

Unit 1 Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn

“There is no clear evidence as to when Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn (WatYai)”, in Phitsanulok province, was constructed. It is presumed to have been built as a royal temple during the Sukhothai Era. When the Sukhothai stone inscriptions were discovered, the information formed on them indicated that King Srinaonamthom built the Phra Tantanatathat Sukonta Chedi. Local people often refer to this temple as “WatYai” or “Wat Aram Luang Pho Phra Buddha Chinnarat”. In 1915, Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama VI) ennobled the temple to a first-grade or Royal Temple of the Woramahaviharn type. Nowadays, the full name of the temple is “Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn”. It is an ancient temple that has high significance in history and archaeology.

Wat Yai is located on the east bank of the Nan River opposite the Phitsanulok City Hall. And is considered by Somdet Phra Chao Borommawong Thoe Krom Phraya Damrong Rajanubhab to be the most important temple in Phitsanulok. It is believed to have been built during the early Sukhothai period when Sukhothai was a capital city and, has been restored many times over the ensuing years”. In the northern historical records, it is proclaimed that, “During B.E. 1900, Phra Chao Sri Dhamma Tri Pidok (Phra Maha Dhamma Racha Lithai) was a King that ruled Sukhothai, and was a faithful believer in Buddhism”.

Moreover, the King also studied the Tripitaka and scriptures of other religions. The King built this temple on the east side of Nan River with a stupa in the center, 4 viharns in the 4 corners, 2 terraces and ordered the casting of 3 Buddha images to be enshrined as the Main Buddha image in the temple. According to legend, the king was dissatisfied with the first main Buddha image and ordered a second Buddha image to be made. The king was not happy with the second Buddha image and ordered a third Buddha image to be cast. At this point an old hermit in a white robe came forward and told the king that he could create a Buddha image that would please the king. The king gave his permission and when the third Buddha image was unveiled the king knew that the old hermit had created the most beautiful Buddha image in Thailand, Phra Buddha Chinnarat. The old hermit left Phitsanulok, went up the Nan River north, and settled in a small village that is still known as “Hermit Village”.

Wat Yai also has many ancient remains and antiques. Somdet Phra Chao Borommawong Thoe Krom Phraya Narisara Nuvadtivongs stated that “After paying homage to Phra Buddha Chinnarat, I took notice of pulpits, the glass pavilion and other objects, and I found them all in great elegance that I have never met before”. The structure of the temple has a stupa as the main Buddha image of the temple. Surrounding the stupa are cloisters. The east viharn is an enshrinement of Phra Attharos, which is called the Viharn of Nine Rooms. Today, only the Phra Attharos image, some pillars, and dunes of the viharn remain. The west viharn is an enshrinement of Phra Buddha Chinnarat, the north viharn is an enshrinement of Phra Buddha Chinnasi, and the south viharn is an enshrinement of Phra Sri Sassada. Phra Buddha Chinnasi and Phra Sri Sassada have been moved and enshrined at Wat Bowon Niwet Viharn in Bangkok. The model of the original images can be found at Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn.

Source: Phra Buddha Chinnarat, Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn,

Phitsanulok, 2007, Pages 7 – 8.

Unit 2 Chao Phraya Chakri Monument (King Rama I)

In 1768, Somdet Phra Chao Krung Thonburi (King Taksin) was crowned as the King that ruled Krung Thonburi, with the name “Somdet Phra Borom Rachathirat VII” or Somdet Phra Chao Krung Thonburi. At this time, Burmese troops were given the orders from Phra Chao Mungra, King of Burma, to invade and attack Krung Thonburi. The Burmese decided to move troops from the Mae Lamao post in Tak City, west of Phitsanulok. This would engage Thai troops and prevent them from helping Krung Thonburi.

Chao Phraya Chakri (Thong Duang) and Chao Phraya Surasi (Boon Ma) brought troops to defend Phichai City and faced the Burmese troops at Phitsanulok. Phitsanulok was an important city that governed the northern provinces, and was strategically located on the Nan River which enabled boats to easily travel and communicate with the southern provinces.

