Historical City of Ayutthaya

Wat Chai Wattanaram gives an idea of how majestic Ayutthaya once was. The Ayutthaya heritage forms a significant part of the Thai culture that we know today.

On the map, Ayutthaya or Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya is a province in the Central Plains of Thailand, located just north of Bangkok. In the heart of Thai people, however, the city is their old town – the former capital before Bangkok came to be – in which their own history is restored.
Throughout Ayutthaya, architectural heritage reminiscent of the grand past – the 417 years that Ayutthaya reigned as the capital city – can be seen. These include exquisite Buddha images, magnificent temples, palaces and forts. Each day, a number of people, young and old, native Thais as well as foreign tourists, travel to the city to pay homage to the sacred legacy and to admire its splendid archaeological remains.

Viewed in a larger context, Ayutthaya is not only a chapter in the book of Thai history but also a significant kingdom whose rise and fall fulfils the story of how countries in the region came into being, and how they were related to one another and to the world at large.

Physically, Ayutthaya may have fallen. It is no longer the shining capital of the Siamese kingdom. In terms of cultural continuity, however, Ayutthaya has stayed on as a foundation for the establishment of the Rattanakosin era. It is the basis from which the Thai civilisation flows.

The kingdom of Ayutthaya may be no more. But the spirit of Ayutthaya lives on as a part of the Thai cultural identity.
Historical and Archaeological

Before the Rise of Ayutthaya

"The Kingdom of Siam is one with a tough luck... Many old books, which should have given us a window into our past, were lost. The little we are left with is but tiny compared to what we could have enjoyed. Still, we know as a truth that this Kingdom of Siam thrived and prospered at times that might last as long as 1,000 years. This fact should be evident to people interested in the history of Siam."

King Rama V, an address to the Society for the Exploration of Siamese Heritage, 1917

People of different races and ethnic origins had inhabited the land known as Ayutthaya for thousands of years before Thailand came into existence.

The country’s fertile Central Plains was the location of many large city-states. To the west were U Thong (situated in the area of present-day Suphan Buri province), Kubua (Ratchaburi) and Nakhon Chai Si (Nakhon Pathom), which were later developed into the kingdoms of Suvarnabhumi, Ratchaburi and Petchaburi respectively. To the east lay Lavo (Lop Buri).

Around 1250 AD, a Chinese chronicle recorded that there were two dominant cities in the area; one was called Xian (Siam and Suvarnabhumi) and the other was called Lorhok (Lavo). Sometimes, their relationship was cordial; at other times they waged wars.

The kingdom of Ayutthaya-called Ayodhya Si Ram Thepnakhon in Sukhothai’s 11th Stone Inscription – emerged soon afterwards as major polity in the Lavo territory.
The ancient kingdom of Ayodhya was situated to the southwest of present-day Ayutthaya, at the confluence of many rivers and streams. It was closer to the sea than Lavo. The access enabled the state to get in touch with neighbours near and far more conveniently. It was no surprise that Ayodhya soon became both a trading and power hub in the region.

The evidence that confirms the existence of human settlements in and around Ayodhya is the huge Phra Phanan Choeng (Phra Buddha Trai Rattana Nayok, Luang Por To or Sam Por Kong). According to the royal chronicles of Ayutthaya, the massive image of the Buddha in the position of Subduing Mara had been built in Chulasakaraja (Lesser Era) 686 or 1324 – 26 years before Ayutthaya was founded in 1350.

Also, the colossal head of a Buddha image from Wat Dharmigharaj, which shares the same artistic style with Phra Phanan Choeng but is made of bronze, is proof that people who lived there possessed advanced skills in sculpture and metalwork.

These legacies indicate that the ancient Ayodhya community had both wealth and technological know-how that would later serve as a foundation for the development of the kingdom of Ayutthaya.

The Rise of Ayutthaya

*In the Chula ara 712, the year of the tiger, on Friday the sixth of the waxing fifth month, at 9.54 am, the foundation of Ayutthaya was laid.*

_The 'Luang Prasote' version of The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya_
The Royal Chronicles stated that King U Thong founded Krungthep Dhavaravadi Si Ayutthaya Mahadilok Noparat Ratchathani Burirum as the capital in 1350.

