

Culture

Ways of Life and Wisdom





Culture

Ways of Life and Wisdom





“...ชาติไทยเรานั้นได้มีเอกราช มีภาษา
ศิลปะ และขนบธรรมเนียมประเพณี
เป็นของตนเองมาช้านานหลายศตวรรษแล้ว
ทั้งนี้ เพราะบรรพบุรุษของเราได้เสียสละอุทิศชีวิต
กำลังกายและใจ สะสมสิ่งเหล่านี้ไว้ให้
พวกเรา จึงจำเป็นอย่างยิ่งที่เราจะต้องรักษา
สิ่งเหล่านี้ไว้ให้คงทนถาวรเป็นมรดกของอนุชน
รุ่นหลังต่อไป...”



Royal Address by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej
at the Opening Ceremony of the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum, Sukhothai Province, on 25th January 1964





Message

From

His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.)
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
on the Occasion of the Publication of the Book entitled
“Culture, Ways of Life and Wisdom”



Throughout our long history, the Kingdom of Thailand has been independent, prosperous and rich in culture. We take much pride in preserving and cherishing the magnificent Thai arts, culture and tradition inherited from our ancestors. The distinctive Thai culture, ways of life and wisdom passed on from generation to generation, are by-products of our ability to develop our own traditions and adopt various cultures and civilizations that came into our contact, reflected in our literature, music, performing arts, fashions and foods, which are unique and vary from region to region.

The Royal Thai government has implemented a number of policies, for preserving, restoring and promoting our cultural heritage. In this connection, this book can help encourage the Thai people to learn and understand our own history, and to be aware of the importance of our cultural lineage. It can also cultivate and enable the younger generation to cherish and uphold “Thainess”, thereby sustaining our long-standing status in world history.

This book serves as a permanent record of the knowledge about Thai culture, ways of life and wisdom. It should enable the young generation to enhance their understanding of Thai ways of life, practiced, developed and handed down through the generations. I wish this initiative great success in its effort to generate pride in being a Thai person. In addition, I sincerely hope that this book can create a better understanding of the Thai culture and wisdom to our foreign friends.

General  (Ret.)
(Prayut Chan-o-cha)

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand



Message from the Minister of Culture



Culture is fundamental in determining the notion of Thainess. As the principles of morality playing a role for overall individual, social and national development, culture remains the foundation for our unity and security for the sake of human dignity and prestige. The Ministry of Culture is entrusted with the task of promoting and supporting all dimensions of culture in line with the government policy.

The elements of the book, “Culture, Ways of Life and Wisdom,” appear as part of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage officially recognized and legally protected by the Department of Cultural Promotion. The Act of Promotion and Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage B.E.2559 (2016) was established as a normative instrument for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Apart from being the pride of the nation, intangible cultural heritage can be developed according to the concept of economic value added to its contribution to cultural tourism, cultural goods and services.

On behalf of the Ministry of Culture, I hope that the book will be useful to enhance knowledge, understanding and awareness of the importance of culture to both the Thais and friends of Thailand with regard to sustainable development in the context of the future.

VIRA Rojpojchanarat

(Mr. Vira Rojpojchanarat)

Minister of Culture



Preface by Director-General of the Department of Cultural Promotion



The Department of Cultural Promotion following the Minister of Culture's policy has produced this book to promote knowledge of culture, ways of life and wisdom for the general public to understand and become aware of importance of culture.

It is extensively known that Thailand is a country of cultural diversity. People living in different regions have their unique ways of life – owing to the ingenuity of Thai ancestors for utilizing their wisdom to live in harmony with nature.

The content of the “Culture, Ways of Life and Wisdom” book is divided into 6 chapters: Prologue; Precious Tradition and Ways of Life; Performing Arts and Spiritual Performance; Thai Craftsmanship; Thai Cuisine and Lifestyle; and Thai Folk Games and Sports. Each chapter showcases a unique story covering every region of Thailand, for interested people to visualize the importance of the varieties.

The Department of Cultural Promotion hopes this book will be useful for promotion patriotic love and pride among Thai people.

(Mrs. Pimravee Watthanavarangkul)

Director-General
Department of Cultural Promotion

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Culture

Ways of Life and Wisdom

Prologue

Thai culture, ways of life and wisdom is a precious heritage inherited through many generations and worthwhile to be preserved for pride and sustainability.

The book entitled **“Culture, Ways of Life and Wisdom”** is produced by the Department of Cultural Promotion, the Ministry of Culture with the determination to disseminate the valuable stories and charming cultural heritage, the identity of lifestyle and wisdom through the lives of Thai people living across the country, especially in terms of Thai tradition, performing arts, traditional craftsmanship, cuisine and sports to the general public.

The knowledge process reflects on the ways of life close to the nature, reverence for ancestors and benefactors, community solidarity, beliefs and faith in religions, artistic creations and skills invented to develop lives and livelihood, in harmony with the nature.

In addition to the dissemination of knowledge and understanding of Thai culture, the book aims to promote morality and good attitude to the general public to realize the importance of Thai culture.

The Definition of Culture, Ways of Life and Wisdom

Culture or “**Wattanatham**” in Thai, is composed by two words: “**wattana**” means growth and prosperity, while “**tham**” refers to action or practice. The overall meaning is the action for growth.

The National Culture Act, B.E. 2553 provides the definition of “**culture**” that refers to the ways of life, thoughts, beliefs, value, norm, custom/tradition, rituals and wisdoms which a group of community or society incorporates in creation, accumulation, cultivation, transfer, learning, improvement, and change for growth both mental and physical aspects peacefully and sustainably.

Culture therefore covers all aspects created by humans whether they are abstract or concrete. It also means the behavioral pattern of the society from the past, through the learning, invention, adaptation in response to the needs and development of livelihood. It evolves from generation to generation systematically to create growth and social security.

Ways of life refers to Thai people’s ways of live from their birth to mortality, including the four requisites necessary for living: shelter, food, clothing and medicine. It also means social knowledge, culture, wisdom, behavior, practice, education from past to present.

Wisdom is knowledge and skills developed over a period of time through cognitive process, selection, improvement, development and transfer to be used for solving problems, life development with nature balance and suitable to the current period. Thai wisdom is outstanding in many areas including agriculture, arts, literature and language.

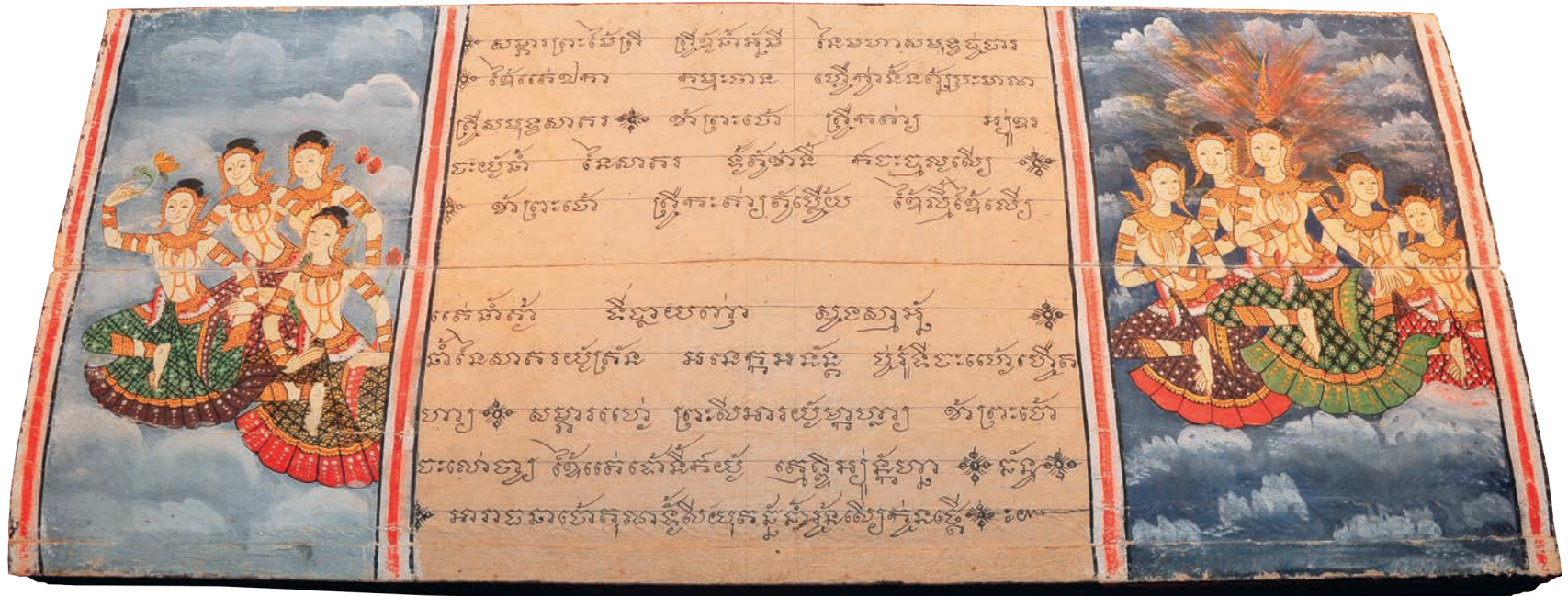
It is obvious that culture, ways of life and wisdom reflect on the competence of local people as a product of various knowledge collection, dynamic adaptation to environment. The process has been ongoing through many generations to become the ways of life that suit Thai society.



- Religion is one of the factors that influences the ways of live and culture. Thai culture has its root from Buddhism and it has been inherited through generations in the pattern of beliefs, rites, morality, law, literature, language and custom.

“ Culture is a tool to unite social members, engage them in harmony, and cultivate the right attitudes, beliefs, and values. In addition, culture is subject to a never-ending process of changes through time. ”





“Wisdom of each locality is the heritage that ancestors had been creating, collecting and retaining through generations. Thai and the local people should realize its value and be proud of sustaining the heritage.”

Language refers to the tool that people use to communicate in life, interact with other groups. Both spoken and unspoken language reflects perspectives, wisdom and culture of each ethnic group. Thailand has Thai language as a national language with the following classifications.

“**Thai Language**” refers to official language of Thailand

“**Local Thai Language**” refers to dialects communicable and understandable in each locality. It can be differed in words and sound, such as Northern Thai dialect, Northeastern Thai dialect, Central Thai dialect and Southern Thai dialect.

“**Ethnic Group Language**” refers to dialects communicating among ethnic groups living in Thailand, such as Tai language, Chino-Tibetan language and Mong-Mian language.

Moreover, Thai language also has levels of vocabulary and rankings used in particular groups and activities. For example, terms of reverence are set for royal family members. Individuals can be called like family members such as brother, sister, uncle, aunty, grandfather, grandmother, even though they do not have a kinship relationship.

- Culture and tradition of each Thai locality may differ by geography, natural resources, environment, but remain their identity of language, artefact, music, food and costume.

© Performing Arts

Performing Arts refer to the forms of arts including Lakorn (drama), modern dance, traditional dance and music that conveys stories. They can be formal or adapted from originals, performed in front of audiences serving the purpose of beauty, entertainment, thought-provoking which leads to social development and change. The performances can be original or adapted, such as Lakorn, music and local performance.

Performing Arts can be divided into 2 categories.

“**Music and singing**” refers to the sound from musical instrument and singing that composes music melodies, creating pleasure or various moods. It also plays a role in driving moods, providing entertainment, supporting acting or ritual performances. As for the music, it can be classified as music for performances and music for ritual performances such as playing Pin (stringed lute), Can (reed mouth organ), wooden xylophone, flute, fiddle and singing baby lullaby songs.

“**Dramatic arts and Drama**” refer to a physical expression, body movement, dance, use of voice, singing, use of scripts, use of equipment, etc. to convey stories, moods and feelings, together with or without music and singing. The performance is divided into ritual performance, storytelling performance, and non-story play, such as Lakorn Nai, Li-kae, Khon, Mo Lam, Manohra, dance, etc.

© Social Practices, Rituals, Traditions and Festive Events

Social practices, rituals, traditions and festive events mean the collective behaviors of people in the community that transmit through generations and lead to the peaceful society and express the identity of that community and ethnic group which can be divided as follows;

- **Etiquette** means good behavior towards other people, such as etiquette of speaking, paying respect, walking, sitting and squatting, proper manners at the table, etc.



- **Tradition** refers to continued behaviors and practices of activities based on the lifestyle and society of the community such as religious tradition, festive tradition, lifecycle tradition traditions about livelihood.

- Religion traditions e.g. Buddhist Holy Day, Buddhist Lent Day, End of the Buddhist Lent Day, Visakha Bucha Day, Makha Bucha Day, Asanha Bucha Day.