Aa Sae Woon Ki, the Burmese army leader, camped on two sides of the river and began a series of indecisive battles. Aa SaeWoon Ki saw that the Thai army leader was highly skillful because the number of the Thai army was fewer than that of the Burmese, but they were still able to defend the city. Aa Sae Woon Ki thus stopped the battle, and asked to see Chao Phraya Chakri (Thong Duang), the Thai army leader.

Chao Phraya Chakri showed up on his horse (there is a statue of the leader in front of the Phitsanulok Town Municipality). When Aa Sae Woon Ki saw Chao Phraya Chakri, he praised, “This man is good-looking, and has strong skills to fight with me who is an old man. Take care of yourself, for one day in the future you will truly be a king”.

After praising and giving things to Chao Phraya Chakri, a one-day armistice took place. Thai soldiers and Burmese soldiers offered each other food and acted like friends. Phitsanulok had been encircled for four months when Phra Chao Krung Thonburi (King Taksin) decided to lead the army along the Nan River to help Chao Phraya Chakri (Thong Duang) and Chao Phraya Surasi (Boon Ma) and take charge of the battle. However, during this period, the Burmese brought troops from the Sing Korn post and successfully attacked Kuiburi City and Pran City. Then, they headed to Petchaburi City, Ratchaburi City and Nakornchaisri City to attack Krung Thonburi.

Phra Chao Krung Thonburi (King Taksin) was forced to move the army back to Krung Thonburi, so Phitsanulok City was alone and faced with a shortage of food.

Both Chao Phrayas discussed the situation and agreed that their only recourse was to escape by slipping through the Burmese lines. The Burmese troops then invaded the city, and set flame to houses and temples. Fortunately, at Wat Yai, only the parts of Phra Viharn Attharos and the back of Phra Viharn Phra Buddha Chinnarat were destroyed.

The Burmese occupation was short lived because Aa Sae Woon Ki was soon ordered to bring the army back to Burma because Phra Chao Mungra, King of Burma, passed away. That was the last time the Burmese ever attacked Phitsanulok City.

Sources: Local Arts, Phitsanulok province, 2004, Pages 33 – 34.

Buddha Amulets of the province, 2004, Page 7.

Unit 3 Phitsanulok Railway Station

On March 1, 1890, Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama V) announced in a Royal Proclamation the construction of the first state railway line in Siam from Bangkok to Nakorn Ratchasima city.

Importance of Northern Railway Route and the Designation of the Route to pass through in the area of Phitsanulok precinct

During the era of King Rama V, the Siamese government faced political and economic problems due to the expansion of English and French imperialism in the northern and southern regions, England and France wanted to explore transportation routes to the Yunnan County in Southern China. England, in particular, had plans to construct a railway line to connect India and Southern China by passing through Burma and the lower Northern region of the Kingdom of Thailand. In response, the Siamese government sent Mr. Hermann Grehrts, the railway director, to travel, survey, and determine a route for a northern railway line. Hoping to receive economic benefits from the trains, it was decided to the fourth construct railway line which would intersect the northern railway line from Nakhonsawan and pass through Phitsanulok, Uttaradit, Lamphun, to Chiang Mai for a total distance of 450 kilometers.

On 24 January 1907, the railway was opened at the Phitsanulok station with a steam locomotive travelling from Phitsanulok to Bangkok to transport passengers and a great amount of rice to sell in Bangkok. Rice mills were constructed along the railway line to mill paddies into wholegrain rice.

In 1917, construction was started on the northern railway line passing through Phitsanulok and Phichai City to Lamphun Province. During the period of King Rama V, the **E Class model number 181 Steam Engine** was used. Nowadays, the steam engine is displayed in front of the Phitsanulok station. Assembled by the North British Locomotive Company of England, it is an engine of the Tender Engine type, and was kindly given to Thailand by Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom.

In 1921, the northern railway was opened by a steam engine, travelling from Bangkok through Phitsanulok to Chiang Mai.

