the 'Subduing Mara' gesture, signifying the moment of his enlightenment.*



*Fig. 46 Buddha Image, 16th-17th c CE, Lan Na Early Chiang Saen, Bronze*

*Although attributed to as late as the 17th century, this image is in the Early Chiang Saen style.*



*Fig. 47 Buddha Image, 15th-16th c CE, Lan Na / Late Chiang Saen style, Bronze.*

*In comparison to Early Chiang Saen statuary, this type of image shows Sukhothai influence in the flame-shaped halo, the folded posture of the legs, and the long flap of the upper garment ending at the navel.*



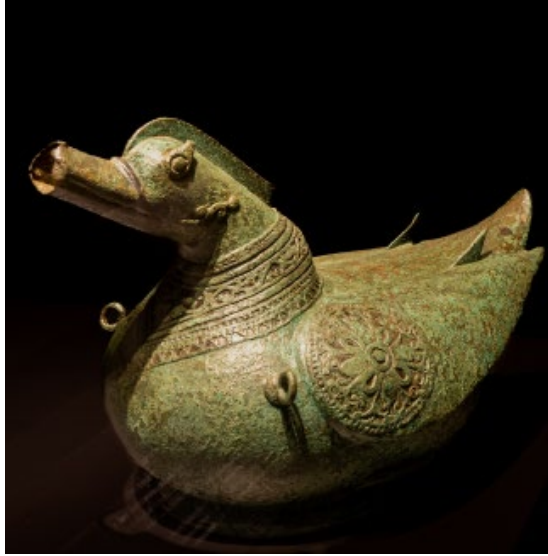
*Fig. 48 Crowned Buddha, 15th-16th c CE, Lan Na / Late Chiang Saen, Bronze*

*The complete royal attire includes a diadem, earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, rings, and anklets.*



*Fig. 49 Caparisoned Elephant, 19th c CE, Lan Na, Bronze.*

*The elephant with its fine decorative details has a crowned rider seated behind the 'howdah', which holds a lotus-bud-shaped offering jar.*



*Fig. 50 Vessel, 19th c CE, Lan Na, Bronze*

*This bronze water vessel in the form of a 'hamsa', or celestial goose, must have been made for ritual or ceremonial use.*



*Fig. 51 Reliquary Casket, 16th c CE, Lan Na, Stone and gold*

*The head of the crouching deer, turned towards the left, has a golden mask. The cavity on the animal's back, intended to enshrine relics of the Buddha, has an elaborately decorated, golden lid.*





*Fig. 52 Replica of Regalia, 16th c CE. Lan Na, Gilded metal*

*This model of regalia comprises a throne, umbrellas, fans, fly whisks and a pair of fine filigree sandals. Miniature votive objects such as this are believed to have been made as ceremonial offerings.*

## 5.2 Sukothai (1238 – 1378 CE) – Room 502



*Fig. 53 The Sukothai Gallery*

The origins of the Thai people are shrouded in legend. Current scholarly debate questions traditionally held beliefs that they had migrated over the centuries (before the 13th c CE) into northern and upper Central Thailand, possibly from regions of southern China, and perhaps areas further east or north. However, with these people in the Sukhothai region and their rise to greatness, the history of Thailand, or Siam, is said to have begun.

Until the middle of the 13th c CE, regions of what today are Northeast and Central Thailand were under Khmer rule. At that time, at Sukhothai, a group of independent Thai chieftains who owed allegiance to the Khmer were able to throw off the Khmer yoke and establish themselves as rulers.

Although this kingdom of Sukhothai (translated as 'The Dawn of Happiness') enjoyed only a brief period of independent flowering--less than 200 years before it was absorbed in 1438 by the power of Ayutthaya of the Central Plains--it is regarded by the Thais as a golden age, the fount of traditions still practised today.

Sukhothai and its regional towns reveal that although the Hindu beliefs of the banished Khmer were partially retained, it was the Buddhist faith that gave impetus to the new civilisation. The third King of Sukhothai, Ramkhamhaeng, regarded by Thais as the father of the nation and creator of the Thai alphabet, records in his 1292 inscription the kingdom's abundant prosperity and religious piety of the people who flock to numerous Buddhist sanctuaries, both inside and outside the city walls.

While Sukhothai architecture reveals a harmonious synthesis of various regional influences, the sculpture of the period is a unique expression of religious vitality, abounding as it does with radiant otherworldly images both in stucco and bronze. In the casting of bronze Buddha and Hindu images, the craftsmen of Sukhothai are unsurpassed.

To the uninitiated eye Sukhothai period Buddha images may at first appear awkward and distorted. This 'distortion' is deliberate, as sculptors did not base their images on human models but on close and literal interpretations of metaphors from religious verses and Pali language scriptures, which specified the many distinguishing marks or lakshana of the Great Being. Accordingly, the artist created images that were intended to reflect the superhuman spiritual and compassionate nature of the Buddha.

Characteristically, classic Sukhothai images are seated on a plain base, with the right hand placed near the knee, performing the gesture of 'Subduing Mara'. Soaring above the ushnisha is a Sukhothai innovation, the Thai flame, symbolising the Buddha's radiant spiritual energy. The hairline forms a delicate V-shape at the top of the brow. This shape is echoed by the curved sweep of the arched eyebrows which join at the bridge of a substantial almost hooked nose, shaped like a 'parrot's beak' according to the scriptures. Three lines incised at the neck are also marks of the Great Being, as are the elongated earlobes denoting the Buddha's princely origins. The shoulders of Sukhothai images are extremely broad, and the chest inflated, as if with yogic breath. As stipulated in the scriptures, the arms are long and sinuous, 'like the trunk of a young elephant'. This convention is particularly evident in the images of the Walking Buddha in the full round, a Sukhothai innovation too.

Bronze images of the Hindu gods were also cast during Sukhothai times. In anatomical proportions, they closely resemble the Buddha images. However, the Hindu gods are crowned and wear royal attire, being cult objects in royal court rituals performed by Brahmin priests.



*Fig. 54 Ramkhamhaeng Stele, 13th c CE, Sukhothai, Stone*

*The obelisk in Fig. 54 was found at Sukhothai in 1833 by the then prince-monk who was to become King Mongkut (Rama IV, r. 1851-1868). The inscription, parts of which appear to have been composed by King Ramkhamhaeng, describes life in the kingdom of the 'Dawn of Happiness' and is the first extant inscription firmly identified as using Thai script, traditionally said by the Thais to have been devised by King Ramkhamhaeng.*



*Fig. 55 Walking Buddha, 15th c CE, Sukhothai, Bronze*

*Walking images in the full round were an innovation of the Sukhothai period. The image in Fig. 55 displays the hallmarks of the classical Sukhothai style, which aimed not at naturalistic expression but a spiritual ideal. The robe, with its characteristic 'fishtail' notch at the navel, appears diaphanous, being outlined by ridges at the breast, ankles, and wrist. The delicately modelled hands and fingers 'like lotus buds opening' perform the act of 'Dispelling Fear'. Characteristic of the period are the broad shoulders and pendant arm 'like the trunk of a young elephant'. The flat feet and projecting heels are part of the anatomy characteristic of a Great Being.*





Fig. 56 Buddha Footprint, 15th c CE, Sukhothai, Bronze

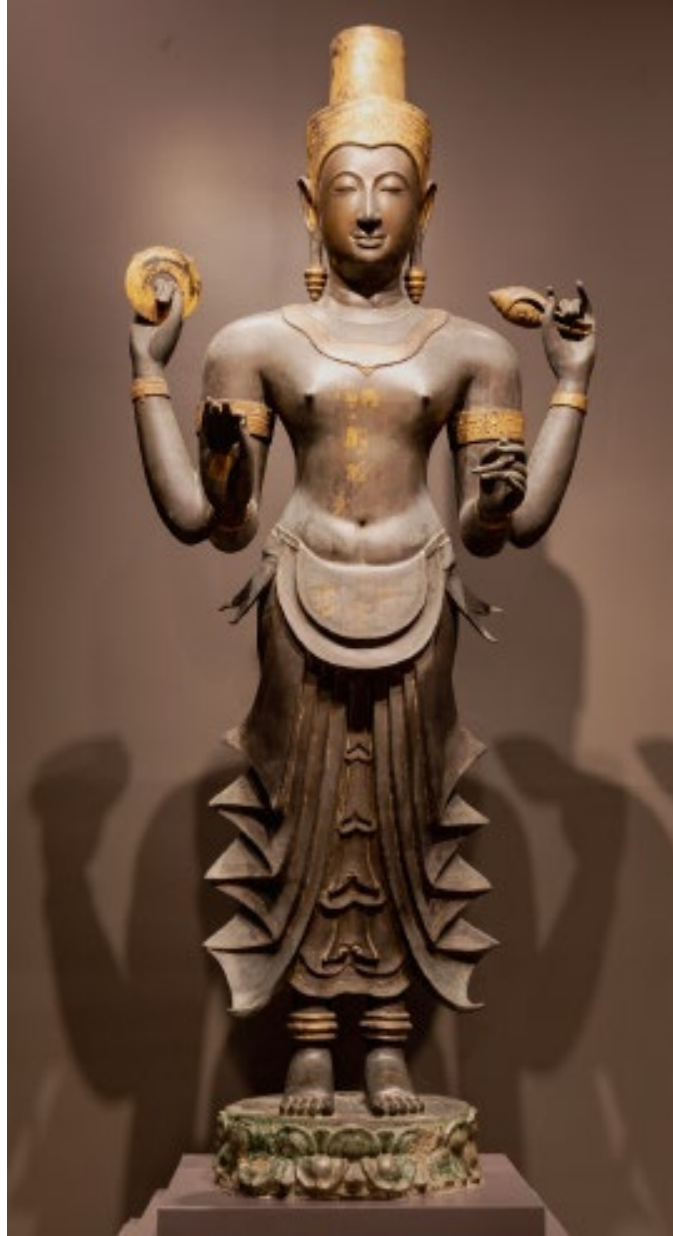
*In early Buddhist art in India, aniconic symbols represented the life and the teachings of the Buddha. While the Wheel symbolised the teachings, the footprint represented the presence of the Buddha, or the idea of his teachings having travelled to a specific place. Bronze representations of the Buddha footprint were venerated during the Sukhothai period. At the centre of this footprint is incised the Wheel of the Law. Inscribed in the wheel are many of the 108 auspicious signs listed in Pali language scriptures as 'lakshana', or characteristics of the Great Being. Concentric circles represent the seven ocean-fringed mountains at the centre of which is Mount Meru, the centre of the universe in Buddhist cosmology. At the outer edges, graceful deities pay homage to the teachings of the Buddha. Bordering the footprint are walking Buddha images and Buddhist disciples.*





*Fig. 57 Uma, 14th c CE, Sukhothai, Bronze*

*Uma, the wife of the Hindu god Shiva, is dressed in royal court attire of the Sukhothai period. The necklace, armbands and crown are embellished with gold paint. While the right hand held a now vanished object, the left shoulder and left arm display the modelling techniques common to Buddha images, being shaped 'like the trunk of a young elephant'.*



*Fig. 58 Vishnu, 14th c CE, Sukhothai, Bronze*

*Standing on a lotus pedestal, this monumental image of the Hindu god Vishnu replicates the bodily proportions of Buddha images of the time. However, crowned, wearing royal attire and still bearing some of the attributes of the god, (conch shell, discus or 'chakra'), the image clearly represents the preserver of the universe.*

### 5.3 Ayutthaya – U Thong (1350 – 1767 CE.) – Room 503

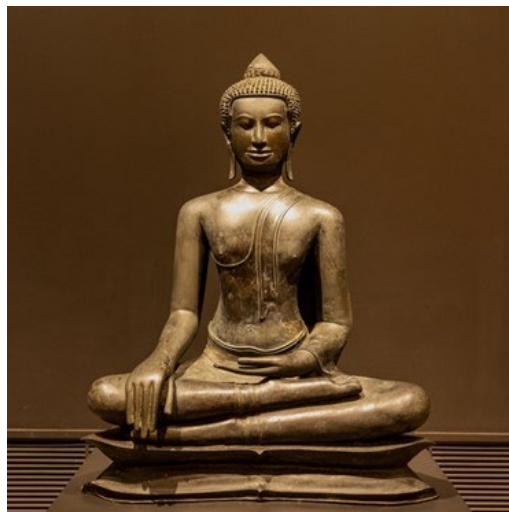
#### 5.3.1 U Thong

In 1350, King U Thong established the kingdom of Ayutthaya, which was to become one of the most important and long-lasting kingdoms on the mainland of Southeast Asia. The kingdom was situated in the Menam (Chao Phraya) basin, previously occupied by the Mon / Dvaravati and then by the Khmer, and was to the south of its political rival, Sukhothai. The name U Thong has been used to designate the art which flourished in these Central Plains areas of Thailand from the 12th until approximately the 15th century.

Many images in the U Thong style predate the founding of the Ayutthaya kingdom. The earliest images date from the 12th century but are usually incorporated by scholars into the Early Ayutthaya period. The U Thong style of Buddha image is divided into three different phases called by art historians A, B and C. Type A is the earliest (12th to 13th c CE), with types B and C somewhat overlapping in time (type B spans the 13th to 14th, while type C dates from the 13th to the 15th century).

Features common to almost all three types include a small band between the hairline and forehead, the robe draped in the open mode with a long flap from the left shoulder ending in a straight line above the navel. All have fingers of unequal length. The head is covered with small, sometimes spiky curls. The images are generally seated, with the legs folded, on a simple concave base and perform the gesture of 'Subduing Mara'. Bronze was the favored medium, although stucco and sandstone images were also made.

The faces of early U Thong images are square and show a mixture of Mon and Khmer characteristics. In later images, oval faces are the result of Sukhothai's influence, which was to prevail. In U Thong A images, the ushnisha is usually surmounted by a lotus bud. In styles B and C, this is replaced by an elongated flame. Similarly, the silhouette of the images of this time also becomes elongated. Graceful and slender, images of the U Thong C style were produced in great numbers and were to influence images of the whole Ayutthaya period.



*Fig. 59 Buddha Image, 13th-14th c CE, U Thong / Early Ayutthaya, Bronze*

*Typical of the U Thong style is the band delineating the hairline, the angularity of the body, and the concave base on which the image is seated.*



*Fig. 60 Buddha Image, 13th-14th c CE, U Thong A, Bronze*

*An extraordinary sweetness of expression is typical of U Thong A style images, in which are fused Mon, Khmer and Thai traditions.*



*Fig. 61 Head of Buddha Image, 14th c CE, U Thong B, Bronze*

*The broad band delineating the hairline accentuates the squareness of the face, characteristic of the U Thong B style. The 'ushnisha' is topped by a flame finial.*



*Fig. 62 Head of Buddha Image, 14th-15th c CE, U Thong C, Bronze*

*U Thong C style images are slender and attenuated. Sukhothai influence is evident in the face, the V-shaped hairband, and the flame finial.*

### 5.3.2 Ayutthaya

The Ayutthaya style of the Buddha image appeared in the 15th century and was inspired by both Sukhothai and U Thong characteristics. Bronze remained the favourite material for Ayutthaya sculpture. However, sandstone images occupy a prominent place in this period, and stucco images also seem to have been popular although few now remain. Wood sculptures were great works of art; the talent of the woodcarvers of Ayutthaya can still be seen on some doors and pediments of temples. But the burning of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767 destroyed most of them.