- Festive traditions e.g. Loy Krathong, Songkran, parades of lent candles, Phi Ta Khon, the end of the tenth lunar month, Chak Phra (Pulling the Buddha), Bun Pha Wet, Mahachati Sermon

- Lifecycle traditions from birth to death e.g. baby haircut, tonsure, funeral ceremony, wedding ceremony, new house ceremony, prolonging life tradition, ordination, requiem, traditional welcome ceremony wrist-binding ceremony, Phuk Seui (Silk Festival for friendship)

- Traditions about livelihood e.g. Teacher veneration (Wai Khru) ceremony, rice ritual (Kwan Khao), cat parade for rainfalls, Rocket Festival, Royal Plowing Ceremony



“The different characteristics of climates and environments in each region of Thailand contribute to the diverse culture of living.”



◎ Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and the Universe

Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe refers to the knowledge, methods, skills, beliefs, practices and the expressions developed from interactions between human and environment, naturally and supernaturally as follows:

- **Food and Nutrition** is consumable substance for humans, cooking methods, consumption methods and nutritious value

- **Thai Traditional Medicine and Indigenous Medicine**

“**Thai Traditional Medicine**” is the medical process concerning the health check-ups, diagnosis, treatments or preventions, promotions and rehabilitations of humans and/or animal’s health by the application of Thai traditional wisdom.

“**Indigenous Medicine**” is the way of self-reliance healthcare in traditional communities through different beliefs, rituals and resources based on each locality until it has become part of life.

- **Astrology and Astronomy**

“**Astrology**” is knowledge of predicting the fortune and future of individuals and nations based on the position and pattern of the stars at the time of incidents.

“**Astronomy**” is knowledge concerning the observation and explanation of the universe beyond the earth’s atmosphere e.g. eclipses and weather forecasts.

- **Natural Resource Management** is knowledge of ecosystem management for conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources

- **Strategic Location and Settlement** refers to knowledge and belief in the inhabitant selection in harmony and balance with the environment and culture of the community.

◎ Traditional Craftsmanship

Traditional Craftsmanship refers to wisdom, technical skills, material selections, and creative methods that express the local identity, social and culture development of people. Local materials together with knowledge accumulated from many generations are developed into expertise of individuals. It becomes quality and unique craftsmanship of the locality such as silk or cotton weaving, lai or krajoed basketry, silverware, brass making, pottery, leather, wood carving, etc.



◎ Indigenous Games, Indigenous Sports and Martial Arts

Indigenous games, indigenous sports and martial arts refer to sport games and martial arts which are played in Thailand and reflect on Thai identity, divided into three following categories.

“Indigenous games” is the self-motivated and body-moving activity for fun, uniquely found in each locality. Such games create love and harmony in the group — without fixed rules but agreed among the players, such as Mak Keb (jackstones), Mon Son Pa (hiding a cloth behind one’s back), Ma Kan Kluai (Banana rib horse), Mae Ngu Aei (Snatching a baby from the mother snake), Phong Phang (Trapping the fish), Ri Ri Khaosan (Catching the last one in the line), Son Ha (Hide and seek) or Pong Pae.

“Indigenous Sports” refer to the physical competitions which require moving ability, with an aim of winning results by the rules of each locality such as ox and cattle running competitions, Ti Chab (Humming and Tagging), Takro Lod Huang, Yae Long Roo, Thai kite, and chess.

“Martial arts” refer to fighting methods or formats of using body or tools with the skills culturally and inherently trained such as swordplay and Thai boxing.







Ways of Life

Thai People of Four Regions

Thai people's ways of life are similar and different dependent on each of their regions. Several factors including environment, ethnicity, beliefs, religion and tradition in that region are mixed and lead to their ways of life and identity that significantly indicate value and the pattern of their lifestyles.

Northern Region of Thailand formerly known as Lanna Kingdom has unique livelihoods in terms of spoken language, written scripts, culture and tradition. With its temperature cooler than other regions, the Northern people's ways of life are soft and neat, obviously seen from their soft sweet dialects and delicate traditions and indigenous performances like the festive events of Poi Luang, Yi Peng, Floating Lanterns, Nail-covered Dance, Ngiao Dance, Klong Sabud Chai (Lanna Encouraging Drum). The Northern people also have strong faith in Buddhism, and a primitive belief in spirits as evident in the prolonging ceremony.



Their culture of eating is similar to the Isan people as their popular food includes sticky rice and pickled fish. Famous Northern food include green chili paste (Nam prik Num), Northern sausage (Sai Oau), Nam ngiao curry noodles (Kanom Jeen Nam Ngiao), etc. Due to its high mountainous terrain rich in forest, most of the Northern Thais make their living by raising livestock and agriculture in the lowlands. Their slow ways of life makes themselves gentle and kind. Through many generations, they continue to adhere to their native traditions and customs that have been developed into the lifestyles of Lanna people.

Isan or the Northeastern Region of Thailand is diverse in terms of arts, culture and traditions that vary from place to place due to the ethnic interactions. Isan people have a simple way of life. Despite their poor living conditions, the Northeast Thais are still very diligent, hard-working, and retain the ancient traditions of the ancestors strictly, both dialects used in communication and beliefs in spirit of the ancestors and farms. They normally hold worship ceremonies as they believe that ghosts have superstitious power which can bring them good or bad luck.

Northeastern tradition and indigenous games are unique, such as the tradition of Phi Ta Khon, rockets, fire boats, Moh-Lam Dance with string musical instrument or reed mouth organ. The show is fun and lively to replace the arid landscape. Another very famous thing is the food, especially **“Som Tam”**, which is popular among people in all parts of Thailand. The indispensable ingredient for Isan food is **“pickled fish”** or so-called **“Pla Dak”** by the Isan people.

Central Region of Thailand. The ways of life of people in the Central region is related closely to water. Most houses are in the height of the floodplain to prevent floods in the wet season and use the boat as a vehicle for convenient transportation. This region is the country's major rice plantation area. The Central Thais have a way of life that is associated with farming societies, especially rice farming. There are still rituals that reflect the beliefs in rice society, such as the worship of the mother and the farmer. People in the Central region eat rice as the main food. And with its rich terrain, it is rich in so many fish. The main food that is available in almost every meal of the Central people is “Chilli” such as shrimp paste chilli sauce (Nam prik Kapi), sweet chilli paste (Nam prik Long-rua), and grilled-fish chilli paste (Nam prik Pla Yang). There are also many vegetables enabling possibilities to create various kinds of dishes, tastily and beautifully both on main dishes and sweets.

In addition to being an important food source, the Central region is a main region collecting both Thai culture and arts of the royal court and villagers, as evident in the performances of Khon, Li-kae, Lam Tat, folk song for rice cultivation, E-saew, Choi, as well as craftwork which is considered an archetype of Thai arts. The people in this region are still attached to religion, as evidence in their traditions and beliefs, such as the tradition of food offerings at the end of Buddhist Lent Day, flowers offerings and Rub-Bua (lotus acceptance) tradition. Although the lifestyle of the people in the Central region is changing along with the influx of civilization, the traditional ways of life is preserved in many parts of Central Thailand.

Southern Region of Thailand. Culture and ways of life of the people in the Southern region is diverse based on their religious beliefs, both in Buddhism and Islamism. Ethnic groups are living together whether they are Thai-Buddhist, Thai-Muslim, Chinese, or Chinese-Malay (Nyonya). Their costumes are different according to the uniqueness of their identity. They also respect and express their gratitude to our ancestors through the end of the tenth lunar month (Sart Duan Sib) tradition. There are also important traditions and festivals like Pulling the Buddha (Chak Phra) tradition, sacred cloth parade (Hae Pha Khuen That) festival, boat racing festival, vegetarian festival, and Hari Raya day. In addition, the Southern region is a rich array of culturally diverse performing arts and indigenous games that are bustling with excitement, such as the shadow play, Manohra dance, Dike Hulu, Rongngeng dance and Zebra Dove competition. Their food is also unique in light of strong spicy taste, such as spicy and sour soup (Kaeng Lueng), spicy rice salad with mixed vegetable (Khao Yum), fish soup with fermented fish's kidney (Gaeng Tai Pla), fried Parkia (Pad Sator). They make their living by rubber plantations, palm plantations, fishery and plantations of some fruits such as rambutan, durian, mangosteen and Southern langsat.

Ethnic differences, beliefs, religions and culture in each area of the South add charm to its lifestyle. It is full of integrated diversity and cultural strengths that create the identity of people in this region.







Precious Traditions and Ways of Life

The pattern of people's lifestyle in the society is made by humans with regard to the nature of their livelihood. It leads to traditions practiced and passed through generations, which reflect beliefs and moral anchors of the community members.

Loy Krathong Festival, Tham Khwan Khao Ceremony and Rocket Festival of the Northeastern region, shows human humbleness towards nature in terms of food resources and occupations. Songkran Festival is not only the Thai New Year, it is also an expression of love and unity in families. The Tenth Lunar Month Festival of the Southern region reflects the gratitude to the parents and ancestors. The expression of reverence for benefactors and teachers leads to a teacher worship (Wai Khru) ceremony since the ancient times.



Songkran

The Thai New Year

The moment of life in transition to a new year is important for people to be aware and reminisce of the past. The Songkran tradition, in parallel to Thai New Year tradition, shows the culture and lifestyle of people in the society in association with Buddhism and reverence towards their parents and ancestors.

Thai tradition of making a smooth transition from the old year to the new one is based on the beliefs in eliminating bad things from life and replacing with new auspicious things, as the meaning of **“Songkran”** in Sanskrit is stepping up or moving into. This refers to the passage of the sun, from one zodiac sign to another sign every month from one sphere to the next until completing a cycle, or from Pisces to Aries, which is counted one year according to the solar year. Therefore, the new year is celebrated for 3 days: the 13th of April is set as the Songkran day; the 14th of April is called **“Wan Nao”** (literally **“the day of living”** in Lanna), which is the day of bridging the old year and the new one; and the 15th of April is called the beginning of New Year’s Day. The traditional Songkran festival according to the lunar year is on the 15th day of the fourth month.

The preparation to the New Year starts with cleaning houses, things, places including temples which are considered as public space. People begin their new day by making merit or offering food to monks at temples in the morning, and participating in bathing rites to monks and Buddha images in order to sustain and nurture Buddhism. The activities also soften their minds to make a sacrifice without expectation. Forming sand pagodas is another form of making merit and solidarity at the same time because the sand can be further used in construction or land filling.



“ Songkran is a tradition of summer, therefore “water” is used as a symbol to relieve the heat of weather by splashing water on each other for moisture and asking the elderly family members’ blessings for auspiciousness and prosperity. ”

The dedication of the charity to the ancestors is paying reverences to the the deceased. Watering the elderly is the act of paying a tribute to living senior members of the family or respected adults of the community. It is the act of showing reverence from the younger generation to the elders. Following the graceful culture of Thailand, splashing water after ceremonies is considered a way to strengthen relationship among friends and family members. Clean water probably mixed it with scented water or perfume is used for pouring on them in a polite way. Festivals and entertaining games may differ in each locality and for enjoyment and harmony such as Mae Sri spiritual possession, communication with spirits, Saba, Luk Chuang etc.

The current lifestyle of Thai people may change. Traveling to other places to make a living may not allow family members regularly in touch as in the past. Yet, the Songkran tradition connects people, by bringing good ties and culture back to the identity and community again. It also preserves traditions and culture, and remains true to the core idea to make people aware of the activities during the past one year and ready to move forward with good practice.



- *“Saba Mon”, a traditional game of Mon people at the Phra Pradaeng Songkran Festival in Samut Prakan province.*





Songkran of the Four Regions

New Year Festivals in each region may be celebrated differently in detail. But every process still retains the essence of lifestyles based on family principles, reverence and Buddhist doctrine.

Central Thailand

The Songkran tradition of the Central Thailand begins on the April 13th April 14th is regarded as 'Wan Nao' or the middle day. April 15th is called 'Wan Thaloeng Sok' (the beginning of new year). Activities during the three days include releasing bird and fish, pouring water for making merit to the deceased relatives, bathing rites to monks and Buddha images, and forming sand pagoda.





- *Splashing cool water to each other in a gentle way helps reduce the heat of summer, add the enjoyment to the Songkran Festival and strengthen friendship among the community members.*

Northern Region

The New Year's day in the northern region of Thailand is also called 'Prapheni Pimai Mueang', starting from April 13th or 'Wan Sangkan Long' or 'Maha Songkran'. It means the old year passes by and the day that family members help each other clean their house for luck. The next day, April 14th, is called 'Wan Nao', a day for maintaining auspiciousness by thinking and doing good all day. The third day, April 15th, is called 'Wan Phaya Wan' or 'Wan Thaloeng Sok', starting from offering food to monks, listening to sermon at monastery, pouring water to the elders (Rot Nam Dam Hua) in the afternoon. On April 16th, or 'Wan Pak Pi', people will perform the water - pouring ceremony to the abbot at various temples to show respects and ask for forgiveness. Finally, on April 17th 'Wan Pak Duean' is for dispelling bad luck.

