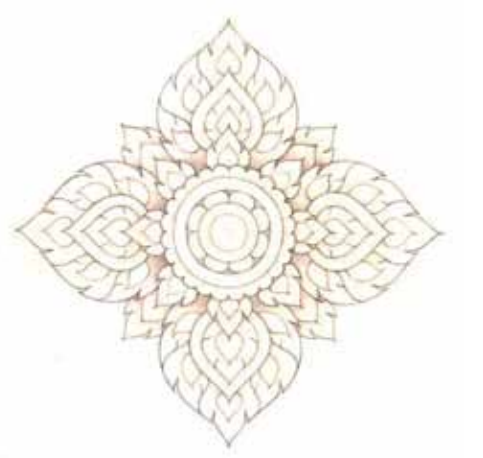
SECTION 1

HISTORY



A Brief History of Heritage Protection in Thailand

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Thailand has a long history of heritage protection. From the mid seventh to the mid nineteenth century, the aim of protecting man-made monuments as well as the manner of conserving them were different from those of today. For over a millennium, personal piety was the rationale behind conservation. From the mid nineteenth century onwards, as the state took over the responsibility for protecting cultural heritage, so did the aim of conservation change from religious piety to national pride. The 1960s saw development as a threat to conservation. But twenty years later, the state used conservation as a means to further economic development through tourism. Thus, the change in the history of heritage protection parallels those of the Thai nation as it advanced from a traditional Buddhist kingdom to a modern materialist state.

The aim of Buddhists of all sects during the seventh century was to acquire merit through the making of Buddha images and building stupas, the rewards for which were immeasurable (Beal 1969, 146–147; Takakusu 1966, 150–151). Merit could be gained by restoring and beautifying existing stupas, as exemplified by the three phases of the Chula Pathon Cetiya (Dupont 1959, 90–92; Krairiksh 2012, 54–57, 86–88, 270) and the three phases of Vihāra of Wat Phra Men (Dupont Ibid.; Krairiksh Ibid., 260), both at Nakhon Pathom. Enlarging and modifying existing structures to suit sectarian specifications and prevalent tastes were accepted practices, as witnessed by the evolution of such hallowed monuments as the Great Stupa-1 at Butkara in the Swat Valley, Pakistan, and the Vihāra at site No. 3, Nāḷaṇda, India. While the former underwent six phases (Khan 1993, 23; see Figure 1), the latter can boast of seven phases (Mitra 1971, 88; see Figure 2).

Further incentives for constructing and restoring stupas came with the acceptance of the beliefs of the Mahāvihāra sect from Sri Lanka in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Ever since the fifth century, this sect believed that the Buddhist religion had a life span of five thousand years, and that merit would accrue to those who strived to perpetuate the religion by consecrating Buddha images and founding

Figure 1. The Great Stupa-I at Butkara, Swat Valley, Pakistan, 3rd BC–10th CE

Figure 2. The Vihāra at Site No.3, Nāḷaṇda, Bihar, India, 3rd BC–12th CE

monasteries (Skilling 2007, 78). When the teaching of the Buddha Gotama came to an end, they could hope to enter *nibāna* and to meet the Future Buddha Metteya as rewards for their good deeds. So from the fourteenth century to the nineteenth century dedicatory inscriptions on Buddha images and stupas attested to the wishes of the donors to enter *nibāna* and meet the Future Buddha Metteya as reward for their making merit.

Among the earliest examples of the Mahāvihāra tradition of pious heritage preservation was the restoration of the Maha That Luang at Sukhothai by Somdet Phra Mahathera Śrī Śradhārājūlāmāṇī Pen Chao in the 1340s. He had the height of the Great Relic Stupa increased from 95 *wa* (1 Sukhothai *wa* = 1.86 metre) of the original to 102 *wa*, and had it stuccoed (Griswold and Prasert 1972, 121). He also had fragmentary stone images, collected from far and wide, brought together and joined with mortar to make them new, durable and "exceedingly beautiful" (Ibid., 123).

In 1447, King Tilokarat of Lan Na had the Maha That at Lamphun rebuilt. He had a trench dug all around the ancient monument at a distance of ten cubits (5 metres) from the monument and to the depth of a man's height. This trench served as the foundation for the new building which was constructed of stone slabs. The new Maha That was 92 cubits (46 metres) in height and had a single spire (Jayawickrama 1968, 134–135). In keeping with Buddhist tradition, the new building was constructed over the old one.

To welcome the new millennium of the Cula Sakarat Buddhist era, which fell in the year 1638, King Prasat Thong of Ayutthaya

> made an explanation on the prophecy of a thousand years, saying that he would be the renewer of everything, and that the people by building and repairing many new temples, had to serve the gods, so that everybody might receive rewards for his good deeds from the gods. In such a way the king sought to change everything spiritually. In view of this the king had all the principal temples in the entire country and even in uninhabited places, repaired (Van Vliet 1910, 74–75).

Probably in preparation for the Cula Sakarat millennium, King Prasat Thong had built, "renewed and repaired more temples, towers, and pyramids than any of his predecessors" (Baker et al. 2005, 243).

Among the structures restored at this time was the *prang* (tower) of the Great Relic Stupa at Wat Mahāthat, Ayutthaya, which had collapsed earlier. Originally, the *prang* was nineteen *wa* high and the trident finial three *wa*. As the king thought that the original form was extremely squat, he had the height of the tower increased to one *sen* (40 metres) and two *wa*, but retained the original finial (*Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* 2000, 217).

