

GUIDE TO PHIMAI AND ANTIQUITIES  
IN THE PROVINCE OF  
NAKHON RATCHA SIMA (KORAT)

*by*

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ABRIDGED AND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

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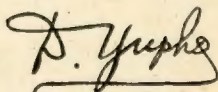
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## PREFACE

As there are many interesting ancient sites in the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima (Korat) and many tourists have gone there to enjoy themselves since the Friendship Highway has been open to the public, the handy guide-book to Korat is deemed necessary by the Fine Arts Department. I have, therefore, asked Nai Mani Vallibhotama, Chief Curator of the National Museum, Bangkok, who supervised the excavation at Prasat Phimai in 1954, to contribute such a useful document. He consented to my request and this guide-book resulted from his experience and laborious work. I have also requested M.C. Subhadradis Diskul, another Chief Curator of the same museum, to abridge and translate Nai Mani Vallibhotama's work into English version.

I would like here to express my thanks to both Chief Curators of the Fine Arts Department and also to Mr. Kenneth J. MacCormac, Deputy Public Affairs Officer of the United States Information Service in Bangkok, who kindly agreed to check the English text of this guide-book, which I hope will be useful to visitors of ancient monuments in the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima.



**The Fine Arts Department,  
Bangkok, Thailand.  
13 October, 1961**



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# PHIMAI AND ANTIQUITIES

## IN THE PROVINCE OF

### NAKHON RATCHA SIMA (KORAT)

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The Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima or Korat is 255 kms. north - east of Bangkok. It can be reached by train, car or plane.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

The Province is divided into 14 Amphoes and 2 King Amphoes :-

Amphoe Muang Nakhon Ratcha Sima, Non Soong, Khong, Bua Yai, Phimai, Chakrat, Chokchai, Khonburi, Pak Thong Chai, Soong Noen, Si Khiew, Pak Chong, Dan Khun Thod, Non Thai and King Amphoe Chumphuang, dependent on Amphoe Phimai and Kham Thale So dependent on Soong Noen.

#### BOUNDARY

On the north the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima touches those of Chaiyaphum and Khon Kaen; on the east that of Buriram; on the south it is adjacent to Nakhon Nayok and Prachinburi and on the west to Chaiyaphum and Saraburi.

#### TOPOGRAPHY

The Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima is comprised of a 15,781 sq. km. plateau, which is 300-400 m. above sea level. Many mountains and jungles exist on the

south and south-west, thus forming many streams that join together into a large water-way called Lam Takhong. This river flows north-eastward, past Amphoe Soong Noen and Nakhon Ratcha Sima to meet the Mun River at Amphoe Chakrat. The Mun River originates from mountains in Amphoe Pak Thong Chai and Khonburi and then flows north, passing Amphoe Phimai and into the Province of Buriram. Apart from these two water-ways there is another large river in the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima, called Lam Plai Mat, originating in mountains of the Province of Buriram and then flows north-east of Amphoe Khonburi, passes Amphoe Nang Rong and Lam Plai Mat into Amphoe Phimai to join the Mun River in King Amphoe Chum Phuang. In the rainy season, the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima relies on these three rivers and many streams to fertilize the country but during the rest of the year, water is scarce and the Irrigation Department has to construct many reservoirs to keep water in this part of Thailand.

The Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima is the centre of north-eastern Thailand. Many industries exist there and cattle breeding is also an important occupation of the inhabitants.

## COMMUNICATION

As the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima is situated on a plateau barricaded by mountains, in the old days before the railroad was constructed, one had to go by foot from the central part of Thailand through one of the three passes which exist respectively in Lopburi, Saraburi and in Nakhon Nayok-Prachinburi. In the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the railroad of 264 kms.



was built from Bangkok-Saraburi and Kaeng Khoi to the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. It was begun in 1891 and finished in 1900.

Along the railroad, exist many interesting sites; for instance a very beautiful ravine in the Pa Sak River at Tambon Kaeng Khoi. After this area one arrives at Tambon Tab Kwang, where a rock inscribed with the initials of King Chulalongkorn can be seen on the left of the railroad. This is the site where King Chulalongkorn came to inspect the construction of the railway line in 1895. One then comes to Tambon Pak Chong, where in the old days goods had to be transferred from carts on to the back of oxen in order to be carried through the Dong Phraya Fai Pass. This steep distance from Tambon Pak Chong to Chanthuk is 12 kms. long.

Tambon Chanthuk used to be the site of one of the octrois of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. Copper abounds in this area and in the reign of King Rama III of Bangkok, many Buddha images were cast from the mineral at this site. Then after Si Khiew one arrives at Soong Noen, the site of the two original towns of Korat and then to Nakhon Ratcha Sima Railway Station which is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  km. west of the town.

During the Thai constitutional government, the Sura-Narai Highway, 404 kms. long, was constructed from the Phahol Yodhin one at Amphoe Khok Samrong, Lopburi, passing Amphoe Chai Badan, the Phraya Klang Pass, Tambon Bua Chum, Amphoe Non Thai and Tambon Choho to the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima.

In 1955 with the help of the United States Operations Mission to Thailand and the Thai Technical Economic Committee, another highway named "the

Friendship Highway" was constructed from the Phahol Yodhin one, branching off from the 108th km. sign, south of the town of Saraburi, to Nakhon Ratcha Sima. It was finished in 1957 and opened to the public one year later. This highway is 147.8 kms. long and passes through Tambon Kaeng Khoi, Muak Lek, Pak Chong, Si Khiew, Soong Noen and Phukhao Dad. The distance from Bangkok to Nakhon Ratcha Sima can thus be reduced to only a little above 255 kms. Along the Friendship Highway, one interesting site should be visited, the Muak Lek Falls, in the Forestry Station, about 1 km. from the Highway (fig. 1).

### **MUANG SEMA AND KHORAKHAPURA**

Two old towns exist in the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. Both of them are in Amphoe Soong Noen, in the south-west, about 31 kms. from the present town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. They are called respectively Muang Sema and Khorakhapura and can be reached from the Friendship Highway by a 4 km. road which leads to Amphoe Soong Noen office.

**Muang Sema** is on the south of Lam Takhong and surrounded by a moat and laterite walls, some remains of which can still be seen. Inside the town there are many ponds and two important Dvaravati antiquities. One is a huge stone reclining Buddha image and the other is a stone Wheel of the Law 1.50 m. wide. Both of them are preserved at Wat Khlong Khwang, Tambon Sema, about 9-10 kms. from the Friendship Highway (fig. 3).

**Muang Khorakhapura** is on the north of Lam Takhong, in Tambon Korat, about 6 kms. east of Muang Sema or 2-3 kms. from the Amphoe Soong Noen office.



**Fig. 1**  
*Muak Lek Falls*



**Fig. 2** *The ubosoth of Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat,  
Nakhon Ratcha Sima.*





**Fig. 3**

*The stone Wheel  
of the Law and  
hand of a  
Buddha image  
of Dvaravati  
style at Wat  
Khlung Khwang,  
Muang Sema,  
Amphoe Soong  
Noen.*





In the town there are a few small stone sanctuaries, at one of which a Sivalinga (phallic emblem of Siva) 92×28 cms. and a stone lintel representing Uma, consort of Siva, killing a buffalo - demon have been found. It can therefore be surmised that this stone temple was dedicated to Hinduism of the Saivist sect. This town was probably a very important one in the old days as it could control the routes to the lowlands around the Chao Phya and Prachinburi valleys, being situated at the junction of the routes that pass through Phraya Fai and Phraya Klang Passes.

In front of Amphoe Soong Noen stands a broken stone inscription in Sanskrit and Khmer, which came from Bo Ika village in the town of Sema. This inscription is very important for the date of these two old towns in Amphoe Soong Noen as it relates the episode when King Srichanāsa or Srichanāsesvara donated gifts to Buddhist monks in the year equivalent to 868 A.D.

### THE PRESENT TOWN OF NAKHON RATCHA SIMA

In the reign of King Narai of Ayudhya (1656-1688), many towns on the Thai border were fortified in order to protect the kingdom: for instance the towns of Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Phitsanulok and Phetchaboon. The above-mentioned two old towns at Tambon Korat, Amphoe Soong Noen, were also removed, amalgamated and fortified into one city at the present site. The old names "Sema" and "Khorakhapura" were also combined into "Nakhon Ratcha Sima" but the town is still commonly called "Korat". It was surrounded by battlemented brick walls, 15 forts and 4 laterite gates.

Each of these four gates was protected on top by a tower built in the form of a Thai house. Now only one of them, the Chumphon Gate on the west (fig. 4), has been preserved and enlisted by the Fine Arts Department as an ancient monument in 1937. The rest has been demolished.