Northeastern Region

Northeastern people called the Songkran Festival 'Thambun Duean Ha' (the Fifth Month Merit Making). They implement similar activities with a main focus on sprinkle water onto the Buddha image, water - pouring the elders of the family to ask for their forgiveness, and ancestor worship.

Southern Region

According to the southern belief, Songkran is the time of changing the guardian angels of the nation. Therefore, the first day of Songkran is called 'Wan Song Chao Muaeng Kao' or the day of sending the old governor on April 13th, to perform a ritual of dispelling bad luck. The following day is considered 'Wan Wang' or the day without the guardian angel, on April 14th. The villagers make merit at the temples and sprinkle water onto the Buddha image. The last day is called 'Wan Rab Chao Mueang Mai' or the day of having audience with the new governor on April 15th. The new angel will be welcomed by people with beautiful dresses, also to bid farewell Songkran Festival.



“Countries which share the same Songkran tradition with Thailand are the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, including people who speak Tai language.”





Loy Krathong

The River of Life

River is the lifeblood of Thai people as they live around watersheds and make a living with agriculture. The Loy Krathong festival therefore is an act of offering to apologize to rivers and reverence to the streams that nourish all lives at the full moon of the 12th month. As the month has the highest level of water in a year, it is a good time to express gratitude and appreciation to the nature.

The Loy Krathong tradition is based on a belief in a ceremony of offering apologies to rivers from the activities humans might have been done by ignorance, such as trampling, excreting, dumping wastes to rivers and others impropriety. In addition to expressing gratitude and apology to the rivers, Loy Krathong has many other purposes, depending on the belief of each locality, such as worshiping the return of Lord Buddha after the preach the Dharma at the Sawan Chan Daowadeung (Tavatimsa Heaven); worshiping the footprint of the Buddha on the sandbanks of the Narmada River in India; worshiping the Ket Kaew Chulamani pagoda which contains the holy hair of Buddha at the Tavatimsa Heaven; and expelling misfortune, similar to the sin floating ceremony of Brahman.

The apology ceremony in the Loy Krathong tradition will use floating materials such as banana stalk, bamboo stem, etc. to make a Krathong and filled in some sacrifice things to be floated away with water. Inside it contains a flowery worship set, one incense stick, and one candle. In general, a Brahman Krathong is created in the same way of a Buddhist Krathong. But the difference is that there is no flowery worship set in a Brahman Krathong. In some local areas, people will put a piece of betel nut, silver coins, some threads of their hair, and nails in the Krathong to dispel the bad luck.

- *"The Brahman rite of floating candles" a mural painting on the Twelfth Month Royal Ceremony at Wat Ratchapradit Sathit Maha Srimaram Ratchaworawihan*





The current creation of magnificent Krathongs is originated from the banana leaf Krathong, as firstly evident in the Royal Chronicle (Praratcha Phongsawadan) in the reign of King Rama III that Princess Vilas created a Krathong to play every year. Afterwards, the culture was distributed to Bangkok and the area in the Chao Phraya watershed. Its popularity was widespread across the country in 1957.

The ties with streams and awareness of shared benefits for living together create graceful traditions such as the Loy Krathong, which reflects the water bounded culture and the river apology tradition of mankind. These come with a hope that all community members will continue preserving water resources as long as possible.

Loy Krathong Festivals in the Four Regions of Thailand

Northern Region

The Loy Krathong of the Northern Thailand is most likely celebrated on the full moon day of the second month (December or January, based on the lunar calendar). But at the present the festival is held on the 15th day of the second waxing moon, with great celebrations in many provinces, such as Chiang Mai's Yi Peng Festival (the word **“Yi”** means **“second month”**), Loy Krathong Festival in Tak province, Long Sa Pao Festival in Lampang and Loy Krathong and Candle Festival in Sukhothai province.









- On the Loy Krathong Day, “Krathong” will be made from various materials, decorated like lotus flowers, together with incense sticks and candles. People also put nails, hair or coins into the Krathong and float it to the river to seek forgiveness from the River Goddess (Ganges).



“Countries which share the same Loy Krathong tradition with Thailand are the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.”



Northeastern Region

In the Northeastern region, Loy Krathong is known as Sip Song Peng (the full moon of the twelfth month). Each of the Northeast provinces has its own way of celebrating the festival. For example, Roi Et province hosts Somma Naam Kuen Peng Seng Pratheep as a way to seek forgiveness from the River Goddess. In Sakon Nakhon province, there is the floating of krathongs made from banana leaf sheaths in a shape like an ancient beehive castle. The festival is called Loy Pratheep Pra Rajathan Sip Song Peng Tai Sakon.

Southern Region

The Southern of Thailand also celebrates a great Loy Krathong festival like other regions, especially in Had Yai district in Songkhla province. In addition to the act of seeking forgiveness from the River Goddess (Ganges), the Southern people believe in a Krathong floating to ward off bad luck. They use banana stalks to make a beautiful small boat or raft filled with various food items, flower, incense, and money before floating it away.

Central Region

The evidence of the Central region’s Loy Krathong which is regarded as a model of the festival countrywide is traced back to the Ayutthaya period. There was a royal ceremony called “**Chong Priang Lod Chood Loy Kome**”. Later in the reign of King Nangkhao (Rama III), it was known as “**Loy Pra Prateep Krathong**” and has become one of the twelve month Royal Ceremonies.





“ ‘Khon artists’ Wai Khru is held as a mask covering ceremony for worshiping Khon teachers. After being covered with the mask from the teacher, that person becomes a complete artist. The mask covering ceremony is classified in three levels: mask covering to be accepted in a group of artists and for auspiciousness; mask covering to a teacher; and mask covering to act on behalf of the teacher as that person is authorized to perform the Wai Khru ceremony. ”

• *The important gods of dance and music*

Wai Khru Ceremony

The Way of Expressing Gratitude and Reverence

Parents are a child’s first teachers. A teacher who provides knowledge for the future benefits is comparable to a second mother.

Showing respect, humbleness, gratitude for patrons is a beautiful Thai culture since the ancient times. Likewise, when knowledge is transferred by knowledge providers, they are all considered teachers. The Teachers’ Appreciation (“**Wai-Khru**”) Ceremony is therefore emerged and held on the first occasion for students to submit themselves to their guidance. As a result, the Teachers’ Appreciation Ceremony is most likely hosted every year to show respect and deep appreciation to teachers for their benevolence. It is also an opportunity to seek teacher’s support in guiding on higher education.

The main purpose of the Teachers’ Appreciation Ceremony is to pay homage to teachers and students accept them as virtuous teachers with full of morale and knowledge. At the same time, the students as the successors of academic legacy are determined to receive the knowledge transferred from the teachers to achieve the ultimate goal of education. The meaning of the word “**teacher**” is a guru who is able to transfer knowledge to students and take care students. The essence of being a teacher is not only the transfer of various knowledge, but the teacher, with the righteousness, is ready to inform and teach students on how to behave.

In the past, people willing to submit themselves will have to bring flowers, incense sticks, and candles to salute the teacher. Then, the teacher will lead students with chanting for auspiciousness and hold students' hand in a manner to teach them such as writing a slate as a symbol of studying.

As Thai ways of life holds the value of gratitude and reverence, there are many types of the Wai Khru ceremony such as Wai Khru Dontree Thai (Thai music instruments), Wai Khru Nattasilp (dance), Wai Khru Mo (expertise), Wai Khru Muay Thai (Thai boxing). The current Wai Khru, despite differences in detail, overall process is very similar. One of the successors is the day of hosting worshiping ceremony on Thursday, as it is a teacher day based on the Hindu-Brahman beliefs. The teacher of the gods in religion is Br̥haspati (Thursday).

Different types of Wai Khru ceremonies are not only held in remembrance of the graceful teachers, but also to make merits for past teachers. In some major fields of study such as Thai boxing, dance and music, after students learned subjects thoroughly, a teacher worship ceremony is held to show that the learner has sufficient knowledge to teach others. This is therefore wisdom used to motivate learners to complete the study diligently and successful.

“The offering set used in the dance Wai Khru Ceremony is called Kan Kamnon or a bowl filled with Wai Khru’s sacrifice materials including a sacred flower (Ixora flower, eggplant flower, Bermuda grass), or scent flowers covered with a coned Krathong, one pack of incense sticks, one candle, one piece of white cloth and money for teacher worship.”



• *Wai Khru Ceremony for Music Teachers (Duriyangkasilp)*



• *The traditional Wai Khru Muay Thai Ceremony*





The delicacy and process of the Wai Khru Ceremony is the wise integration of consciousness, wisdom and value. It is important for people in the society to respect each other and the value of acquired knowledge which is considered as intellectual property that teachers have collected and transferred with determination to make students competent.

The Traditional Offerings

On the Wai Khru day, students will make offerings to the teacher with a set of flowers, incense sticks, candles, pea eggplant flowers, Bermuda grass, Ixora flowers and popped rice. Each of them has a symbolic meaning as follows.

- **Dok Ma Kuea**, or pea eggplant flowers, represent respect and modesty. When the flowers are in full bloom, they blend downwards the ground. That represents the gesture of respect that students should gently show respect to their teachers.
- **Yah Praek**, or Bermuda grass, is a durable type of grass that can survive in all seasons. This implies that students must have patience with their studies in class if they want to be successful later in life.
- **Kao Tok** (popped rice) symbolically represents the discipline and controllability. It represents the process of roasting the rice. If the rice is not popped right in a container, it will not be popped rice. Therefore, this implies that if students cannot control themselves, they will be gone out of discipline.
- **Dok Kem**, or Ixora flowers' symbolize the sharp minds and intelligence of students.





Tham Khwan Khao Tradition

Faith of the Golden Field

Before seedlings grow into golden rice ready for harvest, they depend on fertile land and continuous care for more than four months. Morale and strength of rice farmers is crucial to withstand the change of nature that could occur anytime during the cultivation. Tham Khwan Khao (Rice Blessing) Tradition is not just a ritual for worshipping Mae Phosop (Rice Goddess) of Thai farmers to protect the fragile rice. It is, however, the integration of the faith of all members in the community that will enable the smooth cultivation and harvest.

Because rice has been the main food and plant that feeds Thai people since the ancient times, its importance is comparable to a sacred thing to be respected. It is also believed that rice is the only crop that has morale and being protected by sanctity called Mae Khwan Khao or Mae Phosop (Rice Goddess) who protects the rice to keep growing well. If Khwan Khao does not stay with rice, it will not thrive and will not produce completely fertile yields. Therefore, rice farmers must treat rice with gratitude. Whenever there is a change in rice, such as pregnant rice or harvesting rice, farmers must seek rice's forgiveness every time.

Tham Khwan Khao is the wisdom and belief of all Thai people, in order to live together and respect the nature. It is also a ritual in response to psychological needs which help build the morale of Thai farmers. Rice rituals in Thailand are divided into 3 stages: before cultivation, during cultivation, and after cultivation when get the yields. However, there are different ways of practices based on each of the regions. The Central and Southern regions hold the Tham Khwan Khao many times after the panicles of rice have formed and begin to swell like a pregnant woman, also known as Khao Khad Hang Platoo. Tham Khwan Khao is performed again when harvesting grains, moving them in the yard, and relocating them into the barn. In contrast, the Northern and Northeastern farmers would perform Tham Khwan Khao rituals during the harvest and when moving rice to the barn.



“During the period of rice pregnant in the paddy field, farmers will bring a bite of banana, peanut, sesame and orange into a basket together with one piece of betel nut and betel leaf to perform a Tham Khwan Khao ritual to worship Mae Phosop. According to the belief, rice grains will not fall, while worms and insects will not invade, and it will lead to fertile yields.”





- *The Tham Khwan Khao ritual will be performed again after harvests and bringing rice together in the yard, as a way to express gratitude to the sanctity and Mae Phosop for the support of the perfect yields.*

The way of rice cultivation each year is rotated according to the farming season. After harvesting, rice farmers will invite Khwan Khao or Mae Phosop on a barn. When it comes the time of sowing rice again next year, the first rice ploughing ceremony will be performed on a good day to invite Mae Phosop to the paddy field. Then, Khao Khwan (rice collected from the last the ritual) are brought to mix with ordinary rice to cultivate and sow the grains as for blessings. Farmers will recite a spell and a verse to entrust Mae Phosop to Phra Mae Thorani (Mother Earth) and other spirits in the paddy field. Next, they choose another good day to perform the ritual of first rice seedlings transplanting.