The images of the Ayutthaya period are represented in more varied attitudes and gestures than in any other period of Thai art. A great number of images show the Buddha seated in the position of 'Subduing Mara'. However, standing Buddhas were very popular, too. These standing images show a variety of hand gestures: hands clasped over the chest, holding the alms bowl, argumentation (teaching), or more often, dispelling fear, with one or two hands raised. Reclining images were frequent, some of them made in colossal proportions.

The garments worn by the Ayutthaya Buddha images reflect the dual influence of the Sukhothai and Lopburi/Khmer styles. In seated images, the robe is draped in the Sukhothai manner, and in standing images, the robe usually covers both shoulders in the Lopburi tradition.

The art of the Ayutthaya period is generally divided into four subperiods, reflecting the waxing and waning of various earlier artistic traditions as well as innovations of the time:

1350-15th century: Buddha images of the U Thong B and C styles were popular and formed a transition from the U Thong period to the Ayutthaya period. The body of the image is often elongated; the face is at first squarish and later oval, delineated by a hair band, with a Sukhothai type of flame on top of the ushnisha.

15th-17th century: Sukhothai influence prevailed, but U Thong C characteristics were evident. The facial expression changed. The smile became very faint or nonexistent, and often the expression was stern. The bases of images became more decorated, occasionally illustrating episodes in the life of the Buddha.

17th century: during the reign of King Prasat Thong (1629-1656), when the Khmer again became vassals of Ayutthaya, their artistic style became fashionable and was imitated. Sandstone images enjoyed a renewed popularity. In keeping with Khmer tradition, the eyes and lips are incised, and occasionally above the lips, there is a faint moustache. However, the oval face and the flame make the image distinctly Thai. 17th century-1767: during the late Ayutthaya period, crowned Buddha images were popular. These had existed previously, but generally, until the 17th century the Buddha, if crowned, was still depicted wearing a simple monastic robe. After that time the robe was increasingly ornamented. It seems that as the splendour of Ayutthaya increased, Buddha images, to reflect that splendour, became more ornately adorned. The headdress became taller and more elaborate, with decorative wing-like ornaments extending behind the ears, which were enhanced by earrings. Jewels fashionable during each reign were added around the neck, on the arms, and across the chest. By the end of the 17th century, embroidery-



like patterns and ornamentation decorated the Buddha's originally simple robe. In keeping with the majesty of royal garb, the facial expressions were stern and solemn.



*Fig. 63 Head of Buddha Image, 15th-16th c CE, Ayutthaya, Bronze.*

*This colossal bronze head (150 cm), with its highly stylized features, is testimony to the skill of Ayutthaya period bronze casting. Evident in the face is the influence of Sukhothai traditions incorporated in the art of Ayutthaya.*



Fig. 64 Fig. 64. Head of Buddha Image, 15th-16th c CE, Ayutthaya. Bronze

*This monumental head (112 cm) is remarkable for its serene spirituality. Incised above the lips is the faint suggestion of a moustache. Stucco hair curls, lacquered and gilded, originally adorned the bronze coiffure.*



Fig. 65 Head of Buddha Image, Ayutthaya

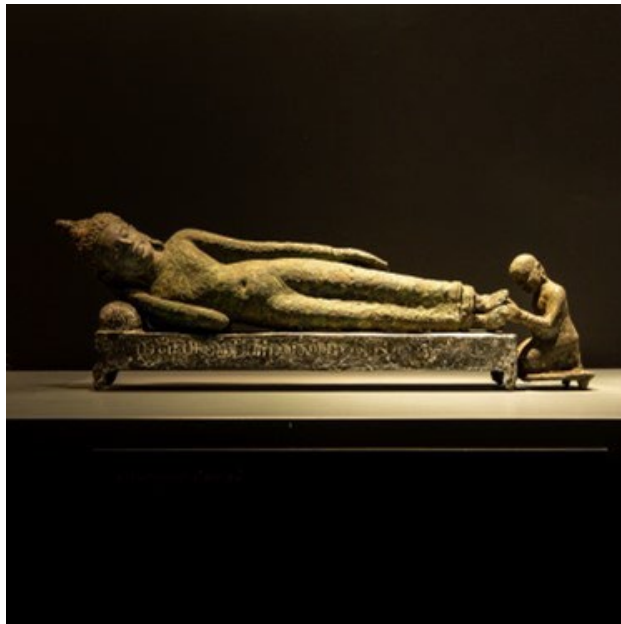
*Ayutthaya's power in Angkor led to the assimilation of Khmer ideas by the Thai in their architecture and art. Thus, while the features of this head are primarily in the Thai style, the use of sandstone as a medium, and the incision of a moustache above the lips*

*denote Khmer influence.*



*Fig. 66 Bodhi Tree, 15<sup>th</sup> C CE, Ayutthaya, Stone*

*The sacred Fig. tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.*



*Fig. 67 Reclining Buddha Image, 15th-16th c CE, Ayutthaya, Bronze*

*Ayutthaya reclining images of the Buddha generally symbolize His death and the ultimate aim of Buddhism, ending the cycle of rebirth.*





*Fig. 68 Buddha Subduing Mara, 14th-16th c CE, Ayutthaya, Bronze*

*This sculpture and the details on the pedestal represent the episode of the enlightenment of the Buddha.*



*Fig. 69 Crowned Buddha Image, 17th-18th c CE, Ayutthaya, Bronze*



*Fig. 70 Buddha Image, 17th c CE, Ayutthaya, Bronze*

*Characteristic of the late Ayutthaya period is the finely worked diadem, with 'hinges' protruding above the ears which are adorned with inverted lotus Khmer style earrings. The monastic robe covers both shoulders in the Lopburi style and has a simplified belt and frontal flap. The curve of the pendant arm reflects Sukhothai influence. The image performs the gesture of 'Dispelling Fear'.*

*Highly adorned images reflected the royal attire of the Ayutthaya kings. Superimposed on the monastic robe, itself decorated by embroidery designs at the borders, are elaborately intricate armlets, and a double baldric crossed at the chest. The tapering lavish headdress supports long pendants hung behind the ears.*



#### 5.4 Thonburi & Rattanakosin (1782 CE. – present) – Rooms 504, 505

After the destruction of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in 1767, a new kingdom was founded in Thonburi under King Taksin. Subsequently, in 1782, the capital was moved to Bangkok, with the foundation of the Chakri dynasty, whose kings are known retrospectively by the title 'Rama'. The art of this time, from 1782 until the present is known as the Rattanakosin or Bangkok style.

Rattanakosin art can be divided into two distinct artistic eras. The earlier era spans the reigns of King Rama I to King Rama III (1782-1851) and embraces classical Siamese traditions. The latter era dates from the reign of King Rama IV to the present, incorporating both classical and modern, Western elements.

During the early Rattanakosin period as many as 1,200 extant images were brought down to Bangkok from war torn areas of central and northern Thailand and were installed in the city's new monasteries. Artists vied to create lofty and ornate thrones for them. Consequently, relatively few images were made during that period. New images, when made, were either cast in bronze or carved from wood, and generally followed the Ayutthaya traditions of Buddha image making. These can barely be distinguished from their earlier prototypes. Though some were plain, many of these early Bangkok period images were elaborately decorated, with artists striving to outdo their predecessors in abundant ornamentation. Thus, the originally simple monk's robe apparel of the image was entirely decorated with embroidery-like designs, and heavy ornate bands embellished the edges of the robes.

Crowned Buddha images were also popular at this time, dressed in ceremonial vestments designed to resemble royal attire. These were extremely ornate, heavily decorated and bejeweled, with crown-like headdresses tapering to a pointed spire-like finial. The refinement and simplicity of Buddha images made in earlier periods gave way to regal ornamentation and, some would say, a loss of spirituality in the image.

During the reign of King Rama III, images of the Buddha were commissioned depicting thirty-four new attitudes, all drawn from important events in the life of the Buddha. However, the new attitudes proved unpopular, and the six traditional attitudes remain the most common.

Later Rattanakosin sculpture of the Buddha became more realistic and humanized, seeking historical accuracy. This resulted from the influence of King Rama IV (1851-1868) whose interest in the sciences and rational thinking led him to eliminate elements of the supernatural in Buddhism. Consequently, images favoured by King Rama IV were unusual because they lacked many supernatural attributes, including the ushnisha. In this humanizing tradition another unusual image of this later period, commissioned by King Rama V (1868-1910), is the standing Gandhara style Buddha in the gesture of 'Calling Down the Rain'. The distinctly humanized and Western anatomy and hairstyle, the pleated toga-like robe, are all reminiscent of Indian Gandhara iconography and epitomise the quest for historical accuracy.



*Fig. 71 Buddha 'Calming the Ocean', 19th c CE, Rattanakosin*



*Fig. 72 Crowned Buddha with Royal Attire, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Bronze*



*Fig. 73 Gandhara Style Buddha Image, 20th c CE, Rattanakosin, Bronze*



*Fig. 74 Birth, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Bronze*



*Fig. 75 Gautama the Ascetic, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Bronze*



*Fig. 76 Subduing Mara or Enlightenment, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Bronze*

**Fig. 74-76** Miniature Statues Depicting Major Events in the Life of the Buddha, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Bronze

*This group of bronze miniatures is from a set of twenty-nine miniatures depicting the main events in the Buddha's life, from birth to 'mahaparinirvana', the great total extinction of the Buddha. Sculpted during the reign of King Rama III (r. 1824-1851), these miniatures capture the vitality and piety of each event. They were part of the Royal Collection in the Grand Palace.*

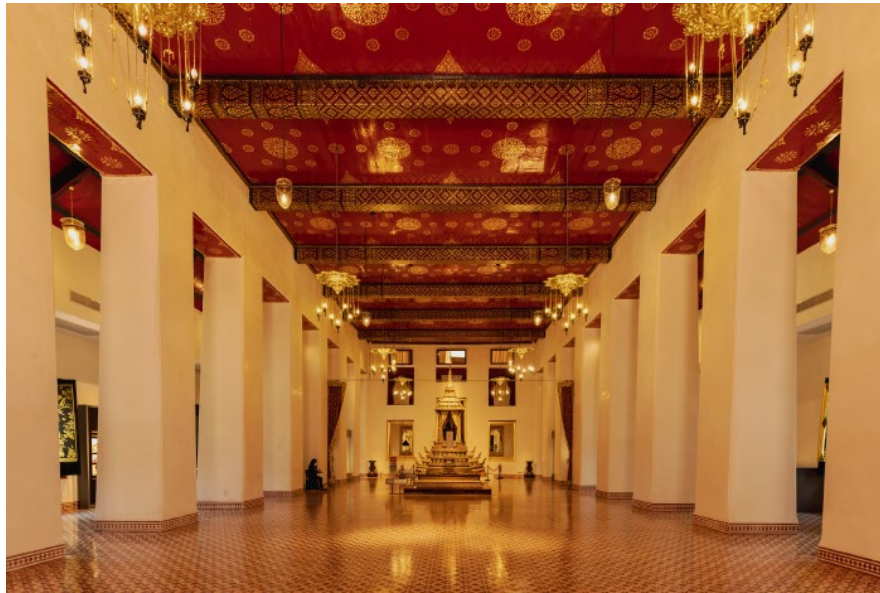
**Fig. 74** Birth: Queen Mahamaya holds on to the 'sal' tree while the future Buddha emerges from her side. The five-tiered umbrella indicates his princely rank.

**Fig. 75** Gautama the Ascetic: Siddhartha, now Gautama the ascetic, fasts until near death. Indra demonstrates with a three- stringed lute that neither the loose nor the rigid ways of life are correct, but only the middle path will lead to understanding and enlightenment.

**Fig. 76** Subduing Mara or Enlightenment: The Buddha (missing here) being challenged by the demon Mara calls Toranee, the Earth goddess, to be witness to all his virtues.

## 6 Phra Wiman (The Viceroy's Residential Complex)

### 6.1 The Issara Winitchai Throne Hall - Room 601



*Fig. 77 Issara Winitchai Throne Hall*

The throne hall was built during the reign of Rama III (1824–1851) as an extension of the viceroys' palace. Today, the throne hall is used for special exhibitions.

The original throne of the viceroys is still located at the far end of the room: the Bussabok Kroen Throne (Phromphak or Brahma's Face Throne) which dates from the Rattanakosin period and was carved from teak, gilded and decorated with glass mosaic under Rama I (ca. 1789). This throne was used for official occasions or audiences, standing originally in front of the palace.

Rama III's viceroy ordered the construction of the Issara Winitchai Throne Hall. Its dimensions were to be the same as the Amawinthara Winitchai Throne Hall in the Royal Palace. The throne was also renamed Bussabok Mala Throne, just like the one in the Royal Palace. The throne is square with a pyramidal roof supported by four triangular columns on a three-tiered base. Each of the steps is decorated with demons, garudas and deities in worshipful postures. The back of the throne was attached to the palace wall, the sides, decorated with magnificent wooden flames, supported the step screens.

The Bussabok Kroen Throne is one of the works of art that showcase the great craftsmanship in Bangkok in the 19th century.



## 6.2 Wang Na (Palace to the Front)



*Fig. 78 Palace to the Front, ca. 1890*

The earliest buildings on the grounds of the National Museum Bangkok were once a royal residence known as Wang Na (Palace to the Front). It was built during the reign of the founder of the Chakri dynasty, King Rama I (r. 1782- 1809), for his younger brother Chao Phraya Surasi. He was given the title of Maha Uparaja, which means viceroy and heir to the throne. In power and prestige, he came just after the king.

The Wang Na stands to the north of the Great Palace and faces east. The palace once occupied extensive land: it covered an area where Thammasat University, the School of Dramatic Arts, the School of Fine Arts, the National Theatre, and parts of the Sanam Luang are located today. High outer walls and towers enclosed the site. These were removed when the position of Maha Uparaja was abolished.

The Wang Na comprised three parallel two-storey palaces and eight other buildings that no longer exist. The custom of having three palaces goes back to a tradition from the Ayutthaya period, as people wanted to live in a different palace during each of the three seasons (summer, rainy season and winter). The three buildings were connected by small courtyards.

Under the first five kings of the Chakri dynasty, the heir to the throne or viceroy lived in the Wang Na. This position was abolished by King Rama V (r. 1868-1910) and, from then on, the heir to the throne was called the Crown Prince. It is interesting to note that the royal wives and children did not live in the palace

proper but occupied a special 'Inner Court' reserved for women and children, located at the rear of the property.

In 1926, King Rama VII (r. 1925-1935) made the entire palace the National Museum Bangkok. It thus came under the jurisdiction of the Royal Institute of Literature, Archaeology and Fine Arts. Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, the president of the institute and French archaeologist Georges Coedès (1886- 1969) reorganised and enlarged the museum, which forms the basis of today's National Museum Bangkok. In 1967, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX, opened the newly built North and South Wings of the National Museum Bangkok.

### 6.3 Royal Vehicles - Room 603



*Fig. 79 Yannamas, 18th-19th c CE, Ayutthaya, Wood*

*This 'yannamas' is gilded and decorated with mirrors. Reserved for kings and high-ranking officials in royal ceremonies, its user sat with hanging legs.*

A palanquin is a wheelless vehicle carried by porters. In Thailand, royalty and the elite travelled by royal palanquins, thus distinguishing them from commoners. The Ayutthayan period Palatine Law, Civil Hierarchy Law and other codes set out the principles governing the usage of royal palanquins. The Palatine Law defined which palanquin was reserved for kings and which type of litter was to be used by members of the royal family. The Civil Hierarchy Law defined the usage rights of royal palanquins for non-royalty. The royal palanquins were modernised during the Rattanakosin period, though still adhering to Ayutthaya traditions. Four types of royal palanquins are distinguished: yannamas, saliang, wo, and khanham.