After having built a palace at Lop Buri, King Narai (r. 1656–1688) commanded that the "holy recitation halls, preaching halls, grand reliquaries, funeral monuments, dormitories and assembly halls, which were damaged and dilapidated in the various temples throughout the Province of the Municipality of Lop Buri, be restored to their original unaltered condition" (Ibid., 303).

In 1742, King Borommakot had the whole of the Temple Royal of Wat Phra Si Sanphet renovated with the instruction that the image house not be given a spire roof, but be built with a roof similar to all image houses (Ibid., 435).

During the heyday of Ayutthaya in the seventeenth century the kingdom had "above fourteen thousand Pagods," the "magnificence" of which "are Arguments of their Piety," as reported by the Jesuit priest, Tachard in 1685 (Tachard 1981, 272). To protect them from vandals, laws were promulgated to punish offenders.

> Whatever is within those Temples is looked upon as Sacred, and to steal anything from thence is death; about five years ago five Robbers were surprised in a Pagod, and they were Roasted alive by a gentle fire. They fastened every one of them to a great pole, and then having kindled a fire, all around them, they were turned there till they expired (Ibid.).

Such cruel punishment was, indeed, legal. Article 48 of the Law on Theft stated that if thieves removed gold from images of Buddha, let the thieves be put into fire just as they had done with the image. Similarly, Article 49 stipulated that, whoever removed gold from images of Buddha would be taken to the place of execution and, just as they did with the Buddha images, have a red hot iron impressed on them (*Roeng Kot Mai Tra Sam Duang* 2521, 445). Article 52 stated that whoever dug up images, stupas, or vihāras would either be put to death, have his fingers cut off, or be whipped 60 times (Ibid., 446). These laws continued to be enacted to the Bangkok period, when King Rama I promulgated them again in 1805.

Having founded Bangkok as his new capital in 1782, King Rama I in 1808 commanded that the large seated bronze Buddha at Sukhothai, which was in danger due to wild fires since no one was looking after it, be brought to Bangkok for safe keeping and installed at the newly built Wihan Luang of Wat Suthat. However, since he noticed that the face and the hands were not in accordance with the Pāli texts and commentaries, he had them corrected according to contemporary interpretations (*Prachum Mai Rap Sang II*, 2525, 128).

Anniversary celebrations are auspicious occasions for restoring monuments, as is evident from the restoration of Wat Phra Si Rattana Sassadaram (the Temple of the Emerald Buddha) on the 50th, 100th, 150th, and 200th anniversaries of the founding of Bangkok. The 50th anniversary came in 1832 in the reign of King Rama III (r. 1824–1851), at which time it was felt that the temple had undergone much wear and tear. As Wat Arun (the Temple of Dawn) and Wat Rakhang had already

Figure 3. The Ubosot of Wat Phra Si Rattana Sassadaram, Bangkok, 1832

Figure 4. The Wihan Yot, Wat Phra Si Rattana Sassadaram, Bangkok, 1832

been restored, it was the turn of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the crown jewel of the capital. The focus of the restoration was the beautification of the *Ubosot* (convocation hall), which was transformed from a subdued structure in red and gold into the riot of colours and forms we see today (*Chotmaihet* 2516, 23–29; see Figure 3). He also had a building which had been constructed by King Rama I to house the image of the Divine Ancestor torn down and replaced with the present building, called Wiharn Yot, since the superstructure is in the form of a crown decorated with ceramics (Ibid., 37; see Figure 4).

The centenary celebration of Bangkok came in 1882 in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910). Since some construction projects begun by King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868), such as the Phra Sri Ratana Chedi and the Phra Phuttha Prang Prasat, had not been completed, their completion became a priority for the centenary celebration. At this time all stupas, big and small, including the Suwanna Cetiya built by King Rama I, were entirely reconstructed (Ibid., 40). The mural paintings depicting the Ramakien in the covered gallery, which were painted in the reign of King Rama III and had not been repaired before, had to be repainted in their entirety (Saengsun 1973, 88).

It can be seen from the above examples that traditional methods of conservation do not mean consolidation or preservation of the original state of the monument. Reconstruction and rebuilding were the accepted norms.

However draconian the laws on theft were, they did not deter would-be treasure hunters from excavating monastic monuments. So King Mongkut, with his usual far-sightedness and pragmatism, introduced a novel and surprisingly modern way of protecting religious heritage by having everyone living within four *sen* of a monastery be responsible for its safekeeping. According to a Royal Proclamation of 1854, people living within 80 metres of a monastery must report to the authority within one month if they noticed that thieves had broken into the *ubosot*, *vihāra* or stupa, or had damaged Buddha images. If outsiders reported the vandalism first, the residents would have to pay for the renovations themselves. King Mongkut reasoned that however big or small and in however ruinous a state, these buildings did not cease to be ornaments of the kingdom (*Prachum Prakat* 2527, 71–72).

The aim of heritage protection entered a new phase in the reign of King Mongkut and his successors for the aim of conservation became to preserve historical remains for the glory of the nation. As Siam joined the "civilised" nations, nationalism took root as a state religion (Phra Phaisan Visalo 2552, 118–131).

> The elevation of cultural sites and artifacts from local to national relevance is indeed a basic move for promoting a shared vision of the past among the citizens of modern nations (Peleggi 2002, 31).

Siam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was no exception.

As a sign of "civilisation", King Chulalongkorn had a museum opened to the public in the Grand Palace as early as 1874. In 1887, the museum became a governmental department under the Ministry of Education and was housed in the former palace of the Heir Apparent (*Wang Na*), where it remains today (Krom Silpakorn 2547, 34–35). In 1902. the first provincial museum was opened at the Chantharakasem Palace in Ayutthaya.