When rice is pregnant, farmers will build a temporary shrine and make the offerings to Mae Phosop. Bamboo is prepared for weaving a five-angle sign, together with a small basket to put the offerings. With the belief that Mae Phosop is a young woman, a plate of offerings is normally filled with food for the pregnant, such as coconut water, sugar cane, betel nut and leaf, and especially sour food, like orange and tamarind. In addition, the ceremony performer, often a female owner of the paddy, also need to bring a glass, comb, powder, scented water, lip wax, Phasin (sarong), paper flags, to make the Tham Khwan Khao ceremony or visit Mae Phosop in the paddy field as well.



In the harvest time and after bringing all yields to their threshing floor, farmers will perform Tham Khwan Kwao ceremony, seeking forgiveness from Mae Phosop again, as a way to make merit and celebrate the rice harvest. People of the Central region call the ceremony Tham Khwan Lan (rice threshing ceremony), while the Isan people call it Boon Koon Lan. In addition to creating the morale and seeking forgiveness, through Tham Khwan Khao Ceremony, farmers express gratitude to the rice, sanctity and nature. After the rice is completely threshed, it will be collected to the barn. Before selling the rice, farmers must perform the ceremony of Perd Yung or Tak Yung (opening a barn) to ask for permission to sell the rice as well.

Tham Khwan Khao tradition is not just a ritual for expressing gratitude to nature, but it is also a humility to everything that supports life and existence. It also shows the benevolent spirit and solidarity of the community members that they will combine efforts to help each other during the rice harvest.

Although currently rice farming can be done several times a year, the Tham Khwan Khao ceremony is only performed for in-season rice farming. However, with changes in farmers' ways of life and farming methods affected by modern agriculture and technology, the present Tham Khwan Khao ceremony may not be performed in comprehensive process like in the past or it is adapted to be more concise. But the belief in Mae Phosop remains with rice farmers in some areas where they still rely on rainwater for rice plantations and organic agriculture. Some communities perform Tham Khwan Khao ceremony together with the ritual of Pha Pa Khao Pheuk (merit making for rice seeds), while some communities hold the Tham Khwan Khao ceremony in conjunction with the temple's annual event.

“In the harvest season, farmers of each locality often combine their efforts for the harvest. It creates unity, solidarity, appreciation and pride of the production together, after the year-round hard work.”



Bot Tham Khwan Khao (Tham Khwan Khao ritual text)

Bot Tham Khwan Khao is a verse sung during the rice growers' ritual for restoring the soul of Mae Posop. It is called differently in different regions. But the similarities are **"Inviting the Khwan"** or **"Calling the Khwan"** part and the **"Kho Phon"** part which asks for Mae Phosop's blessings to make rice bountiful. The verse often heard when performing the Tham Khwan Khao ritual is: **"Mae Phosi, Mae Phosop, Mae Nopdara, Mae Chandevi, Mae Sri Soda, may I invite the mothers to take the offerings in a farmhouse in Khao Khitchakut. May I invite you to get morning sickness of pregnancy, to eat sweet and sour things, to eat oily and salty foods, in and out, left and right of the paddy field. May I invite you to take the offerings. May the rice abundant without harm. May the rice grow as large as a bludgeon with the belly as big as a basket, ear of the paddy as big as galangal flower, all good over the field."**





- “Hmrub” is arranged to make offerings to monks as for dedicating merit to ancestors in the Tenth Lunar Month Festival.



Sart Duan Sib

The Tenth Lunar Month Festival Dedicating Merit to Ancestors

Thailand has a tradition to express gratitude and reverence, which is the foundation of ancient Thai virtues, especially to ancestors and benefactors. Although they have passed away, but the descendants still give importance and always keep them in mind. As obviously seen from the Sart Duan Sib Festival (Tenth Lunar Month Festival) of the Southern Thai Buddhists. It is the successive tradition held every year. The purpose is to make merit dedicated to ancestors who passed away.

From the Buddhist beliefs that if the ancestors had done good deeds when they were still alive, they will be reborn in heaven. But, if not, they will be fallen to hell as evils or become hungry ghosts (Pret/Preta). Hungry ghosts are suffered and rely on merit dedicated by descendants to stay alive. They are only released to the human world once a year on the first day of the 10th lunar month to seek merit from descendants. On that day, Southern Thai Buddhists arrange the Hmrub Lek ceremony (The sound of M and R is diphthong following the Southern Thai dialects) or the day of welcoming grandparents for descendants to make merit dedicated to relatives who may be born into hungry ghosts. Afterwards, on the 15th day of the 10th lunar month, is called the day of Hmrub Yai (The great day or the ceremonial day). They bring a plate of food and supplies to make offerings to monks at temples and perform religious ceremonies such as laying down a funeral robe, to dedicate merit to ancestors and relatives. It is believed that making merit on that day is extremely important. If they do not perform the rituals on that day, their ancestors and relatives who passed away will not receive merit. They will continue to be suffered and hungry, while the living descendants will become ungrateful.



In addition to the purpose of dedicating merit to deceased relatives, the tenth month is a rainy season when agricultural crops start to bloom. Making merit by bringing agricultural product offerings to monks is a blessing for themselves and families. It also supports monks the necessity during the rainy season when they are not convenient to go out for collecting alms.

In addition to their reverence for ancestors, the virtues will be shared to other spirits as in the ceremony of Tang Pret-Ching Pret which is held after the Hmrub ceremony and food offerings. Villagers will divide Kanom (sweets) to put on the temple court, the base of big tree or the wall of temple, known as **“Tang Pret”**. The time villagers in rush to take Kanom is called **“Ching Pret”**. It is believed that people who consume the sweets will also gain merit.

Currently the Tenth Lunar Month Festival is considered the largest ceremony of the Southern Buddhists to return home to express their gratitude and reverence for ancestors annually. The center of the festival is in Mueang Nakhon Si Thammarat, regarded as the Buddhist Kingdom since the ancient times and still preserved the tradition excellently.

“The rainy season of the Southern Thailand begins around the tenth month. It is a difficult time for monks. Villagers therefore arrange their food offerings in the form of ‘Hmrub’ so that the temple can keep them as supplies for the monks during the rainy season.”

- The Tang Pret-Ching Pret Ceremony is emerged from a belief in Buddhism that the spirit of people making bad deeds will be come hungry ghosts (Pret/Preta) in hell, only surviving on the merit dedicated by someone. Each year, on the first day of the tenth lunar month, the hungry ghosts will have the opportunity to return to the human world to seek merit from relatives and back to hell on the 15th day of the waning moon of the 10th lunar month.



The Sweets of the Tenth Lunar Month

Kanom La

Kanom La is made of glutinous rice flour and sugar into a shape of nets through the process of making fried flour lines interlaced. It symbolises clothing. Other meaning is that the ancestral spirit may have become a hungry ghost and had a mouth as small as a needle, unable to eat a piece of food, but only a small snack like this.



Kanom Kong

Kanom Kong is made of glutinous rice flour and molded into a wheel shape, then deep-fried until its color turns to golden brown—symbolized as a jewelry for body accessories.



Kanom Dee Sum

The method of making Kanom Dee Sum is similar to Kanom Ba, but changed to rice flour. After the flour is molded in a ball shape and then pressed the middle to be a hole. After being deep-fried, it becomes white, yellow or light brown, symbolized money.



Kanom Pong

Kanom Pong is made of steamed sticky rice which is pressed down onto a mold to make its shape like a crescent moon and diamond. It is sun-dried before being deep-fried in very hot oil until it swells (Pong). It is symbolized as a raft to take the spirit of the ancestors across the great ocean.



Kanom Ba

(snuff box sea bean-shape snack)

Kanom Ba is made by glutinous rice flour mixed with syrup and mold it in a flat shape like a Saba seed (snuff box sea bean) before being fried. It is symbolically like a Saba seed dedicated to ancestors to play on Songkran Day.



“The heart of making merit in the Tenth Lunar Month Festival is the five key desserts and each of them has significant connotations.”



The Setting of Hmrub

Hmrub, or Samrub (tray of food) for the Tenth Lunar Month Festival is usually organized by family members together with relatives. It is prepared in layered containers such as woven bamboo baskets decorated with supplies or desserts of the Tenth Lunar Month. The bottom floor is placed with dry food. The second floor is long-lasting vegetable. The third floor is for items used in daily life. The top or the fourth floor is considered the heart of the Hmrub. It is packed and decorated with sweets, as symbols the Tenth Lunar Month Festival, such as Kanom Pong, Kanom La, Kanom Kong (Kanom Kaipla), Kanom Ba, and Kanom Dee Sum which are essential and believed that the ancestors and the deceased will use them.



Rocket Festival

Sending fire for rain

Rain coming in accordance with its rainy season is like a gift fallen from the sky to farmers. But if rain does not continue as anticipated, growing yields may fail. The Rocket Festival is therefore considered as one of the merit-making ceremony to worship the god for seeking rains, based on a belief of Isan people which still remains until today.

Because their ways of life are very close to nature and dependent on rainwater for crop cultivation, Isan people have a long-standing belief that the God who gave water to humans is **“Tan”**, based on the legend of Phaya Kankak or the Giant Toad who defeated Phaya Tan. Every time if the world needs water, a Bang Fai (rocket) or firework must be sent up to the sky to signal Phaya Tan to send some rain down. Therefore, when the farming season arrives, the Northeast people organize the Rocket Merit-making Festival.

The Rocket Festival or the Sixth Lunar Month Festival is a great tradition for the Isan people to practice. It has been passed through generations from the ancient times and is set in the **“Heet Sib Song - Klong Sib See”** or the twelve-month tradition and the 14 traditional virtues hold as the core of living by all levels of citizens, from the King to ordinary people.

When entering the farming season and starting to cultivate rice, residents and neighbouring villagers will make an appointment to create rockets. As the village representatives, they cooperate in a rocket parade from their locality to the temple in the village as the host. This tradition connects people in the community and provides their opportunity to have fun together before entering the farming season which will last for several months.



“The Rocket Tradition is one of the rain-making ceremonies, seeking heaven blessings for rains, based on the belief of the Northeast people who make their living by agriculture which requires abundance of land and seasonal rainfall for their cultivation. If anything is mistaken, the yields which are growing good may become failures.”



- *When the rocket parade is finished, villagers will gather rockets from the other villages together and hold a celebration on that night. On the next day, they will lit a "Predicting Rocket" to forecast the weather if rain will fall seasonally. If the Rocket rises well, the rainfall and the water will be abundant.*

As for the rocket parade, in addition to the beautifully decorated rockets that demonstrates local wisdom, there is rocket folk dance performed by villagers together with singing and dancing along the beats of Tum drum. They also play games showing the way of life of people in the society, such as fishing. Originally in the parade, it used to be only male participants. Some of them dressed up as women or bring the female puppets to pose sexual positions along the way. Their verses of folk dances are also full of sexual stories and humorous jokes to ask for rain from angels. In some parades they play sexual comedies to make the parade colorful and nobody minds. In later times, when the rocket folk dance has become a community tradition and resulted in a competition between villages, the format and content of the rocket folk dance has been also changed. Participants consist of both real men and women, creating beautiful dance styles. The host's village will prepare welcoming food such as Khao Pun (Khanom chin) in grilled fish (crispy fish) soup with alcoholic drinks and tobacco (tobacco rolled in dry banana leaf).

Normally, the Rocket Festival is organized for two days only. On the first day, the rocket parade is called **"Wan Home"**, while on the next day, villagers dressed in beautiful costume will bring best food and sweets as offerings to temples. After making merit and having lunch together, they will carry thier rockets to the base in order to fire the rockets one by one, which is considered as a forecast. If the rocket rise well, it is predicted that it will rain well and food will be abundant. If the rocket does not go up or exploded, it is predicted that it will be drought. Relying on such beliefs, each community must put every effort into shooting the rocket to the sky as far as possible.







The Rocket Festival not only reflects the living philosophy of Isan people, but it also demonstrates the wisdom that cleverly engages people in the community by using the Rocket Festival as a channel. When everyone is in solidarity, they can live happily together.

From Bamboo to Amazing Rockets

In the past, rockets were made of the largest bamboo stem which were cut through. At the outside, bamboo strips were woven as ropes tied tight around the bamboo beam to make it firm. The last segment is filled with a considerable number of thick wood, pressed it firmly with Mueu (gunpowder) by pounding or using a lever. The making of rockets is by folk technologies that the wisdom has been inherited and accumulated through generations in addition to the rocket decoration which also requires artistic competency.

There are four types of rockets: Bang Fai Thammada (ordinary), using up to 12 kilograms of saltpeter; Bang Fai Meun (ten thousand), using about 12-119 kilograms of saltpeter; Bang Fai Saen (hundred thousand), using 120 kilograms of saltpeter; and Bang Fai Lan (million) using 1,200 kilograms of saltpeter.