In his book "Along the Railroad", H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab described the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima that in the reign of King Narai, it ruled five dependent towns: Nakhon Chanthuk on the west, Chaiyaphum on the north, Phimai on the north-east, Buriram on the east and Nang Rong on the south-east. Later on other smaller towns also came under the protection of Nakhon Ratcha Sima: Bamnet Narong, Chaturat, Kaset Somboon, Phu Khiew and Chonabot on the north; Phutthaisong on the north-east; Prakhon Chai and Ratana Buri on the south-east and Pak Thong Chai on the south. King Narai then nominated Phraya Yomarat (Sang) to govern Nakhon Ratcha Sima and Phraya Ram Decho to rule Nakhon Sri Thammarat. After King Narai died in 1688, Phra Phet Racha, an usurper, founded a new dynasty and both Phraya Yomarat and Ram Decho proclaimed their towns independent. The Ayudhya army then came up through the Dong Phraya Fai Pass and Phraya Yomarat had to escape to Nakhon Sri Thammarat where the Ayudhya army also descended to besiege. Phraya Yomarat died in the fighting but Phraya Ram Decho escaped. When the Ayudhya army took over Nakhon Ratcha Sima, most of its inhabitants and weapons had probably been removed to Ayudhya so that later a rebel named Bun Kwang with only 28 followers dared to come to the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. He stopped at one of the pavilions outside the town and called Phraya Nakhon Ratcha Sima, a new

governor, to come out and meet him. Phraya Nakhon Ratcha Sima had to join the rebels and deceive them to advance to Lopburi where the Ayudhya army could defeat and capture all of them.

Later on a military troop was again set up at Nakhon Ratcha Sima and it is recorded in many chronicles that the governor of Luang Phra Bang raised his army in order to attack Vientiane and the governor of the latter petitioned for the king of Ayudhya's protection. The Thai king then sent an army with Phraya Saraburi as the commander of the front army and the new Phraya Nakhon Ratcha Sima as the chief commander. As the result the Ayudhya army frightened away the Luang Phra Bang troops.

The town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima was mentioned once again in the reign of King Ekathat at the end of the Ayudhya period when the Burmese army came down to attack the Thai capital. The Nakhon Ratcha Sima army was ordered down to help the defence of the city. First it had been stationed at Wat Chedi Daeng, south of the elephant kraal, near the city but later on was moved down to Thonburi with Phraya Ratna Thibet as commander. When the Burmese army approached from Samut Songkhram in 1765 Phraya Ratna Thibet deserted the army and fled back to Ayudhya. The Nakhon Ratcha Sima soldiers, deprived of their commander, returned home. Later on when the Burmese army was besieging Ayudhya in 1766, another historical anecdote concerning Nakhon Ratcha Sima happened. Prince Thep Phiphit, who had been deported as a political prisoner to the town of Chanthaburi, raised the army from that eastern coast of Thailand in order to help

the Ayudhya inhabitants fighting the Burmese army. When he arrived at Prachinburi, his front army was defeated by the Burmese troop in the Province of Nakhon Nayok and Prince Thep Phiphit, who realised that his army could not defeat the Burmese, marched his troop into the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima with another army of Phra Phibul Songkhram, the governor of Nakhon Nayok and Luang Narin, who were both on his side. Prince Thep Phiphit wanted to ask Phraya Nakhon Ratcha Sima to help him defeat the Burmese army but the governor of Korat, being a bitter enemy of Phra Phibul Songkhram, sent his man to kill the latter and Luang Narin. Prince Thep Phiphit then dispatched one of his soldiers to assassinate Phraya Nakhon Ratcha Sima and entered into the town. Luang Phaeng, the governor's younger brother, fled to the town of Phimai, raised an army and captured Prince Thep Phiphit, whom he would like to execute. Phra Phimai, the governor of the town of the same name, disagreed and asked to take the prince back to his town.

After Ayudhya had fallen to the Burmese in 1767, Thailand was in turmoil and the country was divided into 5 independent groups:—

1. Phraya Wachira Prakarn, former Governor of Kampaengphet, moved to Chanthaburi where he ruled the country up to the Cambodian border. In 1767 his fleet attacked and defeated the Burmese at Thonburi and Ayudhya. Phraya Wachira Prakarn then crowned himself King of Thonburi.

2. Chao Phraya Phitsanulok who ruled at Phitsanulok in the north and governed the territory from Phichai down to Nakhon Sawan.





3. Phra Sanggharacha at Wat Phra Fang, Sawangkhaburi (now Amphoe Phichai in the Province of Uttaradit). He became politically powerful when still a monk and was generally called Chao Phra Fang. His territory extended from the land north of Phichai up to Phrae, Nan and Luang Phra Bang.

4. Phra Palad, the acting-governor of Nakhon Sri Thammarat. His power extended from the Malay Peninsula up to the town of Chumphorn and he was commonly called Chao Nakhorn.

5. Prince Thep Phiphit who had been confined to the town of Phimai by the governor of that town. He was later on supported by the latter and assumed the title of Chao Phimai, governing the whole Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima.

After the King of Thonburi had driven the Burmese army from Ayudhya and had set up Thonburi as his capital, he began to attack the other four independent groups above-mentioned. First he assaulted Phitsanulok in 1768 but was wounded and the army had to retreat to Thonburi. The same year he attacked the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima by dividing his soldiers into two armies. The first one commanded by the King, marched in on the west and the other commanded by Phra Racharin (later on King Rama I of Bangkok) and his younger brother, Phra Maha Montri (later on the Prince of the Front Palace), went up to attack through the south. Chao Phimai nominated his regent, the former Phra Phimai, as commander-in-chief, with a Burmese general, who had fled from the King of Thonburi at Ayudhya, as adviser. The regent's army was set up on the north of the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima and that of his son on the south. They were both defeated by

the armies of the King of Thonburi and of his two general brothers. The commander of the Nakhon Ratcha Sima southern army fled to lowland Cambodia where he was followed by the army of Phra Racharin and Maha Montri, who also captured the town of Siam-reap. Chao Phimai tried to escape to Vientiane but was taken prisoner by Khun Chana, a city counsellor of Nakhon Ratcha Sima, who was later on promoted by the King of Thonburi to be the new governor of that town.

The King of Thonburi had, however, to continue fighting against other independent Thai groups and subsequent invading Burmese armies, thus lacking time to set up the proper administration for Nakhon Ratcha Sima. In 1775 when the Burmese armies were attacking the north of Thailand, the governor of Nang Rong which was a dependent town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima, asked for protection from the Prince of Champasak (Bassak), who ruled during that time an independent kingdom. The prince agreed, believing that the Thai would lose in their fighting against the Burmese and the governor of Nang Rong then proclaimed himself independent from Nakhon Ratcha Sima. After the Burmese army had retreated, the King of Thonburi sent Choa Phraya Chakri (Later King Rama I) to capture the town of Nang Rong in 1776. The latter learned from the captured governor of that town that the Prince of Champasak was preparing an offensive army. So with the consent of the King of Thonburi, his army and the troop of his younger brother, who assumed the rank of Chao Phraya Surasi, seized Champasak and many towns on the left side of the Me Khong River down to the frontier of Cambodia, which had already become a vassal state of

Thailand. The two brothers also incorporated into the Thai kingdom four Khmer towns in the jungles on the plateau. The town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima then governed all this new territory and became more powerful but the towns on the north of Nakhon Ratcha Sima were still under the control of Sri Satana Khanahut (Lan Chang) as the ruler of that country still maintained a peaceful treaty with the King of Thonburi. In 1778 this relationship was, however, severed because Phra Wo, a minister of Vientiane, which was the capital of Sri Satana Khanahut, broke away from his king and moved his family and attendants to settle down at a site which was not very far from the present town of Ubol Ratcha Thani. When Chao Phraya Chakri and Surasi went up to attack Champasak, Phra Wo submitted to them and was later nominated by the King of Thonburi to rule that site. When the king of Sri Satana Khanahut learned of this incident, he was furious and sent an army commanded by one of his generals to kill Phra Wo. The King of Thonburi then ordered Chao Phraya Chakri, who had been promoted to Somdet Chao Phraya Maha Kasat Suk, as the chief commander of the army, to attack Vientiane through Nakhon Ratcha Sima and Chao Phraya Surasi, the former's younger brother, to assault the dependent towns of Sri Satana Khanahut from the south. The Thai armies conquered that kingdom and other towns on the plateau which had never been under Thailand's power and also obtained the Emerald Buddha. The city of Luang Phra Bang also fell to the Thai kingdom.