In order to commemorate that King Chulalongkorn's forty year reign was equal in length to that of King Ramathibodi II (r. 1448–1488), a three-day celebration was held at Ayutthaya in 1907. This occasion caused the old royal palace to be excavated and restored for the first time, as the ancient monuments, together with the Royal Chronicles, bore witness to the Thai nation's long development (*Ratchakitchanubeksa* RS 126, 921). On the same occasion, the King inaugurated the Antiquarian Society, perhaps in response to the Siam Society, which had been founded three years earlier, to research Thai history. The King also took this occasion to decree that the land within the city's walls was to be reserved for the crown. No one was permitted to own it (Kuakun 2529, 51–52).

King Chulalongkorn's views on conservation, as known from his undated memorandum on the restoration of the Phra Prang of the Temple of Dawn, show that he shared the same point of view as the contemporary Italian restorer Camillo Boito, whose "*Prima Carta del Restauro*", or the "Charter of Restoration" of 1883, sought to maintain the integrity of the original materials. Since ancient monuments represent the history of the nation, they should be respected (Nikom ed. 2533, 89). King Chulalongkorn commanded that the restoration of the Phra Prang and its vicinity must rely on the original materials as much as possible, that old parts should not be made to look new, that the original designs must be followed, and that the restorers must seek the King's approval before making any improvement anywhere on the building (*Roeng Kan Burana* 2516, 1).

Towards the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign some people made their living from treasure hunting. They knew exactly where deposits had been placed in different types of stupa, so they could hunt directly for them. When caught, they were imprisoned for three years. Crown Prince Maha Vajiravudh attributed the destruction of "national monuments" to avarice and delusion, for amulets fetched a high price and people were deluded into thinking that these artefacts could protect them from dangers, so they forgot "both nation and religion" (Maha Vajiravudh, RS 127, 31–33). However, he was the first Thai to equate progress with destruction of antiquities. He realised that "sometimes progress is an enemy of antiquities, which is quite normal, not only in our country, but in other countries as well" (Ibid., 240).

> If we are forced to choose between progress or preservation of antiquities, it is normal to think of progress first. So that we have to sacrifice antiquities for

> the sake of progress. In our country how many bricks from the buildings of Ayutthaya went into the making of railway embankments? My only hope is that there will not be too many occasions when we will have to barter antiquities for progress (Ibid. 241).

In March 1911, one year after his ascension to the throne, King Vajiravudh moved the responsibility for monastic restoration and casting of Buddha images from the Ministry of Public Works and merged it with the Museum Department to form the Department of Art and Crafts, which he named Krom Silpakorn or the Fine Arts Department. This came under the Ministry of the Royal Household and was supervised by the King (Krom Silpakorn 2532, 60). However, no action was taken by the King to organise an Archaeology Department, until a French minister complained to the Foreign Minister, Prince Devawongse, that the "lack of progress, moral as well as material" had deterred Siam from establishing an archaeological department (Vella 1978, 312–313). This remark prompted the King to found an archaeological service in 1926, with the aim of surveying and protecting antiquities. He reasoned that the National Library, which King Chulalongkorn had founded in 1904, already had the expertise in archaeological research, and hence should be given the additional responsibility of looking after antiquities. In his proclamation on the Survey and Preservation of Antiquities of 1923, he stated,

> as the antiquities in Siam, such as stupas and other artifacts, which were made by past kings and expert artisans, represent evidence for the Royal Chronicles and are sources for archaeological research, they are useful and bring honor to the nation. Thus all civilized countries take it as their duty to survey and restore their own antiquities (*Ratchakitchanubeksa* 2466, 244–245).

Thence the protection of national heritage became the duty of the state. However, no actual conservation took place in his reign.

Like his elder brother, King Vajiravudh, King Prajadhipok (r. 1925–1934) saw works of art and antiquities as part and parcel of national myths and history which bore witness to the development of civilisation of the nation. Also, these works embodied the spirit and character of the people. In his speech on the opening of the Bangkok National Museum in 1926, he said,

> As for Siam there is a national art, born and bred in our own country. Being different from that of other lands, it belongs only to the Thai nation (Krom Silpakorn 2536, 47).

In the same year, he established the Royal Institute to oversee the Fine Arts Department, the Museum Department, and the Archaeological Department. In 1930,

the president of the Royal Institute, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, delivered a speech at the Bangkok National Museum giving directions to the conservation of antiquities, as follows:

> 1. If anyone wishes to make a restoration, tell him to keep to the original. Do not change the forms, nor the decorations, as he wishes.
>
> 2. Do not demolish or damage a monument so as to replace it with a new building.
>
> 3. Any new addition must be built at some distance from the ancient monument, so as to preserve the dignity of the old building (Damrong 2516, 12–13).

Prince Damrong's directions may have been a response to Khru Ba Sriwichai's programme of renovating ancient monuments in Lan Na. Prince Damrong feared that the popular monk's pious restorations might have changed the original forms of buildings and forever wiped out any chance of relying on antiquities to supplement the study of history (Somchart 2555, 96).

The Royal Institute's task then was to preserve the monuments not to restore them to their original state. It did so by using buttresses to support the structure and by utilising the anastylosis method, disassembling and then reassembling the dismembered parts, favoured by the French archaeologists (Nikom ed. 2533, 94).

Three years after the absolute monarchy was overthrown in 1932, the Royal Institute was shorn of its responsibilities, but survived as a research centre for higher learning. The Fine Arts Department, which came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, took charge of archaeology, conservation, and museums.

During Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram's first administration (1938–1944), the government's attention was geared toward "nation building". Accordingly, the name of the country was changed to Thailand in 1939. Among the programmes of national development was a scheme to rehabilitate the island of Ayutthaya, which for 417 years had been the capital of the kingdom, but which since 1767 had been depopulated. The government transferred the ownership of the land inside the city walls, which King Chulalongkorn had proclaimed protected property, to the Ministry of Finance to be developed.

In 1940, Luang Pradit Manutham, who was then Minister of Finance, had the Provincial Hall constructed in the middle of the island so as to bring people back into the former capital. In the same year, the government built the Pridi-Thamrong Bridge, then the longest concrete bridge in the kingdom, to link the island with the mainland. On the island itself, roads were built to facilitate communication and land was parcelled out for sale (Kuakun 2529, 60–63). As a result of government sponsored development, twenty-three ancient monasteries, which appeared on

Phraya Boran Ratchathanin's map of the ancient city, disappeared (Ibid., 91). King Vajiravudh could not have been more astute to predict that, given a choice, the government would choose progress over conservation.

As for conservation, the government did provide Wat Nakhon Kosa at Lop Buri with a barbed wire fence in 1935 and did some restoration to other monuments there (Fine Arts Department 2508, 30).

Although Field Marshal Phibun had founded the Division of Culture within the Fine Arts Department in 1938 to enforce the Cultural Mandates of State announced by the Office of the Prime Minister and to promulgate a law on culture from 1940–1942, it was not until 1952 that the Division was elevated to become a ministry. Its writ was to oversee the Departments of Publicity, Fine Arts, Religious Affairs and Culture (*Krasuang Watthanatham* 2546, 19–21). The new Ministry of Culture "was also charged with promoting patriotism" and every ministry was ordered to promote the spirit of nationalism among government officials, so they could "spread the patriotic feeling to the Thai public" (Grossman ed. 2009, 61). Whereas the former Division of Culture had been in charge of a modernisation programme, the Ministry of Culture now supervised the promotion of nationalism along King Vajiravudh's line, namely "nation, religion and king," but with the constitution added to the trinity.

Field Marshal Phibun's second administration (1948–1957) was more constructive in the area of conservation, spurred, no doubt, by the country becoming a member of UNESCO in 1949. In that year alone, the Fine Arts Department made restorations of ancient monuments in Nakhon Ratchasima, Phitsanulok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Saen, Lop Buri, Phetchaburi and Kanchanaburi as well as enclosing the Kroe Sae Mosque in Pattani with a fence (Ibid., 31). This was the most the Fine Arts Department had accomplished in one year since its founding.

Patriotism must have led Field Marshal Phibun to visit Sukhothai in 1952. Since 1940, Luang Wichit Wathakan, the director of the Fine Arts Department, had launched his promotion of Sukhothai-period culture on the grounds that it "represented the apogee of Thai cultural achievement" (Barmé 1993, 162). As a result of the prime minister's visit, the Fine Arts Department began the survey and restoration of the Sukhothai monuments which continued every year until 1962 (Fine Arts Department 2508, 31–33).

Field Marshal Phibun next turned his attention to Ayutthaya in 1956, as the following year would be the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddhist era, in preparation for which he had 1,239 monasteries restored (Thak 1979, 717). Also one year earlier, U Nu, the prime minister of Burma, had donated funds for the restoration of the *vihāra* of Phra Mongkhon Bophit in Ayutthaya, and had stated a wish to see the result as well as to make an official apology for the Burmese destruction of Ayutthaya. More importantly, Phibun wanted to make Ayutthaya a tourist destination. He had parking lots laid out, souvenir shops opened, public space landscaped, and roads

improved (Kuakun 2529, 67). Thus, Phibun ushered in the era of cultural tourism.

Unfortunately, the announcement of impending restorations by the Fine Arts Department prompted thieves to break into stupas before official excavations could begin. In 1957, they broke into the deposit chamber of the *prang* of Wat Ratchaburana and stole gold artefacts before official excavation commenced sixteen months later (Krom Silpakorn 2502, 11–14).

Patriotism continued to be the goal of state conservation after Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat ousted the Phibun government in 1957 and had the Ministry of Culture abolished the following year. The Fine Arts Department reverted to the Ministry of Education. In the same year it began its restoration of Chiang Saen in Chiang Rai Province where the work continued to 1962 (Fine Arts Department 2508, 32–33). In 1959, at Don Chedi in Suphan Buri Province, a statue of King Naresuan was unveiled in front of a newly built *Chedi* constructed over the remains of an anonymous stupa that Prince Damrong thought had been erected by the great king himself to commemorate his victory over the Crown Prince of Burma. The image was unveiled on the anniversary of the victory which was then declared "Army Day" (Wong 2006, 91).

In 1961, the Act on Ancient Monuments, Objects of Art, Antiques, and National Museums was promulgated with a clause stating that "no person shall repair, modify, alter, or excavate in the compound of an ancient monument, except by order of the director general or with a permit obtained from him" (*Phraratcha Banyat* 2513, 6). This Act clearly gave the Fine Arts Department freedom to do whatever it thought best with impunity. The Department discarded the concept of consolidating monuments with buttresses as favoured by the Royal Institute, for it reasoned that after four to five years the elements would wash away the ancient bricks, leaving the cement supports standing, as had happened at Lop Buri. Similarly, the Department decided that the anastylosis method, while suitable for stone and laterite structures, was unsuitable for brick buildings. So, for the brick monuments at Sukhothai and Chiang Saen it opted for excavation and restoration instead (Nikom ed. 2533, 95). However, between 1964 and 1969, the sandstone Prasat Phimai in Nakhon Ratchasima Province was restored by the anastylosis method with French assistance under the auspices of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (Pichard 1976, 4).