When the rockets are finished, they are decorated with beautiful colored paper, called in the folk language “Ae”. The head and tail of the rockets will be composed in various shapes as required, mostly in the shape of Naga head.

“The Rocket Festival is popularly organized in the 6th or 7th month, which is in the rainy season for rice farming, seedling, planting and ploughing. It is made to worship the ‘Tan’ to beg for rainfalls in the season, similar to the parade of rainmaking cats of the Central people.”







Performing Arts Spiritual Performances

Thailand's performing arts, whether they be music, dance, or drama, are the expressions of valuable culture filled with the grace of Thai wisdom. Each of the performing arts aims to serve the purpose of beauty and entertainment which may encourage critical thinking that leads to social change and development. At the same time, performing arts express emotions, feelings and ways of life of each locality as well, such as the Nora dance in the Southern Thailand, Li-kae and Lakhon Chatri in Central Thailand, Mo Lam in the Northeastern Thailand and Phin Pia in the Northern Thailand.

Phin Pia

The Stringed Instrument of Lanna

Among the supreme music instruments of Lanna, “Phin Pia” is considered as a unique lute by the resonance and pitch sound of the instrument placed on the bare chest or abdomen of the instrumentalist. The sound brings peaceful feelings to listeners to dive deep into the magical melody.

The history of Phin Pia can be traced back to Indian people’s music instruments, in the family of Wina or Phin. The word Pia is differently pronounced by each locality. It can be Phia, Phlia, Phin Phia or Phin Pia.

The identity of Phin Pia is at its structure, comprising the head or skull made of half coconut shell or gourd. Its fingerboard is made of long and round Kaen wood. The length measured from the top end to the bottom is about 70-80 centimeters. Wood used for making the tail (fingerboard) is hardwood such as Padauk wood, Rosewood, Redwood, Ebony wood. At the peg box, covered on the top with bronze or brass Hasadiling bird (elephant headed bird), Naga, peacock, or elephant. The pegs are attached to the strings, from 2 to 7 strings.

The charm of Phin Pia is not only about its gorgeous appearance, but also the technique and expertise of the instrumentalist in flicking the Phin Pia properly. The method to play Phin Pia is similar to that of other lutes. The left hand presses the strings on the fingerboard and holds the tail against the body of the instrumentalist, while fingers of the right hand sweeps, touches and releases the strings of Phin Pia to create a beautiful sound. Music tones can be adjusted as desired, in association with the control of opening and closing Phin Pia’s head attached to the muscles of chest or abdomen.

In the past, Phin Pia was popularly played exclusively in the Northern royal court. Later, the popularity spread to a community of well-off people and skillful folk musicians. Phin Pia players are highly regarded in the society as the head of Phin Pia, an important component of the instrument, is rare and expensive. It is also difficult to play the instrument despite its beautifully melodic sound. Young men of Lanna in the past tried to play Phin Pia over other types of instruments in order to take the advantage in courting girls at night.



- For the technique of playing Phin Pia, instrumentalists must cover the head on their chest and flick the strings with a specific technique called “Pok” by using a little finger or a ring finger. Then finger bases are used to touch the strings to make loud, clear and resonant sound, like a pitch from a bell.

“ It is assumed that the name “Phin Pia” comes from the past when Lanna people called it “Pia” in short, literally meaning show-off or match (in the Northern language). Therefore, Phin Pia instrumentalists look more charming than the players of Salor, Sor, Sueng and it became a competition itself. ”





- *Phin Pia has been developed from Phin Thanu (arrow-shaped lute), while its sound-generating and flicking principles are similar to those of Phin Namtao (gourd-shaped lute). A half coconut shell is used as a sound head. Phin Pia's rod is made of hardwood for its own strength and beautiful sounds.*



Songs mostly played with Phin Pia are often those with slow and sweet melodies that convey the feelings of the artist. They are Lanna-style songs which inherited until now, such as **“Prasat Wai”** song, **“Chok Lai”** song, **“So Phama”** song, **“Muai”** song, **“Luk Kui Woei”** song, **“Ruesi Long Tham”** song, **“Yaeng Luang”** song, **“Lamai”** song, **“Long Nan”** song and other folk songs. Music of central region can also be flicked as well, such as **“Toei Khong”** song, **“Khamen Saiyok”** song, and **“Soi Lampang”** song.

In practicing Phin Pia, the player needs to be patient over a period of time, in order to be able to play beautifully and clearly express emotions. But beautiful music will become a rewarding outcome of the commitment. The uniqueness and alluring sounds of Phin Pia is filled with the cultural values and wisdom of the Lanna people. The wisdom was reflected on the Phin Pia music which is played in various occasions and purposes, such as religious ceremonies, entertainment, social status positioning and gaining, and marriage partner finding.

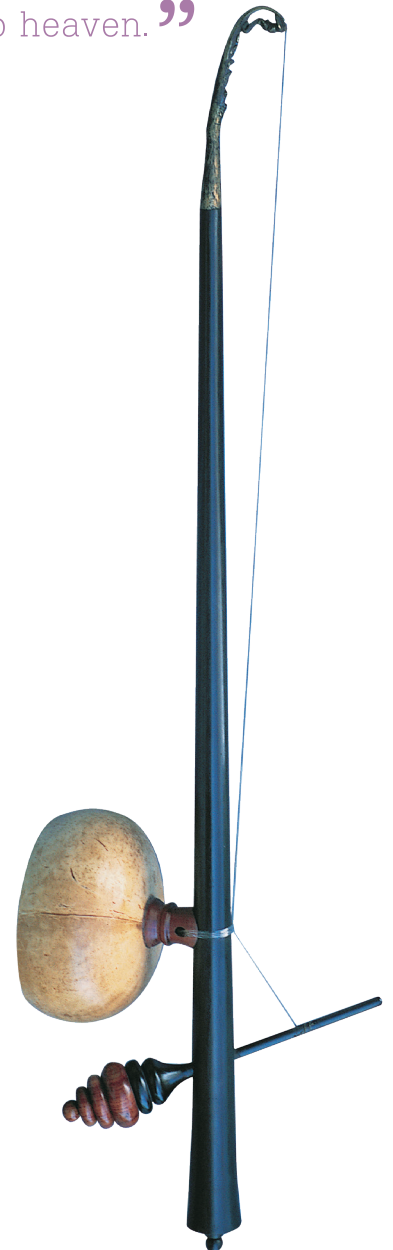


“The top of Phin Pia is usually decorated with a Hasadiling, an ancient bird living in the Himavanta. It has an elephant-like head, while its body is still a bird. According to the Lanna beliefs, the bird is a very powerful creature, equivalent to five elephants and has a mission to bring the soul of the merited people to heaven.”

Based on the style that the Phin Pia's head must be placed on the bare chest, it is thus believed that this instrument is suitable for male artists only. But according to an image engraved in stone of Ban Khu Bua in Ratchaburi province, which is dated back to the Dvaravati Civilization, it is evident that women could also play the lute as the instrument on the stone look similar to Phin Pia. In addition, if it is not convenient to attach the instrument to the chest, it can also be placed on the abdomen instead.

At the present time, it is popular to play Phin Pia in the style of “**Pia Chum**”, which is, bringing 2-7 sets of Phin Pia to play together as an ensemble. It is also played with other undertone instruments such as Sueng, Salor or flute. Despite the number of Phin Pia's player are lesser than before, together they stand fast and maintain beautiful melodiousness.

“There is a say that Phin Pia is a flicked lute which generates beautiful and light sounds. It is one of the most difficult-to-play Lanna musical instruments. There is a Northern musician's metaphor “Practicing (Pin) Pia (Phin Pia) for 3 years, learning to play but flute for 3 months” showing that to be able to play Phin Pia beautifully, it needs technique, expertise, and training for a very long time.”







Nora

The Exquisiteness of Performance

The delicately soft, yet energetic dance movement in intensely rhythmic music from Thap (or Thon) and a unique costume adorned with colorful beads is the incomparable charm of Nora, a form of folk performing arts popular in the Southern region of Thailand since ancient times.

Nora has been a long-standing performance since the Ayutthaya period. It is believed that Nora was firstly performed in Phatthalung city, which is now Bang Kaeo district, in Phatthalung province. Nora was later distributed to other cities of Southern Thailand and when it reached the Central region, where it gave birth to Lakhon Chatri. As it brought the story of **“Phra Suthon - Manohra”** to the show, it was finally called Manohra.

The prominences that make Nora’s performance different from others are its costume and musical instruments. Nora costume includes a Soet (crown), an exquisite head accessory for the principal performer, or **“Nora Yai”**, and a top which is made of beads in various colors, patterns and motifs. It is also decorated with Pik Nok Aen or Pik Neng (a pair of wings), Thap Suang (pendant), Pik or Hang Hong (tail wing), Pha Nung (wrapped skirt), Sanap Phlao (a pair of half-length trousers), Pha Hoi Na (front-hanging cloth), Pha Hoi Khang (side-hanging cloth), Kamlai Ton Khaen (armlets), Kamlai Plai Khaen (bracelets) and Leb (extended fingernails). All these arts in great detail require strong commitment and creativity. However, they are the costume and decorations only for the principal character, called Nora Yai or Nora Yuen Khrueng, while the costume for female characters or Khrueng Nang does not have armlets, pendant, or wings. But the bead decorations are comparably beautiful.



“The uniqueness of the Nora dance is to mix the various dance moves together harmoniously with the agility and skillfulness to change the dancing style to the rhythm of music. It also has to be beautiful and lithe, sometimes it also increases the ability to dance in particular, such as arm posture, lithesome body, finesse dance.”



As Nora's music will change its tempo according to the dance, Nora orchestra comprises mostly percussion instruments. A pair of Thon or Thap Nora (tuned one-sided drums), which are beaten by one drummer, is the most important instrument in the orchestra because it controls the tempo and leads the orchestra following the performer's dances. Other instruments to complement to the sound include drum; Thap (Nora percussion); a Pi (Thai oboe); a pair of Mong (medium-sized gong) or double gongs; a pair of Ching (small cymbals); and a pair of Trae (Multiple layer claves).

The key element of Nora performance is its harmonious integration of singing and dancing. On some occasions, the performances convey the stories of ceremonial beliefs and Wai Khru (reverence to teachers) rituals. In this regard, Nora Performance can be divided into two types: one is Nora for ritualistic ceremony, called Nora Rong Khru, and another is Nora for entertainment. Nora Rong Khru is a very important ritual performance for the Nora professionals. The spirits of the Nora past masters are invited to the ceremonial stage (Nora Long Rong) for the younger performers to pay homage to the masters or Ta Yai Nora. The sacred ceremony includes a sacrificial offering to the past masters, and tying Soet or holy cloth for the new generation of Nora performers.



Nora for entertainment is a performance made for pure entertainment. It plays a vital role in the way of life of people in the community. This type of Nora is usually held in monasteries for raising funds to support religion. Important traditional festivals held for Nora performances on special occasions by the local communities, temples, and government offices consists of multi-gesture dance that show individual skills and talent by mixing various dance postures such as arm posture, body bending with singing skills and improvising witty verses with good content and good rhyme. Because of the challenge, making a script is considered the most excellent art of Nora. If time allows, a story of Nora might be told to entertain the audience, with a focus on the comicality and Nora-style verse singing based on the story.



Although the performance is considered mastery, delicate and needs time for practice, both types of Nora are still performed, not lost through time like other performances. Not only because of the unique beauty of Nora's costume and dance postures, but Nora also can easily access and communicate with people, so that it also serves as **"media"** to disseminate news and information to the general public. Nora therefore remains as a sacred ceremony, which are still preserving its core value, belief, and performing style excellently, passed through generations until today.

Nora Rong Khru Ceremony

Nora Rong Khru Ceremony is divided into two types: Nora Rong Khru Yai and Nora Rong Khru Lek. The Nora Rong Khru Yai is the complete version of the ritual dance, which lasts three days and two nights. It usually starts on a Wednesday and ends on a Friday and must be performed every year or every three or five years, dependent on the beliefs of different Nora schools. The ritual performance of Nora Rong Khru Lek lasts one day and one night. It usually begins on a Wednesday evening and ends on a Thursday.



Khru Mo Nora

Khru Mo Nora is the spirit of former Nora masters or the ancestor of Nora, sometimes called Khru Mo Ta Yai, respected by the local people and regarded as a spiritual anchor when facing difficulties. If the local people have fallen ill without causes, Khru Mo Nora will be invited to find the treatment. At the same time, Khru Mo Nora is a local wisdom in a way of contributing to the harmony of the community and being a subtle mechanism to control community members' behaviors to behave in virtue. If they misbehave, Khru Mo Nora can punish them.