Certain Historians from previous generations believed that King U Thong led an exodus from somewhere to build this new city. However, more studies of archaeological ruins and research into historical evidence suggest that King U Thong simply moved the city centre from the older settlement of Ayodhya.

King U Thong’s Ayutthaya was situated to the west of the ancient community of Ayodhya. It sat on the confluence of three major rivers, namely the Chao Pharaya, Lop Buri and Pasak.

Both Ayodhya and Ayutthaya refer to the same kingdom of Rama, an avatar of the god Narsi, in the epic Ramayana, The name means ‘invincible city’.

Chinese chronicles recorded that during the reign of King U Thong, the two major cities of Xian and Lorhok were integrated. The consolidation gave much strength to the thus-born Ayutthaya. Before long the kingdom expanded its power and brought into its control such formerly independent city-states as Sukhothai.

In 1431, during the reign of Chao Sam Phraya, Ayutthaya’s army had grown in power to the extent that it could march out and successfully take control of Phra Nakhon – the centre of power in the region at that time - in Cambodia.

Ayutthaya, Capital of the kingdom

"Happy, original and courageous message in writing like a lion originating from the feet of the most illustrious unconquerable, powerful and divine Lord, the all-seeing Supreme Sovereign of the most noble Kingdom of Siam, the pride of the noble town of Juda, the divine Lord of the Golden House, the white and red elephant, the happiest, greatest and chief Prince of all his vassals who shines like the pure sun and the clear moon in the highest of Heavens, who is worshipped by his subjects with reverence and Joy, …"

*Translation of the King of Siam’s title as written in 1633 in his Missive to the Prince of Orange (Holland)*
As Ayutthaya grew, King Borommatrailokanat (1448-1488) adjusted the structure of government to accommodate change. He centralised power to the palace, created the sakdina system of hierarchy based on the amount of land one was allowed to keep, and issued a law to control society.

The sakdina system governed the relationship between people of every social stratum - members of the royal family, courtiers, bureaucrats, monks, subjects or slaves-across the kingdom. Each group of people was allowed a different amount of land. The king separated the military and civil services. The nobles abided by the chain of command according to the sakdina system.

The King was considered all – powerful. He was the only one exempted from having any sakdina.

During this period, Ayutthaya became a true capital – an administrative hub and a kingdom known as the kingdom of Siam.
The fusing of the king’s secular power with religious attainment is evident in the Phra Buddha Nimit Wichitmanmolee Si Sanphet Borommattrailokanat, the adorned Buddha image in the ordination hall of Wat Na Phra Men. According to Ayutthaya belief, the image portrays a posture of the Buddha when manifesting himself as an emperor.

The mural on the wall of Wat Pradu Songtham’s vihara shows a royal procession.

The King of Ayutthaya was believed to be a dhevaraja, a divine ruler or an avatar of the Hindu god Narai. The grand palace was thus built to conform to the imagined layout of Mount Phra Sumeru, believed to be the legendary centre of the universe.

At the same time, however, Buddhism stipulated that the King ruled as a dhamaraja, governed by righteousness. He was believed to be a bodhisattva and protector of Buddhism. King Borommattailokanat gave sanctity to Ayutthaya by enshrining the Buddha’s relics there. During the early period of Ayutthaya, the most important temple was Wat Mahathat, where the relics were kept.

Later the king had Wat Phra Si Sanphet built within the compound of the Grand Palace. It was a way to proclaim his supremacy as the ruler of both the secular and spiritual worlds.

Social and Culture

The Island Kingdom

* Siamese people call their capital Si Ayutthaya or simply Krung... Not only is the capital an island itself, but it is also surrounded by many others....Even though the city is quite expansive, it's sparsely populated. In the fourth part of the city, which lies in the south, there are only temples to house Buddha images. People only gather there during big festivals. The three main rivers, which originated from the North, flow around Ayutthaya and into three canals, which cut the Kingdom into different zones. We can get to Ayutthaya by boat only. The place that is inaccessible to the boat is uninhabitable,*

Francois Henri Turpin histoire civile et naturelle bu royaume be Siam. (1771)
Three rivers surround Ayutthaya; the Chao Phraya, Lop Buri and Pasak. It is thus an island.