After King Rama I had begun a new dynasty and set up Bangkok as his capital, he divided the plateau territory near the Me Khong River into three dependent



principalities: Vientiane, Nakhon Phanom and Champasak. As for the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima, it ruled the Khmer towns in the jungles as well as on the plateau, which did not fall into the above-mentioned three principalities, and at the same time supervised these three vassal states. The town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima was probably raised to a first grade city during this period as its governor from this time on had the rank of Chao Phraya. In the reign of King Rama I, two white elephants were found in Phu Khiew, which was an independent town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. The wooden pole to which the white elephants had been attached has still been kept and can be seen on the north of the town. Formerly it was near the town's moat but is now moved to the west side of the Friendship Highway.

### **THE HEROIC DEEDS OF THE NAKHON RATCHA SIMA INHABITANTS**

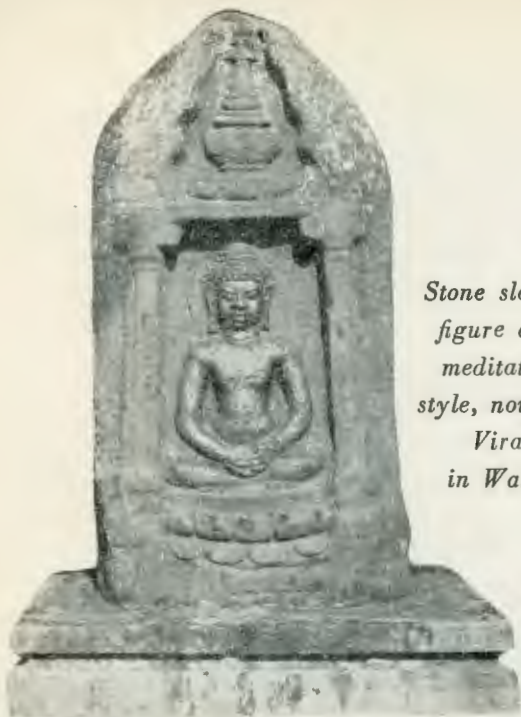
At the end of King Rama I's reign, the Prince of Vientiane died and the king nominated the prince's younger brother, Prince Anu, to succeed him. This prince had helped the Thai armies fighting against the Burmese at the towns of Chiangmai and Chiangsaen. In the reign of King Rama II, Prince Anu often came down to Bangkok and was in great favour of the king. In 1819 a rebel and his followers on the left side of the Me Khong River attacked the town of Champasak so King Rama II ordered the governor of Nakhon Ratcha Sima and Prince Anu to suppress this revolt. The son of Prince Anu captured the town of Champasak as well as the rebel chief and his assistants, who were later on sent down to Bangkok. King Rama II then nominated this son of Prince Anu as the Prince of Champasak and



**Fig. 4**

*Their Majesties  
the King and  
Queen laid  
wreaths at the  
monument of  
Lady Suranari  
in front of  
Chumphon Gate  
on the 2nd  
November 1955.*





**Fig. 5**

*Stone slab carved with the figure of the Buddha in meditation of Dvaravati style, now displayed at the Viravongs Museum in Wat Suttha Chinda.*



**Fig. 6**

*Prasat Hin Wat Phanom Wan.*

the power of Prince Anu then extended down to the south of the Me Khong River. During the reign of King Rama III, Prince Anu asked for the repatriation of the Laos at Saraburi, who had migrated when King Rama I captured Vientiane in the reign of the King of Thonburi. This demand was refused and the furious prince attempted to attack Bangkok. He moved his troops to the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima and tried to evacuate its inhabitants to Vientiane. Lady Mo, the wife of the assistant-governor of the town, was also sent in a group that worked as cooks. She and the others pretended to be ill during the journey, and waited until they could form a larger company. One night, when they were resting at a site called Thung Samrit the male and female inhabitants of Nakhon Ratcha Sima with Lady Mo as their chief, killed nearly all of the Vientiane guardians, collected their weapons and set up a camp. Prince Anu sent the army of one of his sons to conquer them but his army was defeated. During that time Prince Anu learned that the Bangkok army was approaching so he retreated with his army to Vientiane. After this war was over and Vientiane had been captured by the Thai army, King Rama III conferred the title of Lady Suranari (heroic woman) on Lady Mo. King Rama III also abolished the vassal state of Vientiane by dividing the territory into many towns. Many cities on the plateau such as Ubol Ratcha Thani, Roi-et and Nong Khai were mostly set up during this reign. Also during this period, Thailand had to go into wars against Vietnam and most of her soldiers were recruited from the Nakhon Ratcha Sima inhabitants.

During the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV), trade prospered and the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima

also profited by exporting animal hides and horns as well as silk. During that time, the Thai government was searching for another capital that would be far from the sea. The town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima was also considered but as its communication with Bangkok was still difficult and water was scarce, King Mongkut chose Lopburi as his second capital instead.

During the early reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), some rebellions broke out on the north-east frontier of Thailand and each time men from the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima were recruited. The administration of the Province of Nakhon Ratcha Sima was altered during this reign in 1841 by dividing the high plateau into north, central and south principalities with Nong Khai, Nakhon Ratcha Sima and Champasak as the centre of each area respectively. King Chulalongkorn nominated his three younger half-brothers as governor of each principality. Later on this division was again modified. The northern area had the town of Udorn Thani as its centre. The central still retained Nakhon Ratcha Sima as its important town but the southern one changed its centre to the town of Ubol Ratcha Thani. This southern area was subsequently sub-divided into two principalities. The upper one had its centre at the town of Roi-et and the lower one still at the town of Ubol. After the revolution in 1932, which brought about the constitutional monarchy, Thailand was divided into 6 principalities. The Principality of Nakhon Ratcha Sima was classified as the 3rd, containing the following provinces in its administration: Nakhon Ratcha Sima, Chaiyaphum, Buriram, Surin, Srisaket and Ubol Ratcha Thani. The centre of the principality was at Nakhon Ratcha Sima. This division was however later on abolished.



## INTERESTING SITES IN AMPHOE MUANG NAKHON RATCHA SIMA

**Lak Muang** or an auspicious pole of the town at the crossroad of Chainarong, near Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat.

**Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat** commonly called Wat Klang, probably constructed during the Ayudhya period (fig. 2) at the same time as Wat Boon, Wat Isan, Wat Phayab, Wat Bung and Wat Sa Kaew.

**Phra Narai Shrine** near Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat. There are many carved stone sculptures, which are said to have been transferred from the town of Khorakhapura. Formerly a sandstone image of four-armed Vishnu 40 cms. high was also here. Now the image has been removed into the *viharn* of Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat for better preservation.

**Wat Sala Thong** at Tambon Hua Thale, about 2 kms. from the Nakhon Ratcha Sima Administration House. In the *ubosoth* there is a gilt mortared-brick image of the seated Buddha, flanked by an elephant and a monkey. The original workmanship might belong to the Ayudhya period but the statue was restored several times. The annual fair takes place in April.

In front of the *ubosoth* of this *wat*, stands a small *stupa* containing the relics of the Buddha, enshrined on the 13th of January 1956. Now a large *chedi* is being built to cover this small *stupa*.

**Chumphon Gate** an original western entrance into the town, preserved to show an ancient tower protecting above the gate (fig. 4).

**Lady Suranari Monument** in front of Chumphon Gate. The story of Lady Suranari has already been related in the part concerning "the heroic deeds of the Nakhon Ratcha Sima inhabitants".

In the reign of King Mongkut, her husband was promoted as adviser to the governor of Nakhon-Ratcha Sima. Lady Suranari and her husband lived in a village opposite Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat. They both built a monastery called Wat Sala Loi on the right side of the Takhong River. She died in 1852 at the age of 81 and her husband enshrined her ashes in the *wat* they had constructed. Later on the ashes were moved by a governor of Nakhon Ratcha Sima to a newly built monument at the north-east corner of Wat Phra Narai Maha Rat. In 1934 the military commander and the governor as well as the inhabitants of Nakhon Ratcha Sima created a new monument for Lady Suranari in front of the Chumphon Gate, in the form of a bronze statue holding a sword and standing on a base, inside of which were enshrined her ashes (fig. 4). The annual celebration takes place for 7 days in March.

**The Maha Viravongs Museum** in the precinct of Wat Suttha Chinda, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  km. south-west of Chumphon Gate. Most of the archaeological objects displayed in this museum were presented to the nation by the late Rev. Somdet Phra Maha Viravongs of Wat Boromniwat, Bangkok\*. He had collected them from various provinces in the north-east of Thailand. The concrete museum building was constructed by the Fine Arts Department in 1955 as the branch of the National Museum at Nakhon Ratcha Sima. It has been named "Maha Viravongs Museum" after the name of the late Lord Abbot.

In this museum there is a large red sandstone slab, carved with a meditating Buddha image seated on a lotus inside a frame. The top of the frame was carved into the form of a *stupa* (fig. 5). This sculpture belongs to the Dvaravati period and was brought from Amphoe Dan Khun Thod by the Rev. Somdet Phra Maha Viravongs. It testifies that Buddhism had already prospered in the north-east of Thailand 1000 years ago.