Nora for Entertainment

Nora for entertainment normally has a standard sequence of performances, starting with the release of Nang Ram to dance (two to five performers.) with Kiao Man or Khap Na Man, in which the performers sing the verses from behind the curtain, invisible to the audience. It is followed by skillful dances which the performers come out to show off their dancing skills and special talents making the script. The performers express more verses to present the poetic ability and dance again before exits. Next, it is time for Ok Phran (**“Entrance of the Hunter”**) or the presence of the comedian, an important character that adds humors to the show. The performance ends with Ok Tua Nai Rong (**“Entrance of the Principal Performer/Character”**) or Nora Yai, who will show off his expertise and talents in dancing, singing, and improvising verses as cherishing his position as the principal performer. In case of a competition, Nai Rong will perform the rites of Khian Phrai (**“Flogging the Sprites”**) and Yiap Luk Nao (**“Stepping on Lime Fruits”**) as a spell on the rivals and boost the troupe's morale, followed by Ok Phran again to tell the audience the next story before starting the performance.





Mo Lam

The Ballad of People's Ways

Mo Lam performance is evolved from a Mo Lam Phuen or a Mo Lam Rueang (master of storytelling), who tells stories in a lively way together with the sound of Khaen in randomly high and low rhythms. Then, it was transitioned to Mo Lam consisting of a Mo Lam (singer) and a Hang Khrueng (dancer), reflecting a social change and different ways of life of the Isan people in each era.

Mo Lam performing arts have been standing with the Isan people since the old times. **“Mo Lam”** is composed of two words: **“Mo”** refers to a master and **“Lam”** is a kind of storytelling along with beautiful melodies. Mo Lam therefore means a master of storytelling with melody. In other words, Mo Lam adopted Isan literatures into verse singing, or telling folktales in Isan dialects while playing Khaen folk music.

Mo Lam in the Northeastern region of Thailand can be divided into two major types: Mo Lam for entertainment and Mo Lam for ritual ceremonies. Mo Lam performing arts for entertainment include Mo Lam Rueang, Mo Lam Moo, Mo Lam Ploen, which tell stories through different performances, music instruments and performers. Some of them sing in duo or group. Some rely on Khaen music, sometimes add Pin and drum to create more fun. Mo Lam for ritual ceremonies refers to a medium for the communication with Phi Fa (spirit in the local folklore) following Isan people's beliefs in Phi Fa and Phi Thaen. This kind of Mo Lam is able to forecast the weather or cure sick people, also provide a moral support to patients for fighting disease.



“Khaen (bamboo mouth organ) is the only musical instrument used in complementing the show of Isan people's Mo Lam Klon. Mo Khaen will play the Khan accompanying the verses.”





- *In the Thai-Isan tradition of Heet Sibsong Kong Sibs, there often have the Mo Lam Klon as a protagonist in celebrating the festive event.*

With an unsophisticated lifestyle close to nature, Mo Lam is considered as a valuable folk performance, important to the Isan people in the past. It is not only a show for entertainment at festivals or festive events. Mo Lam is filled with knowledge, ideas, morals, beliefs and traditions that improve listeners' intelligence, continue well behavior, and promote morale and ethics among them and subtly retain social norms.

The simple quality to reach all kinds of villagers is an advantage of Mo Lam and makes popularity widespread. As the lifestyle of local people is close to temples, Mo Lam is regarded as a social philosopher and a successor of wisdom. To be a good Mo Lam, that person must have a wide range of knowledge, from history, geography, occupation, traditions and custom, sins and mercy, folktales, to national news. A Mo Lam also needs to be clever to respond and solve immediate problems on stage in a timely manner. In the past, when communication

did not develop as today, Mo Lam played a role in providing updates, knowledge of political ideology, guidance for understanding democracy, knowledge of family planning, contraception, and hygiene.

If the proposition of the show is the entertainment for the audience, Mo Lam is considered as an entertainment full of flavour and spirit of the Isan people and filled with moral lessons for refining people in the society and reminding them of good and bad deeds. At the same time, Mo Lam performances have changed through time. From a solo storyteller in the early stage of Mo Lam Phuen, it became a duo performers to add the fun of responsive chorus. Then, it transformed into a group performance of the Mo Lam Mu and Mo Lam Ploen. They further formed a band that brought an instrumental band accompanying with the Mo Lam performances of Mo Lam Sing. Regardless of change, all types of Mo Lam can reach out the audience. This is an important part that makes Mo Lam sustained until nowadays.



Mo Lam for entertainment can be classified by a chronological order, storytelling method and style of performances as follows: Mo Lam Phuen, Mo Lam, Mo Lam Klom, Mo Lam Mu, Mo Lam Ploen, Mo Lam Sing.

- **Mo Lam Phuen**

Mo Lam Phuen is the oldest kind of Mo Lam for entertainment, sometimes called “**Lam Rueng**” as the Mo Lam tells stories from allegories, such as Thao Karaket, Thao Si Thon, Nang Tang On, Nang Sipsong and Thao Mayui. Khaen is used for creating two-tone background melodies: one is slow and melancholy, and another is fast and rush, to keep tracks with the narrative.

- **Mo Lam Klom**

Mo Lam Klom, usually performs as a duo, is a storyteller of responsive verses, poems or parodies. The performance is sometimes filled with a courteous melodrama between men and women.

- **Mo Lam Mu**

Mo Lam Mu is a performance by a group of artists. Its costume is influenced by that of Li-kae, while the story telling part is modelled from Mo Lam Phuen and Mo Lam Klom. The group consists of 15-30 people playing roles according to the Isan tales or allegories, such as a king, queen, prince, princess, servant, parents, son, daughter, hermit, angel and ghost. Its outstanding performance is the dance and fun elements. Mo Khaen will perform “**Lam Toei**”, which includes Toei Kong, Toei Burma, Toei Thammada and Toei Hua Nontan.



“The indigenous performance of the Northeastern Thai people like ‘Lam’ has evolved continuously. It starts from Lam Phuen Mueang (folk storytelling) by using the content of folk tales, such as Karaket, Sin Chai, Nang Tang On. The performers comprise of one Mo Lam and one Mo Khaen. Mo Lam assumes to play all characters and tells the stories all night long. Thus, it is the origin of all types of Mo Lam.”

- **Mo Lam Ploen**

Mo Lam Ploen is another type of Mo Lam which perform as a group. The story of the show could be anything, including that the Mo Lam Moo performs. The difference between the Mo Lam Moo and the Mo Lam Ploen is that all the female performers of Mo Lam Moo are dressed with Pa Sin --- traditional Isan folk costumes or Thai dresses. But female performers of Mo Lam Ploen will wear short skirts, showing off their body. The melody of Mo Lam Ploen is focused on excitement and thrill by using various instruments of Khaen, Pin and and drum set to excite the audience.

- **Mo Lam Sing**

Mo Lam Sing is a melodic dance adapted from fun Mo Lam songs. Male performers will sing to court female performers, while show the soft and beautiful performances and accompanied by Khaen. Modern instruments are used to create rhythm like Mo Lam Ploen, while Hang Krueang joins the show like Luk Thung music. The highlight is the fun verse with an exciting rhythm.

Lakhon Chatri

Heritage of Singing and Dancing

Lakhon Chatri is one of the oldest forms of Thai traditional performing arts that link between the dramatic performances of the Central region and the Nora dance of the Southern region. It is filled with the beliefs in fortune and holiness which influence the livelihoods and lifestyles of Thai people.

The origin of the word **“Chatri”** is discussed on several assumptions. For instance, **“Chatri”** may refer to a master of weaponry, who knows the methods of protecting himself from all kinds of weapons. Or, it could be a slightly different pronunciation of a Sanskrit word **“Kasatriya”** to **“Chattriya”**, and it became further distorted to **“Chatri”** after entering Thailand. This hypothesis is based on the performance of Lakhon Chatri which presents the story about kings of the costume of ancient kings. On the other hand, Chatri may be derived from the word **“Yatri”** or **“Yatra”**, which mean **“to wander”**, in accordance with a mobile troupe in India called **“Chatri”**.

After its widespread popularity in the Southern region, Lakhon Chatri was introduced to Bangkok in 1769 AD, when King Taksin of Thonburi led the army to suppress the ruler of Nakhon Si Thammarat and brought several people including the Lakhon Chatri troupes to the capital of Thonburi. Later in 1780 AD, on the occasion of celebrating the Emerald Buddha Statue, King Taksin commanded the ruler of Nakhon Si Thammarat’s Lakhon Chatri troupe come to Thonburi for performance in the royal court. Next in 1832 AD, during King Rama III’s reign, Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse (Dit Bunnag), then Head of the Royal Treasury, led the army to suppress an uprising in the Southern region and brought back with him some talented performers of Lakhon Chatri. Banding as a performing group later, these performers became well received and the popularity of Lakhon Chatri continues to younger generations until today.

“Women were permitted to act in general performances during the reign of King Rama IV, not only limited to men. Lakhon Chatri performers changed their dress to the costume of Lakhon Nok and changed Soet to Chada because of the slimmer shape and suitability to a woman’s face that makes her look gorgeous.”









“Some of the current Lakhon Chatri troupes are inherited from traditional Lakhon groups such as Soithong Hirun troupe (Bunchu Luk Soithong), Udomsin Krachangchot troupe. Some of them split from traditional groups and changed to new name. They updated their performances to modern style, such as Thida Na Bangsai Troupe, Chadet Daoden Troupe and Si Chanthra Troupe.”

The prominence of Lakhon Chatri is its adaption of entertaining literatures or folk literatures to the performances, such as Sang Thong, Chai Chet, Phra Rot and Meri, Kaeo Na Ma (A horse-faced woman), and Suwana Hong. Sometimes the troupe will create their own scripts, while they memorize, improvise, or listen to the lines of lyrics and verses. Their dialogues are usually simple with straightforward communication, accompanied by Pi Phat Chatri band playing music with a focus on beautiful dance scene. Lakhon Chatri used to be the performance for general celebration and an offering for god because it is believed that the performers has magical power to contact with god or the holy spirit. If one would prayed for fortunate things, once it were received, one must present a suitable dramatical art as an offering to god. The theatre used in Lakhon Chatri consists of four poles in four corners of a square with one bed and a monumental pole at the center to make a theatre. The Lakhon Chatri performers in the past were shirtless males. There was only a principal performer/character, dressed in elaborated costume of Sanap Phlao (a pair of calf-length trousers), Chia-rabat (a kind of sash with decorative strips hanging down over the thighs), Hoi Na (a decorative cloth strips that also hang down in front from the waist), Hoi Khang (a decorative cloth strips that hangs down aside from the waist). Later joined by females, the performers are no later shirtless but dressed like Lakhon Nok.



- The music instruments of Lakhon Chatri originally comprise Ranat Ek (traditional Thai idiophone), Pi (Thai oboe), Ta Phon (two-faced drum), (Klong Tuk (small drum), Thon Chatri (tuned two-faced drum), Ching (small cymbals), small Chap (cymbals) and Krap Maiphai (bamboo rhythm clappers)

Lakhon Chatri performance starts with an homage rite to the teachers and past masters, followed by Pi Phat Hom Rong Chatri (Chatri's overture), Rong Prakat Na Bot (announcement singing). The principal character will come out to perform the dance of Ram Sat Na Bot in an anti-clockwise circle. In the past, the performer must chant an incantation to invoke protection from the evil force. This part is called **"Chak Yan"** (Spinning the fabric talisman or Casting a spell). Next, the principal character sits on the bench, as a start of the performance, singing and being chorused by other characters. When the performance finishes, the principal character performs the Ram Sat again, but with backwards chanting and moves in a clockwise circle. This part is called **"Khlai Yan"** (Undoing the spell), to remove all spells.

Lakhon Chatri has changed through time. The singing to carry on the story which was earlier performed in the Nora tunes, such as Na Trae and Rai Chatri tunes was changed to simple tunes of the central region in level 2 tempo, with the addition of Ranat Ek to enhance the dance. The part of Ram Sat is replaced by dances of Phleng Cha, Phleng Reo, and Phleng La (slow tune, fast tune, and farewell tune) these are called **"Ram Thawai Mue"** (veneration dance). The set and equipment of Lakhon Chatri are more decorated and colorful from its fundamental costume influenced by the high-level dress of the Royal Court. Despite many changes in style, Lakhon Chatri is still performed as Ram Kae-Bon an act of votive offering—under the same belief in the past.