The first Phitsanulok railway station was located at the Tung Dum area (the water tank to refill water for the steam engines), which is south from the current station. During World War II, the station was attacked by Japanese soldiers and completely destroyed.

In 1945, a new Phitsanulok railway station was built. It is located 389 kilometers from Bangkok and is an important railway station since it is in the center of northern Thailand and a hub for the distribution of people, goods and services.

In 1955, Diesel locomotives began to replace steam engines and in 1957, steam engines were decommissioned.

Source: History of Phitsanulok city, 1998, Page 141 and Page 151.

History of the Lower Northern Region, Khong – Salawin Civilizations Stream,
Page 151.

Mr. Chaluy Vijarat, Phitsanulok stationmaster (1 October 2012 – Present).

Unit 4 Phitsanulok Clock Tower

On 2 January, 1957 between 8.00am - 6.00pm. Phitsanulok City experienced a major fire. The fire was caused by a 4 year old child who was playing with matches and burning newspapers in the area of shops situated to the south of present day Kadesarin Beauty School, Eka Thotsarot Road. A total of 6,650 people were affected, including 450 houses damaged and 50 people slightly injured. Fortunately, there were no deaths. The fire destroyed 75.5 Rais and 36 square Wahs, and did approximately 150 million baht worth of damage.

The fire caused important physical changes for Phitsanulok. A new city plan moved the city's business zone, from the port along the Nan River, to the present commerce zone in front of the railway station and Khok Matoom transportation center. This move resulted in a clear separation between government offices on the west side of the river Nan and the business zone of the city on the east side of the river.

On 29 July 1990, on the auspicious occasion of the 400th Anniversary of King Naresuan the Great's Accession to the Throne, Mr. Dilok Mahadumrongkul, Senator and President of C. Thong Panich Company, donated a solar cell clock, which was worth 1,500,000 Baht, and Mr. Wanchai Chirathivat, Committee Chairman of Central Trading Company Limited, donated 240,000 Baht to install a fountain. Mr. Surachai Pongcharoen, Phitsanulok City Mayor, and the Municipal Council were in charge of the installation.

On 29 March 2013, the Clock Tower and the Fountain of Phitsanulok were renovated by the Phitsanulok Town Municipality, and Mr. Boonsong Tanthanee, Mayor of Phitsanulok City.

Because the clock in the Clock Tower was more than 50 years old, the Phitsanulok Town Municipality decided on July 30, 2013 to install new clocks on all 4 sides. RHYTHM from Japan, Fah Thai Phitsanulok Clock store, and Innovation Time Company Limited, together with donations of around 500,000 baht, installed the new clocks. The private sector that donated the clock will also offer free maintenance for two years.

Source: Phitsanulok: A Province of Opportunities and Challenges, 2011, Pages 45 – 46.

Ceremony of delivering a new clock. Available :

<http://www.phitsanulokhotnews.com>. November 13, 2013.

Unit 5 Talangkang: Execution of Criminals in the Past

Talangkang, is a junction of several roads and the place where criminals used to be executed. It is in the front of Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University and the Wang Chan Riverview Hotel. An old temple used to be located near Talangkang, but recent real estate developments have erased all signs of the past. The procedures for criminal executions were formal and complex.

Execution by Decapitation

The “Executioner” was selected because they had a suitable fate. This decision was made by an astrologer and involved complex calculations. To execute a human was a heavy sin, thus it was necessary to choose an executioner who had the fate to control his self. Otherwise, the executioner’s life will be short. The executioner had to be highly specialized in sword tactics, and had an extensive knowledge of swords. He had to be precise when beheading so as to not cause undo suffering and had special knowledge of incantations, such as spell praying for the ghosts’ spirits, magic before holding the executioner’s sword, as well as being able to fix mysteries if the prisoners had skills in invulnerability.

When it was time, the executioner would bring the sword from its location and worship with offerings to awaken the sword to be powerful. After the ceremony, the sword would be stored at its original location, and wait for the next execution. There were 3 executioners who were responsible for the execution. These consisted of the first sword and 2 substitutes, which were called the second sword and third sword. If the first sword could not fully decapitate, the second sword must be used. If still unsuccessful, then the third sword had to slash until the neck was severed.