The rivers served conveniently both as the city's moat and water supply system. Since Ayutthaya as well as the rest of the Central Plains received a heavy run-off from the North after the rainy season, people who lived there learned to excavate water drainage canals off the natural waterways along a north-south direction to help release the flood out of the city as fast as possible. The internal water drainage canals were also linked to the other rivers both in and outside the island.
The yearly run-off brought with it sediments that became natural fertiliser. The fertility of the soil and the abundance of water made the land such a perfect place for rice cultivation. Agriculture was for this reason the foundation for the rise of Ayutthaya.

Europeans who passed through Ayutthaya estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 people lived in the city; most of them resided outside the walls. The city centre was where the many temples, state agencies and palaces were. The waterways were the main transportation system.

A record describing the geographical landscape of Ayutthaya mentions that there were four major floating markets around the island of Ayutthaya. Land-based markets, including communities with speciality morning as well as afternoon fresh markets, amounted to about 40. There were 32 more outside the city centre. Ships carrying merchandise from kingdoms both near and far also arrived regularly to trade with different communities in Ayutthaya.

Ayutthaya’s reliance on water earned it the nickname of the ‘Venice of the East’ from foreign visitors.
Port City with Multiracial Traders

"As the trade wind arrives in Ayutthaya, it is the season for commerce. Chinese junks, Arabian and European boats, Javanese, Malayan, French, Portuguese, Holland, Spanish, British, dark-skinned foreigners or islanders, commanded their sails to moor along rivers and canals. They loaded their goods up to the buildings in Ayutthaya, which they have bought or rented; then opened up for trade according to their taste."

Khamhaikan Khunluang Wat Pradu Songtham (The Testimony of Khunluang Wat Pradu Songtham)

A mural from the Ayutthaya period, at the Buddha Kosacharn pavilion, Wat Buddhaisawan, depicts western-style sailboats.

Ayutthaya’s currency included bia cowrie money, pod duang bullet money and coins, which either took a round or flower shape.

A stone pillar which carries the inscription ‘a monument to the Japanese village at Ayutthaya’, is found in the Japanese community area to the south of the island.
At its height, Ayutthaya was a major port that served as a hub for international trade. The palace engaged actively in trade itself by reselling goods sent to it as tributes in exchange for labour. It also served as a middleman by setting up a ministry of trade to decide the prices of goods that foreign traders wanted to sell to it. The palace’s sea trade was a major source of revenue for the kingdom.

By location, however, Ayutthaya was more than 100 kilometres away from the sea. Its inner position could be a disadvantage compared to other ports that were closer to the sea. That is why Ayutthaya paid a lot of attention to developing a transportation network along the Chao Phraya River, its main access to the outside world. Many canals were dug to connect the winding curves of the river in order to reduce the distance between the river’s estuary and city itself.

The trade-related disadvantage, however, was a boon for agriculture, another foundation of Ayutthaya’s economy. That Ayutthaya was quite fat from the sea helped insulate its paddy fields from an intrusion of salt water.

There are remains of both local and foreign people in the Catholic graveyard located at the church in the Portuguese village.
Ayutthaya grew steadily to become a major trading and economic hub of Southeast Asia. The prosperity brought peoples of different race and religion into the kingdom. One of the first groups of foreigners to settle in Ayutthaya was Chinese overseas merchants. More foreigners of increasingly diverse origin followed. Ancient maps made by Europeans indicated foreign communities to the south of the island. They identified places that served as residences, places of worship and factories of the Japanese, Malay, Mon, Vietnamese, Chinese, Portuguese and the Dutch.