*Fig. 80 Phra Saliang, 19th-20th c CE, Rattanakosin, Wood with rattan and ivory details*

*The 'saliang' was reserved for kings and members of the royal family.*



*Fig. 81 Wo Phanak Wai, 19th-20th c CE, Rattanakosin, Wood with rattan and fabric details*

*The 'wo' was reserved for members of the royal family, court ladies and high-ranking monks.*



*Fig. 82 . Phra Wo Siwikakan (Phra Wo Cho Fa), 19th-20th c CE. Rattanakosin, Wood with lacquer, decorated with mirrors and gilded fabric*



*Fig. 83 Detail of Khanham, 19th-20thc CE, Rattanakosin, Wood*

*A hammock-like palanquin used by government officials and high-ranking monks.*

## 6.4 Theatre Art and Music - Room 604

### 6.4.1 Musical Instruments

The exhibition of musical instruments in the National Museum Bangkok has undergone several reorganizations. During the reign of King Rama V, the instruments were arranged according to categories, such as wind instruments, stringed instruments, and percussion instruments. In 1926, the museum changed its curating philosophy to become both an archaeological and art museum. Musical instruments were now displayed to showcase their beauty and diversity based on ensemble types. In 1989, the musical instruments collection was rearranged once again to reflect the layout of a real orchestra. Instruments from neighbouring countries were added for comparison purposes. Gradually, the focus shifted to the exclusive display of musical instruments used in the royal court. Today, the exhibition narrates the story of musical development in Thailand through these exquisite works of art.



Fig. 84 Sor Ou, 19th c CE, Khmer, Wood and ivory

*The neck, bow and tuning pegs are made of ivory. The top of the neck is carved into a merman, the tuning pegs into mermaids. The back of the body is decorated with thin strips of ivory within a circle. The front of the body is covered with thin wood.*





*Fig. 85 Thon Mahori, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Ceramic, leather and rattan*

*The body of the drum is made of ceramic. Animal skin (calf, goat, python, or elephant) is fastened to the drumhead with split rattan or strands of braided silk. The player strikes the head with one hand while the other hand controls the sound on the other end. Usually, the body is decorated with inlaid mother-of-pearl, stained glass and/or 'bencharong lai namthong'.*



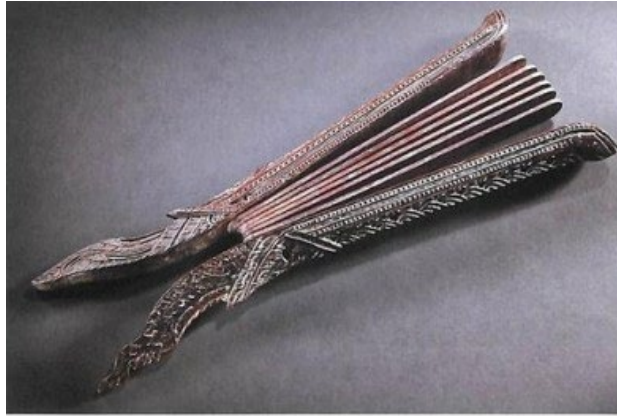
Fig. 86 Ranat Ek, 19<sup>th</sup> c CE, Rattanakosin, Wood and ivory

*The 'ranat ek' is believed to be the first instrument in the xylophone group. Initially, the bars were made of bamboo; later hardwoods were used. Its body is boat- shaped and it has 21 bars.*



Fig. 87 Khong Wong Lek, 19<sup>th</sup> c CE, Rattanakosin, Wood, ivory and metal

*The 'khong wong' is a percussion instrument. Initially, only one size was produced, later more sizes were added. This gong circle is made of rattan and decorated with ivory carvings.*



*Fig. 88 Krap Phuang, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin,*

*This fan-shaped rhythm instrument is made of six thin wooden pieces tied together at one end and covered with two pieces of finely carved wood.*



*Fig. 89 Trae Ngawn, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin*

*This Indian-influenced horn is used in royal ceremonies and processions.*

#### 6.4.2 Shadow Play Puppets - Room 605



*Fig. 90 Nang Yai (Nang Rueang)*

*Rama in Fig. 90 with Mangkonkanth*

In Thailand, two types of puppetry are distinguished: the two-dimensional shadow play puppets, presented both in front of and behind a brightly back-lit white screen, and three-dimensional puppets, presented on a stage. The shadow play puppets are collectively known as nang (projected image), while three-dimensional puppets are called hun (modelling).

Shadow plays are further subdivided into: nang yai (large shadow puppets) and nang talung (joint shadow puppets).

Nang yai is considered a classical art form; the precursor of the classical masked dance, the Khon. The puppets are quite large, sometimes standing two meters tall, are made of pierced leather, and depict key scenes of popular narratives. They are held aloft by the puppeteer by means of light bamboo rods attached to the puppets. During the performance, the puppeteer, accompanied by music, tells the story through

recital, singing and dance, with varying nang yai. Flickering light, fueled by a smoke-free coconut shell bonfire, imbues life to the puppets. Brightly coloured nang yai are used for daytime performances.

Nand talung is considered folk art. Popular lore is told, often lampooning the latest social and political topics. Nang talung puppets are much smaller than nang yai Fig. s and handled by a sitting puppeteer. The Fig. is held aloft on a single stick. Hands, arms, legs, and other body parts are moved by means of thin rods attached to the puppet during the performance. Traditionally, the entire performance is staged by a single puppeteer, the master puppeteer. Master puppeteers often carry the honorific 'nang' in front of their name.

Clappers, drums, gongs, and oboes accompany the puppeteer.

#### 6.4.3 Masks – Room 605



*Fig. 91 Hanuman, Phra Ram's Monkey Warrior, Papier-mache and mother-of-pearl*

Episodes from the Ramakien, the Thai adaptation of the Indian Ramayana epic, which narrates the victory of good over evil, are very popular. They are performed by masked actors and dancers, miming narrations recited or sung off stage, to the accompaniment of a piphat orchestra. This type of performance is known as the khon or masked drama. Although formerly all performers wore masks, nowadays only demon and animal characters wear them. Each mask has special features and colours, thus making them easily identifiable to the audience.



#### 6.4.4 Marionettes – Room 605



*Fig. 92 Hun Luang Puppets, 19th c CE*

*To left, is the leading demon character, Phra Pirap; to right, the leading male character, Phra Prat. When manipulated by the numerous strings from below, these puppets may perform intricate stylised gestures.*

Theatrical performances using shadow puppets have long been popular, particularly in Southern Thailand. In recent times, there has been a general revival of interest in performances using rod puppets, as well as string-controlled marionettes.

In Thailand, such marionette puppets are known by the term hun. Of note in the museum collection are the recently restored hun luang, the royal puppets. These puppets are unique to Thailand in that they are controlled from below. A complex string mechanism enables each of the puppet's joints to be moved freely and imitate the graceful movements of the human dancer.

Hun Thai or hun lek puppets are smaller in size than the hun luang and have fewer strings for manipulation.

## 6.5 Mother-of-Pearl Inlay - Room 606

The use of mother-of-pearl in inlaid decoration dates back as far as the 6th c CE in Thailand. Traces of it have been found in stucco embellishing a Dvaravati monument (Ku Bua, Ratchaburi). Apart from one or two isolated fragments found on Buddha images from the Srivijaya and Chiang Saen periods, little is known of the evolution of this medium of decoration until its full flowering during the late Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin periods, when it became popular to decorate doors, windows, furniture, and vessels with mother-of-pearl inlay.

Thailand is noted for its distinctive hoi fai, or flaming mother-of-pearl, from the turbo snail indigenous to the Gulf of Thailand. This shell, on catching the light, emits a deep pink and green lustre reminiscent of fire opals, making other varieties of mother-of-pearl appear pale by comparison.

To decorate an object in mother-of-pearl requires infinite patience and meticulous attention to detail. An object has first to be made either of wood in the case of doors, shutters, and bookcase panels, or of rattan in the case of circular vessels. The scene or design that is to decorate the object is sketched out in its entirety and is then transferred in the reverse onto tracing paper.

The shell, which is naturally curved, is cut with a small saw into pieces measuring approximately 2.5 cm. These pieces are then filed on a whetstone until they are reasonably flat. Since mother of-pearl is brittle and tends to snap, these pieces are then glued to discs of wood which are twice the thickness of the shell. After reinforcing, the shell is then cut with a special curved bow saw to the desired shape. As cutting proceeds, each piece of shell is immediately pasted into place on the design tracing.

The object to be decorated with mother- of-pearl is given several separate coatings of lacquer, a resin from the lacquer tree. While the final coat is still sticky, the mosaic of shell attached to the tracing paper is pressed face down into the lacquered surface. When the lacquer is completely dry, the tracing paper is peeled off by spraying with water. The hollows and ridges between the shell and lacquer surfaces are then filled with a paste made from charcoal mixed with lacquer. When completely dry, the lacquer surface is rubbed down with carborundum until smooth. Lastly, the object is polished with a dried banana leaf impregnated with coconut oil.

Most objects in the museum's outstanding mother-of-pearl collection date from the 19th century and were once used in the homes of the wealthy, in court ceremonies and for conveying food and alms to monasteries.



Fig. 93 Detail of Door

*A 'thepanom', a celestial Fig. , pays homage to the Buddha's teachings from amidst foliage and Chinese-style clouds.*



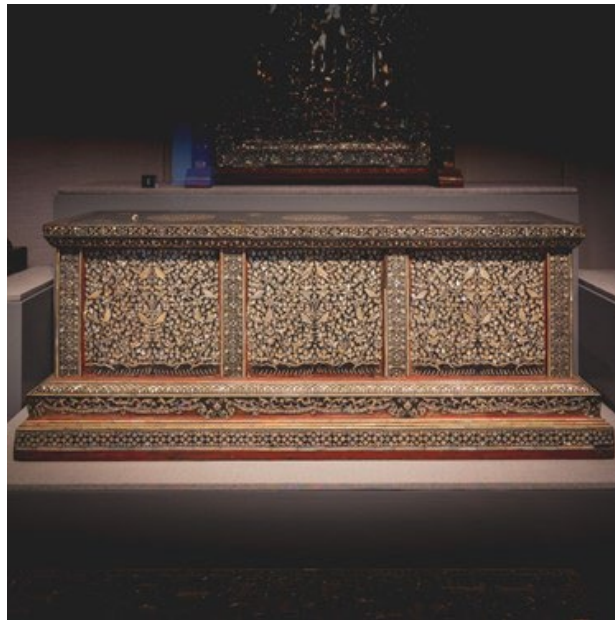
Fig. 94 Tiep Muk, 19<sup>th</sup> c CE, Rattanakosin

*This receptacle with a cone-shaped cover was originally used to present alms or offerings to a monastery. The cover is decorated with 'phum' (lotus bud) patterns surrounded by 'kranok' (flamelike sprays).*



*Fig. 95 Monk's Bowl, 19th c CE*

*The cover, bearing the coat of arms of Rama V, depicts Erawan (triple-headed elephant) flanked by the 'rajasingha' (royal lion) and the 'khotchasi' (elephant lion). According to an inscription the vessel was created as a gift for the Supreme Patriarch.*



*Fig. 96 Tuu Nangsuu Suat' Manuscript Chest, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin*

*The panels are decorated with floral and bird designs.*

## 6.6 Metal Works – Room 608

### 6.6.1 Silverware

The centre of silver craft traditions in Thailand is in Chiang Mai. The northern region, known since 129 as the Kingdom of Lan Na Thai, has a long history as a cultural melting pot and was only incorporated into the Kingdom of Thailand as late as the reign of King Rama V (r. 1868-1910). Well prior to that, Burmese influence in the area was strong. Legend has it that in 1284, some five hundred families of silversmiths fled to the Chiang Mai region from Burma as refugees from the Mongol invasions.

Over succeeding centuries, such artisans became prizes of war, as the Burmese and the inhabitants of Lan Na struggled for supremacy in the region. Consequently, some cultural traditions, including that of silver craft, are common to both countries, in which the art of the silversmith has been a family concern for generations.



Fig. 97 Ceremonial Offering, 20th c CE (?), Silver

*The bowl and its cover are in the shape of a lotus and feature exquisitely worked high relief lotus petals with a 'thepanom' at the centre of each. The lotus bud finial is decorated with the characteristic Thai flame, the 'kranok'.*

Until relatively recently, most Northern silver was derived from old coins of Indian, Indochinese and Chinese origin, attesting to overland trading between these regions since ancient times. These coins, some of which yield 92% silver, are melted down, and if necessary, alloyed with small percentages of copper, and then pounded into thin sheets. From these, objects of various shapes are made by fusing and appropriate pounding. Certain forms are popular both in the North and the rest of Thailand. Means of ornamentation include repoussé, in which the raised relief pattern is achieved by hammering and working from the reverse or inside of the piece. This type of delicate workmanship requires the use of almost pure silver.

Many of the silver ceremonial wares in the National Museum Bangkok collection were donated as gifts to the museum.





*Fig. 98 Water Flask, 20th c CE, Silver*



*Fig. 99 Offering Stand., 20th c CE (?), Silver*

*Decorated with floral patterns, the ornate water flask (Fig. 98) replicates the shape of everyday 'terracotta' water flasks still in use in present-day Thailand.*

*The upper section of the offering stand (Fig. 99) is formed by lotus leaf-shaped designs inside of which alternate celestial Fig. s and lion-like demon faces. Three sacred serpents (naga) support the upper section.*





*Fig. 100 Detail of Fig. 99*

### 6.6.2 Nielloware



Fig. 101 Betel Nut Box, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Gold and niello

*The ritual of betel nut chewing was widespread throughout Thai society. The quality of utensils associated with this custom reflected the owner's rank of the owner.*



Fig. 102 Lidded Teapot, 19th c CE, Rattanakosin, Gold and niello

*Chrysanthemum flowers and foliage in harmonious symmetry adorn this royal utensil. Floral designs of Chinese origin became popular in the early 19th century when trade with China was extensive.*

Exquisitely decorated ceremonial vessels of nielloware have long been popular in Thailand. It is thought that the art of nielloware may have been introduced here centuries ago by the Portuguese, and it seems that the continuing tradition of presenting nielloware objects as state gifts dates back to the reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya (r. 1656-1688). Nakhon Sri Thammarat in Southern Thailand has been the centre of nielloware traditions for centuries.

The process of decorating in niello is painstaking and complicated, requiring great skill from the craftsman. Briefly, the object to be decorated, usually of silver or gold is incised with a traditional Thai pattern. Those areas which are to be the background are carved in deep relief and filled with niello, a black powder or paste usually composed of copper, lead, silver, and sulphur. The mixture is fused with the metal of the object by heating. The object is then hand-smoothed with a file and polished. Extra details may also be incised during the filing and polishing process. In the finished product, the silver or gold base of the object stands out in shining contrast to the black, matte background created by the niello.

6.7 Howdah - Room 609



Fig. 103 Howdah

*Phra Chao Intavichayanon presented this ivory 'howdah' to King Chulalongkorn as a gift on his 20th birthday. The 'howdah' is made from carved ivory. The ivory bars of the backrest are crafted in cucumber-like patterns while the inside shows auspicious animals such as lions, peacocks and pheasants amidst floral forests, with human figures in the middle.*



Fig. 104 Howdah with Canopy, 20th C CE, Rattanakosin

*Sapkhap or howdah* is a carriage placed on an elephant's back. A royal howdah is called *phra ti nang* (royal seat).