The Executioner’s Swords

In the era of King Rama VI, execution of the criminals by using swords was discontinued. Consequently, 2 executioner’s swords were preserved in a special room of the Royal prison and forbidden to be touched. The swords were worshipped with liquor and steamed chicken on every Saturday. Approximately 1,000 prisoners were executed from this pair of swords.

Procedures and Practices

When the jury at the Royal Court of Luk Khun Hall imposed a punishment of execution, the matter was respectfully forwarded to the King, whose assent was needed to allow the execution. Before the prisoner was executed, he/she was whipped for 3 sets of 30 times per set, making a total of 90 times. The prisoner was given a last meal and then monks were invited to give a sermon. As the execution was about to begin, the prisoner was seated with feet in the stocks and the hands tied to a stake. The executioner used clay to plug the prisoner's ears and mouth, and then stuck clay or lime on the prisoner's neck in order to specify the location of the slash. Next, the second sword executioner would dance to the sword tactics waiting until the prisoner's mind was at peace. At that point, the first sword executioner would immediately decapitate the prisoner. After the execution, the officer would cut off the heels of the prisoner to release the stocks, and the body would be chopped or sliced into pieces and given the meat to vultures and crows. The head was also pricked to defame.

Source: Toponymy of Phitsanulok province, 1999, Page 207.

Execution punishments in Thailand. Available:<http://th.wikipedia.org>.

November 18, 2013.

Thai Dictionary, 2010, Page 435.

Unit 6 The Museum of Phitsanulok

The Arts and Culture Office of Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University has enhanced and organized a display center in the form of the Phitsanulok City Museum. The museum was opened to the public on 7 August, 2009. The displays consist of a number of rooms in which the story of Phitsanulok is shown during different historical periods.

Getting to Know Phitsanulok Room

Phitsanulok is a big city composed of historical sites, various cultures, and natural scenery consisting of beautiful streams and forests in the east, the Nan River in the middle and low lands in the west. It is situated 377 kilometers north of Bangkok. Phitsanulok Province has an area of 10,815 square kilometers. The governing areas of Phitsanulok are divided into 9 districts, which are: City District, Wang Thong District, Phrom Phiram District, Bang Rakam District, Bang Krathum District, Nakhon Thai District, Chat Trakan District, and Noen Maprang District.

Early Sukhothai Period Room

The History of Phitsanulok city, or the Song Kwae city, during the Sukhothai era from the time when King Sri Inthrahit constructed the city to when King Maha Thammaracha I (Li Thai) ruled Phitsanulok city for 7 years, is shown in this room. During this period (in 1362-1369), the arts, culture, and religion thrived.

Under the Shadows of the Ayutthaya Period Room

In the Ayutthaya period, Phitsanulok City had many important roles. During the wars with Burma, it was the capital of Thailand for 25 years during the reign of Somdet Phra Borom Trai Lokkanat (in 1463-1488). It was the birthplace of Princess Suphankanlaya, the great warrior king Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharaj and Somdet Phra Ekatotsarot. Phitsanulok was a frontline city that fought bravely against the Burmese during the wars which only ended when Krungsri Ayutthaya was defeated in 1767.

Under the Auspices of the Chakri Dynasty Room

After the army of King Thonburi had retrieved independence and established Krung Thonburi as the new capital city, Phitsanulok city was rebuilt. Since Phra Bat Somdet Phra Phraphutthayotfah Chulalok (King Rama I) established the Chakri Dynasty, after the war with Burma ended during the Nine-Armies war. Phitsanulok city has grown and stayed firmly united since the beginning of the Chakri Dynasty (in 1782).

Phitsanulok Room 1

It displays the identities of Phisanulok City in the areas of arts, culture, music, dramas, and architecture, such as the architecture of Wat Chula Manee, the Mang-Kla music show by showing instruments and VDOs about Mang-Kla music and dance.