The Goods of Ayutthaya

In the chief City the trading is very good and free in its course; the principal commodities are Choromandes and Sura vestments, all manner of China wares, Jewels, Gold, Benjamin, Gumlack, Wax, Sappang, Agerwood, Tin and lead, as also vast numbers of Harts-skins, one hundred and fifty thousand of these creatures being caught yearly in this Countrie, and sold with much profit to the Japanners. They drive a great trade with all eating provisions, especially Rice, many thousand Tuns being transported yearly by Forraigners. This City, by reason of its great traffick, is frequented by several Nations, as the Indians, the more Western Asiaticks, European Moors, and Christian Merchants.

Joost Schouten, VOC oppenhoofd (chief of the factory) at Ayutthaya, 1633

The elephant roundup took place in the presence of royalty during the later period of the reign of King Rama V. The Kraal at Thung Talay-yah was used to contain rounded up wild elephants during the Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods.

When it came to commercial activities, Ayutthaya was the centre of all kinds of goods whether wildlife, jungle products, minerals or produce from those cities located further inland. It even possessed well-trained elephants for export to India, which needed them for battles among its many states. India was also a big market for sandalwood. Deerskins were exported to Japan to make armour, sword hilts and gun scabbards.

The bark of sappanwood was very popular in the Japanese market, and so was tin and lead. Rice
was a major export to China during the late Ayutthaya period.  

Apart from selling what it produced, Ayutthaya also served as a transit point for reselling. There, ceramics from the kilns in Sing Buri, Sukhothai and Si Satchanalai, or silk and porcelain from China, were gathered.

![Japanese sword](image1.png)

*The Japanese sword was a popular weapon among the elite in Ayutthaya. It remained one of the regalia of Siamese royals up to the Rattanakosin period.*

![Cannon from Spain](image2.png)

*Ayutthaya imported cannons from Europe. The photo shows a cannon from Spain, engraved with a symbol of the cross and the year 1651.*

![Pa Lai yang patterns](image3.png)

*Pa Lai yang patterns feature designs that Thai people then sent to India for production. The chintz would then be sent back for sale in Siam.*

*The pa-lai-yang-patterned textile was expensive and considered a luxury fit only for royals or nobles.*

Ayutthaya was a large market for foreign merchandise, especially luxury goods for the elite, such as good-quality tea, silk, Chinese porcelain, Indian cotton, Persian perfume and rugs, Japanese furniture and swords, and European mirrors. Apart from these, Ayutthaya also imported silver and bronze from Japan, and cannons and small arms from Europe.

Foreign products that ordinary citizens had access to were cheap ceramic bowls and iron works from China.
There was also a motley crowd resting on their knees, dressed in gorgeous clothes, with their heads wrapped in cloths of various hues; this consisted of Pattani, Moors, Wadiga, Mukkara, men of Delhi, Malacca, and Java, Kavisi, Chinese Parangsis, Hollanders, Sannasis, Yogis, English, French, Castilians, Danes, men from Surat, Ava, and Pegu, representing every race.

Archive of a Lankan diplomat who came to Ayutthaya during the reign of King Borommakot, 1750

The Persian style is evident in these gold ornaments retrieved from the crypt of the stupa at Wat Ratchaburana
Since Ayutthaya was an international port, its culture was a mixture of native ways of life with influences from the Chinese, Cambodian, Sri Lanka, Indian, Persian and European.

The stucco that decorated the pagodas and stupas of Ayutthaya was an extension of the Khmer art of stone carving combined, for example, with patterns from Chinese porcelain.

The elephant-surrounded pagoda, with its roots in Sri Lanka art, was also found in Ayutthaya. European motifs and images could be seen on the door panels of tripitaka cabinets. Local musical ensembles, eunuchs court costumes showed direct influence from Persia. In some Ayutthaya temples two storey buildings with arched doors and windows can be found, reminiscent of Muslim architecture.

It was not only cultures that were mixed in Ayutthaya, but faiths also. People in the kingdom worshipped in their various religions. While the majority of citizens belonged to Buddhism, Brahmanism was prevalent in the court. The King of Ayutthaya granted his permission for and protection to followers of different religions, including Islam and denominations of Christianity, to practise.