*Howdah* were not only used in times of peace and war, but also as a ceremonial gift. During the design process, an elephant would be chosen and the howdah would be crafted to meet the requirements of the intended user.

*Howdah* were meticulously crafted and decorated, thus not only reflecting the delicacy and uniqueness of Thai art, but also the owners' social status.

Different sophisticated patterns and fine craftsmanship indicate different royal ranks.

## 6.8 Woodcarving – Room 610

Woodcarving is considered to be the most characteristically 'Thai' of all the arts. It is thought to best illustrate the vitality and fertility of nature in both subject matter and technique. Wood was rarely used for Buddha images, but instead for furniture and the wide variety of fittings and ritual objects in the service of religion. Therefore, wood carvers were free of restrictive iconography. They often sought inspiration from their surroundings: the luxurious tropical vegetation and the real or imaginary creatures who populate it. This resulted in an emphasis on decoration, on ornamentation, which is characteristic of Thai art. There is little concern for realism, for the human body, its movement and drapery, all of which are of primary importance in Western art.

Unaffected by restrictions of material as experienced by bronze workers or stone sculptors, wood carvers employed a composite technique. This allowed an artist to carve the individual parts of a piece separately and then assemble them. The resulting spontaneity parallels the creativity of nature. Wood is an abundant material in most tropical countries. Of the many varieties of wood available, teak is the material of choice because it is easy to carve, and relatively resistant to both termites and the elements.



*Fig. 105 Kinnari, 17th-18th C CE, Ayutthaya, Wood*

The earliest remaining pieces date from the 16th century. Very few are found in situ, with the best preserved in museums. The highpoint of Thai woodcarving is found in images of lesser religious figures dating from the late Ayutthaya period (17th-18th century). The collection of the National Museum Bangkok features such fine pieces as the kinnari, half-bird half human creatures, and inhabitants of the Himaphan forest (Fig. 105). The sophistication of these carvings suggests that there had been a rich developing tradition of woodworking over prior centuries, none of whose products survive. Excellent



workmanship continued into the early Rattanakosin period. The finest wood sculpture was closely associated with architecture, and animals were a favourite theme.



*Fig. 106 Cabinet, 18th c CE, Ayutthaya, Wood*



*Fig. 107 Detail of Fig. 106*

*Teak library cupboards, this one dating from approximately 1750, were used to store palm leaf manuscripts of Buddhist scriptures. They were just about the only items of furniture in a Buddhist 'wat', and ultimately derive their origins from Chinese antecedents, as evidenced in*

*this piece by the base of lion's claw feet with a dragon design between them.*

*This particular cabinet is an extraordinary piece, partly because it is one of only half a dozen surviving carved, as opposed to lacquered, cabinets. It is also unique in that its design of architectural elements is thought to represent an accurate picture of Ayutthaya shortly before its destruction in 1767.*

*The octagonal Chinese-style building pictured at the bottom of the doors has been identified from 17th-century European maps of Ayutthaya (Fig. 107).*



Fig. 108 Maha Phichai Ratcharot (Royal Chariot of Great Victory), 1795 CE., Rattanakosin, Wood

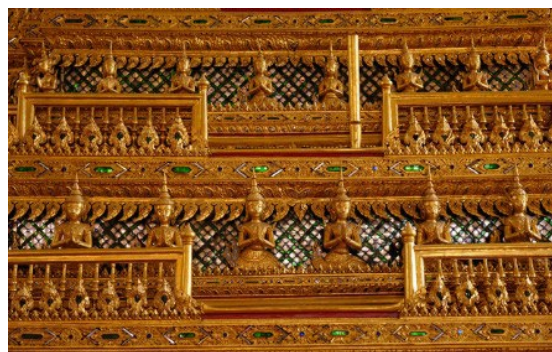


Fig. 109 Detail of Fig. 108

*The Vejayant Rajarot (Fig. 108) built by Rama I in 1785 is a royal funerary chariot used to transport the urn containing the body of the deceased. Made of teak, carved, gilded, and inlaid with glass, it is 40 feet high and weighs 40 tons. The Vejayant Rajarot is meant to symbolise Mount Meru, the location of the heaven the deceased is about to enter. The forests of Mount Meru are inhabited by mythological creatures who are represented on the chariot by 'naga' and 'deva', arranged in five tiers painted gold on top and red underneath. The tiers are separated by bands of inlaid coloured glass. Altogether, the decoration appears as flames which reach up to engulf the urn placed on the top of the chariot under a canopy.*



Fig. 110 Gable Pediment of Buddhaisawan Chapel, 1787 CE, Rattanakosin

*Thai gables are carved in various designs, and often inlaid with coloured glass. Hindu divinities may appear in Thai Buddhist architecture. This gable pediment depicts the four-faced, four-armed Hindu god Brahma in a central celestial pavilion, flanked by smaller pavilions also showing Brahma. From the background foliage emerge more manifestations of Brahma.*

*'Chofa' (finial) literally means a 'bunch of sky' or a 'sky tassel'. These finials are found on royal and religious structures only and may vary in their form from region to region. They are thought to represent a 'hamsa', a celestial goose and Brahma's mount, or Garuda, half man, half bird and Vishnu's vehicle. Another popular motif is the 'naga', a sacred serpent and king of the terrestrial waters. The body of the semidivine being undulates from the peak of the roof and culminates in a stylised head at both outer edges of the eaves. Such architectural elements serve no functional purpose but reflect religious symbolism*



## 6.9 Textiles - Room 611

Traditionally, textiles and clothing were locally produced in Thailand, with many regions being unique in their material choice and weaving techniques applied. The knowledge to turn natural threads into fabric can be traced back to prehistoric times.

Over time, textiles became a sought-after commodity and were traded between Southeast Asia, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Imported textiles began to influence local tastes. Between the mid-18th and early 19th centuries, besides local weaves, fabrics from abroad, mainly from China and India, were widely favoured. As imported textiles were costly, local manufacturers integrated foreign design ideas, fabrication techniques and new materials into their production. A wide range of new textiles ensued, such as

- *pha khien thong*: cotton, printed with a design that uses the gold line technique;
- *pha phrae chin*: Chinese silk cloth;
- *pha mat mi*: ikat, fabric coloured in patterns by resist dyeing; and
- *pha yia rabap*: Indian silk with gold stripes, brocade embellishments, etc.



Fig. 111 . *Pha Khien Thong*, 19th-20th century, Cotton with gold

*'Pha khien thong' tube skirts were worn by members of the royal family.*

More than 60 ethnic groups live in all regions of Thailand. Ethnicities like the Tai Lue, the Tai Khrang, the Tai Raman (Mon), and many more contribute to Thailand's rich and diverse textile tradition. Though materials and motifs of ethnic textiles vary greatly from group to group, there are certain fundamental similarities in the production of these fabrics. Spinning is done by hand, and handlooms are used for weaving, natural fibres such as cotton or silk are dyed with natural dyes derived from plants or trees.

Finely woven cotton or silk matmi (ikat) or khit is often embellished with motifs created by ethnic artisans.

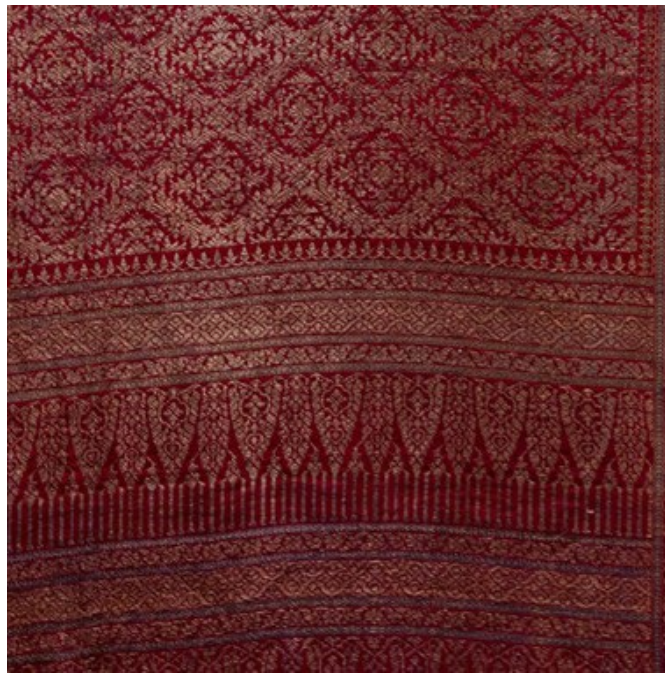


*Fig. 112 Pha Sompakpoom Yaeng Nak, 20th c CE, Silk*

*This 'mud mee' fabric was worn by senior officers as a lower garment for audiences with the king.*



*Fig. 113 Cap, 20th c CE, Velvet embroidered with couched gold threads*



*Fig. 114 Shawl with Embroidered Collar, 20th century, Satin silk embroidered with gold and silver threads, crystal beads and sequins*

*Pha Yiarabap, 20th century, Satin brocade embroidered with gold threads*





*Fig. 115 Shoulder Cloth, 20th c CE, Brocade satin with gold embroidery*

*These shoulder cloths were worn by female nobles working in the royal court.*

## 6.10 Ceramics – Room 612

The ceramic collection of the National Museum Bangkok comprises over 3,000 pieces spanning from prehistory times to the current Bangkok period. The strength of the collection is its comprehensive range of domestic wares.

Discoveries in the mid-20th century and ongoing archaeological research have contributed greatly toward understanding the history of ceramic production in Thailand. In the mid-1960s, a fortuitous find of an undisturbed repository of Ban Chiang pottery in Udon Thani Province instigated a series of surveys that revealed an extensive prehistoric civilization. In the mid-1970s significant ceramic data were found in three areas. First, several ancient sunken cargo ships carrying Thai ceramics were sited in the Gulf of Thailand. Quantities of glazed stoneware vessels were brought to the surface for analysis. These finds help to identify Thailand's early maritime activity and trade routes. Second, the excavation of a Khmer kiln and the discovery of over one hundred kiln mounds in Buriram Province, substantiate that the area was a major production centre for Khmer ceramics. Third, the identification of hundreds of kilns in northern Thailand confirms the existence of an extensive ceramic industry operating between the 14th and late 16th centuries.

Typical wares of the early period of Ban Chiang are coil-built vessels finished with an anvil and beater. The varied tones of the earthenware clay are a result of uneven firing conditions and establish the use of a simple, open fire pit. A distinctive feature of the early period vessels is a band of clay applied around the midsection. The late period wares are characterized by dark clay covered with a buff slip and painted with red geometric designs.

The most recent scientific testing results conclude that the prehistoric Ban Chiang culture extended from about 1,500 BCE to around 900 BCE.

Practically no ceramic finds in Thailand can be confidently dated to the next 1,500 years. But similarities with some prehistoric shapes, techniques and decorations can be found in early pottery produced in Central Thailand during the Dvaravati period (7th-11th c CE). This important evidence supports the theory of continuous occupation in Central Thailand between the two periods.

Northeastern Thailand was a major production area for Khmer, or Lopburi, ceramics between the 11th and 12th century. Basic materials and techniques were used to produce vessels for utilitarian and religious use. An exceptionally fine example of the Khmer appreciation of nature is a predominantly brown glazed elephant standing on four short legs, with a modelled trunk, ears, and facial features. Interestingly, the tusks are green-glazed, indicating careful attention to detail.

In late 1984, an enormous cache of ceramics was discovered in hilltop burial sites which seem to date between the mid-14th and mid-16th centuries, and are situated in the mountainous terrain of Tak Province. Finds include Chinese, Sukhothai, Sawankhalok, Northern Thai, Haripunchai, some Vietnamese and several unknown types.

Thailand is recognized internationally for a wide range of appealing glazed stonewares which were produced at two main centres: Sukhothai and Si Satchanalai. They were most decorated by using a sgraffito technique and a green-coloured glaze. These wares were the prototype for the later celadon glaze.

Production at Sukhothai began in the 13th century or later. Shapes include primarily plates, bowls and pots. Weighty and robust, the forms were potted from a grainy clay with impurities. A light-coloured slip over the body provided a light background for the iron-black designs that were freely painted on the surface. Perhaps the most typical motif is the ubiquitous fish. A superb example of Sukhothai craftsmanship in the museum collection is a large bowl with a cover. Well- executed geometric patterns mingle with indigenous floral designs. The lotus bud finial on the cover is typically Thai.

Architectural fixtures such as finials, tiles, railings, and balustrades were made at Si Satchanalai beginning in the 13th or 14th century, for use on religious buildings and grounds. The museum collection contains a substantial representation of these wares. The skill of the Thai potters in sculpting ceramic objects is apparent in the museum examples.

The crest of potting technology was achieved in the production of Sawankhalok celadons at Ban Ko Noi. Jars, pots and plates with a lustrous, jade-like green glaze are so admired today that the craft of making celadons has been revived at several modern factories in Thailand.

While the Kingdom of Sukhothai was extending its boundaries to the south, other groups of Thais were setting up strongholds in the north. A creditable range of monochromes and decorated wares was produced in these areas for the utilitarian and religious needs of the local population.

As the glory of the kingdoms in northern Thailand faded, the demand for ceramics diminished and production gradually ceased. The ceramic focus shifted to the south, at Ayutthaya, the new kingdom then dominating Thailand.



*Fig. 116 . Pot, Late Ban Chiang, Earthenware*

*This buff-coloured pot has a wide mouth, flaring rim and round bottom. The red- painted swirling bands are characteristic of late-period vessels found at Ban Chiang.*



*Fig. 117 Pot, Early Ban Chiang, Earthenware*

*The unglazed, medium-sized pot has a wide mouth, short foot and band applied around the mid-section. The upper body is incised with a geometric design; the lower body is cord-marked.*

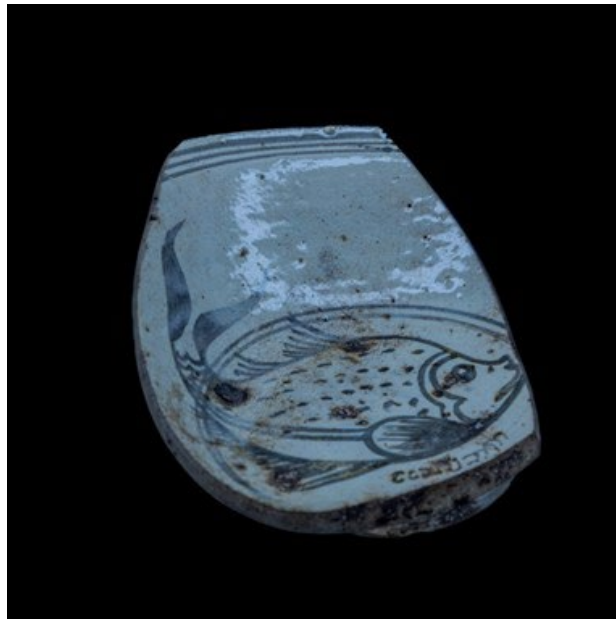
A special class of porcelain, made in China, between the 17th and 19th centuries exclusively for export to Thailand, dominated the ceramic field. Collectively known as Sino-Thai wares, two primary types, bencharong and lai nam thong, constitute this ceramic group. Multicolored enamels were used to decorate the entire surface of white glazed vessels with intricate Thai-style designs. The earliest piece in the museum collection is a late 17th-century bowl with mythical figures and a fire pattern enamelled on a black background. An internationally known example of lai nam thong is a pedestal water jar with a conical-shaped cover. One of the most distinctive pieces of Sino-Thai type wares is a drum. It was most likely used for religious ceremonies.