Phitsanulok Room 2

It presents the identities of Phisanulok City in the areas of traditions, beliefs, and the charms of Phitsanulok. Examples include Phra Buddha Chinnarat, WatPhra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn, important Buddha amulets of Phitsanulok, the tradition of sticking victory flags, the tradition of the long-tailed boats competitions at the end of the monsoon, King Naresuan's fighting cocks, and Bangkaew dogs, etc.

Source: Phitsanulok City Museum. Available:<http://aco-psru.tk/naenum.php>.

November16, 2013.

Unit 7 City Wall, City Moat, City Forts and City Gates

The original Phitsanulok City wall was made of clay. Historians believed that it was built in the reign of Somdet Phra Borom Trai Lokkanat (in 1459) to withstand the battles from Phra Chao Tilokarat of the Lanna Kingdom. Later on, Somdet Phra Maha Chakkraphat renovated the city wall to prepare for the Hongkawadi battle. In the reign of Somdet Phra Narai Maharat, the King ordered French workers to construct a new wall using bricks to strengthen the wall. During the battles with Chiang Mai, Phitsanulok city had less importance than during the Rattanakosin period, but the city's wealth was still the enemies' target. King Rama I demolished the city walls and forts in order to prevent the Burmese, who had invaded Thailand, from benefiting from them. The city wall used to be located in the areas of King Naresuan Camp and near Wat Yang and Wat Rachapraditsathan as well, but today, the only line of the wall that is clearly visible lies in the area of Wat Phothiyon. The width is approximately 6 meters, and has the feature of a brick wall. Only the lower parts of the wall's line still remain.

Phitsanulok City Moat – Phitsanulok had a moat that surrounded all 4 sides of the city. Today all that remains is on the west side, parallel to Phra Ruang Road (behind Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Wang Chan Campus), and on the east side in the northern area of Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn, which stretches to the Phothiyon city wall.

Phitsanulok City Forts – From historical evidence, it was discovered that Phitsanulok has 4 city forts, but unfortunately, most of them have been destroyed. They include:

- The fort at Wat Phothiyon, presumed to be located at the east side of Wat Phothiyon
- The fort in the northern area of Wat Noi, presumed to be located at the Chinese Gate
- The fort beside the Noi River, presumed to be located at the Provincial Police Division 6
- Petchfort, presumed to be located at the west side of Nan River

Phitsanulok City Gates – Phitsanulok had 4 City Gates, which were :

- The Chinese Gate was in an area where the Chinese community settled to work on the pottery industry. The gate was located at the corner of the upper east side of the city wall.
- Mon Gate was located at the corner of the city wall, in front of Padoongrasdra School.
- Phi Gate was located slightly to the south side of the Mon Gate, on the east side of Phitsanulok city wall, south side of Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn.
- Tawai Gate was supposedly located along the road in front of the Provincial Police Division 6.

Source: Phitsanulok City and Temples Tours, 2003, Page 70 – 71.

Phitsanulok: A Province of Opportunities and Challenges, 2011, Pages 109.

History of Phitsanulok City, 1998, Page 72.

Legend of Phitsanulok City and History of Phra Buddha Chinnarat, 1959,

Pages 16 – 17.

Unit 8 Wat Wihan Thong

In the past, Wat Wihan Thong was used by kings and city locals to perform Buddhist rituals. The temple was built near the Royal Palace, second from Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn, which is situated opposite Wat Wihan Thong's east side. Formerly, Wat Wihan Thong encompassed a vast area, and was situated south of the Chan Palace flourished during the period that the Phra Ruang Dynasty ruled the Song Kwae city. During the Sukhothai Era, artisans had the skills to build large, beautiful Buddha images. Wat Wihan Thong also houses a large Buddha image cast in bronze, Phra Attharos Srisukot Tossapon Yanabapitr, which is a 9-meter Standing Buddha Statue that King Maha Thammaracha Li Thai was enshrined at Wat Wihan Thong.

The base of the monastery, Phra Attharos Srisukot Tossapon Yanabapitr was built of bricks and mortar, and is still visible (Phra Attharos, like other temples in the past). Parts of the base of the monastery and an old Phra Chedi (Pagoda) still remain. Wat Sutsawat and Wat Kai Khiaw were two nearby temples that were built just north of Wat Wihan Thong.