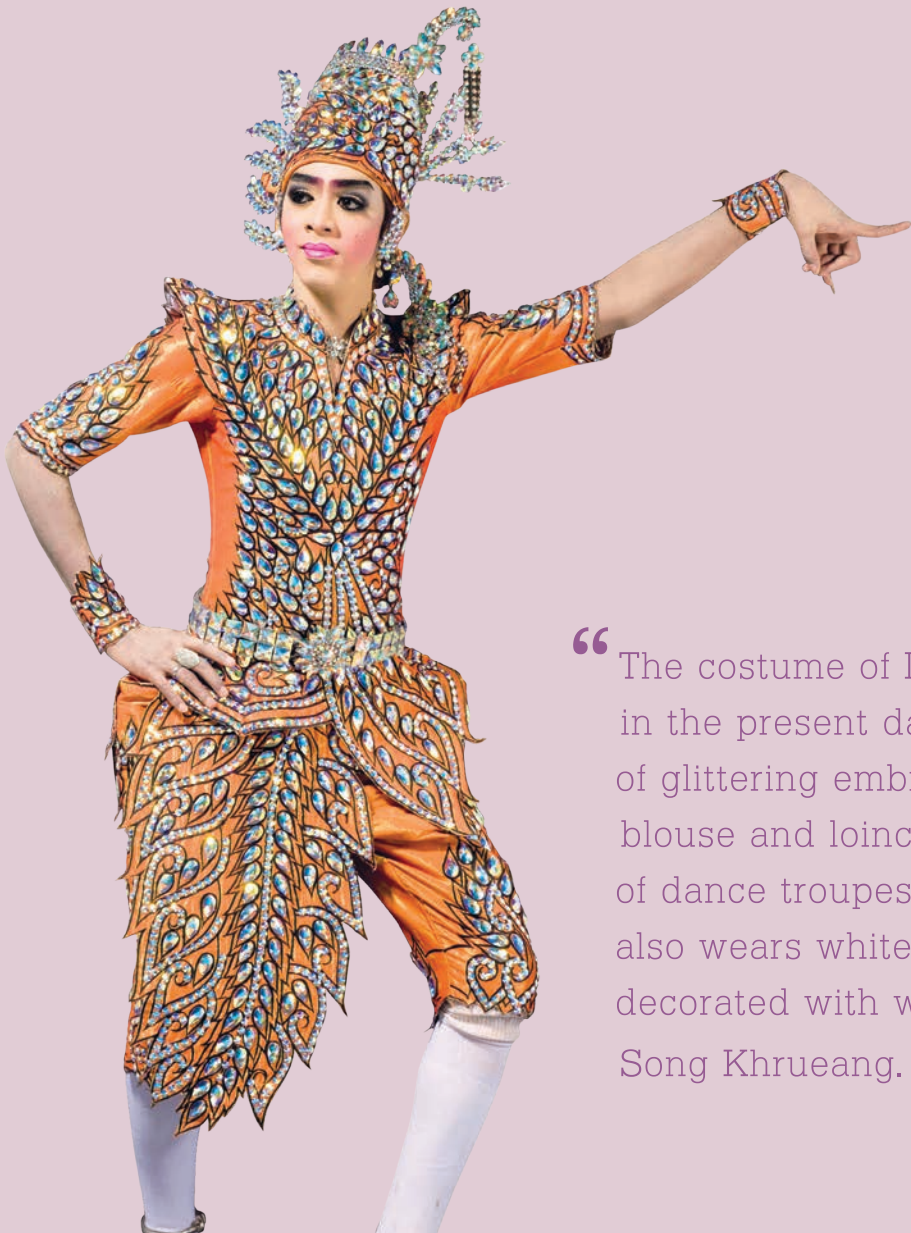
Li-kae

The Folk Dance of Thailand

Li-kae in Thailand is originated from the Islam worship chanting with its folk music in harmony with the rhythm of Rammana (one-sided drum with shallow body) about hundred years ago. It is developed into a performance that combines dance with music from Pi Phat ensemble. It proceeded in the style of folk drama that entertains audiences in each era. It is a unique charm of Li-kae that it picks the story from social conditions or events to present in the form of entertainment.

It is believed that the word Li-kae is derived from the Persian word Sike, which refers to reading the praises to commemorate God Allah in Islam. Earlier during the reign of King Rama III, Li-kae was called Li-kae Suat Khaek, when Thai Muslims traveled from the Southern region to settle down in Bangkok and brought the chants to God together with Rammana performances. Later in the reign of King Rama V, the Li-kae Suat Khaek started its performance by chanting in Malay praises to God and singing Southern Malay verses, called Puntun or Li-kae Pantun. Later, Li-kae brought the Pi Phat Ok Pasa (performance with mixed languages) to tease the expatriates at that time through the satirical dress and spoken language mixed with foreign languages. The songs started with Malay prayers, followed by other languages including Mon, Chinese, Laos, Burmese, Cambodian, Japanese, English, Javanese, Indian, and Talung (Southern Thai) and ended up with a series of short comedy.

“The costume of Li-kae’s heroine character in the present day focuses on the luxury of glittering embroidery, wearing a plaited blouse and loincloth like a heroine character of dance troupes. The heroine character also wears white stockings and the head decorated with white feathers like Li-kae Song Khrueng.”





The most popular Li-kae performance today is from Li-kae Song Khrueng, considered as a folk dance drama of the Central region which originated around 1907 AD, in the reign of King Rama V. The first Li-kae Song Khrueng was performed by Phraya Phetpani at a theatre (called **“Wik”**) near Pom Phrakan, on the bank of Khlong Ong Ang. The performance of Li-kae Song Khrueng features a combination of singing, dancing, acting and natural expressions following the dialogues and accompanied by the Pi Phat ensemble. The performers wear a glittering dress and present a long story similar to those of Lakhon Ram.



- *Li-kae music is played by two types of Pi Phat: Pi Phat Thai and Phi Phat Mon, by playing two-tiered music that is used in Thai dance and folk songs sung by the Li-kae performers to draw the attention of the audience.*





“Li-kae dance is different from Lakhon dance based on a say “Lakhon dance is a posture, but Li-kae dance is a gesture”. Lakhon dance is meant to start the dance to complete a session, but Li-kae dance will imitate the Lakhon dance’s posture, not to perform full dance as standard for proceeding the story quickly.”

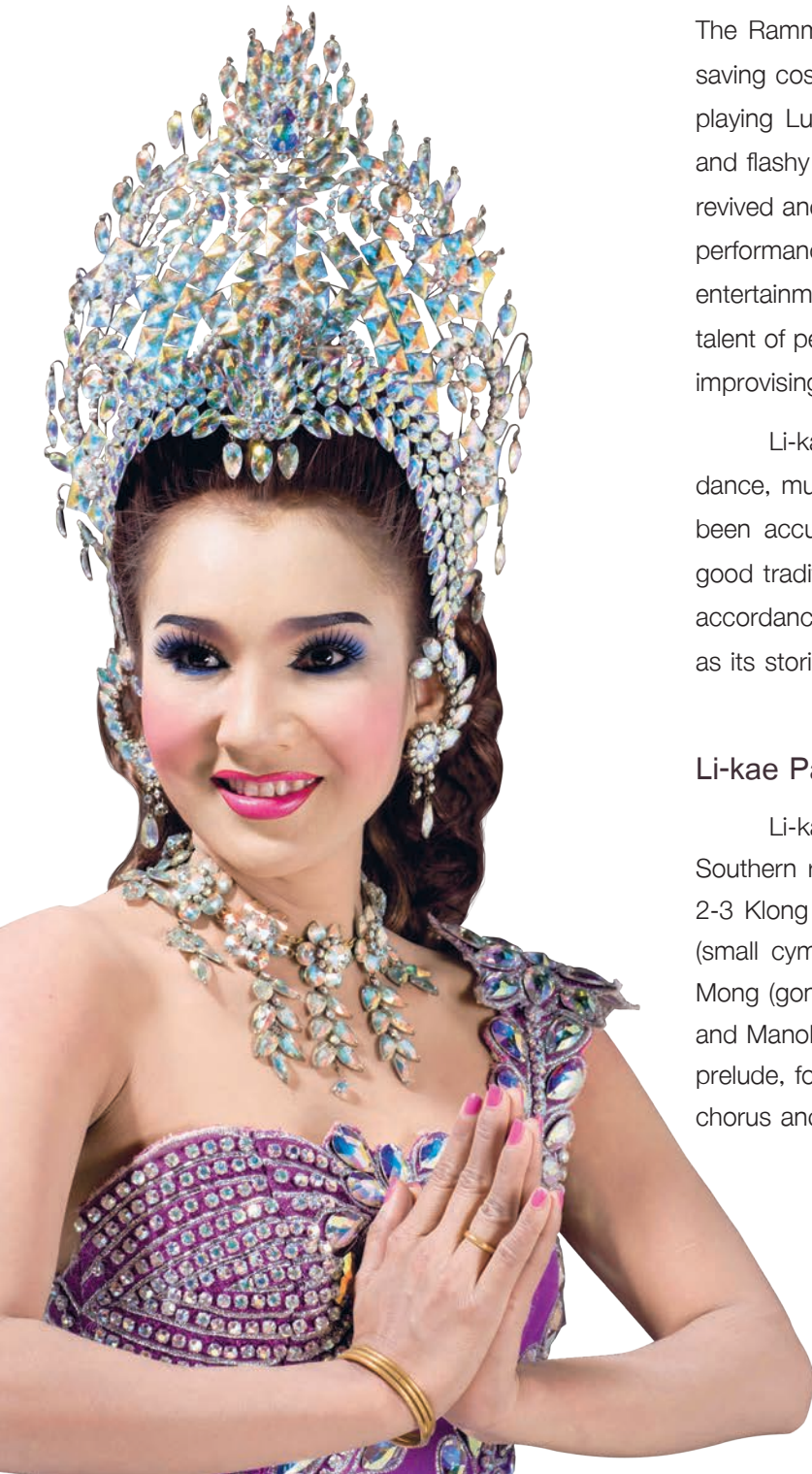
Li-kae Song Khrueng is considered a prototype of later Li-kae performances, whose dance patterns, classical Thai-style singing, and presentation style serve as the framework and model. The most striking example is the Rani-kloeng song or Ratchani-kloeng song that was created by Master Dokdin Suea-sa-nga. It has become identified with Li-kae.

The performance of Li-kae Song Khrueng was halted during the World War II due to a shortage in local costume materials. The difficulties in importing cloth and artificial diamond from overseas also resulted in the discontinuity of the original Li-kae Song Khrueng costume. The Rammana ensemble for supporting Malay songs was replaced by Pi Phat ensemble for saving costs and further changed into Li-kae Lukbot, which is the performance of singing and playing Lukbot song, led by Pi Phat orchestra. The performers were all male wearing glitzy and flashy costume during the time. After the end of World War II, Li-kae Song Khrueng was revived and added more with social dimensions. Its performance was complimented with other performances, such as folk and Indian songs and more spectacular dress to create more entertainment for audience. The enjoyment of watching Li-kae of all types is dependent on the talent of performers who are competent in singing and well-versed in the story. They must have improvising abilities and impressive voices.

Li-kae is a theatre that reflects Thai ways of life, traditions, values, language communication, dance, music, painting, morale, and ethics cultivation. The wisdom of Li-kae performance has been accumulated through learning, training, experiences and successions by retaining the good traditional wisdom. At the same time, some wisdom had been changed through time in accordance with the social conditions today. Li-kae therefore remains as a popular performance as its stories highly entertain audience.

Li-kae Pa

Li-kae Pa is another form of Li-kae popularly played among Muslim people living in the Southern region. The instrument of Li-kae Pa or Li-kae Rammana or Li-kae Bok comprises 2-3 Klong Rammana or Thon (tuned two-faced drum), one Pi (Thai oboe), one pair of Ching (small cymbals) and one Krap (wooden rhythm clappers). Some Li-kae Pa troupe may use Mong (gong) and Thab (small drum). There are masters as well as Nang Talung (shadow play) and Manohra. One Li-kae Pa troupe comprises six to eight people. The folk play begins with a prelude, followed by dancing and singing of white Indians and red Indians in harmony with the chorus and continued with storytelling prior to the main performance.





- Mural paintings of “Ramayana” on the cloister’s exterior walls of Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)

Thai Puppet

The Science and Art of Performance

Thai puppet theatre is the art of pulling and plunging. It requires expertise, skills and multiple knowledge of the puppeteers to drive the puppet’s movement like the gesture of humans as much as possible, at the same time also in harmony with the music rhythm and roles in the story. Thai puppets are divided into 4 sub-types: Hun Luang, Hun Wang Na, Hun Krabok, and Hun Lakhon Lek.

Hun Luang (The Great Royal Puppet)

Hun Luang is the royal performance emerged since the middle Ayutthaya period of King Narai. It is evident in royal orders, Thai books and various literatures. Hun Luang’s prominent feature is its large size about one meter tall, made of wood. Hauled at abdomen, the puppet’s body is tied with fingers by stacked rattans and strings for controlling its movement, while legs and feet are fixed together. The puppeteer holds the wooden handle at the bottom part of the puppet and moves the strings to perform different actions. The puppet’s costume and ornaments is similar to those of Khon and Lakhon.