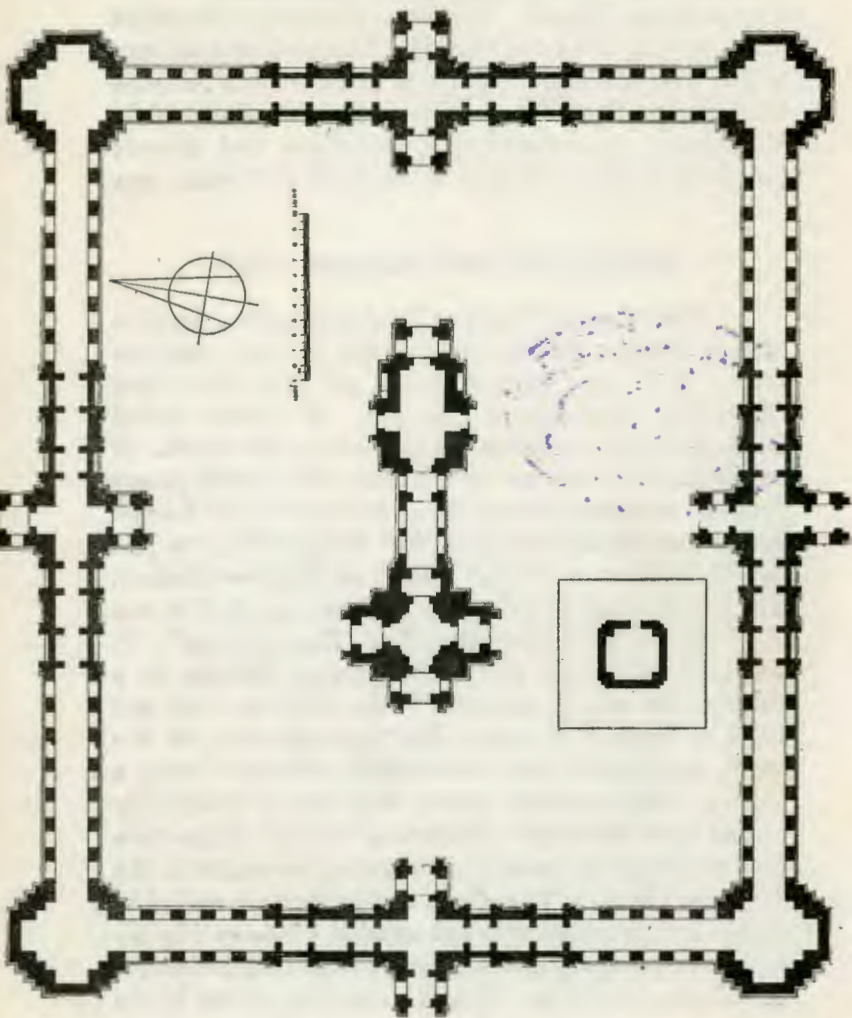
### PRASAT HIN WAT PHANOM WAN

Wat Phanom Wan is at Tambon Ban Pho, Amphoe Muang Nakhon Ratcha Sima, about 12 kms. from the town. A 4 kms. road branches off from the Chon-Chob Thit Highway to this *wat*. A stream called Boriboon flows on the east of this *wat* to the south. It comes from a mountain in Amphoe Pak Chong, passes Amphoe Si Khiew, Soong Noen, Muang Nakhon Ratcha Sima, Tambon Cho Ho and Wat Phanom Wan to join the Mun River at Madan Village in Amphoe Chakrat. The Khmer stone sanctuary in this *wat* is called in one of its inscriptions "Devāsrama" or "Ratanabhūmi". It was built as a *prang* and a *viharn* joined together by a gallery, the whole structure being 25.50 m. long and 10.20 m. wide. The *prang* has three porches, on the north, south and west respectively, the east being a gallery. The northern porch still has a beautifully carved stone lintel and pilasters as well as a large stone Buddha image in the attitude of giving protection in the door-way (fig. 8). The *viharn* and gallery are roofed in arches and provided with balustraded windows (fig. 6). Inside the *prang* and *viharn* are many stone Buddha images of different attitudes. One is a standing statue of the

วัดพนมวัน

PLAN OF WAT PHANOM WAN

จังหวัดน่าน PROVINCE OF NAKHON RATCHASIMA (ROMY)





**Fig. 7**

*Stone standing Buddha in the attitude  
of giving protection at Prasat Hin*

*Wat Phanom Wan.*

*Dvaravati—U-thong style.*



**Fig. 8**

*The northern view of Prasat Hin Wat Phanom Wan.*



**Fig. 9**

*Figure of Nang  
Lavoo. Stone.  
Lopburi style.  
Now at Silpakorn  
Branch, Amphoe  
Phimai.*



**Fig. 10**

*Men Phrommathat, Amphoe Phimai.*

Great Teacher in the attitude of giving protection, 1.53 m. high, of Dvaravati—U - thong style (fig. 7). Surrounding this stone sanctuary, are a court-yard and outer galleries, 54 m. wide 63.30 m. long, pierced with four gates. Though many parts of this stone temple have crumbled down, their restoration would not be too difficult a task as many stone blocks are still *in situ*. In the court-yard, near the western gate of the outer gallery, stands a sandstone structure housing a red sandstone slab representing footprints of the Buddha. These two footprints were carved vertically like those at Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

There are many inscriptions on door - jambs and pilasters at Prasat Hin Phanom Wan, especially the one in Khmer on the door-jamb of the southern porch of the *prang*, giving the date equivalent to 1082 A.D., when Vra Kamrateng Añ Lakshmīndravarma received the order of Vra Pāda Kamrateng Añ Srī Jayavarmadeva (Jayavarman VI, 1082 - 1107 A.D.) to keep up this Hindu sanctuary (Devāsrama) with many officials. It can be concluded that this temple was either constructed in 1082 or had existed before that date.

Beside Prasat Hin Wat Phanom Wan in Amphoe Muang Nakhon Ratcha Sima, there also exist interesting stone sanctuaries in other Amphoes for instance:

In Amphoe Non Soong, are Ku Ban Prasat, Prang Ban Prasat, Prasat Phon Songkhram and Tham Prasat. The water at the latter is believed to be sacred and was used in the coronation ceremony of the present king.

In Amphoe Chokchai stand Prasat Sra Phleng and Prasat Ban Prang.

In Amphoe Bua Yai, exist Ku Rishi, Prasat Chamsin, Prasat Nang Ram and Prasat Ban Sita.

These stone sanctuaries are, however, small and difficult to get to. They are not as within reach and as beautiful as the Prasat Hin Phimai.

### MUANG PHIMAI

Muang Phimai was a town in the old days but is now only an Amphoe, 56 kms. north-east of the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima. In ancient times when there was no Nakhon Ratcha Sima-Ubol Ratcha Thani Railroad, one had to go by horse for a one day ride from Nakhon Ratcha Sima and two and a half days if accompanied by carts carrying food and goods. After the Nakhon Ratcha Sima - Ubol Ratcha Thani Railroad had been in use, a train from Chira Station to that of Chakrat or Hin Dad could be taken and then the journey was followed by horse, cart or foot. The whole journey was 25 kms. and Phimai could be reached in one day. At the present time the Sura-Narai Highway runs from the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima to Tambon Cho Ho and then the Chen Chob Thit Highway continues from Cho Ho to Khae Market and branches off to Phimai. A journey by car to Phimai from the town of Nakhon Ratcha Sima can thus be accomplished in less than an hour. The Chen Chob Thit Highway also passes in front of Wat Phanom Wan and many buses run through this road.

When the town of Phimai was still the centre of the territory around Nakhon Ratcha Sima, Buriram and Chaiyaphum etc., which was sometimes called the southern plateau, it was probably very fertile as it was surrounded by many rivers. One can now see that it is



still embraced on the north, east and west by the Mun River. The other river, Lam Chakrat, flows on the north and joins the Mun in front of Tha Songkran. On the south, Lam Nam Khem, another water-way, which branches off from the Lam Chakrat at Tambon Wang Hin, flows past Nang Sra Phom Landing Stage to join the Mun at Tambon Prasuk in King Amphoe Chum Phuang, where another river, Huai Lam Plai Mat, also flows into the Mun. At Tambon Prasuk there is one village called Ban Lavo or Ban Khok Lavo, at the site of which one beautifully carved stone image of a lady called Nang Lavo had been found. Now only its torso still remains (fig. 9). This town of Phimai is sometimes called in stone inscriptions Vimāya or Vimāyapura. Could it be the same with the one referred to in the stone inscription of King Isānavarman I of Cambodia (616-circa 629 A.D.) as Bhīmapura ?