Phra Attharos Srisukot Tossapon Yanabapitr is different from Phra Attharos of Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn because it is a Buddha image cast in bronze, and is regarded as the only large standing Buddha image cast in the Sukhothai period that has significance to all three Seated Buddha images (Phra Buddha Chinnarat, Phra Buddha Chinnasi and Phra Sri Sassada). When Phra Bat Somdet Phra Nangklao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama III) looked at the ruins of the deteriorated temple, the King moved Phra Attharos that was located in the temple of Wat Wihan Thong to be enshrined at the constructed temple in Wat Saket in Bangkok. In 1825, during the reign of Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama IV), the King commemorated the name of this Phra Attharos as “**Phra Attharos Srisukot Tossapon Yanabapitr**”.

Today, Wat Wihan Thong is an abandoned temple. In the area surrounding the temple, the archaeological sites remain indicate that it used to be a large temple. Pillars which once belonged to a large temple can be found in two locations. The first

location is adjacent to the Phitsanulok Province Land Office, and the other is a little to the north. Moreover, near the remains of the temple there is a huge Bodhi tree. On the west side adjacent to Thepharak Road, there is a large mound, which is certainly the Pagoda base, and on the opposite side of the road, there is a small canal. What is now the Thepharak Road used to be the Temple's wall. This is known because on May 1971, the Phitsanulok Teacher Saving Co-Operative Office (the old office) ordered workers to dig the holes in which to place fence posts. They discovered remains of a long line of the bricks, and under those bricks, a number of large terra-cotta pipes. The pipes each had a diameter of 30 centimeters long and a length of 1.30 meter and were lined up in a long line.

Source: Naresuan University. Available: <http://www.mscs.nu.ac.th/historyplk7.pdf>.

November 13, 2013. Pages 622-623

Nuntiya Rorboon, 2013, Compiler.

Unit 9 King Naresuan the Great's Shrine (Sanphet II)

Chan Palace used to be the location of the Thepharak Shrine. Roi Ek Luang Chuea Chamnangane wrote in his book "Legend of Phitsanulok" that, "This Shrine is located in the back area of Chan Palace, and today it is called the Former Maharat Shrine, or more commonly the "City Pillar Shrine". The Shrine is a small house made from wood with a high base and a roof made from zinc. Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama V) ordered the Shrine construction in 1901 during a visit to the outskirts of the northern precinct. On the Shrine sits a Thepharak image that was adorned like a King. This is assumed to be the image of the Former Maharat who has ruled Phitsanulok City the ancient times. The Thepharak image at this Shrine, apart from being respected by city locals, has also been respected by Kings and Royals who have traveled to Phitsanulok to perform offering ceremonies.

The Fine Arts Department directed Mr. Sitthidet Sanghirun and recruited craftsman of the Fine Arts Department to mold a Royal Statue of King Naresuan the Great, holding a sword in his hand, and cast it in plaster. This royal statue is 1.50 metres in height. It was placed in Thepharak Shrine, and the Shrine was renamed to "King Naresuan the Great's Shrine". When the Fine Arts Department built a new Shrine, the old Shrine was placed at the side of Chan Palace. The original Thepharak wooden image and the old Royal Statue of King Naresuan the Great are now stored at the National Museum, Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn.

King Naresuan the Great's Shrine is located in the area of Chan Palace. The Shrine is a Thai pavilion of the Tri-mook type, and its features include a floor made of reinforced concrete and covered with marble, walls built from bricks and mortar, and a roof covered with tiles. The life sized Royal Statue of King Naresuan the Great, which is cast in metal, is enshrined inside. In his hand, the King holds a water jug. The original jug was used by King Naresuan when he poured water and declare Thai independence at Kraeng City in 1584, saying: "From this day onwards Thais are no longer allies with the Burmese". The Fine Arts Department completed the construction of both the Shrine and the Royal Statue on 28 November 1961. King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) and Queen Sirikit opened this site on 25 January 1962.