Concern over the Fine Arts Department's heavy-handed restorations prompted O. P. Agrawal, head of the Indian Conservation Department, to advise in 1967 that the immediate priority was to draw up a clear plan for the restoration of ancient monuments. Agrawal remarked that if the trend of reconstruction was allowed to continue, and the directives for conservation, as spelled out at the Venice Meeting of Council on International of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1964, were not taken into account, then many of Thailand's architectural masterpieces would be turned eventually into fakes ("Thasana Khong Tang Prathet" 2516, 119). He

suggested that for the restoration of brick buildings, Thailand could learn from the work on the ancient forum in Rome. He also warned that it would be too risky to permit anyone who was not properly trained in conservation to take sole charge of restoration (Ibid., 123).

In 1964, the Office of the Prime Minister took charge of conservation work at Sukhothai and the prime minister, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, headed the committee in charge of the restoration of the monuments. He attributed Thailand's independence to the Thai "national characteristic of building and accumulating legacies for children and grandchildren, such special traits enable us Thai to be free till now" (Khana Kammakan 2512, ก).

In recognition of the contribution of the Siam Society under Royal Patronage to the knowledge of the nation over sixty years, he generously allocated two million baht from the national budget to establish an endowment fund to meet the operational expenses of the Siam Society under Royal Patronage as well as for the upkeep of the Kamthieng House. This ancestral home of the Nimmanahaeminda family of Chiang Mai was donated to the Siam Society in 1963 to be rebuilt in Bangkok as Thailand's first ethnological museum (Siam Society 1966, 1–4).

The 1960s was a period of economic development that saw many of Thailand's ancient heritage buildings destroyed for the sake of progress. Individuals such as Sumet Jumsai "launched himself into what was initially almost a one-man crusade" to stop the destruction (Taylor and Hoskin 1996, 248). Sumet battled with the governors of Chiang Mai and Nakhon Si Thammarat to halt demolition of their city walls and in 1967 won an injunction from the Ministry of Interior to stop provincial governors destroying historical monuments (Ibid.).

As officers in the Department of Town and Country Planning of the Interior Ministry, Sumet and his supervisor, Nid H. Shiranan, were instrumental in setting up the Ayutthaya Historical Park project which was approved by the government in 1967. The following year they began the restoration of the former residence of King Rama I at Wat Rakhang Kositaram in Thonburi (Ibid., 250–251). Sumet also initiated the Fine Arts Commission of the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA), which was unveiled in 1968, with the aim of conserving urban and rural features and buildings of architectural or historical interest as well as publicising the importance of preservation (Lassus 2006, 396).

To meet the requirements of the Venice Charter, the Division of Archaeology in the Fine Arts Department was reorganised in 1974 and took to heart the following articles of the Charter:

> Article 1: The concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or a historic event.

This article gave sanction to the Fine Arts Department not only to restore but also to develop a historical site. So from this time onward, the Department always referred to conservation and development together.

> Article 2: The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.

Under this article the Fine Arts Department introduced the manicured lawns and flower beds that have since become a fixture of Thai historical sites. Thus, conservation projects, which hitherto had involved only archaeologists and artisans, now involved historians, architectural conservators, engineers, scientists, and landscape architects. While archaeologists and historians took care of excavation, the rest worked on restoration.

> Article 14: The sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner (ICOMOS 2012).

Such was the system that the Fine Arts Department used for conservation of historical monuments from 1974 to 1986 (Nikom ed. 2533, 96). However, it was less scrupulous on the following articles:

> Article 9: The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins...

The restoration of the Chedi of Wat Sorasak at Sukhothai showed how the Department had relied on pure conjecture to create the stupa in its present form (see Figure 5).

> Article 11: The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration.

Prince Narisranuwattiwonge, who visited Wat Si Chum at Sukhothai in 1901, noticed that the different levels of the eyes of the Phra Acana image indicated that at least four restorations had been undertaken in the past (Narisranuwattiwonge 2506, 98; see Figure 6, left). But to preserve the vestiges of all periods has never been the intention of the Department, for its aim was to show the unity of the Sukhothai style (Figure 7).