### INSIDE MUANG PHIMAI

The town of Phimai is rectangular, 565 × 1030 m. Some traces of the eastern rampart still exist as well as three sandstone gates on the north, west and south, the latter being named Pratu Chai (Victory Gate). The eastern one has been destroyed by the Mun River. The Nakhon Ratcha Sima-Phimai Highway enters the town through the north by crossing the Mun at Songkran Landing Stage. Before arriving at this Tha Songkran, a large field called Thung Samrit can be seen on the west between the 7th-8th km. signs of the Khae Market-Phimai Highway where the above-mentioned heroic deeds of the Nakhon Ratcha Sima inhabitants were performed. Traces of the wall-rampart also exist at the foot of this Tha Songkran Bridge and about 150 m. on

the west of the latter stands the northern gate of the town. Between the Tha Songkran and the gate is a pond named Sra Phlung.

**Tha Songkran** is the site where the Phimai inhabitants make merit and enjoy themselves during the celebration of the lunar new year. On the east of this site a large pond called Sra Khwan borders on one section by the eastern town-rampart. South-east of this Sra, outside the eastern wall, lies a very large pond called Sra Phreng, the water of which is used by the Phimai inhabitants and every evening beautiful girls of the town can be seen fetching water from the pond for use in their homes.

On the road from Tha Songkran to the south one can see the beautiful stone sanctuary of Phimai. Further on to its left, is the Amphoe Phimai office. Many houses line the road in front of the Phimai sanctuary and south-east of the Amphoe stand the remains of another large monument called Men Phrommathat ( Meru Brāhmadatta, no. 9 in the map ).

**Men Phrommathat** a large earthen mound 30 m. high and 59 m. wide. On the mound are brick ruins 13 m. wide 9 m. long and 7 m. high ( fig. 10 ). It is believed to be the crematorium of King Phrommathat, the legendary figure in the folk-tale of Phimai but its workmanship only denotes the Ayudhya period. Originally, near this site, remained another smaller monument called Men Noi, believed to be the cremation site of the remains of King Phrommathat's consort. It was pulled down when the roads in Amphoe Phimai were enlarged in 1944 and the details of the excavation carried on at the same time are as follow :—

**Men Noi** opposite Men Phrommathat but a little bit further south, was a round earthen mound 60 m. in circumference at its base, 19.50 m. in width and 3.20 m. in height. On the mound exist many laterite blocks,  $27 \times 40 \times 60$  cms. each, forming a hollow rectangular base,  $5.16 \times 4.80$  m. Seventy-two centimetres under this laterite base were three layers of bricks,  $9 \times 21 \times 42$  cms. each, expanding about 1.60 m. beyond the boundary of the laterite blocks. Some of these bricks were covered with gold leaves and underneath them, about 1.30 m. lower than the level of the road, another layer of broken bricks was found as well as bones of two deer. One had horns and turned its face to the north whereas the other one to the west. These two animals had probably been sacrificed and buried according to some rite when this monument was constructed.

From Men Phrommathat one can turn west to the main road and then follow south to Pratu Chai (the Victory Gate).

**Pratu Chai** which is the main gate of the southern rampart, is built of sandstone and wide enough for a caparisoned elephant (or a bus) to pass through (fig. 11). Now a circle has been built around it in order to preserve the gate, which will be later on fenced by the Fine Arts Department.

**Nang Sra Phom Landing Stage** About 1 km. south of Pratu Chai, flows a small water-way called Lam Nam Khem and on the bank of it is a large earthen mound, surrounded by laterite enclosures. This site is called Nang Sra Phom Landing Stage, believed to be the place where Nang Oraphin, the heroine in a local folk-tale, took her bath. It is unfortunate that many



laterite blocks were removed to construct the Phimai-Hin Dad Highway, thus rendering it rather difficult to study this archaeological site.

Inside the town, along the road from Pratu Chai to the Amphoe Phimai office are many restaurants and shops. Behind the Police Station, on the west, is another large pond called Sra Kaew. These four ponds, Sra Kaew, Khwan, Phlung and Phreng were used as reservoirs for the town of Phimai in the old days. From Sra Kaew, a road runs further west to the outer part of the town to meet another water-way called Lam Chakrat. This vicinity is sometimes called Lam Talad and is believed to be the site of the palace of the former rulers of Phimai. When the Queen Mother of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) visited Phimai, her resting pavilion was constructed on this site.

**Khlang Ngoen (the Treasury)**, ruins of sandstone and laterite 26 × 35.10 m., near the Police Station. They are now overgrown with 3 or 4 large Bo trees. The real function of this monument is still unknown as it has not yet been excavated. It is said that 4 or 5 bronze coins bearing on one side the figure of a Garuda or a swan and on the reverse ancient characters were discovered among the ruins, and hence derives the name of the site "Khlang Ngoen".

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STONE SANCTUARIES IN THAILAND

In many provinces of Thailand, there exist a certain type of ancient architecture structure both large and small, dating from about 1000 to 600 years old. Most of these are found in the north-east of Thailand and are either of brick, laterite or stone or sometimes



of the mixture between two or three materials. They are called in Thai "Prasat Hin" (stone royal residence) but in reality they were or have been used as Buddhist or Hindu shrines. It can be perceived from the scene or figures carved on the lintel of the main sanctuary whether the shrine was dedicated to Buddhism or Hinduism. Determining the age of the monuments by considering the difference in their construction materials, *i.e.* brick, laterite or stone is rather doubtful as the materials relied mostly on the region, the communication and the political power of the builder during the time of construction. These monuments are now mostly left in jungles but originally they were not meant to be in such a condition. When they were first built, the areas around these sanctuaries were still fertile and inhabited. Later on they were destroyed by natural phenomena such as the changing courses of rivers, epidemic or destruction by wars. The sites were then deserted and overgrown.

### THE PHIMAI SANCTUARY

The Phimai Temple is probably the most beautiful and certainly the easiest to reach among the stone sanctuaries in Thailand. It can also be considered as one of the important sites for studying archaeology in South-east Asia. This sanctuary is a Buddhist shrine, situated at the centre of the town of Phimai and surrounded by stone walls pierced by four gates, each on one of the four cardinal points of the compass. The largest gate is on the south, preceded by a Naga bridge 4 × 31.70 m. and 2.50 m. above the ground (fig. 12). From

this bridge one can descend to the ground by three stair-cases, at the foot of which formerly stood lion guardians. Some of the Naga and lion figures are still lying around. Behind the Naga bridge are two large rectangular stone bases set up in front of the gate. This southern gate is divided into three sections. The foremost is  $6 \times 4$  m., having a pair of stone pillars and two balustraded windows on each side. The central section is  $6 \times 13$  m., decorated by six pairs of pillars, and flanked on the east and west by two porches, each of 3 sections. These porches are continued by stone walls on each side, the latter being each 80 m. which connect with the eastern and the western walls of the sanctuary respectively. The last section of the gate is the same size as the first one. The roof of the central section is the highest and then becomes lower on both sides. This gate, with its 2 lateral porches, takes the form of a cross. The northern, eastern and western gates resemble the southern one but are deprived of the preceding Naga bridge. The walls surrounding the Phimai Temple are of red sandstone, and together with the gates they are 220 m. on the north and south and 277.50 m. on the east and west. Most of them are still in good condition and at one section on the south-west the wall is 8 m. high.

**The Outer Court-yard** Inside the walls is a large court-yard with a pond at each corner. Formerly four Buddhist monasteries existed in this court: Wat Sra Hin on the north-east, Wat Phra Prang Yai on the south-east, Wat Sra Bot on the north-west and Wat Phra Prang Noi on the south-west. The main Buddha image of Wat Sra Hin and Wat Phra Prang Yai, both



**Fig. 11**

*Pratu Chai, southern gate of Muang Phimai.*



**Fig. 12**

*The main entrance of Prasat Hin Phimai, facing south.*



**Fig. 13**  
*Southern gate  
of the  
Prasat Hin  
Phimai gallery.*

**Fig. 14**

- 1. The Hindu Shrine.*
- 2. Prang Phrommathat.*
- 3. Prang Hin Daeng.*





made of mortared brick, still exist on the court. The *ubosoth* (ordination hall) of Wat Sra Bot is commonly called Bot Chao Phimai, probably constructed or restored by Chao Phimai (Prince Thep Phiphit) during the latter half of the 18th century. As for Wat Phra Prang Noi, the stilts of its wooden library can still be seen in the pond at the south-west corner. These four monasteries were later on removed from within the Phimai Temple walls and are now called respectively Wat Pa Yang, Wat Mai Pratu Chai, Wat Sra Phreng and Wat Burapha or Wat Bung.