City of Temples

This City in particular abounds in all parts with Temples, the Courts of which keep a regular proportion with the Streets, and are full of pyramids and columns of divers shapes and gilt over. They do not equal our churches in bigness, but far exceed them in outward beauty, by reason of the many bended roofs, gilt frontispieces, advanced steps, columns, pillars, and other ornaments. Within they are adorn’d with many images as big as the life and bigger....

Engelbert Kaempfer, a German physician attached to the Dutch East Indies, 1690, in the reign of King Petracha
Ayutthayan artists adapted Khmer stone sanctuary designs in the making of their stupas, which were used to enshrine sacred Buddha relics. There are many large-sized stupas in Ayutthaya today like the one at Wat Ratchaburana (Left) and the one at Wat Chai Wattanaram (Right) shown here.

Ayutthaya’s prosperity is evident in its exquisite Buddhist art – architecture, sculpture and paintings – some traces of which have remained until today.

The kingdom inherited a Buddhist civilisation developed over thousands of years in the region called Suvarnabhumi. Ayutthaya was essentially a capital of Theravada Buddhism. In and around the island kingdom were more than 400 temples. They included royal temples, built at the order or sponsorship of the King and members of the royal family, those sponsored by nobles and civil servants and those paid for by ordinary people.

Traditionally, affluent people considered building a temple a meritorious act, a means to accumulate good karma for their next lifetime. Socially, temple builders gained a lot of prestige. In a way, contributing to the religion served as a redistribution of wealth – turning personal assets into communal ones. It also helped create a bond and a sense of belonging within the Buddhist community.

Ayutthayan Buddhists held the relics of the Buddha as most sacred objects of worship. One of the kingdom’s most important temples was Wat Mahathat, which ancient documents referred to as Wat Na Phrathat, and which was located in front of the stupa where the relics of the Buddha were enshrined.
To pay tribute to the relics, Ayutthayans gathered other objects of worship at Wat Mahathat, too. There was a Dvaravati-style Buddha image from Nakhon Chai Si, which has since been moved to the small vihara in Wat Na Phra Men. Bronze sculptures of different shapes and forms – demons, lions and Erawan elephants – were moved from Phra Nakhon to surround the stupa of Wat Mahathat (these sculptures were taken away by the Burmese after the first fall of Ayutthaya.)

Ayutthaya – A military Stronghold

Fighting and killings will result,
Masses will fall,
Rivers will dry up,
while jungle grows on palaces.

The kingdom of Ayutthaya will fall,
The light of the three gems will vanish,
Until all of its time has been paid,
Until the end of BE 5000.

A poem foretelling Ayutthaya’s fortune, believed to be the work of King Sanphet (King Sua), 1703-1709

Ayutthaya adopted technology from the west and turned its mud- bases fortresses into brick walls to prevent penetration by cannons. Pom Phet fortress is located on the bank of the Chao Phraya River to the southeast of the city. It was considered a major fortress of Ayutthaya.
Conflicts over commercial interests and the need for labour often led Ayutthaya to war with its neighbours, whether states in Burma, Lanna, Lane Xang (Laos) or the Khmer kingdom (Cambodia).

Ayutthaya’s army consisted mostly of farmers. The rest were mercenaries from Japan, Portugal and Cham, among others.

Portuguese mercenaries introduced modern warfare knowledge and technology to Ayutthaya. The availability of both short- and long-range small arms changed the format of battle assault and defence. Ayutthaya’s forts went through a major transformation from mud-and-wood barracks that had been in existence since the early period of the kingdom to stronger brick ones.

Wars expanded kingdoms. Early in the era, Ayutthaya’s army defeated Phra Nakhon. To the south, it expanded its power down the Malay peninsula to Malacca. At one point, it ruled over Myeik, or Mergui at present, an important port in the Andaman Sea. Up north it took control of the Lanna kingdom, even though for only a brief period of time.

For kingdoms in the region, a war was a way to increase population, which translated to a labour force to be used both as soldiers in time of war and farmers in time of peace. The winner routinely rounded up the populace of the losing side and, along with other war spoils, took them back to its home state.