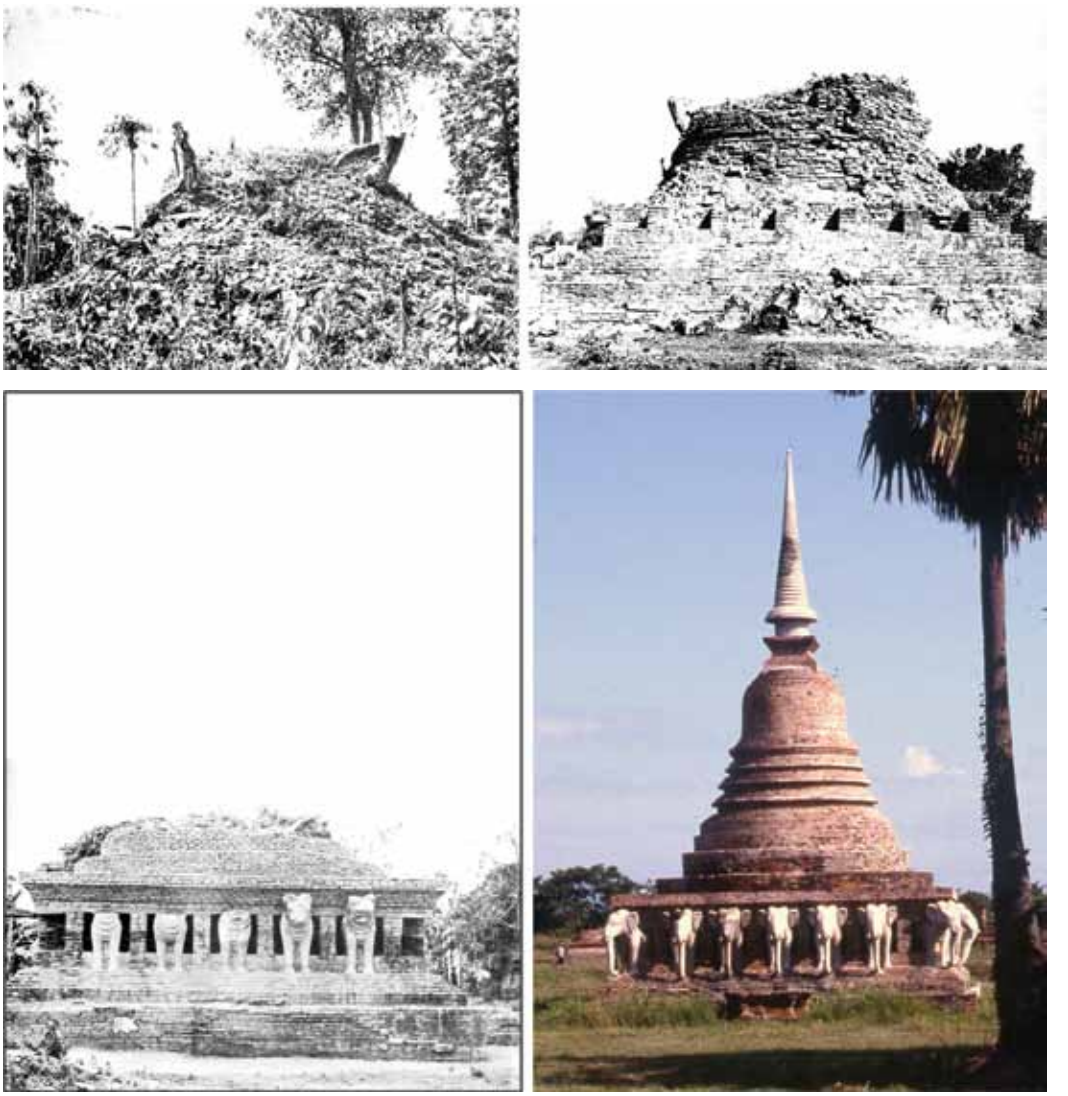

Figure 5. The process of restoring the Chedi of Wat Sorasak, Sukhothai:
(top left) before restoration in 1965; (top right) during restoration in 1965;
(bottom left) during restoration in 1965; (bottom right) after reconstruction in 1983

Article 15: All reconstruction work should however be ruled out "*a priori*".

Despite this "*a priori*" outlawing, the Fine Arts Department seems to have thrived on reconstruction work. Most of the mouldings on the base of an excavated monument are usually damaged to the extent that there is no way to figure out what the original looked like. So the restorers reasoned that they must have resembled those that have withstood the vicissitudes of time. Hence the mouldings at the base of Wat Si Pichit Kirti Kalyaram, Sukhothai (Fig. 7) and those of other monuments throughout the kingdom now all look the same..

In 1977, the Fine Arts Department drew up a masterplan to conserve and develop

Figure 6. The Phra Acana Image, Wat Si Chum, Sukhothai, before and after restoration:
(left) photograph taken c. 1892; (right) after restoration in 1953

Figure 7. The Chedi of Wat Si Pichit Kirti Kalyaram, Sukhothai, before restoration in 1965 and after reconstruction in 1983

the environment of the historic monuments at Sukhothai as well as to "recreate the atmosphere of the historic city." Its intention was to restore the historical monuments and to revive the abandoned city. Thus was born the Sukhothai Historical Park Development Project, a 10-year endeavour with a total budget of 202.6 million baht. It involved conservation and archaeological research, land use planning, community development, resettlement of people to make way for the historical park and associated infrastructure, and landscape improvement. It also included revival of festivities that were mentioned in the Ram Khamhaeng inscription for the benefit of tourist promotion (Ishizawa ed. 1988, 104; Nikom ed. 2533, 101).

This project was included in the Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977–1981) and Sukhothai was declared an historical park. The Fifth Plan (1982–1986) saw the same designation extended to Ayutthaya, Phimai, Phanom Rung, Muang Singh, Si Satchanalai, Kamphaeng Phet, Si Thep, and Phra Nakhon Khiri (Nikom, Ibid). Thus conservation was broadened to include development of vast areas and numerous monuments, such as the 70 square kilometres and approximately 200 monuments at Sukhothai Historical Park; the 45.14 square kilometres and 140 monuments at Si Satchanalai Historical Park; and the 3.83 square kilometres and 60 monuments at Kamphaeng Phet Historical Park (*Thailand's World Heritage* n.d., 13). Thus, the Fine Arts Department used conservation as a rationale to develop entire cities.

In preparation for the Bangkok Bicentennial celebrations due in 1982 the government of General Prem Tinsulanonda in 1978 appointed a committee to draw up a plan for the conservation and development of Bangkok's inner city (Krung Rattanakosin). In 1981, the cabinet approved the committee's proposals as follows: to forbid the construction of new housing by the state as well as the private sector within the inner city (Article 3); to restore any building built in the reign of King Chulalongkorn or earlier to its former state, or to demolish the building and reconstruct it following the same design as the original (Article 4); to create open space and shady areas along the Chao Phraya River (Article 9); and to allot land for traditional and cultural activities (Article 11) ("Karn Damnoen-Ngan Anurak", 1–4).