**The Library** In the outer court-yard, near the western gate, exist the ruins of a stone structure 26.50×25.50 m. It has not yet been excavated so its function is still unknown. It has been surmised either to be the resting pavilion of the king when he came to worship in the Phimai Temple or the sanctuary library.

**The Galleries** From the court-yard one arrives at the galleries, which are 87 cms. above the ground and provided with four gates, the southern one being the largest like the gate of the southern wall. The galleries are 72×50 m. and 2.35 m. wide, roofed by stone blocks, most of which have fallen down (figs. 13, 28). In 1954 the Fine Arts Department cleared these galleries and discovered a Khmer stone inscription at the south-east corner describing the royal performance of merits and the construction of public edifices during the reign of King Jayavarman VII of Cambodia. At the south-west corner, near the southern gate, was found an *in situ* stone base of a missing statue bearing an inscription of "Sri Virendrādhīpativarma of the town of Chokvakula created Kamrateng Jagata Senāpati....."

The door-jamb of the central passage of the southern gate of the gallery also bears an inscription beginning with *Vra Kamrateng Añ Sri Virendrādhīpativarma* of the town of Chokvakula created *Kamrateng Jagata Senāpati Trailokyavijaya* as *Senāpati Kamrateng Jagata Vimāya* in the year equipvalent to 1108 A.D. and ending with *Tengtatau Prasān* the son of *Vra Kamrateng Añ Sri Virendrādhīpativarma* of the town of Chokvakula dedicated slaves to *Kamrateng Jagata Vimāya* in 1112.

The names of "*Vra Kamrateng Añ Sri Virendrādhīpativarma*" are quite important concerning the date of the Phimai Temple, which will be discussed later on.

**The Inner Court-yard** From the galleries one arrives at the inner court-yard where are situated the three *prangs* and one edifice (fig. 14). This court-yard is 58 × 66 m. and formerly was filled with earth and blocks of stone and laterite nearly as high as the base of the galleries. In 1954 the Fine Arts Department also cleared this court-yard and had to dig down to 1.20 m. before the original level was reached. The stone and laterite blocks have been classified and kept in order to restore this sanctuary in the future.

The three *prangs* in this inner court-yard comprise the main sanctuary in the centre preceded by two smaller ones on its right and left. The left tower is in laterite and is commonly known as *Prang Phrommathat* whereas the right one is called *Prang Hin Daeng* (the red stone tower) as it is in that kind of material.

**Prang Phrommathat** a redented square tower, 14.50 m. wide and 16 m. high. Three stone statues commonly called figures of King *Phrommathat*, Prince

**Fig. 15**  
*Brahma head.*  
*Stone. Lopburi*  
*style. Found at*  
*Prasat Hin Phimai.*



**Fig. 16**  
*Western view of the main prang.*





**Fig. 17**

*Southern lintel of the main prang, representing the Buddha under Naga.*



**Fig. 18**

*Stone lintel of the southern porch of the main prang, representing the assault of Mara.*



**Fig. 19**

*Western lintel of the main prang representing the crowned Buddha subjugating King Maha Jambu.*



Pachit and Nang Oraphin were originally installed here. Later on their heads disappeared but H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, the then President of the Royal Institute, retrieved the head of King Prommathat. He ordered the statue's body as well as the torso of Nang Oraphin (fig. 25) to be removed to the National Museum in Bangkok. The torso of Prince Pachit is still kept at Phimai. As for the figure of King Prommathat (fig. 24), French archaeologists have discovered that it represents King Jayavarman VII of Cambodia (1181 - 1201). Another statue representing the same king, but some what larger, is in the museum at Phnom-Penh.

**Prang Hin Daeng** 11.40 m. wide on each side and 15 m. high, was situated on a redented square base. When it was excavated by the Fine Arts Department in 1951, a stone figure of Kala riding on his mount, a bird, was found at the centre of the *prang* and has been there installed. In 1954 after the pedestal of the *prang* had been cleared, it was seen that some of the carved stone blocks had been placed in reverse so one can surmise that this small sanctuary was added later on and its stone blocks were probably removed from another older temple.

**Hindu Shrine** Behind Prang Hin Daeng, exists another small edifice, 17 × 6.50 m. During the excavation some small *lingas* (phallic emblems of Siva) were found which are now kept in a temporary museum at Wat Derm, not very far from the Phimai Temple. The edifice is hence named "Hindu Shrine".

**The Main Prang** Behind Prang Phrommathat and Prang Hin Daeng is situated the main *prang* of the Phimai Temple (fig. 16). Its material is composed of

both limestone and sandstone. The base is formed of a redented rectangle 18 m. wide and 32.50 m. long including the length of the southern porch. This main shrine has four doors and the lintel above each door is carved with scenes in Mahayana Buddhism.

The southern lintel depicts the Buddha seated in meditation under the hood of the serpent and surrounded by worshippers who are bringing offerings (fig. 17). In front of this door a passage leads to the front porch and over the passage there is another lintel representing the scene of Mara or the evil spirit and his army attacking the Buddha before the Master's enlightenment. This piece is archaeologically important as it proves that the Phimai Temple was dedicated to Buddhism (fig. 18).

The western lintel of the shrine is carved into two registers (fig. 19). The upper one represents the crowned Buddha standing between two trees and flanked by various monarchs and their attendants as well as palanquins and insignia of royalty. The lower register portrays musicians and dancers. It is believed that this scene depicts the episode when the Buddha subjugates King Maha Jambu, the story of which figures in Maha Jambupati Sutra. The northern lintel is carved with a three-faced and six-handed central image (fig. 20), seated in a celestial abode and surrounded by dancers who are at the same time trampling on human bodies (Hindu gods?). It is surmised that this main figure represents Vajrasattva (another name of Adi Buddha) but Vajrasattva is usually represented in the attitude of meditation and wears a five-pointed crown as well as the decorations of the Dyani Bodhisattvas. His upper right hand holds vajra to his chest and a bell is held by his



**Fig. 20**

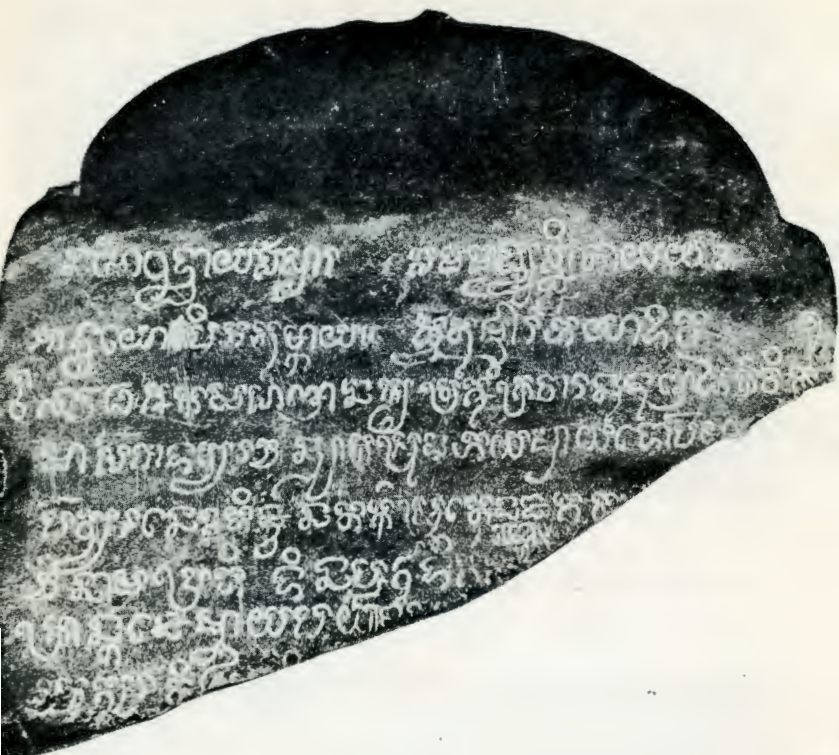
*Northern lintel of the main prang representing Vajrasattva?*



**Fig. 21**

*Eastern lintel of the main prang representing Trailokyavijaya?*





**Fig. 22**

*Stone inscription in Khmer and Sanskrit (front face)  
of 1036 and 1046 A.D.,  
discovered at the south-east corner  
of the main prang.*



upper left hand at his waist. This figure is also in meditation but the other two arms on the right hold a rosary and a conch or a bag respectively. The two arms on the left have also as their attributes a bell and a conch or a bag. If the objects hold in the uppermost left and right arms are really money bags, this image should represent Kuvera who is an angel-guardian of the north. He is also a protector of Mahāyana Buddhism, having yellow skin and a flying chariot as his transportation.