It is no surprise then to find Burmese documents stating that quite a few soldiers from Ayutthaya were in the service of the Burmese King. The same went for Ayutthaya, whose army had in its employ a number of Burmese soldiers.

But wars could ruin kingdoms as well. For Ayutthaya, the major battles were waged against independent state in Burma, both Pegu and Angwa. Burmese chronicles show that conflicts over trading benefits between the

According to an archive created by Engelbert Kaempfer, the German physician who came to Ayutthaya about 90 years after the battle between King Naresuan of Ayutthaya and the Crown Prince of Burma on 1593, the huge Phu Khao Thong pagoda was
Some historians believe that the main pagoda at Wat Yai Chai Mongkol was built to commemorate the famous victory of King Naresuan of Ayutthaya over the Burmese Crown Prince. The name of the temple was changed from Wat Pa Kaeo to Wat Yai Chai Mongkol.

In 1767 Ayutthaya’s reign as the capital city ended. The centre of administration was moved southwards to Bangkok, a former port outlet of Ayutthaya.

At the end of the brief Thonburi era, King Rama I, the founder of the Chakri dynasty, established the new Rattanakosin era and in 1782 proclaimed Bangkok the new capital of Siam.

From then on, Ayutthaya became known as the old town. Its places of residence, temples and
palaces were deserted. Some that still stood after the ravages of the war were pulled down so that the invaders could not make use of them.

Literally, the remains of Ayutthaya were used to lay down the foundation of the Rattanakosin era. Bricks from old palaces and bridges in Ayutthaya were used as construction materials for such Bangkok landmarks as the Phu Khao Thong (Golden Mountain) pagoda at Wat Sraket and Loha Prasat (Lohaprasada) at Wat Ratchanadda.

Bangkok was developed with the image of Ayutthaya at its peak as the blueprint.

The first generation of Bangkokens consisted of people who grew up in Ayutthaya. Therefore, landscape development during the first 50 years of the new capital was inspired by the good old days of the old town.

The best example is the location of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Wat Phra Kaeo, inside the grounds of the Grand Palace. The layout was the same as the Grand Palace of Ayutthaya, which had Wat Phra Si Sanphet inside.
Neither wat has ever had living quarters for monks. Indeed, the similarities were so great that it is said that people during the reign of King Rama I often referred to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha as Wat Phra Si Sanphet.

Although the Buddha image of Phra Si Sanphet had been burned down by Burmese soldiers eager to loot the gold covering, leaving only the core, it still commanded great respect from the early Rattanakosin leaders. They moved the remains of the image down to Bangkok and enshrined them in the pagoda at Wat Po. The pagoda was later named after the Buddha image as Si Sanphetchadayan Chedi.

The name of Wat Phra Si Sanphet was given to another important temple in Bangkok but it was later changes to Wat Mahathat.

(Left) A bell-shaped Phra Si Rattana Chedi, and (Below) square-shaped building in Wat Phra Kaew share some similarities to those inside Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya.

Reviving Ayutthaya

If someone construct a building today, that person would receive the honour alone. Archaeological ruins, however, are the pride of the whole nation. A single piece of an old brick is invaluable and deserves preservation. If we do not have Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Bangkok, then Thailand has no meaning.

HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s address during his visit to Ayutthaya in 1951, unofficial translation.
The vihara that houses the important image of Phra Mongkolbophit after major restoration in 1956.
The Phra Mongkolbophit vihara during the late period of the reign of King Rama V or early in the reign of King Rama VI, before the restoration. The large, bronze Buddha image of Phra Mongkolbophit, which has been renovated consistently, can be seen inside.

The reconstruction of Ayutthaya began during the reign of King Rama IV, who had the Chandra Kasem Palace, located to the northeast of the island, restored.

After that, King Rama V set aside the island area of Ayutthaya as part of Siam's national heritage. Excavation work began at the site of what had formerly been the Grand palace. Since then the ruins of Ayutthaya have received due attention as the embodiment of national history.