The National Museum Bangkok's eagerness to bring the latest archaeological finds to the public is reflected in continuing additions and special exhibitions as new discoveries are made. Precise identification of all the ancient ceramic production sites, their chronology and interrelationships are the goals and hopes of the future. Because of the extensive time span and the inclusion of domestic as well as export wares, the ceramic collection in the National Museum Bangkok is the most representative display of Thai ceramics in public exhibitions.



*Fig. 118 Pot, 13th-14th c CE, Lopburi, Clay*

*An elephant-shaped pot with handles at each side of the opening on the back. The light-coloured clay is covered with a brown glaze except for green-glazed tusks.*



*Fig. 119 Plate Shard, 14th c CE, Sukhothai, Clay*

*Underglaze black plate shard with a Sukhothai fish design in the centre. The light-coloured clay is covered with a transparent glaze.*



*Fig. 120 Bottle, 15th-16th century CE, Sukhothai / Sangkhalok*

*A fixture modelled in the form of a mythical Fig. . The beady, brown-glazed eyes are in stark contrast to the white-glazed form.*



*Fig. 121 Roof Finial, 14th-15th c CE, Sukhothai / Sawankhalok*

*A finial modelled in the form of a mythical animal. A combination of decorating techniques creates definition on the scaly body, ornamented necklace, mane, and face. An interplay of brown painting and white glaze adds textural interest.*





*Fig. 122 Bencharong Bowl, 19<sup>th</sup> C CE., Sino-Thai Style, Rattanakosin*

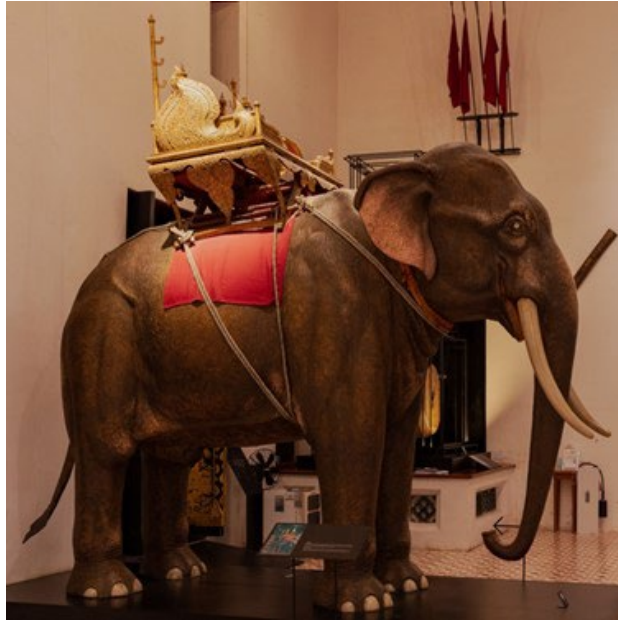


*Fig. 123 Lai Nam Thong Toh Water Jar, 18th- 19th c CE., Rattanakosin*

*The 'bencharong' bowl in Fig. 122 has curving sides and a slightly flared rim. The exterior is enamelled with a repetitive design consisting of two mythical Fig. s and a fire pattern on a black background. Ceramics of this period are called 'Thepanom Ware', based on the name of the central Fig. depicted on the exterior. The interior is a clear, green colour with a floral border design and an open lotus in the centre.*

*The water jar in Fig. 121 has a pedestal and a tiered lid with a lotus bud-shaped handle. The gold background is decorated with a multi-colour floral design. Green bands encircle the tiers, pedestal and base.*

## 6.11 Traditional Arms – Room 614



*Fig. 124 War Elephant*



*Fig. 125 Protective Hat and Shirt with Cabalistic Writing*

*Such individual protection was worn on the battlefield*

An important factor to succeed over the enemy on the battlefield was the skilful use of weapons. Since the Ayutthaya times, three types of weapons are distinguished: slashing and stabbing weapons used for close combat, hitting weapons such as staves, and firearms such as bows and guns.

The war elephant's main use was to charge the enemy and break their ranks. Elephant lines were arranged in accordance with military strategies and tactics. At the centre of such lines, the armed general in command (or king) rode on the elephant's neck. Sitting behind him on a howdah, was a signaller, communicating by means of peacock feathers. Behind the signaller, on the elephant's back, sat the mahout, the steerer. Prior to the battle, a sacred ritual would be performed to ensure the elephants' invulnerability.

## 6.12 Ivory Carving



*Fig. 126 Myanmar Style Carved Ivory, 20th c CE*

Although long valued as a beast of burden, the elephant has been even more appreciated for the precious ivory of its tusks, which have been turned into highly prized objects of ornamentation. The nature of ivory lends itself well to the creation of intricate patterns, and an ivory carving is often more treasured than a similar piece worked in precious metal.

To prepare ivory for carving, it must first be boiled in a solution to make it soft. It is then cut into the desired size pieces, the cutting going with the grain to prevent fracturing. The desired shape is outlined in charcoal, carved with delicate chisel strokes, smoothed with a file, and finally polished to give it its characteristic gloss.

Thai art is fundamentally religious in its purpose. Although objects of nature appear to Fig. in the design, the design itself is not meant to be a representation of the real world but rather a symbol of the spiritual world, an expression of continuous change.

## 7 Issaret Rachanuson Building (Residence of King Pinklao) - Room 701, 702



*Fig. 127 Issaret Rachanuson Residence*



*Fig. 128 Pinklao, Second King of Siam*

The Issaret Rachanuson building (initially named Wang Chan) is a western-style royal residence built during King Rama IV's reign by King Pinklao, who disliked living in the existing vice king's traditional residential complex. This residence is a two-storey plastered brick mansion. Exterior stairs lead up to the top floor, as interior stairs were considered unfavourable according to traditional beliefs. Thus, the lower floor was the royal attendants' area. Five rooms make up the king's section on the upper floor: the library,



a reception room, a dining room, a bedroom, and a dressing room. King Pinklao lived here until his passing in 1866.

King Pinklao was the third son of King Rama II (re. 1809–1824), and the younger brother of King Mongkut (Rama IV, r. 1851-1868). He was born in 1808. In 1851, Rama IV ascended to the throne and crowned his younger brother as King Pinklao, the Second King of Siam, with equal honours as himself.

Being fluent in English, Pinklao actively supported Siam's diplomatic relations with the West. He was an expert in western weaponry and warfare and modernized the royal navy and the capital's fortification system.

Pinklao reigned for 15 years, from 1851 until his death at the age of 58.

## 8 Nukitrachaborihan Shrine



*Fig. 129 Interior of Nukitrachaborihan Shrine*

This structure was part of the Chinese-style Boworn Pariwat Residence compound commissioned by King Pinklao who passed away before its completion. King Rama IV completed construction and used it for occasional overnight stays at the Front Palace. In 1934, this residence became part of the newly established School of Fine Arts campus, while the small shrine was converted into accommodation. In 1962, Boworn Pariwat Residence was pulled down, only the Nukit Ratchaborihan Chinese Shrine was left. Murals decorate the interior of the shrine featuring scenes from the 16th-century Chinese novel *Fengshen Yanyi* (Investiture of the Gods).

Chinese furniture is set up to indicate the shrine's original function.

## 9 Chao Phraya Yommarat Memorial Hall



*Fig. 130 Chao Phraya Yommarat Memorial Hall*

Pan Sukhum, better known by his title Chao Phraya Yommarat (1862–1938), was a government official who served in several senior positions under the governments of Kings Rama V and Rama VI. Born in Suphan Buri, Pan was raised as a novice monk in Bangkok and left the monkhood to join government service around the age of 21, becoming a teacher at the royal palace school and then a tutor to King Chulalongkorn's (Rama V) children studying in England.

In England, he served as a diplomat for eleven years. He then became commissioner of monthon Nakhon Si Thammarat under a new administration system for twelve years and was later appointed to several successive ministerships in the reformed government system. where he oversaw various public works projects, including the introduction of electricity and water utilities in the capital. Furthermore, Chao Praya Yommarat modernized the police force and founded the country's first cement factory (now Siam Cement Group). He was elevated to the highest noble rank of chao phraya, receiving the title Yommarat, in 1908. He retired in 1926 but was later appointed regent to the young King Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII) in 1935, holding the position until his death in 1938.

## 10 Royal Funeral Chariots

This room houses chariots, palanquins, urns, umbrellas and many more objects used in royal cremation ceremonies. The hall and doors were built to accommodate the tall spires of the larger chariots.



Fig. 131 Phra Maha Phichai Ratcharoth (The Grand Chariot of Victory)

*The Phra Maha Phichai Ratcharoth, made of teak and embellished with carvings, gold, and glass mosaic inlays, was built in 1795 by King Rama I for carrying the remains of his father to the cremation ground at Sanam Luang. During the reign of King Rama VI, it was refurbished and wheels were added. The last restoration dates to 2017, in preparation for the cremation of King Rama IX. A ramp is used for lifting and lowering the royal urn from the chariot to the palanquin that will transport it to the royal crematorium. It is 13 metres high, weighs over twenty tons and is drawn by a total of 216 soldiers in four groups. The Grand Chariot of Victory represents mythological Mount Meru, and is decorated with Thai and Hindu motifs, such as the 'kranok', 'deva' and 'nagg'.*





*Fig. 132 Phra Vechayant Ratcharoth (The Great Funeral Chariot)*

*The chariot was built around 1799 to carry the remains of Princess Sudarak, an elder sister of King Rama I. It was last used for the funeral of Queen Rambhai Barni, consort of King Rama VII, in April 1985. On that occasion, the chariot was given the name 'Phra Maha Phichai'.*



*Fig. 133 Detail of Manually Operated Elevator*



*Fig. 134 Three-poled Palanquins*

*These large and elaborate teak litters are used to transport the royal urn. 60 porters are required to support the weight. With one of the palanquins, the royal urn is carried from the Dusit Maha Prasat Hall to the chariot, the second palanquin is used to transport the urn from the chariot to the crematorium at Sanam Luang.*



*Fig. 135 Ratcharoth Noi*

*All three chariots were built during the reign of King Rama I for his father's funeral. In the leading chariot sat a venerated senior monk reading the Abhidharma. The second carried*



*King Rama I holding a white cord connected to the urn. In the third chariot sat the king's younger brother, Maha Uparaja Surasinghanad, who threw flowers while proceeding to the crematorium.*



*Fig. 136 Multi-tiered Umbrellas and Urn Covers*

*A royal umbrella consists of many tiers, nine for the crowned king, seven for the unconsecrated king (crown prince/princess) and queen, five for major royalty, and three for the Supreme Patriarch (if not royal).*

*In the past, sandalwood urn covers would be burnt during cremation. In 1985, upon the cremation of Queen Rambhai Barni, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the daughter of King Rama IX, arranged for these sandalwood objects to be no longer destroyed, but instead preserved and put on display as examples of exquisite Thai craftsmanship.*

The ashes of the royal family are kept in small golden urns at the Grand Palace. Ashes have also been placed in Buddha images or stupa in various temples: in Bangkok, e.g., ashes of King Rama I at Wat Po, those of King Rama II at Wat Arun and those of Princess Srinagarindra at Wat Rajabhopit.

## 11 Mangkhalaphisek Pavilion



*Fig. 137 Mangkhalaphisek Pavilion*

The Mangkhalaphisek sala was built at the same time as the Buddhaisawan Chapel. It has an elephant mounting and dismounting platform. During the reigns of Kings Rama II (r. 1809–1824), IV (r. 1851-1868), and V (r. 1868 – 1910), it was used as a ritual bathing pavilion for the prince chosen to be the future viceroy prior to the investiture ceremony, which was performed at the Buddhaisawan Chapel.

## 12 Samranmukkhamat Pavilion



*Fig. 138 Samranmukkhamat Pavilion*

The Samranmukkhamat sala was built during the reign of King Rama V (r. 1868-1910) as a ceremonial bathing pavilion at Dusit Palace for royal bathing ceremonies and dates from the beginning of the 20th century. It was moved to the National Museum Bangkok during the reign of King Rama VII (r. 1925– 1935). Restored in 1987 and again in 2000, it is still used for receptions and ceremonies today. The sala is made of black, red and gold lacquered and intricately carved wood. Drawings of celestial beings, kranok flames and foliage motifs further embellish the pavilion. The body of a naga undulates from the peak of each roof and culminates in a stylised head at both outer edges of the eaves.



### 13 Long Song Pavilion



*Fig. 139 Long Song Pavilion*

The Long Song sala was built during the reign of King Rama VI (r. 1910–1925] and stood originally on the grounds of Sanam Chandra Palace in Nakhon Pathom, where it served as a disrobing pavilion in royal ceremonies. It is an exquisite example of Thai architecture and decorative art. The openings are decorated with leaf-shaped arches terminating in images of heras, a mythical horned dragon. At the centre of each arch, kirtimukha (kala), another mythical creature, guards the opening. The eave brackets depict the naga. A stylised lion's head forms the centre of the diamond-shaped pattern on the pillars.

## 14 Glossary

**Amitabha** : 'The Buddha of Infinite Light' in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism who lives in the Western Paradise, the 'Pure Land' By calling upon him, one can be reborn in his paradise and thus ensure the attainment of Buddhahood in one's next rebirth.

**Aniconic** : a representation in non- human or animal form. Aniconic symbols in Buddhist art include the lotus, throne, bodhi tree, and footprint that represent the Buddha.

**Apsaras** : Celestial nymphs who sing and dance for the pleasure of gods and fallen heroes.

**Avalokitesvara** : The 'Lord who looks down with compassion', the most popular bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism . He is an emanation of the Amitabha Buddha and wears an image of the latter in his headdress. Also appears in the form of Padmapani .

**Avatar** : The descent of a deity from heaven to earth. The term usually refers to one of the ten reincarnations on earth of the god Vishnu.

**Bencharong** : This term, meaning "five colors" was applied to a type of enamelled porcelain originally made in China to Thai specifications.

**Bodhisattva** : In Mahayana Buddhism , a being who has achieved enlightenment but renounces Buddhahood until all beings reach the same goal by the saving power of his compassion. In both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism , the term is also applied to the earlier lives of the historical Buddha as well as to Gautama prior to his enlighten-ment.

**Bodhi Tree** : The sacred tree (ficus religiosa) under which Gautama meditated and achieved enlightenment, becoming henceforth known as the Buddha. In early Buddhist Art, aniconic symbols such as the Bodhi Tree were used to indicate the presence of the Buddha in a scene.

**Brahma** : The creator in the Hindu trinity (Vishnu is the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer). Frequently depicted with 4 faces and 4 arms, he appears in Buddhist Art, along with Indra, as an attendant of the Buddha.

**Buddha** : An enlightened being who has achieved st perfect understanding of the causes of human suffering and the means whereby to overcome them, thereby being freed from all further rebirth. In Theravada Buddhism the term is restricted to the historic Buddha who lived in the 6th c. B.C. (Siddhartha Gautama), and to a series of Buddhas who appeared on earth in previous eras (but did not preach the doctrine), or Maitreya, the Buddha of the future .