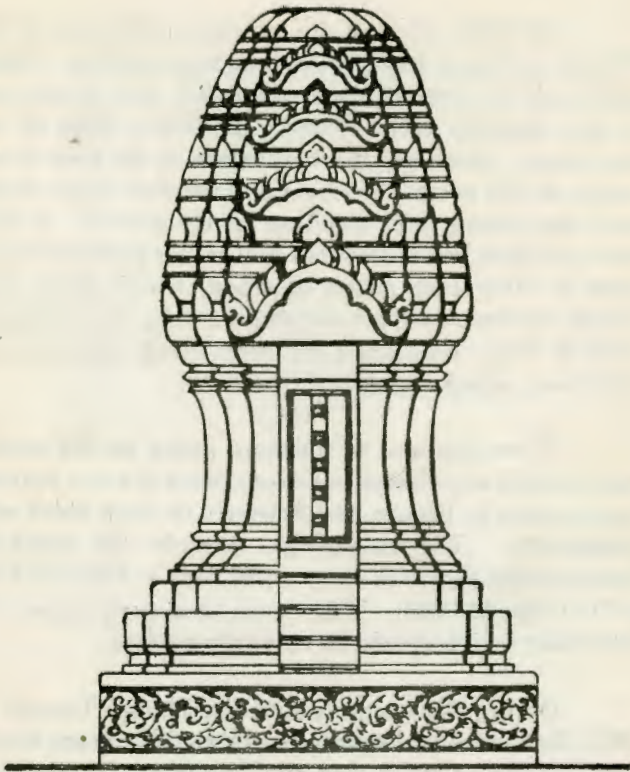
The eastern lintel is also carved into two registers (fig. 21). The upper one represents Buddhas seated in meditation in niches and the lower register portrays male and female divinities dancing on Hindu gods (?). At the centre of the lintel is represented an image with 4 heads and 8 arms, trampling with his right leg two figures, who are lying inversely on an elephant head. Behind this four-headed figure is extended an elephant skin with its tail curving above his head. This central personage has been identified as Trailokyavijaya, a Mahayana god, but this figure differs from other representations of the same god in India and Tibet as it is protected by an elephant skin. In India and Tibet the god attributed with elephant skin is Samvra or Saṃvra, who has 12 arms. This difference in iconography remains to be further researched.

The main *prang*, if one relies on the inscription carved on the door-jamb of the gallery southern gate, should be the place where the image of "Kamrateng Jagata Vimāya" had been installed. This statue should also have represented the Buddha as the Phimai Temple was dedicated to Buddhism. It is, however, difficult to identify this image at the present time as it had been removed a long time ago. Later on a Buddha's footprint

was set up and then taken away. Nowadays a standing stone Buddha image 1.55 m. high in the attitude of giving protection has been installed inside the main sanctuary in order to be worshipped and to remind visitors that this site has been a sacred sanctuary since ancient times.

The finial of this main *prang* has crumbled down but one can still perceive its original form from a model carved on a piece of stone ( see the sketch on the opposite page ). Its remaining height at present is about 22 m. and the brick restoration on top might date from the second half of the 18th century when Prince Thep Phiphit, son of King Borom Kot of Ayudhya, set himself up as the independent Chao Phimai. The prince probably built at the same time a wooden *ubosoth* on the court-yard near the gate of the western wall, opposite the library. This *ubosoth* is now in a dilapidated condition and as it took use of many stone blocks of the Phimai main sanctuary as its foundation, it should be pulled down and the stone pieces restored to their former sites.

The front porch of the main sanctuary has three entrances : on the front and on both sides. When the earth and fallen stones around the areas had been removed in 1954, it appeared that the steps existed only on the right and left of the porch, the one on the front facing south having not yet been finished. Instead there was a 50 to 60 cms. level of sand on the ground and then another 50 cms. thick of laterite blocks on the sand, forming an entrance into the main door of the front porch. In excavating this layer of sand, 6 bronze pots containing decayed rectangular pieces of silver and gilt silver were found. These metal plaques might be



*Sketch of the main prang of Prasat Phimai.*

*Drawn by Nai Chamras Kiatkong.*

talismans and on some of them some reliefs in the form of a flower, a conch, a *naga* (serpent) head as well as Khmer characters reading *Lābha* (fortune), *Jaya* (victory) and *Riddhi* (power) etc. can still be observed. Paddies also figured in these pots.

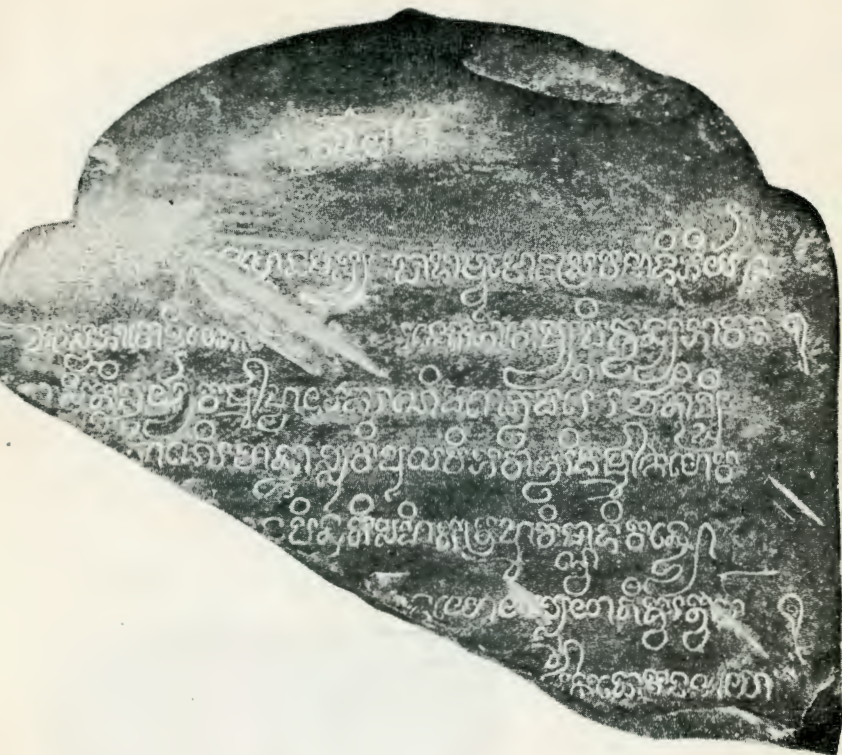
On both sides of the northern staircase of the Phimai sanctuary stand two carved stone pillars. Originally only the one on the western side was known and it was formerly believed to be the fallen finial of the sanctuary. But after the excavation of the base of the *prang* on the north, the remains of another pillar on the east was found, still standing in the ground. It was then checked and discovered that it was protected at its base by other four pieces of stone, which meant that it was constructed there on purpose. At the bottom of each of these two pillars, the function of which is still unknown, exists a tenon.

When the base of the main *prang* on the south-eastern side was cleared, a broken piece of stone bearing inscriptions in Khmer and Sanskrit on both sides was discovered. The inscriptions contain the name of Suryavarman I and the dates equivalent to 1036 and 1046 A.D. (figs. 22, 23). This stone is a very important document which should be carefully studied.

During the excavation of the Phimai Temple in 1954, the Fine Arts Department cleared the inner courtyard and the galleries thus enabling the pedestal of the main sanctuary as well as the structures of Prang Phrommathat, Prang Hin Daeng and the galleries to be thoroughly studied. The three stone inscriptions, as formerly stated, were also brought to light.

If this temple continued to be properly excavated and restored, many documents on history and archaeology of Thailand might be discovered in great quantity and greatly add to present day knowledge.





**Fig. 23**

*Stone inscription in Khmer and Sanskrit (back face)  
of 1036 and 1046 A.D.,  
discovered at the south-east corner  
of the main prang.*





**Fig. 24**

*Portrait of King Jayavarman VII  
of  
Cambodia (1181-1201).  
Originally known as the statue  
of  
King Phrommathat.  
Now in the  
National Museum, Bangkok.*



**Fig. 25**

*Figure of Nang Oraphin.  
Lopburi style.  
Now in the  
National Museum,  
Bangkok.*

## THE AGE OF THE PHIMAI TEMPLE

In the inscription of the door-jamb of the southern gallery, many dates are given which can be used as clues to the age of the sanctuary :-

1. In the year equivalent to 1108 A.D. Kamrateng Añ Srī Virendrādhipativarma of the town of Chokvakula created Kamrateng Jagata Trailokyavijaya, the minister of Kamrateng Jagata Vimāya.

2. In the year equivalent to 1109 A.D. an annual celebration was performed and the name of a hermitage called "Srī Virendrāsrama" was mentioned.

3. In the year equivalent to 1109 A.D. a town was founded on a vacant land and the attendants of Kamrateng Añ Senāpati Trailokyavijaya were ordered to take care of the foundation (of Srī Virendrāsrama).