Source: Research Report of the Development of Japanese Language for Tourism Training Curriculum in Phitsanulok Town Municipality, 2012, Page 75.
Naresuan University. Available:<http://www.mscs.nu.ac.th/historyplk/historyplk.7.pdf>. Pages 614-616. November 13, 2013.

Unit 9 Chan Palace

King MahaThammaracha I (Li Thai) succeeded to the throne of Krung Sukhothai and ruled Phitsanulok city between 1362 – 1369. The King built Chan Palace on a mound located on the west side of Nan River. This Palace was surmised the throne of Thai Kings from the Sukhothai period to Ayutthaya period. On the west side of Nan River is Chai Nat city (Phitsanulok city) that Somdet Phra Boromaracha Thirat II (Chao Sam Phraya), who ruled from 1424 – 1448, established the Chan Palace as the center of governing power. Other important historical sites have been discovered on the southern edge of the palace. Two these, Wat Wihan Thong and Wat Srisukhot, were likely Palace temples because both temples have aesthetic forms and styles which are similar to those of the early Ayutthaya period.

During the reign of Somdet Phra Boromma Trailokkanat (1448 – 1488), Chai Nat City and Phitsanulok City existed on opposite sides of the Nan River. In 1463, Somdet Phra Boromma Trailokkanat, King of Ayutthaya, moved the capital city to Phitsanulok City because the Burmese were threatening Ayutthaya. The King resided at Chan Palace. In 1465, after being ordained, the King ordered the construction of a City Wall to connect the two cities and integrate them into one city. King Maha Thammaracha, who ruled the throne from 1569 – 1590, ordered Somdet Phra Naresuan to reside at the palace. He was the last royal person to reside at Chan Palace. Today, the only historical objects left of the palace are a mound, the base of the palace, Thepharak Shrine, and two pools.

Because the city was originally built on both sides of the river, it originally had two different names: “Song-Kwae” and “Chai Nat”. Song-Kwae City was the original name that exists in stone inscriptions from the early Sukhothai period. The name comes from the two streams –the Nan and the Kwai Noi River – which pass through it.

However, after the battle with Aa Sae Woon Ki in 1775, Chan Palace was left abandoned, and eventually collapsed. Nonetheless, the importance of the palace and particularly the fact that it was the birthplace of King Naresuan the Great, remains vivid in the minds of the Thai people.

In 1901, Phra Bat Somdet Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama VI) paid homage to Phra Buddha Chinnarat and cast a model of Phra Buddha Chinnarat at Phitsanulok City. Also a royal writing from that visit stated that Chan Palace had two layers of palace walls. The exterior wall was down and remained slightly above the ground. The interior wall remained approximately 1 meter high. Inside the palace, a base still existed, which was believed to be the throne that was 44 meters long and 14 meters wide. A glass wall encircled the throne, and the craftsmanship built during the Ayutthaya period”.

On May 5, 1938, Somdet Krom Phraya Damrong Rachanubhab mentioned about Chan Palace of Phitsanulok city as, the term “Wang Chan” was likely from the term “Chan Palace or Chan Residence”, because residential houses in the ancient times were all constructed from wood called “chan” or sandalwood. However, for the royal residences of the King and nobles, the houses were usually built with sandalwood that has fragrance. Therefore, the term “Wang Chan” most likely came from “Chan Residential Palace”.

Recently, the Fine Arts Department has completed the renovation the palace improved the landscaping, restored King Naresuan the Great’s Shrine and on 26 November, 1993, it was registered as an historical site and opened to the general public.

Source: Thai Junior Encyclopedia Edition 3, 2007, Page 18.

Archaeology of Chandra Palace at Phitsanulok, Available:

<http://www.2.eduzones.com/poonpreecha/84293>. November 18, 2013.

Chandra Palace. Available:<http://th.wikipedia.org>. November 18, 2013.