**Chakra** : Wheel, disc, symbol of the sun, attribute of the god Vishnu. In Buddhism, the Wheel is the symbol of the doctrine which the Buddha set into motion when he preached the first Sermon.

**Chakri** : The dynasty that has reigned in Thailand since 1782.

**Chedi** : In Thailand it is used to signify a solid religious monument built to enshrine the relics of the Buddha or holy men, and also to contain the ashes of the dead. The words chedi and stupa are **often interchangeable**.

**Deva** : (male), **Devi** : (female) A celestial being who lives in one of the six lower heavens of Buddhist cosmology.

**Devaraja** : a 'god who is king', the title referring to a Hindu cult claiming the king as an emanation of a god and one who will be reunited with that god after death.

**Dharma** : the right principles, law of the universe, or truth, and in Buddhism, the teachings of the Buddha. Also, dhamma.

**Dharmachakra** :-the Wheel of the Law symbolizing the Buddha's First Sermon that set in motion his dharma or teachings. Also, dharmacakra or dhamacakra.

**Eightfold Path** : teachings of the Buddha: right understanding, thoughts, speech, actions, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

**Enlightenment** : a blessed state of perfect understanding in which the individual transcends desire and suffering and attains nirvana.

**Ekamukhalinga** : Phallic symbol of the god Shiva adorned with the god's face carved in relief.

**Erawan** : The three-headed elephant, vehicle of the god Indra.

**Finial** : a sculptured ornament often in the shape of a leaf or flower.

**Four Noble Truths** : the basic teachings of the Buddha: 1) suffering (dukkha) exists; 2) craving causes suffering; 3) suffering ceases when craving is quelled; 4) craving can be quelled and suffering annihilated by the Eightfold Path.

**Ganesha** : the elephant-headed Hindu god, son of Shiva and Parvati, remover of obstacles, god of knowledge and wisdom; has four arms and rides the mouse, symbolizing ignorance. Attributes: book, string of beads, trident, bowl of sweets, axe, noose.

**Ganesha-Bhairava** : terrible form of Ganesha, wears a necklace of skulls and drinks from skull cups, god of the Underworld.

**Garuda** : A mythical bird, king of the birds and natural enemy of the nagas . It has a human body but the wings, legs and beak of a bird. It is the vehicle of the god Vishnu.

**Gautama** : The clan name of the historic Buddha who was called Siddhartha as a prince; and 'the Buddha' after he achieved Enlightenment

**Himaphan** : A mythical forest in Buddhist cosmology located in the Himalayas below the heavens of the gods, inhabited by both real and imaginary animals.

**Hinayana** : 'Lesser Way' or 'Lesser Means of Progression' a derogatory term used by Mahayana Buddhists in referring to the non-Mahayana sect, especially the Theravada which claims to be closer to the original teachings of the Buddha.

**Iconography** : a symbolic representation or icon, the specific features that accompany an image, making that image instantly recognizable.



**Indra** : the Vedic and Hindu god of thunder, king of the gods and ruler of Tavatimsa Heaven. Indra rides the elephant, Erawan, and is identified in Thai murals by his green face and often as an attendant of the Buddha, along with Brahma.

**Jayavarman VII** : a Mahayana Buddhist king of the Khmer Empire in the 12th C who had many roads, rest houses, hospitals, reservoirs and temples constructed.

**Jataka** : 'Birth Story', referring to the 547 tales of the previous lives of the Buddha. In Thailand, the 10 lives preceding the Buddha's birth as Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Mahanipata Jataka) are most popular and are frequently depicted in mural paintings. Each story represents a virtue practiced to perfection.

**Khojasi** : a mythical animal with the body of a lion and the trunk of an elephant. Also known as khotchasi, khot-chasing, or gajasimha.

**Kinnara** : (male), Kinnari : (female) A divine musician, half-human and half-bird in form who lives in the Himaphan forest

**Kranok** : A flame-like design popular in the decorative elements of Thai Art

**Lakshana** : an auspicious trait or characteristic, the supernatural markings of a great man or a Buddha, and one of 32 marks discussed in Buddhist texts.

**Lingam** : the god Shiva, often worshipped with a yoni base, symbolizing the female reproductive organ.

**Mahayana Buddhism** : 'Greater Way' or 'Greater Means of Progression', a major branch of Buddhism emerging in Northern India at the beginning of the Christian era and attaching essential importance to speculations on the nature of the Buddhas and to the role of the bodhisattvas . It is often called Northern Buddhism because it is chiefly practised in Nepal, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

**Maitreya** : In both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism the Buddha of the future, who is at present a bodhisattva dwelling in Tusita heaven. In sculpture, he is depicted with a stupa in his headdress.

**Mara** : Personified evil, sensual pleasure and delusion, tempter of the Buddha. At Enlightenment the Buddha achieved Victory over Mara and all that Mara represents.

**Meru** : also Sumeru : A mythical mountain, the centre of the Universe around which the continents and oceans are placed. Located on Mt Meru is Tavatimsa heaven ruled by Indra.

**Muchalinda** : King of the nagas who protects the meditating Buddha during a storm shortly after his Enlightenment by surrounding him with his coils and sheltering him with his multi-headed hood.

**Mudra** : See chapter 18.

**Naga** : A snake or serpentine divinity that dwells in the subterranean and water regions. Nagas guard the hidden treasures of the earth and control rainfalls. They are the arch enemies of the garudas . The struggle between the two is a frequent theme in art.

**Nirvana** : 'Extinction' or 'blowing out', the state of release from earthly bonds, suffering and delusion, and thus liberation from the cycle of rebirths. It is the condition one attains upon enlightenment while still living on earth; the Buddha reached nirvana under the bodhi tree. Parinirvana is the perfect or complete nirvana attained at the time of death.

**Padmapani** : 'He who holds the lotus', another form of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. The lotus symbolises his creative powers.

**Pali** : an ancient Indian language derived from Vedic Sanskrit and the sacred language of Theravada Buddhist texts.

**Parvati** : meaning 'daughter of the mountain', the devi, shakti or consort of Shiva.

**Prajnaparamita** : meaning 'supreme virtue of wisdom', the highest female bodhisattva personification in Mahayana Buddhism.

**Rajasi** : a mythical lion-like creature whose skin is a symbol of royal authority. *Also* rajasingha, ratchasi.

**Ramakien** : the Thai version of a 5<sup>th</sup> C Indian epic tale, the Ramakien, a popular source of art, dance and drama throughout Southeast Asia.

**Sakyamuni** : meaning 'sage of the Shakya clan', the historical Buddha's title when he was an ascetic. *Also* Shakyamuni.

**Samsara** : the endless cycle of existence: life, birth, old age, suffering, dying and rebirth. For Buddhists, escape from samsara is found in nirvana.

**Shiva**: the Hindu destroyer god and part of the Hindu Trinity with Brahma and Vishnu, seen with matted topknot, a crescent moon in the hair, a third eye, or as a lingam. Attributes: trishul, naga.

**Siddhartha** : the given name for the prince until age 29 when he achieved enlightenment and became known as the Buddha. *Also*, Siddhartha Gautama.

**Stupa** : originally meaning a burial mound for princes in ancient India. It very early became the most important type of Buddhist monument enshrining the relics of the Buddha, of his disciples or to mark an important site in Buddhism. A stupa is basically a solid monument consisting of a dome (of variable shape) supported by a base and surmounted by a tiered umbrella with differing degrees of stylization. In Thailand it has the same meaning as the word chedi.

**Sutra** : meaning 'thread or text', the sutras are the Buddha's teachings, gathered together into the second book of Theravada Buddhism's Tipi-taka. *Also* sutta.

**Tantric Buddhism** : An advanced stage of Vajrayana Buddhism, important in Northeast India after the 8th c. and surviving in Nepal and Tibet. It flourished briefly in the Khmer empire in ancient times. This school tremendously expanded the Buddhist pantheon including the creation of fearsome multi-limbed, multi-headed deities. Emphasis is placed on esoteric worship practices to enable a devotee to effect union with his god through visual images, symbols, repetition of sounds, prescribed movements and breath control. Worship of the female energy of the god is also important.

**Tavatimsa Heaven** : a heaven of the 33 gods over which Indra presides and a place where,

after enlightenment, the Buddha spent the rains retreat preaching to his mother.

**Thepanom** : The Figure of a deva or devi with hands in a worshipping gesture; a celestial being.

**Theravada Buddhism** : 'The School or Teaching of the Elders', it is today the only surviving school of early Buddhism. Its teaching is preserved in the Pali Canon and is used by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Also known as Southern Buddhism. Often called Hinayana, the rather derogatory term which means 'the Lesser Way', as opposed to Mahayana, 'the Greater Way.' This sect emphasises individual effort towards Enlightenment, whereas the Mahayana abounds with bodhisattvas, or saint-like beings to whom devotees may pray for help along the way to understanding. (see Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism).

**Thoranee** : the Earth goddess, a witness to the Buddha's accumulation of merit during a battle with Mara before his enlightenment, who wrung water from her hair representing his cumulative merit sufficient to drown Mara's hordes of demons. *Also*, Thorani.

**Tosachat** : The Thai name for the ten previous lives of the historic Buddha (Mahanipata Jataka) which are the most popular and frequently represented in mural paintings.

**Tribhanga** : an S-shaped posture in dance, sculpture or painting in which the body defines three bends, or triple flexion, such as at the hips, waist and neck.

**Ushnisha** : a protuberance or cranial bump atop the Buddha's head representing his supranatural Knowledge and enlightenment. *Also*, Lakshana.

**Vajrayana Buddhism** : 'The Way of the Thunderbolt' or 'the Diamond Vehicle', a development in Mahayana Buddhism which began in Northeast India about the 4th c. A.O. and reached its full development by the 8th c. A.O. From India, especially in its advanced Tantric form, it moved to Nepal, Tibet and China. Vajrayana stresses worship practices that enable the devotee to attain union with the Great Universal Spirit through the use of mystical incantation, formulas, magical diagrams, ritual gestures and yoga.

**Vedic gods** : divinities numbering 33, including Indra, mentioned in the Sanskrit Vedas, four ancient Aryan religious texts.

**Vishnu** : the Hindu preserver god, part of the Hindu Trinity, with Brahma and Shiva, seen with four arms riding the garuda. Attributes: chakra disc, conch shell, club, lotus, bow or sword. Consort: Lakshmi. Ten avatars or incarnations include Rama and Krishna.

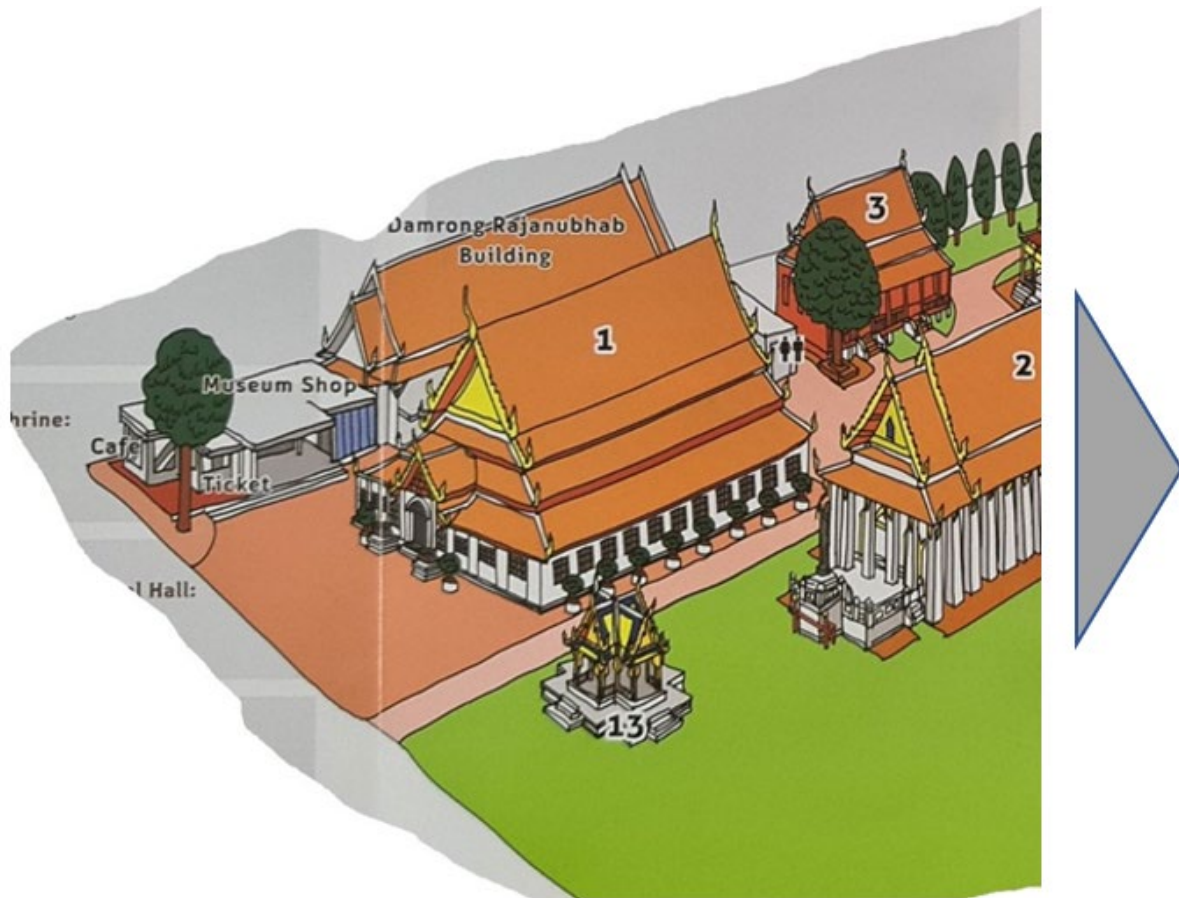
**Wai** : palms together, touching the body between the chest and forehead, a gesture of respect or gratitude.

**Wat** : a Thai temple or Buddhist monastery complex.

**Wheel of the Law** : See dhamachakra or dhamacakra.

**Yoni** : meaning 'womb' a square pedestal with trough depicting the female reproductive organ and the base for Shiva linga. *Also*, linga.