“The personality and appearance of the puppet will be adjusted in accordance with the characteristics, popularity and culture of the people in individual country, as well as the Thai puppet that conveys the dance, costume and the continuity from the Thai performing arts.”

Hun Wang Na (Front Palace's Puppet)

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, Krom Prarachawang Bovorn Vichayachan created a puppet with a height of about 50 centimeters called Hun Lek, while the original Hun Luang was called Hun Yai. The small puppets he produced are divided into two types. The first one is **“Hun Chin (Chinese puppet)”**, a hand controlled puppet with painted face wearing Chinese theatre costume as played in Chinese literature, such as the Suai Ngak (the story of General Yue Fei), Three Kingdoms. The second is **“Hun Thai (Thai Puppet)”** about 28-30 cm tall, wearing exquisite jewelry and costume. The latter puppet is used to play Ramayana, comprising a hero, a heroine, demon and monkey.





- *Hun Krabok performance of the legend of King Naresuan on “Lilit Taleng Phai (The Defeated)” at the Chakrabhand Foundation*

Hun Krabok

Hun Krabok (bamboo puppet theatre) originated in the reign of King Rama V by adapting the Chinese Hainan puppet theatre which used bamboo as a body stem of the puppet. Therefore, it was later called Hun Krabok since the puppets use bamboo as the trunk of their body. The key feature of the puppet is its half body with the following main parts: Head - representing different roles of the hero, the heroine, the demon, the monkey, the clown, and the animals; Hands - the right hand of the hero, the demon and the clown is clenched in a fist for holding a weapon, while their left hand is in a Tang Wong Ram (dance setting) gesture. The hands of heroine are both set in the Tang Wong Ram gesture. Each of both hands is attached to a stick, called Mai Takiap, for the movement of hand gesture; and Costume, which is a sack covering from the shoulders to half-body length, beautifully embroidered. The hero has epaulets and an embroidered collar; the heroine has an embroidered cloak and collar. The method of playing the puppet is adapted from the dance but in the way of imitating real human gestures. Famous stories for playing Hun Krabok are derived from Lakhon Nok (All male performing theatre) such as Laksanawong, Sang Thong, Kaeo Na Ma (horse-faced woman), Suwanna Hong, and Phra Aphai Mani.



Hun Lakhon Lek

Hun Lakhon Lek presumably started in 1901 A.D. as a one-meter-tall puppet created by Master Krae Saphthawanit, to imitate Hun Luang (great puppet) and Hun Lek (small puppet) with the difference in controlling the puppet and the playing style. Later, Hun Lakhon Lek was inherited by Master Sakhon Yangkhiaosod, widely known as Joe Louis. He created a new small puppet theater and develop the playing style to show off the puppets outside. The audience can see the style of puppeteers along with the puppet. One puppet is controlled by three puppeteers and the skills were transferred to offspring. He finally established the first puppet troupe in Thailand named **“the Troupe of Sakorn Nathasilp Lakhon Lek, nephew of Khru Krae”**, and the first theatre for small puppet performances, known as Natayasala Hun Lakhon Lek (Joe Louis) [Traditional Thai Puppet Theatre (Joe Louis)].

The importance of Thai puppetry is to bring different forms of national arts and culture together by relying on a skillful sculptor in making a head and body sculpture, an expert in creating the puppet mechanic controls, and a competent artisan specializes in making embroidery costume and apparels. The performance also requires an excellent puppeteer who has knowledge of dance, music instruments, literary arts, rhythm and mood of the music to control the show, proceed the story based on the lyrics and dialogues, especially for Hun Krabok, which is the combination of several high-class arts, such as architecture, decorative arts for creation of the puppet theatre and scenes in line with the story. Therefore, it is indeed a performance that brings several forms of arts and culture of Thailand to blend together harmoniously.

“ In addition to the Hun Luang which remains to the present day, the evidence of Thai puppet theatre is visible in the mural paintings dated back to the reign of King Rama III at Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram (Wat Pho) and the craftsmanship from the reign of King Rama IV at the Wat Thongthammachart, Wat Sommanatwattana in Bangkok, and Wat Machimimas in Song Khla. ”

- *In the performance of Hun Lakhon Lek, the audience will be able to see the puppets and the puppeteers at the same time. Therefore, it is necessary to use the puppeteers who are also mastery in Khon theatre.*







Science and Art Thai Craftsmanship

Thai craftsmanship demonstrates wisdom and skills passed through generations over a long period of time as well as creativity in the utilization of natural materials with a focus on functions. Splendid details are added to make it precious and unique craftwork full of charm, such as the construction of traditional Thai houses localized to suit the living conditions and the environment of each region, bamboo basketry, woven fabrics which are more than everyday clothing, the creation of Lanna lanterns, fresh flower arrangement and banana stalk carving.



- *“The cold weather condition affects the structure of Northern Thai houses, apparently lower than Thai houses of other regions. Windows are smaller to block the wind from outside and decorated with Lanna art, such as Ka Lae. The space underneath the elevated floor is often used as storage for agricultural equipments, resting, and implementing household industries such as umbrella making, weaving, cotton thread spinning, rice pounding.”*



Ruean Thai

Traditional Houses for Living

The identity of the Ruean Thai (Traditional Thai house) varies from region to region, dependent on geography, beliefs, arts and culture, socio-economic conditions, and the popularity in each locality. What they have in common is the preferences in building a single-storey wooden house in a rectangular shape, high-sloping roof with long eaves, wide terrace, elevated floor and high cellar. The details of each region house may be different in terms of house roofing, style of the structure and the shape of the house.

Northern Style Ruean Thai

In general, Ruean Thai in the Northern region is a wooden house with a platform of raised floor, cellar, gabled roof and long eaves to block sunlight and rain. The horizontal gable of the house is turned towards the North-South direction. The house's staircase is always set under the left side of the eaves. The roof structure must be supported by floated pillars. The style of each house is similar, while the details are slightly different based on the type of craftsmanship. For example, the roof angle of Lanna House in the style of the Lampang school is not very steep and the gable peak is not sharp or high. Kalae house of Chiang Mai school is decorated by magnificently carved wood. The essential component of a Northern Thai house is a water pavilion or **“Han Nam”**, for placing a pot filled with water. It is like a jar of water for guests.

- *“A Central Thai house usually has a Manila-style roof, gable end, awning, and elevated high floor.”*



- *Northeastern Style Ruean Thai*



- *Central Style Ruean Thai*

Central Style Ruean Thai

Thai houses in the Central region of Thailand are most likely built along canals, rivers or lowland areas. As they can be flooded easily, the basement of the houses must be raised from the ground slightly over the height of a standing man to let wind blow through. There are inward sloping pillars and the wall with high gable roof, long eaves for blocking rain and sunlight, the terrace for recreation, the kitchen house is often separated from the main house, a porch, a bird tower as part of the compound, and a staircase at the front. The layout is likely positioned in accordance with the surrounding environment. For example, waterfront houses will be geographically laid out in the direction of the river.

Northeastern Style Ruean Thai

A tradition Thai house of the Northeastern region of Thailand is a wooden house with elevated floor under a gable roof. The large house of the compound is called 'Ruean Koei' with a roof terrace. In some families, a smaller house called 'Ruean Khong', which could be in a small or medium size, may be built separately in addition to the compound. Alternatively, it could be 'Ruean Noi' or a little house with a shape similar to Ruean Khong, but sharing its structure with the big house. The function is modified into separated bedrooms especially for parents and daughters. The most outstanding structure is a shelf which is raised and built separately in another chamber, following the belief in ancestral spirits. Every house has a high floor like those of other regions, but not the big windows. Windows are narrow, while the door is built for the front only to avoid cold wind in winter. There is no eaves covered like a house in the Central region. The space under the master bedroom may be used for other activities such as cattle farming.



- *Isan people (Northeastern Thai people) usually build a barn about 1-4 meters away from their house. Mostly the barn is laid out in parallel to the house in the North or South direction.*

Southern Style Ruean Thai

Because of heavy rainfalls and frequent floods, Thai houses in the Southern part of Thailand are also built with elevated floor. In the monsoon season, current will flow through the basement. The foundation is built using wooden or stone pads to support pillars, it helps preventing the pillars' decay. There are three types of roofs: gable, Panya (hip roof), and Manila gable roof which is mostly found in Pattani. It is a roof combining the style of a hip roof with a gable roof to ventilate well. The cultural diversity in the South makes the Southern houses unique in terms of people in the society, such as Buddhist houses in Surat Thani province, Nakhon Si Thammarat province, Phatthalung province and Songkhla province are often built with gable roofs. Thai Muslim houses, in contrast, are built with hip roofs and gable roofs because the roof structure of these type is very strong and can withstand rain and wind or even typhoon which usually facing in the lower South, such as pattani province, Narathiwat province and Yala province.

Different Thai houses in each region show the wisdom to live with nature. People build their house based on geographical condition and adapt with the environment by using easy-to-find materials local materials, in line with their beliefs and popularity in the society, leading to the local identity of various Thai houses.



- *With a sloping triangular shaped head and tail, a hip roof Pan Ya has a very strong roof structure, resistible to rain, wind or storm.*



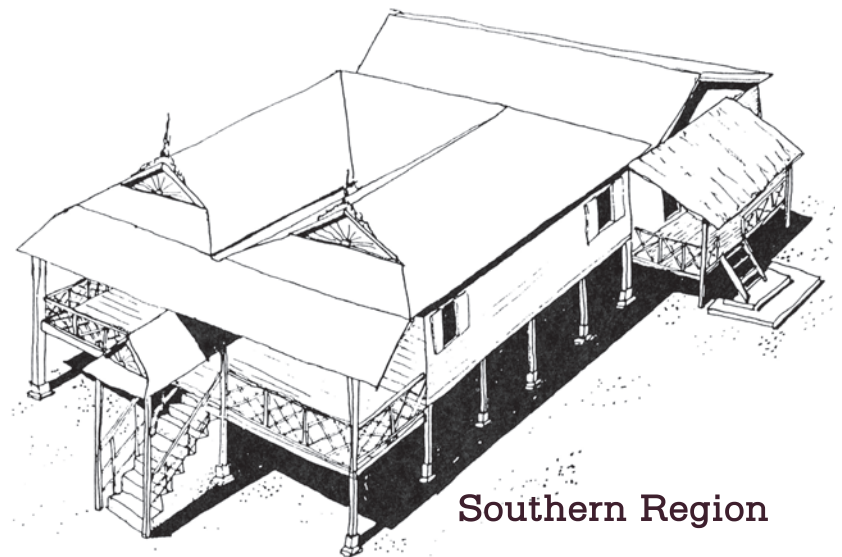
Ruean Khmueang Puk and Ruean Khmueang Sap

Thai houses can be divided into two types by construction methods: Ruean Khmueang Puk (small simple house) and Ruean Khmueang Sap (hardwood house). Ruean Khmueang Puk is a small house with the roof built with local materials such as dry leaves and vetiver grass. Its floor is made of bamboo. Beams and columns are built with hardwood. Bamboo and rattan is used to hold the parts of the house together. The body of the house is made of hardwood such as teak, Teng, Rang, Ta-khian, and Iron wood. This type of construction method is without nails, by hammering the side of beams to make open slots and assemble them together. Thus, the woods are interlocked. Roof is covered with tiles.

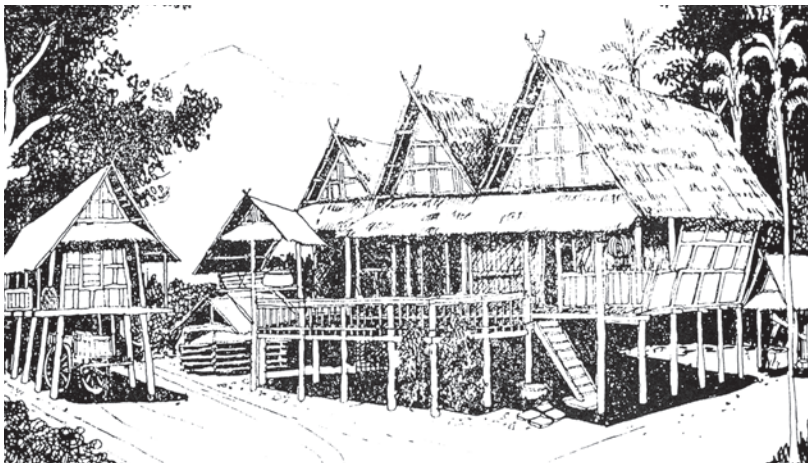
“The culture of living as an extended family of Thai people makes Thai house unique. It can be modified without affecting residents. Because the weight of the house increases on the side, therefore the main structure has not been affected.”



Central Region



Southern Region



Northern Region



“The difference between the word ‘Ruean’ and ‘Ban’ in Thai is that Ruean is an elevated building that has a covered roof, the Ban is the area where the house is located.”