Unit 10 Phitsanulok City Pillar Shrine

Thepharak Shrine

In ancient times, Phitsanulok City locals or even kings or nobles who visited Phitsanulok City paid respect to the Thepharak Shrine, which was located in the back area of Chan Palace. It is nowadays called the Former Maharat Shrineor , more commonly known as the **City Pillar Shrine**. The Shrine is a small wooden house with elevated floor and zinc-covered roof. Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Rama V) ordered the construction of Shrine in 1901 during his visit to the outskirts of the northern precinct. On the Shrine sits a Thepharak image that was adorned like a king, assumed to be the image of the former king who ruled Phitsanulok City during the ancient times.

Phitsanulok City Pillar Shrine

According to legend, the City Pillar of Phitsanulok Province was in the form of a stone inscription, and was originally buried under the ground adjacent to the Nan River. Some said that it sank in the Nan River near the Military Department not very far from Chan Palace. Currently, it is preserved at Phra Buddha Chinnarat National Museum. The idea of constructing a new City Pillar of Phitsanulok Province was started in 1987 by Mr. Suwan Uboncharoen, Mayor of Phitsanulok City. He wanted to build the Phitsanulok City Pillar in the front of Phitsanulok City District Office. The province arranged a meeting with the leaders of the government service, merchants' representatives, and representatives from the Fine Arts Department to commence for the construction.

On Thursday 12th September 1996 at 5.30pm, King Bhumibol kindly allowed the Phitsanulok Provincial Governor and the colleagues to present the City Pillar along with a Golden Foil of the City's Fortune, for the King to water and anoint at Chitralada Palace. After King Bhumibol watered and anointed the City Pillar and the Golden Foil, he addressed the following speech to the group, **“Phitsanulok Province is an old city that has many well-respected sacred items. This City Pillar is a sacred item that matches those sacred items in order to be in accordance with the customs and traditions, and allow people to worship for fortune and stability”**.

On 13 September 1996, Mr. Sawat Songsamphan, Mayor of Phitsanulok City and the colleagues enshrined the City Pillar and the Golden Foil at the Provincial Governor's operations room at Phitsanulok City Hall. On 25 September 1996, the ceremony of the City Pillar enshrinement, the loading of the City's Fortune, and the wearing of the City Pillar's peak was performed.

On 8 April 1997 at 5.10pm, King Bhumibol kindly allowed Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, the Royal Son and Crown Prince of Siam, to attend on his behalf to perform the Phitsanulok City Pillar Shrine opening ceremony. Thus, the celebration and worship of Phitsanulok City Pillar Shrine is held every year on the 8th of April to serve as fortune and a milestone for the people of Phitsanulok.

Source: Research Report of the Development of Japanese Language for Tourism Training Curriculum in Phitsanulok Town Municipality, 2012, Page 75.

Legend of Phitsanulok City and History of PhraBuddha Chinnarat, 1959, Pages 16.

Phitsanulok Provincial Office. Available : http://www.phitsanulok.go.th/Sanluakmuang_5.html. November 14, 2013.

Phitsanulok District Office. Phitsanulok City Pillar Shrine, 2013.

Unit 11 Naresuan Bridge

Naresuan Bridge was built to serve as a remembrance of King Naresuan the Great. The bridge crosses the Nan River from the Phitsanulok City Hall side to Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat Woramahaviharn on the east side. When standing on the Naresuan Bridge, one can see beautiful views of Nan River flowing from north to south.

In 1931, the locals called it the “Black Bridge” because the original Naresuan Bridge was a metal bridge painted in black.

In 1960, the metal bridge was dismantled and newly constructed as a cement bridge.

In 2006, the size of the bridge was expanded to be bigger and more convenient as seen nowadays. The bridgehead is decorated with an elephant statue. However, if people notice from photographs of the old bridge, there were several houses. As for the floating houses, they were built continuously throughout the two sides of Nan River.

In 2007, Phitsanulok Town Municipality had moved all floating houses to the south side of the city to adjust the city’s landscape.

Source: History of Phitsanulok City, 1998, Page 156 and Page 169.

Sgt. Maj. Thawee Folk Museum, 1995, Page 12.