## 15 Museum Map



1 Siwamokkaphiman Audience Hall

2 Buddhisawan Chapel

3 The Red House

13 Long Song Pavillion





#### 4 Maha Surasinghanat Building (South Wing – before 13<sup>th</sup> C CE)

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- 405 Lopburi
- 406 Srivijaya

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- 502 Sukothai
- 503 Ayutthaya
- 504 Thonburi – Early Rattanakosin
- 505 Rattanakosin (Bangkok)

#### 6 Phra Wiman – the Viceroy Residential Complex

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- 602 History of the Palace of the Front
- 603 Royal Vehicles
- 604 History of the Palace of the Front
- 605 Theatre and Music

606 Mother-of-Pearl Inlay  
607 Household Furnishing  
608 Metal Works  
609 Howdahs  
610 Wooden Works  
611 Royal Textiles  
612 Royal Ceramic  
613 Buddhist Monk Utensils  
614 Traditional Arms

7 Issaret Rachanuson Building  
701 History of King Pinklao  
702 Residence of King Pinklao

8 Nukitrachaborihan shrine

9 Chao Phraya Yommarat Memorial Hall

10 Building of Royal Funeral Chariots

11 Mangkhalaphisek Pavillion

12 Samranmukkkhamat Pavillion

## 16 Thai Kings

### ***Sukhothai***

1. Sri-inthrathit 1249 - ....
2. Banmuang .... - 1279
3. Ramkhamhaeng the Great 1279 - 1298
4. Loethai 1298 - ....
5. Nguanamthom ..... - 1347
6. Lithai or Thammaracha I 1347 - 1368
7. Thammaracha II 1368 - 1399
8. Thammaracha III 1399 – 1419
9. Thammaracha IV 1419 - 1438

### ***Ayutthaya***

1. Ramathibodi I 1350 - 1369
2. Ramesuan 1369 - 1370
3. Borommaracha I 1370 - 1388
4. Thonglan 1388
5. Ramesuan 1388 - 1395
6. Ramracha 1395 - 1409
7. Intharacha 1409 - 1424
8. Borommaracha II 1424 - 1448
9. Borommatrailokkanat 1448 - 1488
10. Borommaracha III 1488 - 1491
11. Ramathibodi II 1491 - 1529
12. Borommaracha IV 1529 - 1533

13. Ratchadathiratkuman	1533 - 1534
14. Chairacha	1534 - 1546
15. Kaeofa	1546 - 1548
16. Mahachakkaphat	1548 - 1568
17. Mahinthrathirat	1568 - 1569
18. Mahathammaracha	1569 - 1590
19. Naresuan the Great	1590 - 1605
20. Ekathotsarot	1605 - 1610
21. Sisaowaphak	1610 - 1611
22. Songtham	1611 - 1628
23. Chetthathirat	1628 - 1629
24. Athittayawong	1629
25. Prasatthong	1629 - 1656
26. Chaofa Chai	1656
27. Sisuthammaracha	1656
28. Narai the Great	1656 - 1688
29. Phetracha	1688 - 1703
30. Sanphet VIII (Sua)	1703 - 1708
31. Phumintharacha (Thaisa)	1708 - 1732
32. Borommakot	1732 - 1758
33. Uthumphon	1758
34. Ekkathat	1758 - 1767

## ***Thonburi***

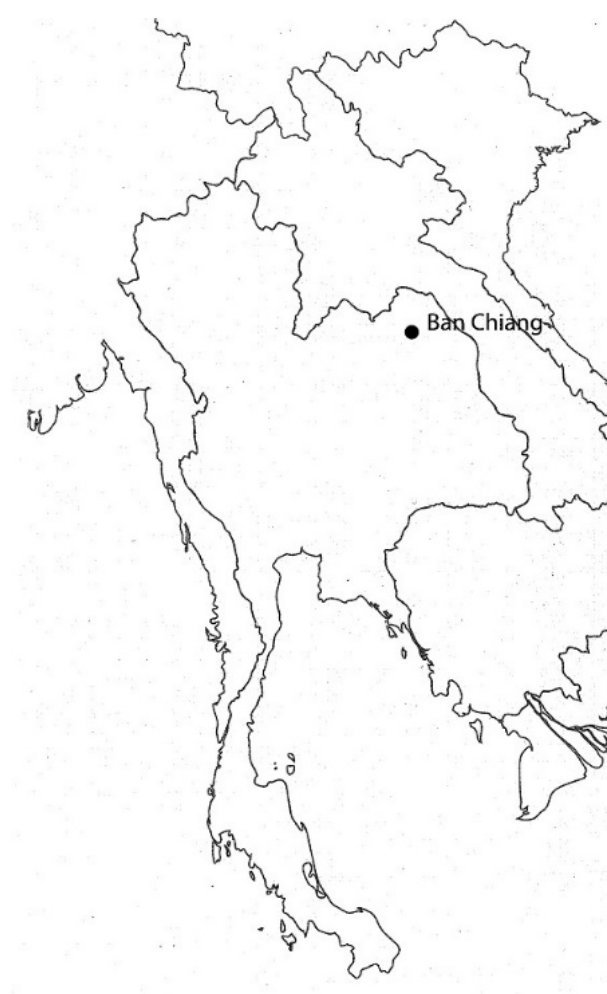
1. Tak Sin	1767 - 1782
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## ***Ratanakosin (Dynastie Chakri)***

1. Rama I.	Phraphutthayotfa Chulalok	1782 - 1809
2. Rama II.	Phraphutthaloetla Naphalai	1809 - 1824
3. Rama III.	Phranangklaao	1824 - 1851
4. Rama IV.	Phrachomklao - Mongkut	1851 - 1868
5. Rama V.	Phrachunlachomklao - Chulalongkorn	1868 - 1910
6. Rama VI.	Phramongkutklao - Vajiravudh	1910 - 1925
7. Rama VII.	Phrapokklao - Prajadhipok	1925 - 1935
8. Rama VIII.	Ananda Mahidol	1935 - 1946
9. Rama IX.	Bhumibol Adulyadej	1946 - 2016
10. Rama X.	Maha Vajiralongkorn	2017 - .....

## 17 A Short History of Thailand's Art

### 17.1 Prehistoric Art

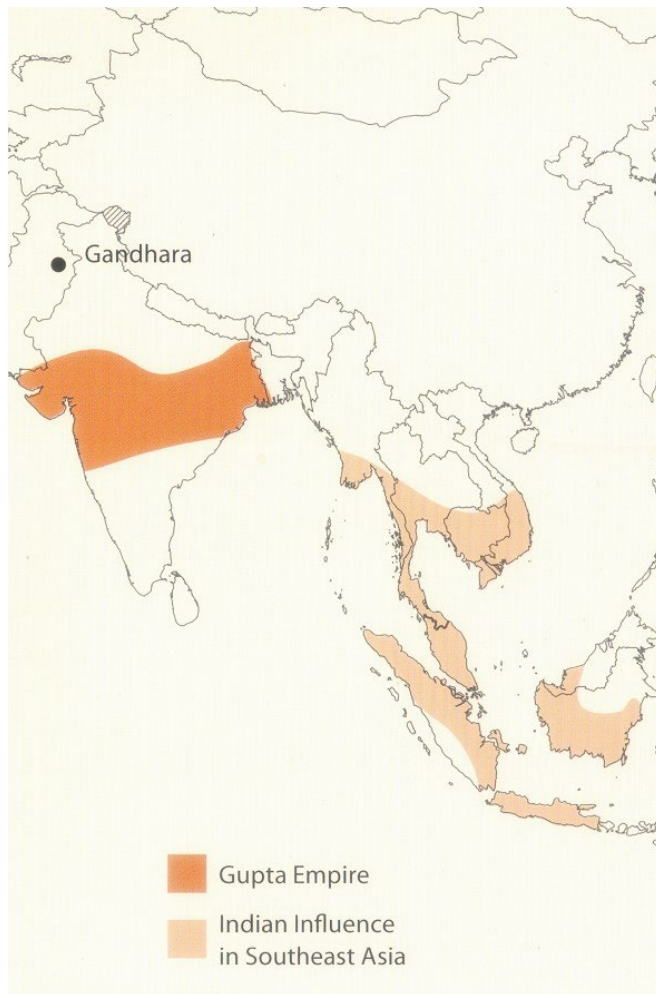


Plentiful rivers and a lush tropical setting provided a bountiful environment for prehistoric hunter-gatherers to live. Throughout Thailand, traces of their existence have been found along riverbeds and in limestone caves; cave paintings show human figures with bows, herd animals and fish. Evidence of silk weaving and rice cultivation found as imprinted patterns on pottery near Ban Chiang give credence to what UNESCO has described as "the most important prehistoric settlement so far discovered in Southeast Asia", best known for its pottery and bronze metallurgy skills.

While the earliest unglazed ceramics had distinct cord marks from paddles or rollers, the Late Ban Chiang period pottery is smooth, typically displaying painted curvilinear designs made from red ochre pigment, a style unique to this area. Other artifacts found in graves include beads, bronze earrings and flanged bracelets, iron tools and woven cloth. The archeological evidence has caused scholars to reformulate past theories about the region. Once thought to have been a passive society, the beneficiary of Chinese and Indian technology, Ban Chiang (2100 BCE-200 CE) is now known as an imaginative, independent Bronze Age civilization.



## 17.2 Indian Art Influence (4 – 11<sup>th</sup> c CE)



Thailand's location, situated in the middle of the trade routes linking India, Cambodia and Indonesia, influenced Thai culture from the 4th C. From the 6-9th c CE, the Indo-Khmer style and the Inda-Javanese style of Srivijaya influenced the rendering of images of Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, their consorts, Ganesha and the linga, found in the Indianized states of the southern peninsula at Takua Pa and Chaiya, and in the central plains at Sri Thep and Dong Si Maha Phot.

Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists from the surrounding countries were influential in Thailand's adaptation of artistic styles from India from the early Gupta to the later Chola schools of art. These styles were reflected in iconography, theme, stance, treatment of faces, drapery and jewelry, and in the fine quality of craftsmanship. Works in stone bas-relief, high relief or in the round, and bronze, terracotta and stucco, sometimes from India, Java or Cambodia, but often locally made, were installed in brick or stone Hindu and Buddhist shrines. Thai-made pieces range in size from small votive tablets to life-size or larger portrayals of Hindu gods, linga, the Buddha, bodhisattvas and Buddhist deities.

### 17.3 Dvaravati Art (6 – 11<sup>th</sup> c CE)



Scholars have given the name Dvaravati to describe the art of a predominantly Buddhist region which is believed to have been situated in central Thailand during the late 6-11th c CE. Communities of people lived in independent city-states distinguished by protective moats, spoke the Mon language related to both Khmer and other Southeast Asian dialects, and used the rivers and seas for commerce. Communities were well established in the central Chao Phraya River basin in the 5-7th c CE, including trade centers in Nakhon Pathom and U-Thong.

The shifting chiefdoms were held together through allegiances with political, economic, and social ties. Highly skilled artists, they excelled in creating stone sculpture, stucco and terracotta decoration. Distinctive Dvaravati sculpture includes the Wheel of the Law accompanied by a deer and symmetrical Buddha images shown standing or seated on thrones. Robes cover both shoulders and end in a U-shape below the knee. The broad faces have downcast eyes and full lips that reveal a gentle smile. The distinctive Thai Dvaravati style, influenced by Gupta, post-Gupta, and Pala Indian art styles, continued until the 11th c when the powerful Khmer Empire gained control of the region.

#### 17.4 Srivijaya and Peninsular Art (7 – 13<sup>th</sup> c CE)

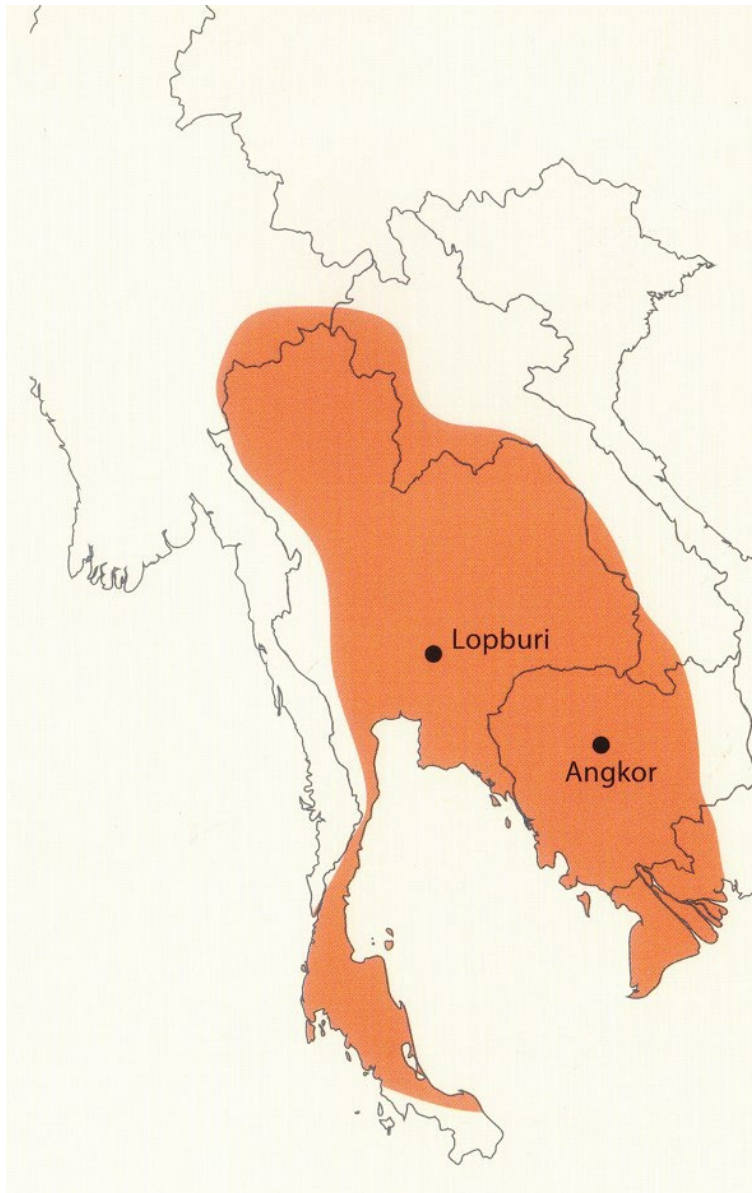


The mighty kingdom of Srivijaya was formed by a confederation of ports in the western Indonesian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula. The Srivijayan rulers had ties with the Sailendra dynasty of central Java. Late 7th C stone inscriptions place the capital of the kingdom in Palembang, in the south of Sumatra, while other evidence indicates Chaiya in Southern Thailand. By the end of the 8th C CE, its power extended into peninsular Thailand as far as the Isthmus of Kra, ensuring safe commerce between India and China by avoiding the Straits of Malacca which was plagued by piracy.

The people were Malay and practiced both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism. The art of the region is known as Srivijaya after the name of this extended, wealthy civilization. Srivijayan art is characterized by a mix of influences: in the early period, the Dvaravati as well as Indian and Indo-Javanese styles, and later, Khmer as shown in bronze-cast sculptures. By the mid- 13th C CE, Srivijaya lost the maritime supremacy

in the region to the Chinese Song dynasty, and Sukhothai, the new power of the region, penetrated the peninsula and brought the southern regions under its rule.