The Committee for the Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin probably had in mind the Fine Arts Department's masterplan for the Sukhothai Historical Park. But whereas Sukhothai was a sparsely populated place, Bangkok's inner city was a thriving, living business centre. The first casualty was the Sunday Market at Sanam Luang, which was moved to Chatuchak Park in 1982 so that people could enjoy an uncluttered view of the Grand Palace from a wide expanse of green lawn.

In 1985, the Fine Arts Department made amendments to the 1961 Act on Ancient Monuments so that it could have a freer hand to restore and develop. The so-called "Bangkok Charter" defines restoration as "the act of putting back to a former state" (Article 1 b) (Nikom ed. 2533, 98). Thus, its interpretation of restoration

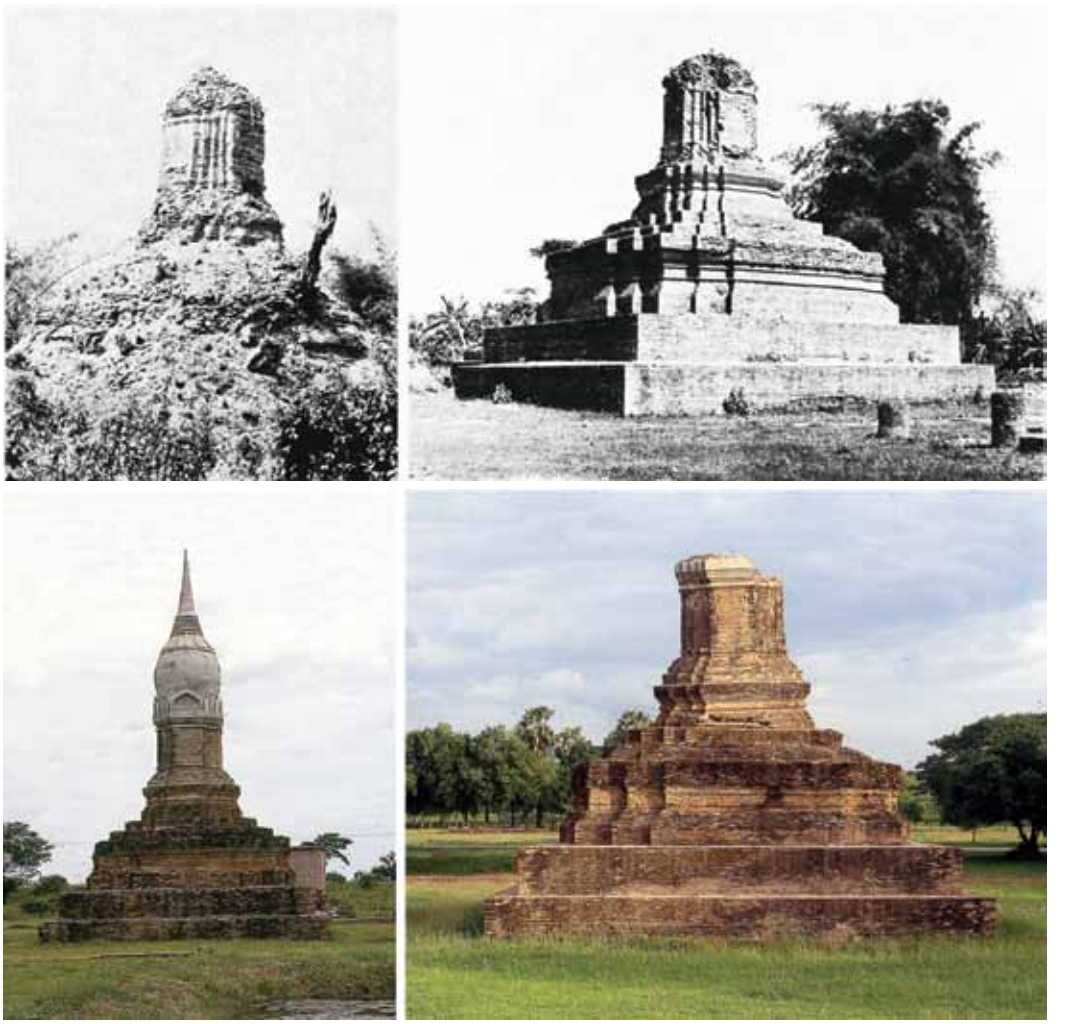

Figure 8. The Chedi of Wat Son Khao, Sukhothai, before and after restoration:
(top left) before restoration in 1965; (top right) after restoration in 1965;
(bottom left) the reconstruction of the "lotus bud" in 1983; (bottom right) after the removal of the "lotus bud" in 1984

is the opposite of Article 9 in the Venice Charter. Article 4 (3) stipulates that, in the case of a monument that has been restored and the restoration has spoiled the value of the original, the restoration work should be undone and the original building put back in place (Ibid., 99).

The Fine Arts Department has practiced what it preached. Since its own reconstruction of the lotus-bud Chedi at Wat Son Khao, Sukhothai resulted in something that looked like an onion dome, it had this offending dome removed (Figure 8).

Article 16 states that "If the ancient monument is still in use, it is permitted to enlarge and to make additions. There is no need to adhere to the original as long as it blends with the original and does not destroy its value." Given the scope of work that the Fine Arts Department has undertaken, it was not unexpected that it had to hire

outside constructors to do restoration work, theoretically, under the supervision of a trained architectural conservator. Thus, in the name of conservation, the Fine Arts Department could do whatever it wished with historical monuments.