The Department of Fine Arts registered Ayutthaya as an archaeological site in 1935. Restoration work continued until 1993, when the Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Historical Park master plan was mapped out. The idea was that Ayutthaya should be preserved, not only as an important piece of the country's history but also as a link in the development of world civilisations.

Even though Ayutthaya suffered a lot of damage, both at the hands of humans during its fall to Burma and by negligence after that, what remains still bears witness to a once magnificent kingdom.

In 1991 UNESCO agreed at its meeting at Carthage, Tunisia, to include Ayutthaya in its list of World Heritage Sites. The main reasons were:

- The excellent location at the confluence of rivers, and city plan suitable for a water-based
community that relied on waterways as the main transportation system.

- Ayutthaya was a model for Rattanakosin, in terms of city plan, architectural format, buildings layout, place names and people's lifestyles.
- Ayutthaya was a unique kingdom physically, historically and culturally.
- Ayutthaya’s archaeological remains bear a unique design of their own. Even though they were based on the architectural formats of prior eras, they were further developed and adapted until they had their own identity.

If there is one important lesson to be learned from studying the history of Ayutthaya, it is cultural tolerance. At its height of prosperity, Ayutthaya was a mix of people of different race, religion and culture who found ways to live together – to share among themselves different aspects of their culture - in peace.

The great civilization of Ayutthaya was born out of cultural diversity and beautiful exchange. Tolerance was passed on to the Rattanakosin era and has become part of the national character of being Thai as we know it today.

### World Heritage Value

Traces of the adornment and glory of Ayutthaya are still seen through monuments and art objects remaining at the site. These remnants are evidence of the greatness of the kingdom. It gives the reflection of grandeur and beauty of palaces, temples, Fortresses, residences and the lives of Ayutthaya people in the past. Ayutthaya represents a masterpiece of creative genius in the perceptive selection of a location on land that was surrounded by rivers from different directions. Aside from being suitable for the water-based living style of the Thais, the land was such a fertile site for food production that the kingdom became known as the “granary of Asia” Furthermore, the strategic location of the settlement was also suitable for protection from enemy invasions. Moreover, the architecture, craftsmanship and literary works of Ayutthaya reveal the extreme skill of Ayutthaya artists and artisans. Evidences of this civilization had made Ayutthaya a historical site that was honored in the list of world heritage in 1991 under the third criteria:

Criteria III : bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.

### Site Management

After the Thais migrated from Ayutthaya in 1767, the kingdom lay abandoned for centuries before its first revival and restoration in the reign of King Rama IV of Rattanakosin period (1854-1868) by rebuilding a palace called “Chandarakasem” as a residence during the period and at the same time building a new pavilion on the former site of the grand palace.

The beginning of the actual preservation of the kingdom as the national historic and cultural heritage
was in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910). It was declared in this period that the land in Ayutthaya was the public property, any private own is forbidden. All monuments were to be surveyed by the regional office and the former restorational plan for the grand palace was to be conducted following the project launched by the previous king.

In the year of 1935, the Fine Arts Department, as the organization responsible for the care and preservation of the national monuments, ancient objects had taken over the duty and began by registered the site as the national monument. From then on, the preservation works that was projected by the late King Rama IV and King Rama V had been followed respectively.

The historical city of Ayutthaya and the monuments in the area, like those of Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai and Kamphaengphet historical cities, was protected under the Act on Monuments, ancient objects, art objects and National Museums 1961. In 1977, the government granted permission for the Establishment Plan of Ayutthaya Historical Park to restore all monuments in the area. However, in 1993 the plan launched was converted into the Master Plan of Ayutthaya Historical Metropolis due to the importance of the site that was registered in the world heritage list in 1991 which included a plan for the study and preservation of historic and archaeological evidence; a plan for the improvement of infrastructure and environment; and a land use plan to adapt the restoration task to present ways of living. The main consideration was to preserve the past glory of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya.
ที่มาของข้อมูล: วิชีดิมรดกไทย มรดกโลก
บริษัท ปตท. สカラ์จและผลิตปิโตรเลียม
จำกัด (มหาชน)