### 17.5 Khmer Art (9 – 15<sup>th</sup> c CE) / Lopburi Art (11 – 14<sup>th</sup> c CE)

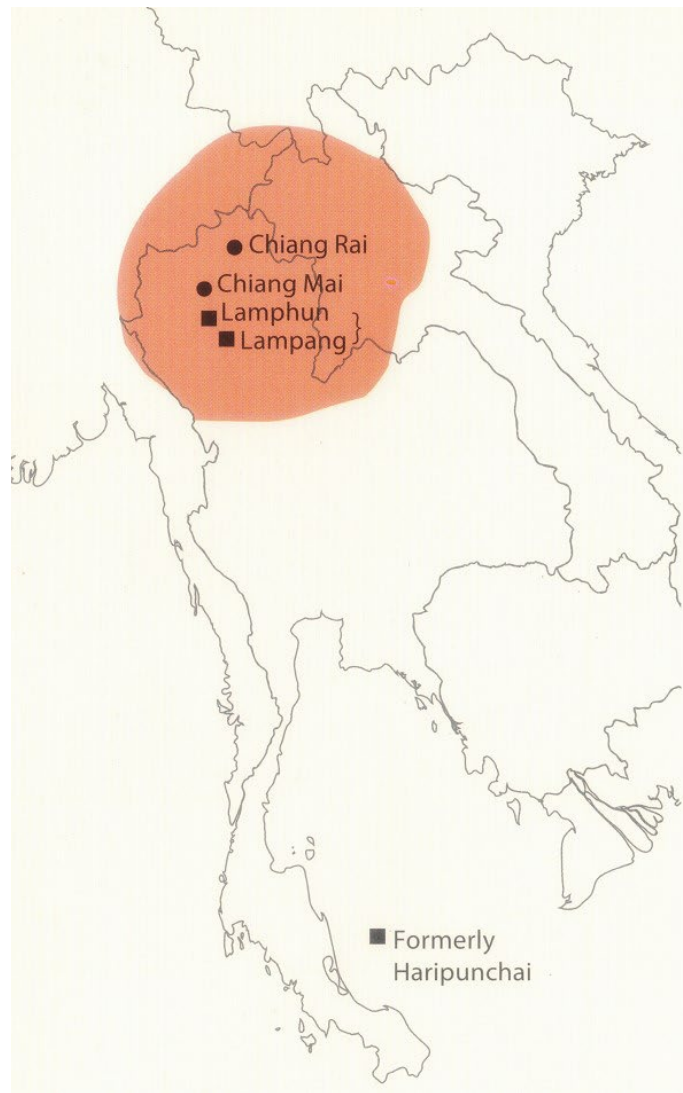


Flourishing during the 9-15<sup>th</sup> C, the Khmer Empire expanded its commercial and political sphere to become the most powerful state in Southeast Asia. Initially, fundamental Hindu beliefs influenced Khmer architecture, sculpture, and rituals, but over time, rulers mixed Hindu cosmology and astrology with Mahayana, Tantric and Theravada Buddhist beliefs. During King Suryavarman's reign in the early 11<sup>th</sup> C, a complex system of symbolic artistic structures and elements were implemented in Lopburi, an annexed Khmer administrative capital and Theravada Buddhist kingdom, merging Dvaravati art with Khmer designs. During the reign of King Jayavarman VII (1181-1215 CE), rest houses and roads were built, facilitating travel and control over the vast Empire.

Numerous Khmer settlements were established and many monuments were built throughout Thailand. Artisans learned stone carving techniques, building temples decorated with magnificent reliefs and statues, and gave life to sculptures characterized by soft, round forms and gentle smiling faces of bodhisattvas. Khmer Angkor and Bayon styles of architecture influenced the mandala layout of wats, prang towers, lotus bud chedis in Sukhothai, and balustrades decorated with nagas that flank the stairs of Lanna temples. A millennium after the decline of the Khmer Empire, the shadow of its former grandeur is still omnipresent in Thai art and architecture today.



## 17.6 Lanna Art (1266 – 1939 CE)

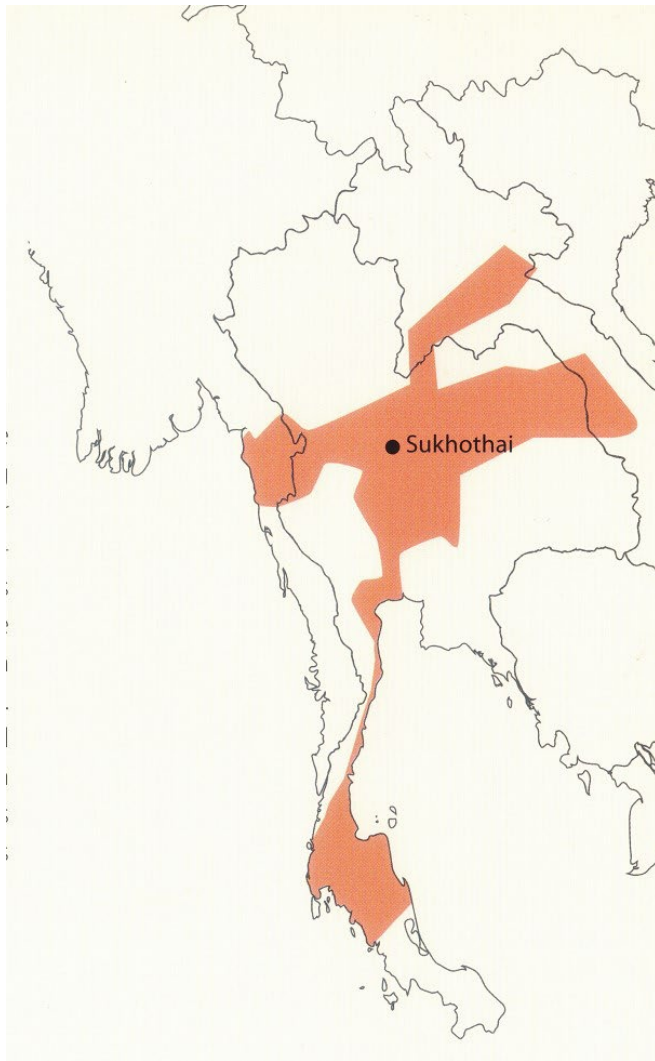


Northern Thailand's history is largely independent from the rest of Thailand. In fact, Lanna, a vassal state, was not fully integrated into the country until 1939. King Mengrai of Chiang Rai founded the Lanna Kingdom by unifying northern principalities, taking over Haripunchai and founding Chiang Mai as the capital. Through trade, the Khmer, Sukhothai and Burmese all left their artistic mark on sculpture and temple architecture. Of all the cultural influences, however, none was more influential than the Dvaravati kingdom of Haripunchai. These devout Buddhists attracted famous teachers from Sri Lanka and India known for their innovative designs.

Lanna images include Early Chiang Saen "Lion-Lord" style Buddhas, reminiscent of 10th C "Lion of the Sakyas" images in Bodhi Gaya, India. Pre-dominantly bronze and seated in full lotus position in the bhumisparsa mudra on a lotus petal base, the Buddha images feature a well-developed chest, a conical ushnisha topped by a knob-like lotus finial, thick fat curls, rounded face with straight nose and prominent chin. Late Chiang Saen style shows evidence of Sukhothai influence in the longer fishtail robe flap and

images seated in half-lotus position, while other ornate Lanna pieces include crowned Buddha images and objects for ceremonial use.

## 17.7 Sukothai Art (1238 – 1378 CE)



The kingdom of Sukhothai arose when the former Dvaravati and Khmer rulers of the region started to weaken. Tai people, who had migrated from China and surrounding countries, were integrated into the society. Two chieftains defeated the Khmer governor of Sukhothai and enthroned Sri Intradit, the first king, marking the founding of the Sukhothai kingdom. The third king, Ramkhamhaeng the Great, brought the kingdom to its apogee, expanding the territory. He is regarded as being a strong administrator, a wise lawgiver, and a brilliant statesman.

The Siamese people embraced the Buddhist faith from Dvaravati influences and adopted Brahmanic rituals and Hindu gods from the Khmers. Unlike the Khmer kings, the Sukhothai leaders were available to their people and are still held in great reverence today. A tremendous innovation of that time was the creation of the Thai alphabet based on earlier Khmer, Mon and South Indian script. During this Golden Age the most outstanding creative achievement is the Walking Buddha with its fluid elegance.

## 17.8 Ayutthaya Art (1350 – 1767 CE)



Ruled for over 400 years by 34 kings, Ayutthaya, a city of one million, was a powerful administrative center. Founded at the junction of three rivers, cuts in the river created an island, an important defensive tactic; and, located just 90 km from the Gulf of Thailand, it became the hub of international trade. Foreign settlements included the Chinese whose artistic influences were embraced, giving rise to bencharong porcelain with Siamese designs, refined gold-on-lacquer wooden cabinets and more complex murals created with Chinese paint pigments.

Ayutthaya's prosperity was reflected in its richly decorated palaces and temples; Hindu court rituals instilled an aura of sacred power reserved for the devaraja (the King). Impressive Buddha images, built in brick and cast in bronze, and other statues, royally adorned and crowned, blurred the line between king and Buddha. In 1767 after years of dynastic problems, an epidemic, and warfare, resources were sapped, the city was sacked and burned by the Burmese, and people were captured. Most records were lost, so

Siamese versions were rewritten in the late 18-19th c CE. Epic tales highlight an opulent city and wars fought on elephant back which live on today in the minds of the Thai people.

### 17.9 Rattanakosin Art (1782 – present)



After the brief Thonburi period, General Chao Phraya Chakri became king, founding the Chakri Dynasty and the city of Krungthep in 1782. The new capital, called Bangkok by foreigners, was built on Rattanakosin Island created from defensive canals cut into the east side of the Chao Phraya River. Rebuilding Siam was essential; city walls and moats were made of bricks salvaged from Ayutthaya, and Buddha images recovered from Sukhothai were installed in temples as many artifacts from the war-ravaged country had been melted down for currency for use by the starving populace.

New royal buildings and temples were built as re-creations of the glorious Ayutthaya style, including the Grand Palace and the Wang Na Palace, today home of the National Museum Bangkok. Artists created ornate thrones for the old Buddha images, ritually linking the past to the emerging kingdom, and images



representing classical Siamese traditions were copied. New statues created during this period often incorporated a mixture of past traditions resulting in an eclectic style, and Western elements were introduced during the reign of King Rama IV. In 1939 Siam became Thailand, and the foundation developed by the Chakri kings continues today through the reign of HM Maha Vajiralongkorn, King Rama X.

## 18 Mudras

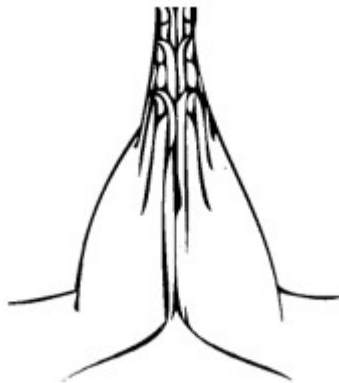
*The mudras or symbolic hand gestures of Buddhist and Hindu statuary are well-defined hand positions with a fixed meaning regardless of historical period or artistic style. In Theravada Buddhist art, the mudras refer to certain aspects of Buddhist teaching described in the canons or illustrate events in the life of the historical Buddha.*

### **ABHAYA MUDRA**



The abhaya mudra means freedom from fear. It symbolizes protection, peace, reassurance, or dispelling fear. It is generally made with the right hand raised to shoulder height, the arm crooked, the palm of the hand facing outward, and the fingers upright and closed. Variations in Thailand include both hands raised to indicate calming the oceans, right hand raised to symbolize pacifying the relatives, or left hand raised to forbid the sandalwood image from leaving his seat.

### **ANJALI MUDRA**



The mudra represents a gesture of greeting, prayer, or adoration. Buddha images are not depicted making this gesture since they no longer need to show devotion to anything or anyone. Both hands are shown with palms pressed together.

### **BHUMISPARGA MUDRA**



Commonly found in Thailand, this mudra is termed "Calling the Earth to Witness" or "Victory Over Mara". It represents Siddhartha Gautama meditating under a bodhi tree touching the earth with his right hand to invoke the Earth goddess, Thoranee, as witness to the truth of his words. Upon wringing her hair, each drop of water that falls represents one act of merit performed by Gautama in his previous lives, creating a torrent of water that drowns an army led by the demon king, Mara, the personification of temptation and worldly desires, an obstacle to enlightenment. Seated in the lotus position, the right hand touches or points to the ground, fingertips near the right knee, while the left hand rests on the lap, palm facing upward.

#### **DHARMACHAKRA MUDRA**



This gesture represents the initial transmission of the first sermon, Buddha's teachings after his Enlightenment in the Deer Park in Sarnath. It is known as "Turning the Wheel of The Law" and implies setting in motion the Buddha's dharma or teachings. The thumb and index finger of both hands touch at their tips to form a circle, the Wheel of the Law. The two hands are positioned close together in front of the chest, the left palm upward to indicate the truths that the Buddha has discovered from within, and the right palm outward indicating the transmission of these truths to others.

#### **DHYANA MUDRA**



The gesture of meditation is formed by placing both hands on the lap, right hand on left with fingers fully stretched and the palms facing upwards, forming a triangle, symbolic of the spiritual fire or the Triratna, the three jewels. The Buddha is seen seated, legs crossed in the half-lotus or full-lotus position.

### **VARADA MUDRA**



Signifying charity, compassion, and granting or giving blessings, the mudra is nearly always depicted with the right arm pendant, hand pointing to the ground, palm outward. Standing images show the left arm crooked, left hand holding the end of the monastic robe or palm shown facing outward. For the seated image, the left hand is usually placed in the lap.

### **VITARKA MUDRA**



Vitarka mudra is the gesture of teaching. It symbolizes the discussion and transmission of Buddhist teachings. The tips of the thumb and the index finger are joined together, keeping the other fingers straight and pointing upward. In Thailand, this gesture, executed with both hands, is called "Descending from Tavatimsa Heaven".

## 19 National Museums of Thailand

The national museums of Thailand are operated by the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture, and are responsible for the safeguarding of state-owned historical and cultural artefacts. Today (as of 2016) there are 43 national museum branches operated across the country.

### Central

Bangkok National Museum (Bangkok)  
Kanchanaphisek National Museum (Pathum Thani)  
National Museum of Royal Barges (Bangkok)  
Royal Elephant National Museum (Bangkok)  
Benchamabopit National Museum (Bangkok)  
The National Gallery (Bangkok)  
Silpa Bhirasri National Museum (Bangkok)  
Chao Samphraya National Museum (Ayutthaya)  
Chantharakasem National Museum (Ayutthaya)  
Narai National Museum (Lopburi)  
Inburi National Museum (Singburi)  
Chainatmuni National Museum (Chai Nat)  
Uthong National Museum (Suphanburi)  
Suphanburi National Museum (Suphanburi)  
Phra Pathommachedi National Museum (Nakhon Pathom)  
Phra Nakhon Khiri National Museum (Phetchaburi)  
Bankao National Museum (Kanchanaburi)  
Ratchaburi National Museum (Ratchaburi)  
Thai Rice Farmers National Museum (Suphanburi)  
Prachinburi National Museum (Prachinburi)  
National Maritime Museum (Chanthaburi)

### North

Ramkhamhaeng National Museum (Sukhothai)  
Sawanworanayok National Museum (Sukhothai)  
Kamphaeng Phet National Museum (Kamphaeng Phet)  
Phra Phutthachinnarat National Museum (Phitsanulok)  
Chiang Mai National Museum (Chiang Mai)  
Chiang Saen National Museum (Chiang Rai)  
Hariphunchai National Museum (Lamphun)  
Nan National Museum (Nan)

### Northeast

Phimai National Museum (Nakhon Ratchasima)  
Mahaviravong National Museum (Nakhon Ratchasima)  
Roi-Et National Museum (Roi Et)

Surin National Museum (Surin)  
Ubon Ratchathani National Museum (Ubon Ratchathani)  
Khon Kaen National Museum (Khon Kaen)  
Ban Chiang National Museum (Udon Thani)

#### South

Nakhon Si Thammarat National Museum (Nakhon Si Thammarat)  
Chaiya National Museum (Chaiya, Surat Thani)  
Thalang National Museum (Phuket)  
Songkhla National Museum (Songkhla)  
Muchimavas National Museum (Songkhla)  
Chumphon National Museum (Chumphon)  
Satun National Museum (Satun)



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Fraser-Lu (2)	Sylvia	Lacquerware
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Representing over thirty nationalities, the 220 members of the National Museum Volunteers (NMV) Bangkok are dedicated to the informed understanding of the arts of Thailand through a variety of educational and cultural activities and to the service of the public and the National Museum Bangkok through their programs.

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