On the grounds that social developments over the past hundred years brought great suffering to the nation through economic decline, depletion of natural resources, loss of national spirit, broken homes, fractious communities, and lack of responsibility by local communities to take care of their own cultural heritage, such as ancient monuments and ancient artifacts, which required the Fine Arts Department to work beyond its capacity, the Minister of Education asked the Fine Arts Department to promote Thai cultural heritage awareness among the people so that they would help to protect the cultural heritage within their own localities. Thus, the Department came up with the Thai Heritage Conservation Day to be celebrated on 2 April, the birthday of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, beginning in 1985 (*Phaen Mae Bot* 2541, 12).

Spurning international conventions, the Fine Arts Department turned to popular support. It declared that the aim of conservation was not to serve scholarship, but to make historical monuments part of local communities. The Department reasoned that even though a restored monument could not be considered an original work of art, it would have a longer life span than one that had not been preserved and would best show how the original might have looked. Besides, over time wind and rain would erode the reconstructed parts so that they would blend with the cityscape or with the rural landscape. Hence, the Department preferred to reconstruct rather than to preserve, especially in the case of religious monuments (Ibid., 102–104).

Given such blatant disregard for the Venice Charter and internationally accepted conservation practice, it was a remarkable achievement of the Fine Arts Department that the Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai, Kamphaeng Phet, and Ayutthaya Historical Parks were declared World Heritage Sites in 1991. By accepting these sites, the World Heritage Committee has authenticated "national historical narrative for which the kingdom of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya were precursors of the modern Thai nation" (Peleggi 2002, 24). In the following year, the Ban Chiang Archaeological Site was added to the list. Inclusion of these places on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites not only boosted Thailand's national pride and promoted international awareness of Thailand's cultural heritage, but also bestowed legitimacy on the Fine Arts Department's reconstruction of historical monuments.

Also in 1991, the Committee for the Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin successfully created the Rama III Plaza and Park by pulling down the Sala Chalermthai Theatre in order to give a vista of the Loha Prasat at Wat Ratchanadda, which was built in 1846. The destruction of the Sala Chalermthai Theatre was a travesty of conservation. The theatre should have been conserved to retain the integrity of Khun Chitrasen (Mew) Apaiwongs' grand Art Deco design of

Figure 9. Ratchadamnoen Avenue in 1941

1941 for Ratchadamnoen Avenue (see Figure 9). However, because of ideological differences there were some who advocated demolishing all Phibun-era buildings in the inner city (Chatri 2552, 203).

The success of the project to develop historical parks must have inspired the Masterplan for the Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin, which received approval from the cabinet in 1997. This plan sought to open up views of

historical monuments, to create more parks, to restore monuments, to create an identity for the inner city, and to develop the environment ("Karn Damnoen-Ngan Anurak", 2). Just as with the Rama III Plaza and Park, "the Government wanted to convert the nearby site of the Mahakan Fort to be a public park, which involved the removal of the community, whereas the local people wanted to continue living there" (Chatri 2550, 458). The committee wanted to recreate the atmosphere of inner Bangkok during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, including providing vistas for important historical monuments and public parks. It saw people as incompatible with monuments (Ibid., 461).

Fortunately, the people of the Mahakan Fort community might have the Constitution of 1997 on their side. Article 66 states, "a community, local community or traditional local community shall have the right to conserve or restore their customs, local wisdom, arts or good culture of their community" (*Phaen Mae Bot* 2541, 14). As Bangkok's oldest and only surviving community of people living between the moat and wall of the city, the Mahakan Fort community deserved protection on the grounds of its continuity. Today heritage no longer refers only to ancient monuments, but living culture as well (Ibid.)

Not so fortunate may be the row of Art Deco-style shop houses lining Ratchadamnoen Avenue that were built during Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram's "nation-building" programme (see Figure 9). They are under threat from the 2003 conservation and development project, known as the "Thai Champs Élysées" (Chatri 2553, 81). As one of Thailand's best known landmarks, this avenue, on which many Thais have fought and died for their beliefs, should be conserved the way it is in respect for the dead and for the nation's history.

To commemorate HM the King's 80th Birthday, in 2006 the president of the Supreme Court declared that the modernist Supreme Court building facing Sanam Luang would be demolished and replaced by a Thai-style construction at the cost of 3,700 million baht (Chatri 2551, 133). The president argued that the building was dilapidated and could no longer be used even though it was only 23 years old. Work on the new building was scheduled to begin in 2008.

The Committee for the Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin should have rallied to save the old Supreme Court building as it has great historical value. Begun in 1939 and completed in 1963, it was built to celebrate Thailand's recovery of full judicial sovereignty after the last extraterritorial treaty with France was rescinded in 1938. Not only should it be saved because of its historical value, but also on the grounds of art history as it is the most imposing example of modernist architecture in Thailand and represents the "nation-building" period of Thai history.

The Committee for the Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin probably will rush to endorse the project, launched by the Tourism Authority of Thailand in 2008, entitled "Bright Chao Phraya Project in Honor of the King". The Committee proposed developing the bank of the Chao Phraya River from Tha

Phrachan to Pak Khlong Talat by demolishing the Tha Tian Market, transforming its site into a park, and reconstructing a clock tower, a palace at Tha Ratcha Woradit, a residence for ambassadors, a model junk, a covered walkway at the Wat Po Landing, new city gates, and houseboats to be moored along the river bank to house souvenir shops (Chatri 2553, 87). By destroying the present, it hopes to recreate the past. But that past never existed as a part of Thai culture.

Having forsaken Buddhist piety and succumbed to anger, greed or delusion, those who should protect Thailand's national heritage mistake fakes for authenticity and choose substitution over conservation. So will there be a future for heritage protection in Thailand?

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