4. In the year equivalent to 1109 A.D. Kamrateng Añ Srī Viravarma.....presented objects and slaves to Kamrateng Jagata Senāpati Trailokyavijaya and donated the merits to Vra Pāda Kamrateng Añ Srī Dharanindravarmadeva.

5. In the year equivalent to 1112 A.D. Tengtuan Prasān, son of Vra Kamrateng Añ Srī Virendrādhipativarma of the town of Chokvakula presented offerings to Kamrateng Jagata Vimāya.

In these five passages from the same inscription, the dates given range from 1108 to 1112 A.D. and one king, "Vra Pāda Kamrateng Añ Srī Dharanindravarmadeva" is mentioned. He is archaeologically known as King Dharanindravarman I of Cambodia and his reign extended from 1107 to 1113 A.D. Therefore, it was originally believed that the Phimai Temple was

constructed around 1108 A.D. but later on it appears that that year was only the date when the image of Jagata Senāpati Trailokyavijaya was founded. This theory is supported by the discovery in 1954 of a base of a statue bearing an inscription of "Srī Virendrādhīpativarma of the town of Chokvakula created Kamrateng Jagata Senāpati ....." It is unfortunate that this image had been removed from its pedestal. The other interesting data lies in the fact that the inscription also refers to Kamrateng Jagata Vimāya.

This name means "the one who is respected by the public and whose name is Vimāya". As the Phimai Temple was dedicated to Buddhism, the most important image of this sanctuary or of Vimāya should be the Buddha image which existed before the statue of Trailokyavijaya, his Senāpati (minister) or attendant, was created in 1108. This image of Vimāya probably had been installed in the main *prang* but its whereabouts is now unknown. The date of the Prasat Hin Phimai is therefore, still a matter of conjecture. About 14-15 years ago, M. Parmentier, a French architect and archaeologist, came to visit Phimai and expressed his opinion in his book, "L' Art Architectural Hindou dans l' Inde et en Extrême-Orient", that this temple was probably constructed during the reign of King Suriyavarman I (1002-1049) by comparing its architectural style to the monuments at Vat Ek and Vat Baset in the Province of Battambang, Cambodia. The discovery of a broken stone inscription mentioning the name of Suriyavarman I as well as the years equivalent to 1036 and 1046 A.D. seems to support the late French archaeologist's theory. The Temple was probably restored many times until the reign of King Jayavarman VII,





**Fig. 26**

*A stone lintel of Prasat Phimai,  
carved with figures of warriors,  
before the vandal destruction.*



**Fig. 27**

*After the vandalism.*





**Fig. 28**

*The southern view of the Prasat Phimai gallery.*



**Fig. 29**

*A grove of banyan trees at the Irrigation  
Department reservoir, Amphoe Phimai.*

when his statue, which is commonly known as the figure of King Phrommathat, was carved.

### THE BEAUTIFUL BANYAN TREES

After having visited the Phimai Temple, one should continue the journey to admire a large grove of beautiful banyan trees near the reservoir of the Irrigation Department, Amphoe Phimai, about 1 km. east of the Phimai Temple (fig. 29). This grove of trees has been called "the beautiful banyan trees" since the time the Queen Mother of King Vajiravudh visited Phimai in 1912.

It would be useful to mention for tourists at the end of this guide-book that around the Chumphon gate in Nakhon Ratcha Sima abound many suitable restaurants and hotels.



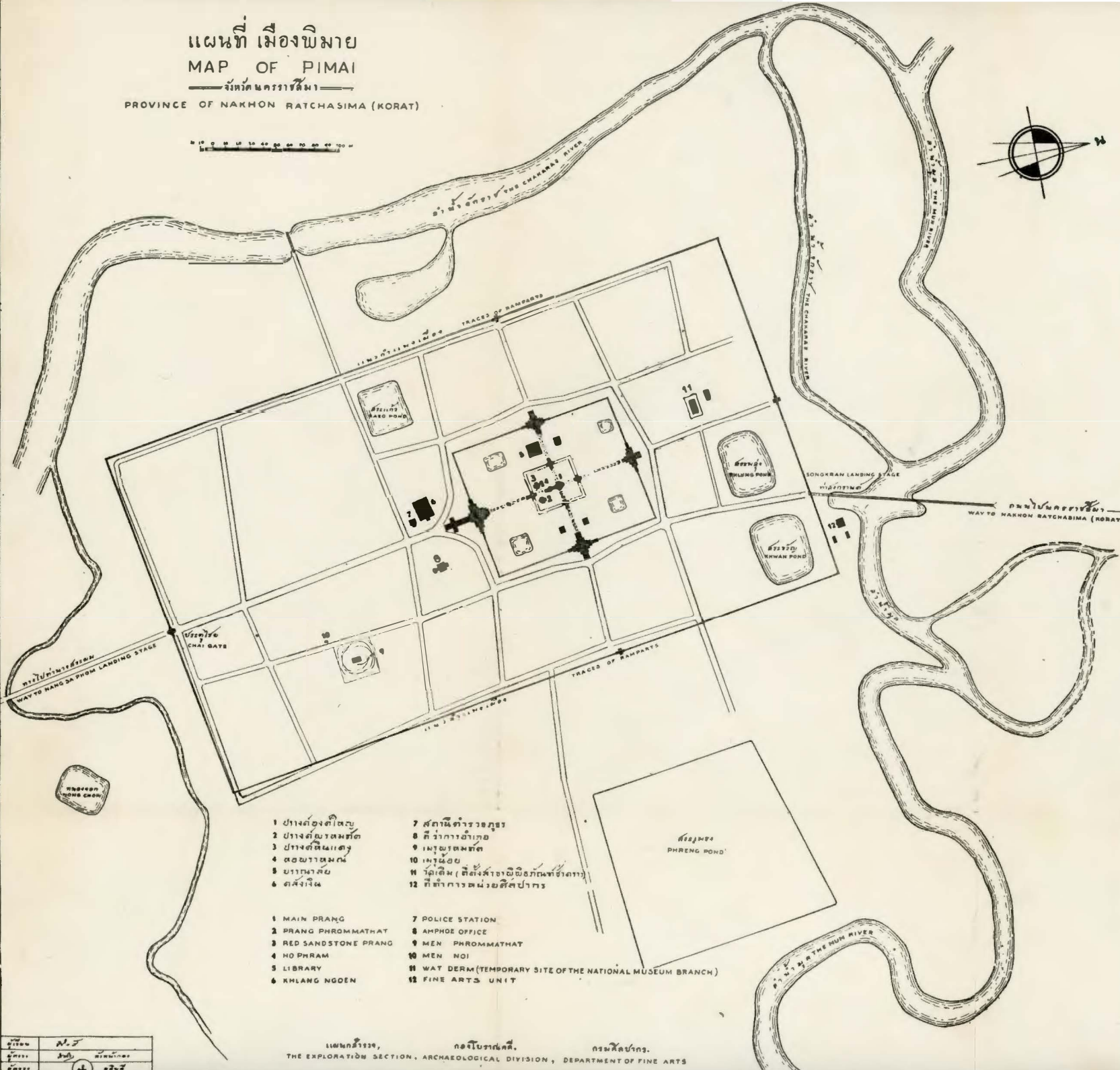
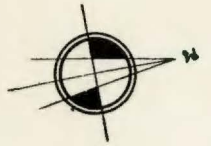
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แผนที่ เมืองพิมาย  
MAP OF PIMAI

จังหวัดนครราชสีมา  
PROVINCE OF NAKHON RATCHASIMA (KORAT)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 M



- 1 ปรางค์องค์ใหญ่
- 2 ปรางค์พรหมมัทธ
- 3 ปรางค์หินแดง
- 4 หอพระราม
- 5 บรรณาลัย
- 6 ตึกรังเงิน

- 7 สถานีตำรวจภูธร
- 8 ที่ว่าการอำเภอ
- 9 คุ้มพรหมมัทธ
- 10 คุ้มเมือง
- 11 วัดเดิม (ที่ตั้งศาลาเฉลิมพระเกียรติ)
- 12 ที่ทำการหน่วยศิลปากร

- 1 MAIN PRANG
- 2 PRANG PHROMMATHAT
- 3 RED SANDSTONE PRANG
- 4 HO PHRAM
- 5 LIBRARY
- 6 KHLANG NGOEN

- 7 POLICE STATION
- 8 AMPHUE OFFICE
- 9 MEN PHROMMATHAT
- 10 MEN NOI
- 11 WAT DERM (TEMPORARY SITE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM BRANCH)
- 12 FINE ARTS UNIT

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| ผู้จัดทำ   | ผ.จ.       |
| ผู้พิมพ์   | กรมศิลปากร |
| ปีที่พิมพ์ | ๒๕๒๕       |

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THE EXPLORATION SECTION, ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS