

THE SONGKRAN FESTIVAL  
AT THE WAT THAI OF LOS ANGELES  
ON APRIL 12-13, 1986

A STUDY OF SPATIAL FACTORS  
AFFECTING SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC PROCESSES

by

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To be able to distill and identify  
the essential variables of experience  
is the essence of the artist's craft

Edward T. Hall  
The Hidden Dimension

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Problem Statement	1
2. Methodology	4
3. Final Proposal	6
4. Fieldwork Situation and Data Gathering	10
5. Data Sorting	12
6. Spatial Organization of the Wat Thai During the <u>Songkran</u> Festival	13
7. Spatial Factors	16
8. Table: Dominant Spatial Factors Affecting Social and Artistic Processes During the <u>Songkran</u> Festival at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles on April 12-13, 1986	18
9. Spatial Factors Affecting the Offering of Provisions by Worshippers to the Monks and the Honoring of the Late Ancestors	22
10. Spatial Factors Affecting Circumambulation of the Temple	24
11. Slide Descriptions	26
12. Slides	
13. Tape Summaries	34
14. Tapes	
 <u>Appendices</u>	
15. Program for the <u>Songkran</u> Festival	40
16. Explanation of the <u>Songkran</u> Festival	41
17. Map of the Wat Thai and Surrounding Area Showing Parking Lot at Saticoy School	42
18. Selected Bibliography	43

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Wat Thai of Los Angeles is one of the most important institutions in the life of the Thai community in this city. Located in the San Fernando Valley, it is a symbol of the commitment of the Thai people to Theravada Buddhism. The Wat Thai serves as the principal focus of community life where a wide variety of religious and secular activities take place. Thais living in Southern California come together at the Wat Thai and express their sense of membership in a moral-religious community through shared norms and common participation in rituals. It is a center for social gatherings, functioning as a school for religious and secular training, a social welfare agency, a curator of traditional arts, an information center, and a playground for children.

The Wat Thai provides a pool of both spiritual and lay leaders. The Sangha (Order of Buddhist Monks) plays a prominent role in the lives of the Thai people in both the religious and secular spheres. Secular leaders are appointed by the abbot of Wat Thai. Considering the importance of the Wat Thai to the Thai community in Los Angeles, the significance of a study focused on the activities of these people at this particular place becomes abundantly clear.

Merit-making, which is action in accordance with Buddhist teaching, is the most important element of Thai religious behavior. The Songkran festival, the traditional Thai New Year,

which was held at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles on April 12-13, 1986, was a communal occasion for the Thai community to make and share merit in the form of religious and festive rituals. People earned merit through a variety of social and artistic processes which included making offerings to Buddha, the monks, and the temple, honoring ancestors and the abbot, participating in processions, and performing music, dance, and drama.

This study of space in a cultural context is premised on the fact that space is one of the fundamental organizational systems for people. All human action takes place in a spatial setting. The designs of spaces therefore have deep and persisting influences on the people in them.

Space is also a system of communication patterned by culture in much the same way language is. This can be seen in the wide variety of ways people plan the environments which they inhabit, the ways they define space through architectural forms, the various ways they organize and use space for their activities, and the ways they move through space, to name just a few. The spatial language employed by Thais is unique to, and is patterned by, their culture. It is this language which is explored in this study.

As anthropologist Edward Hall pointed out in his book The Hidden Dimension, Man and the Man-altered environment participate in molding each other. For this reason and others explained above, the question of how Thais organized and used the spatial setting of the Wat Thai during the Songkran festival

on April 12-13, 1986 is significant to both the Thais and people from different cultures. This study also may be of interest to individuals in the academic community who are interested in Thai culture and the use of space.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study, I conducted fieldwork at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles in April-May, 1986. I employed non-participant observation techniques in order to gather as much data as possible on the spatial setting and on social and artistic processes during the Songkran festival at the Wat Thai. I took numerous photographs in order to visually record the spatial setting and how it was used by people during the two day festival. I also made audio recordings since sound is an important factor of the spatial setting.

Documentation and analysis of the organization and use of space was enhanced through preparation of a site plan of the Wat Thai for the Songkran festival. For this study, I applied a technique frequently used by stage lighting designers which consists of identifying centers of action within areas of various dimensions in order to impose a framework onto the space to facilitate analysis.

In order to conduct a study of space it is necessary to identify the factors which characterize and compose space, that is, how the space taken as the unit of analysis is defined and what occupies it. Consequently, one of the primary objectives of this study is to outline these spatial factors. Conducting this type of study in a cultural context entails an analysis of how these spatial factors affect the social and artistic processes occurring within the context. I believe this system of



analysis and the multi-disciplinary techniques described above encourage a kind of holistic thinking which has both real and even greater potential value to the study of culture.

I must emphasize that the culture of the Thai people studied in this report is not one that I share. As a result, this report perhaps most accurately can be described as an etic study of the Thai spatial language.

## FINAL PROPOSAL

I intend to conduct a cultural contextual study of social and artistic processes taking place at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles located at 12909 Cantara Street in North Hollywood. The focus of my study will be on people's perception, organization, and use of space, both inside the temple and on the temple grounds. I'll concentrate my fieldwork on the Thai New Year festival held April 12-13, on the celebration of Buddha's birthday to be held sometime between May 22-25, and on Buddhist rituals such as the giving of alms to the monks on the first Sunday of every month. In short, I'll be examining spatial factors in social and artistic processes during Buddhist festivals and rituals at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles.

The question of how Thai people perceive, organize, and use the spatial setting of the Wat Thai and the temple grounds and how this affects social relations, artistic processes, architecture, and planning is significant to both the Thais and people from different cultures. As Edward Hall pointed out in his book The Hidden Dimension, Man and the Man-altered environment participate in molding each other. Ways in which the design of the spatial setting influences people therefore may be of interest to the Thai community. People from different cultures (including myself) who interact with Thais at the Wat Thai and elsewhere can benefit from an awareness that how Thais structure space is a culturally patterned system of

communication. My fieldwork and analysis also may be of interest to individuals in the academic community who are interested in Thai culture and the use of space.

I'll begin my study by attempting to obtain plans and sections of the Main Assembly Hall and the living quarters of the monks, and the plan for the temple grounds. These drawings may be with either the City of Los Angeles, the Consul General of Thailand, the Religious Department in Thailand which designed the Main Assembly Hall, or with Vasan Design Company of Los Angeles which has designed a new school to be built on the temple grounds just south of the Main Assembly Hall. If I'm unable to obtain these drawings, then I will use my drafting skills and materials to prepare plans of the buildings and the grounds. These drawings will be essential to my documentation and analysis of the organization and use of space.

Prior to the Thai New Year festival and the celebration of Buddha's birthday, I intend to obtain programs for the events, in order to learn when and where the important activities will occur. I'll also inquire as to who the principal artists, monks, and community leaders are that will be participating in the festivals. Based on this information, I'll prepare my schedule for the events by determining which activities to attend and which people to try to talk with. I expect to cover the festivals from start to finish. My fieldwork documentation techniques and equipment will include field notes based on my observations, taped interviews of both performers and spectators

using a cassette tape recorder, and slide photographs using a 35mm camera. I'll also try to conduct one-to-one interviews with knowledgeable individuals as follow-ups to the festivals.

The taped interviews will be especially valuable for an understanding of how individual Thais perceive space. The drawings will be useful for an examination of how people organize space. And the photographs will be records of how people used the spatial setting during these particular festivals and rituals. These media, along with my field notes and relevant secondary sources, will be utilized in an analysis of how people's perception, organization, and use of space affect social relations and artistic processes at the Wat Thai.

My main informants to date have been Phra Ban Yat, one of the leading monks who lives and works at the Wat Thai; and Commson, a Thai who was a monk for a short period of time and now comes from his home in Los Angeles to the temple every weekend to help out. Phra Ban Yat's knowledge of Buddhist practices and the activities and people at the Wat Thai have been helpful, but communication with Phra Ban Yat has been difficult because of a language barrier and his busy schedule. Commson, on the other hand, is not as informed as Phra Ban Yat is, but because he speaks English well, conversing with him has been much easier and more informative. Therefore, it will be important for me to talk with some of the more knowledgeable Buddhist monks who live and work at the Wat Thai as well as to lay people who may have a better command of English. No doubt

each individual will present unique interviewing challenges. I also may seek an opportunity to talk with architects and planners at Vasan Design Company in order to investigate the future use of space at the Wat Thai.

Throughout the course of my project I will consult relevant books from UCLA libraries, in the library in the basement of the Main Assembly Hall at the Wat Thai, and in private collections. I will compile and continuously update a bibliography. As was alluded to earlier, some of the inspiration for this investigation of space in a cultural context was provided by Edward Hall's The Hidden Dimension, and I intend to apply some of the ideas outlined in this book to the subject of my study.

My faculty advisor for this project is Professor Patricia Harter, PhD. We will be meeting during the quarter to discuss my progress and any problems I might be having with my fieldwork. A summary and analysis of my findings will be presented orally and in a paper, supplemented by sound recordings, photographs, and drawings.

## FIELDWORK SITUATION AND DATA GATHERING

The first individual I spoke with regarding my fieldwork at the Wat Thai was Phra Ban Yat, a monk who lived there at the time. Although communication with Phra Ban Yat was difficult because of a language barrier, he first familiarized me with the Wat by sharing some of his knowledge of its activities and people.

Commson, a Thai who was a monk for a short period of time and occasionally helps out the temple on weekends, became my principal informant. Prior to the Songkran festival, Commson, who speaks English well, talked to me at length about the Wat Thai, the Thai community, and the festival. During the Songkran, he provided me with relevant materials and was always willing to answer any questions I had. Yet, Commson made his most significant contribution as my informant by frequently directing me toward important events which I otherwise would have missed.

I also briefly interviewed a number of other people during and after the Songkran festival. A few of these interviews were recorded, including one in which a man served as an interpreter and another with a woman who taught English to interested Thais. However, most of the interviews I conducted were not recorded. Regardless of the situation, I was always warmly received by the gracious and generous people of the Thai community with whom I interacted.

Throughout the course of the festival there were many people taking photographs and video taping the events at the Wat Thai. There were absolutely no limits placed on the use of this equipment and as a result I had complete access to any subject I might wish to photograph. This also held true for audio recording equipment which, after obtaining permission in the case of interviews, I was able to use at my discretion.

After completing my fieldwork during the Songkran festival, I contacted Chaidej Vachirakornvatana of Vasan Design Company, Architects/Planners located in Los Angeles. He provided me with a plan of the temple and a site plan of the Wat Thai for a proposed school to be built in the southeast corner of the compound. From this site plan, I prepared a site plan of the Wat Thai for the Songkran festival.

I also compiled a bibliography of relevant books on Thai culture located in the UCLA libraries. Consulting these secondary sources provided me with much valuable information.

## DATA SORTING

The process of sorting the data I gathered began with selecting from among the slides I shot during the Songkran festival those which I felt best depicted the subjects relevant to this study. Next, I put the slides into sequence with the order of priority being chronology, then location, followed by subject. Then I numbered and arranged the slides in archival sleeves.

I numbered the audio tapes on which I recorded sound during the festival in chronological order and labelled them. My report includes all of the audio tapes I recorded during the festival.

I prepared a site plan for the Songkran festival by tracing the site plan provided by Vasan Design Company, omitting the school which is still in the planning and design phase. I added to my site plan the permanent and temporary structures at the Wat Thai during the festival. Based on my field observations and the slides, I identified centers of action during the festival throughout the compound. I then numbered each area and provided each with a descriptive name.

The final step in the data sorting process was writing descriptions for each slide and summarizing the contents of the audio tapes. I cross-referenced the slides and tapes with each other. Finally, I assigned to each slide and section of tape the number of the area from which it was collected.



SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WAT THAI  
DURING THE SONGKRAN FESTIVAL

A wat is not just a temple, but refers to the whole complex of buildings in a compound which is usually surrounded by walls. In addition to the permanent structures at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles, there were several temporary structures located on the compound during the Songkran festival on April 12-13, 1986.

The temple or Main Assembly Hall at the Wat Thai is rectangular in plan, a characteristic feature of Thai Buddhist temples. There is a portico at the front and one at each of the long sides. The front entrance faces southeast. Surmounting the temple is a four-tiered gable-roof covered with deep orange and green glazed tiles. At the edge of each gable end there is a decorative figure.

The building is enclosed, containing one large hall and a basement. Tall and narrow carved teak windows admit light from outside into the temple. At the northwest end is an altar on which sit several Buddha images facing the southeast entrance so that the rising sun will shine on them. The main Buddha image sits in the center of the altar in blessing posture. A copy of the original Emerald Buddha image sits in the posture of meditation at one end. Another large Buddha image in the meditation posture sits at the opposite end of the altar. Along the northeast wall is a long raised platform with cushions for the monks to sit on. The beams of the ceiling are in the shape of lotus petals. Several paintings decorate the walls and Khon

masks are displayed on a pedestal. There are several rooms in the basement, including a library, dining room, and kitchen.

Located in the northwest corner of the compound is a building which serves as the monk's quarters. It consists of two stories with six bedrooms, an office, and a sitting room.

The third permanent structure is an old four room building on the south side of the compound which currently serves as the Wat Thai Adult School. A soft drink stand is located at the northwest corner of the building.

The temporary structures on the wat during the festival were a stage, several canopies, and food tents. The stage, located just northeast of the Adult School building, was rectangular and had an upstage wall. Two canopies, one facing the stage at a distance of approximately 40 feet and the other adjoining the first at the stage-right side, provided shade for spectators sitting in chairs. Another canopy, located about 40 feet southwest of the temple, had a banner with festival program information written on it and sheltered the cart used to carry a small Buddha image during circumambulation of the temple. A fourth canopy adjoined the southwest corner of the temple. Under it were tables where flowers could be bought and offerings of money could be placed in bowls beside small Buddha images. Also under this canopy were one large Buddha image on a pedestal sitting in the posture of meditation and a smaller Buddha image on a short table sitting in the blessing posture which worshippers bathed with scented water. Tents at the south end of the compound provided shelter for people preparing and

selling food to those attending the festival. These food tents were placed on the east and south sides of the Adult School building, along the south gate, and around the borders of the playground which is in the southeast corner of the compound.

Other important areas at the Wat Thai include a playground, a grove, and parking lots. The playground has a slide, swingset, and geodesic dome for climbing. The presence of a grove in the northeast corner of the wat, a word perhaps derived from the Sanskrit vata which means grove, may be due to ancient worship of tree-spirits which preceded Buddhism in Thailand by several centuries. There are parking lots at the northeast and southwest corners of the compound. People visiting the Wat Thai may also park their cars at a school lot four blocks south of the compound and board a shuttle that takes them to the wat.

## SPATIAL FACTORS

I developed the following outline of factors which characterize and compose space from an anthropological view of human beings as, first and foremost, biological organisms who receive all information about the environment through their sensory receptors: eyes, ears, nose, and skin. The emphasis is that human experience of space is multisensory.

### Definition/Modulation of Space

Size of space  
Shape of space  
    enclosed (partially or completely)  
    open (partially or completely)  
Location of space  
Orientation of space in relation to larger spatial setting  
Change in size, shape, location or orientation of space

### Occupation of Space

Objects  
    type  
    number  
    size  
    shape  
    color  
    distribution (location and orientation)  
    movement

People  
    type  
        age  
        sex  
        ethnicity  
        social status or role  
    clothing  
    number  
    distribution (location and orientation)  
    movement

Light  
  type  
    natural  
    artificial  
  intensity  
  distribution  
  color  
  movement

Sound  
  type  
  source  
  movement of source  
  loudness  
  properties (i.e. reflection, diffraction, interference)

Odors  
  type  
  source  
  movement of source  
  intensity

Atmosphere  
  temperature  
  humidity

TABLE

DOMINANT SPATIAL FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC PROCESSES  
 DURING THE SONGKRAN FESTIVAL AT THE WAT THAI OF LOS ANGELES  
 ON APRIL 12-13, 1986

<u>Social and/or Artistic Process</u>	<u>Dominant Spatial Factors</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slides</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>
worshippers offering provisions to the monks and honoring the late ancestors	Shape and Location of space Objects: type and movement People: social status and distribution Sound: type, source, and properties Odors: type	5A	15-18	1 / A / 11- 73
worshippers bathing Buddha images and placing gold paper on footprint of Buddha	Location of space Objects: type and distribution People: ethnicity Odors: type	10	23-27	
preparation and consumption of food	Shape of space Objects: type and distribution People: movement Sound: sources Odors: type and intensity	16-18	31-37	1 / A /321-358
children playing on playground equipment	Location of space Objects: shape and movement People: age Sound: type	19	38-39	1 / A /127-141
assembling and decorating the cart used during circumambulation of the temple	Location of space Objects: type, shape, color, and distribution People: ethnicity and number	2, 9	47-51	1 / A /198-320
worshippers offering food to monks during the alms round	Change in size and shape of space Objects: type, number, distribution, and movement	6-9, 11	52-63	1 / B / 46- 73

<u>Social and/or Artistic Process</u>	<u>Dominant Spatial Factors</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slides</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>
worshippers offering food to monks during the alms round (cont.)	People: sex, social status, distribution, and movement	6-9, 11	52-63	1 / B / 46- 73
water sprinkled on worshippers as they pray; monks chanting	Shape and Location of space Objects: type and movement People: social status and number Sound: type, source, and properties Odors: type	5A	64-66	1 / B / 98-162
children playing with water pistols	Location of space Objects: type People: age and movement	2	67	
people offering meals to the monks	Location of space Objects: type and distribution People: social status and distribution Odors: type	5B	68-72	
dancers putting on costumes and make-up	Size of space Objects: type, number, shape, and color People: age and clothing	5B	73-74	
demonstration of how to make miniature flower arrangements	Size of space Objects: size and distribution People: sex, social role, and distribution	5B	75	1 / B /163-215
musicians performing Thai classical music	Shape of space Objects: type and distribution People: social role and distribution	12-13,15	77-81	1 / B / 10- 45 74- 97 216-339

<u>Social and/or Artistic Process</u>	<u>Dominant Spatial Factors</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slides</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>
musicians performing Thai classical music (cont.)	Light: natural, intensity, and distribution Sound: type and source Atmosphere: temperature	12-13,15	77-81	1 / B / 10- 45 74- 97 216-339
circumambulation of the temple	Orientation of space Change in size and shape of space Objects: type and movement People: ethnicity, clothing, number, distribution, and movement Sound: type and movement of source	3,5AB, 6,9,11	88-93	2 / A / 0-152
presentation of Resolution to Phra Thepsophon	Shape and Location of space Objects: type People: ethnicity, social status, number, and distribution Sound: type and source	5A	94-98	2 / A / 253-411 2 / B / 0- 50
dance performances and award ceremonies	Shape of space Objects: type and distribution People: ethnicity, social status, clothing, distribution, and movement Light: natural, intensity, and distribution Sound: type and source Atmosphere: temperature	12-15	99-113	2 / B / 51-427 3 / A / 0-427 3 / B / 0-384



<u>Social and/or Artistic Process</u>	<u>Dominant Spatial Factors</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slides</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>
folk dancing	Shape of space Objects: type and distribution People: sex, ethnicity, distribution, and movement Sound: type and source	14-15	114	

SPATIAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE OFFERING OF PROVISIONS  
BY WORSHIPPERS TO THE MONKS  
AND THE HONORING OF THE LATE ANCESTORS

Some of the worshippers at the Songkran festival made merit by offering provisions to the monks and by honoring the late ancestors in a religious ritual inside the temple. This process consisted of worshippers buying provisions such as clothing and soap, from people inside the temple who were assisting. This provided worshippers with a convenient means for obtaining goods to offer to the monks and a way for them to contribute to the temple. Worshippers then offered the baskets of provisions to the monks. After the monks received the provisions from a worshipper, the provisions were returned to the assistants and were resold to other worshippers. This recycling process ensured that the temple received the provisions and money it needed while still allowing worshippers to make offerings to the monks in an acceptably traditional way. As an alternative, several worshippers chose to offer to the monks food which they had prepared and placed in special containers. Worshippers also honored the late ancestors at this time using small vessels filled with water.

One of the dominant spatial factors affecting this process is the location of the space, which was inside the temple. The temple is the heart of the Thai community, enclosing a sacred space in which the laity gathers and the monks perpetuate Buddhist teaching. The beams of the ceiling are in the shape of lotus petals, so that the monks and worshippers are, in a real physical sense, inside a lotus petal shaped space.

The types of objects occupying this space also significantly affect this process. The magnificent images on the altar are powerful visual reminders of the presence of the Buddha. The provisions offered by the worshippers are the objects around which this ritual revolves. The repeated movements of these provisions in a recycling process are also of fundamental importance to the continuation of the ritual in this form.

The distribution of people involved this ritual is linked to the social status of each person. The monks, who are the spiritual leaders of the community, sit on a long raised cushioned platform at a higher level than the worshippers. Worshippers kneel on the floor in front of the monks out of respect for them.

The sound of chanting is yet another dominant spatial factor in this process. This type of sound, characterized by long rhythmic vowels, is conducive to entering an introspective, meditative state of mind. The source, of course, is the monks who are reciting a blessing. Their chanting, which is amplified by the reflections of sound waves off the walls, causes the temple to act like a large resonating box.

The sensual space of the temple, inside which worshippers offered provisions to the monks and honored their late ancestors, was further enhanced by the smell of incense burning in an urn outside the southwest entrance to the temple.

## SPATIAL FACTORS AFFECTING CIRCUMAMBULATION OF THE TEMPLE

The most festive ritual during the Songkran was the circumambulation of the temple by members of the Thai community. Prior to this ritual, a cart used to carry a small Buddha image was assembled and decorated with flowers, banners, and a parasol. A group of drummers and percussionists, playing under a canopy about 40 feet southwest of the temple, attracted a crowd of spectators. Then they made their way to the front of the temple where additional participants and spectators gathered. Several dancers headed the procession, followed by the musicians. Behind them was Miss Songkran, who threw flower petals in front of the cart which followed her. The processional train was completed by the people following the cart.

Once the procession got under way, there was a change in the size and shape of the space in which this process occurred. The size increased and the shape became an oval defined by the movement of people, objects, and sound through space. Another important factor in the definition of this space and the evolution of this process was the orientation of the oval space in which the primary action occurred to adjacent spatial settings. The community of people and assemblage of objects were circumambulating, not just around any space, but around the temple, which is of central importance. At one point, when the procession passed by the grove just northeast of the temple, the woman who had decorated the cart with flowers and was at the

time following the cart, spoke in Thai to the people relaxing in the grove through a megaphone, apparently encouraging them to participate in the event. Several responded and joined the procession.

The cart and the Buddha image on it were the central objects of this process. Preceding the cart were dancers, musicians, and Miss Songkran in joyous celebration. Following the cart were more members of the Thai community in a festive mood. The cart with its Buddha image rolled along at the center of this movement.

Both participants and spectators celebrated the Thai New Year and their common ethnic heritage. While those in the procession circled the temple, many people lined the path to observe the procession. Another spatial factor related to the people involved in this process is clothing. Some of the dancers were in festive costume while all of the musicians could be identified by the blue shirts they wore. Miss Songkran was also in ceremonial dress.

Finally, sound was a dominant spatial factor in the circumambulation of the temple. The music was wholly percussive. Many of the dancers and musicians also sang. The sources of these sounds moved along at the head of the procession, heralding the presence of the Buddha.

SLIDE DESCRIPTIONS

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	5		temple or Main Assembly Hall at the Wat Thai of Los Angeles
2	4		monk's quarters
3	5		temple
4	14		canopies, stage, and area in front of the stage
5	20		Wat Thai Adult School
6a	21		SW parking lot
6b	1-21		Site Plan of the Wat Thai of Los Angeles for the <u>Songkran</u> Festival on April 12-13, 1986 (located in an envelope in the back pocket of this binder)
6c	1-21		areas: numbers and descriptions, on the Site Plan
7	5A		burning incense in an urn outside the southwest entrance to the temple; notice the shoes lying outside the temple entrance
8	5A		interior of the temple, including three Buddha images, monks, and worshippers; notice the ceiling architecture
9	5A		Buddha images inside the temple
10	5A		Emerald Buddha image
11	5A		main Buddha image in blessing posture
12	5A		Buddha image to the right of the main image
13	5A		worshippers offering food
14	5A		food left as offerings by worshippers
15	5A		people who assist the temple sell provisions to worshippers; this provides worshippers with a convenient means for obtaining goods to offer to the monks and a way for them to contribute to the temple

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
16	5A	1 / A / 11- 73	worshippers offering baskets of provisions, which they had bought from the temple assistants, to the monks; the provisions are then returned to the rest of the stock to be resold to other worshippers; this recycling process ensures that the temple receives the provisions and money it needs, while still allowing worshippers to make offerings to the monks in an acceptably traditional way
17	5A		woman offering food in a silver canister to a monk
18	5A		vessels used during ritual to honor the late ancestors
19	5A	1 / A / 359-378	Phra Thepsophon with a young boy who is speaking into a microphone connected to the temple's public address system; the boy's voice could be heard throughout the Wat
20	5A		public address/sound system equipment, including a mixer, equalizer, cassette tape recorder, and amplifier, located in a small room in the temple
21	5A		Khon masks on display inside the temple
22	5A		model of the proposed school to be built in the southeast corner of the Wat (see Vasan Design Company's Site Plan of the Wat Thai of Los Angeles for a proposed school, located in an envelope in the back pocket of this binder)
23	10		flowers for sale, which are subsequently offered to Buddha; the black bowls contain offerings of money to Buddha
24	10		worshippers kneeling alongside burning incense and offerings of flowers to Buddha
25	10		worshippers praying, making offerings, and bathing a Buddha image with scented water
26	10		woman pouring scented water over a Buddha image
27	10		footprint of Buddha, onto which a woman is placing a small piece of gold paper

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
28	10		Common (right), my principal informant during the two day <u>Songkran</u> Festival, and a monk (left) taking photographs
29	11		attendees taking photographs of others standing on the front stairs of the temple
30	11		Christian church located on the east side of Coldwater Canyon Ave. across the street from the temple
31	16	1 / A /321-358	scene at the food tents
32	17	1 / A /321-358	preparation of food at a food tent
33	16	1 / A /321-358	woman pouring batter into a baking pan
34	17	1 / A /321-358	man serving as a monitor for the Wat Thai during the festival
35	18	1 / A /321-358	food stand of the Thai Classical Dance Group; one of the young men at the stand informed me that half of their proceeds go to the temple, while the other half is for the dance group
36	18	1 / A /321-358	food stand of the Thai Cultural Center
37	18	1 / A /321-358	scene at the food tents south of the Adult School building
38	19	1 / A /127-136	scene at the playground
39	19	1 / A /127-136	children climbing on a geodesic dome
40	20		west side of the Wat Thai Adult School building
41	20		two men playing chess
42	20	1 / A /142-149	soft drink stand at the northwest corner of the Adult School building
43	21		security officer using a megaphone to direct traffic on Cantara St. near the entrance to the SW parking lot of the temple
44	1		van used to shuttle people between the Wat and the parking lot at Saticoy School (see the map in the Appendix)
45	1		men wearing camouflage outfits posted at the entrance to the NE parking lot



<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
46	5A		the kneeling man wearing camouflage had walked into the temple with his shoes on to deliver a message; he was stopped by a monk who asked him to kneel so that his shoes would not touch the floor of the temple and to write his message on a piece of paper for the monk to deliver
47	2	1 / A /198-320	cart, used to carry a small Buddha image during ritual circumambulation of the temple, at an early stage of its assembly
48	2	1 / A /198-320	cart, at a later stage, being assembled by two men
49	2		woman arranging and tying flowers onto the cart
50	2		flower arrangement on the cart at a later stage
51	9		cart with full flower arrangement on display
52	8		people lining up for the alms round with the food they have brought placed on tables
53	11		monks descending the front stairs of the temple for the alms round; Phra Thepsophon leads the way while Commson (lower right) videotapes the proceedings
54	8		monks and people in the Thai community participating in the alms round
55	8	1 / B / 46- 73	woman placing alms in Phra Thepsophon's bowl
56	8		Phra Thepsophon taking alms he has received out of his bowl in order to place them in the basket held by the person on the left
57	8		man taking alms out of Phra Thepsophon's bowl
58	8		men sorting food received by the monks into baskets
59	9		after the men complete the initial food sorting, some of the food is emptied onto a large blue sheet of plastic for further sorting
60	7		people who arrived shortly after the alms round began lined up in the direction of the monk's quarters

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
61	6		more people giving alms to the monks lined up along the walk between the monk's quarters and the temple
62	7		Phra Ban Yat (center), the monk who first familiarized me with the Wat Thai
63	11		monks returning to the temple at the conclusion of the alms round
64	5A	1 / B / 98-130	monks chanting while worshippers silently pray
65	5A	1 / B /131-162	worshippers praying while sitting on the floor of the temple
66	5A		Phra Thepsophon using a bundle of reeds dipped in water to sprinkle water on the worshippers; Commson assists by carrying water in an urn
67	2		children playing with water pistols
68	5B		monks eating a meal in the basement of the temple; Phra Thepsophon is sitting at the head of the table
69	5B		monks eating a meal; Commson (standing at center in the back) assisted throughout the meal
70	5B		meals for the monks being prepared in the kitchen
71	5B		dishes of food placed on a table before being offered to the monks
72	5B		people offering meals to the monks
73	5B		dancers getting into their costumes and having make-up applied in the dressing room
74	5B		Kangwan Guedpond, the Thai classical dance instructor, in the midst of costumes which he is helping the student-dancers put on
75	5B	1 / B /163-215	woman demonstrating how to make miniature flower arrangements from a paste of bread dough, buttermilk, and glue
76	5B		painted ceramic vessels on display
77	12		spectators seated under a canopy facing the stage

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
78	13		more spectators seated under a canopy at the stage-right side
79	15	1 / B / 10- 45 74- 97 216-294	musicians performing Thai classical music on the stage
80	15	1 / B / 10- 45 74- 97 216-294	closer view of musicians performing Thai classical music on the stage
81	15		musical instruments used to perform Thai music
82	3		people relaxing in the grove on the northeast side of the temple
83	3		children in the foreground play with toys while elderly man seated at a bench in the background prays
84	9		banner with festival program information written on it
85	9		people relaxing in the shade of a canopy
86	9		copies of a book being offered in exchange for donations toward construction of the proposed school; the author informed me that the book addresses problems in areas such as immigration, law, and the family, which Thais living in the United States commonly face
87	9		people preparing food at a table under a canopy
88	9		cart just prior to being used during ritual circumambulation of the temple
89	9	2 / A / 0-152	drummers and percussionists playing music
90	11		participants and spectators gathering for circumambulation of the temple; the drummers and percussionists are near the center wearing blue shirts
91	11		dancers heading the procession; they were followed by the drummers and percussionists
92	11		Miss Songkran throwing flower petals in front of the cart carrying a small Buddha image

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
93	11		cart with a parasol carrying a small Buddha image; people following the cart completed the processional train
94	5A	2 / A / 253-277	California State Assemblyman Mike Roos presenting a Resolution to Phra Thepsophon in honor of his service to the Thai community
95	5A	2 / A / 278-319	Phra Thepsophon speaking to those present after receiving the Resolution from Mike Roos
96	5A		dignitaries seated in carved wood benches during the ceremony honoring Phra Thepsophon; Mike Roos is sitting in the front bench, second from the left
97	5A		Resolution presented to Phra Thepsophon
98	5A	2 / B / 0- 50	musicians playing Thai classical music inside the temple immediately after the ceremony honoring Phra Thepsophon
99	12		section of seating reserved for dignitaries
100	12	2 / B / 256-260	dignitaries, including California Secretary of State March Fong Eu (standing at center) and Mike Roos (sitting to her left), watching dance performances
101	12		Phra Thepsophon (left) sitting with Mike Roos (right) during dance performances
102	15		dancer performing the first dance
103	15	2 / B / 51-255	dancers performing the second dance
104	15	2 / B / 261-346	dancers performing the third dance
105	15	2 / B / 347-427	Mike Roos presenting awards to winners of a health contest
106	15		winners of a health contest, nurses, Phra Thepsophon, and Mike Roos posing for a group photograph
107	15		March Fong Eu presenting awards to winners of a drawing contest
108	15		winners of a drawing contest and March Fong Eu posing for a group photograph
109	15	3 / A / 42-209	dancer performing the fourth dance

<u>Slide</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Description</u>
110	15	3 / A /210-278	dancer performing the fifth dance
111	15	3 / A /279-427	dancers performing the sixth dance, the dramatic episode from the <u>Ramayana</u> in which Rama pursues a golden deer through the forest
112	15	3 / B / 0-155	dancers performing the seventh dance
113	15		student-dancers and Kangwan Guedpond posing for a group photograph
114	14		people folkdancing to music played by the musicians on the stage at the conclusion of the festival

TAPE SUMMARIES

<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slide(s)</u>	<u>Summary</u>
1 / A / 0- 11			introduction and comments upon arrival on April 12
11- 73	5A	16	monks chanting
74- 92	5A		sound of sticks being shaken in a small cylindrical container during a prayer
93-114			explanation of the shaking sound and prayer at 74- 92
115-126	14		person speaking through the temple's public address/sound system
127-136	19	38,39	children at the playground
137-141	19		man serving as a monitor for the Wat Thai using a megaphone to tell parents and children that the playground is closed
142-149	20	42	popular music being played at the soft drink stand at the northwest corner of the Adult School building
150-197			explanations of sounds on tape from 115-149
198-216	2	47,48	interview with one of the men assembling the cart used during ritual circumambulation of the temple
217-320	2	47,48	interview with a man who served as an interpreter for the men assembling the cart
321-358	16-18	31-37	ambient sounds at the food tents
359-378	5A	19	young boy speaking into a microphone connected to the temple's public address system
379-403	5A		Phra Thepsophon speaking through the temple's public address system
404-419			comments at the conclusion of fieldwork on April 12

<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slide(s)</u>	<u>Summary</u>
1 / B / 0- 9			introduction and comments upon arrival on April 13
10- 45	15	79,80	Thai classical music performed by musicians on the stage
46- 73	8	55	Phra Thepsophon talking to people during the alms round
74- 97	15	79,80	Thai classical music performed by musicians on the stage
98-130	5A	64	monks chanting
131-162	5A	65	monks leading responsive prayer
163-215	5B	75	interview with Dorothy Smith, an English teacher, who explains how miniature flower arrangements are made as demonstrated by the woman in slide 75
216-294	15	79,80	Thai classical music performed by musicians on the stage
295-339	15		Thai classical music played by students
340-344			explanation of music played by students at 295-339

<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slide(s)</u>	<u>Summary</u>
2 / A / 0-152	9	89	music played by drummers and percussionists
153-252	15		pre-recorded music and an announcer as heard through the stage sound system during a boxing match on the stage
253-277	5A	94	California State Assemblyman Mike Roos speaking to those gathered in the temple for the presentation of a Resolution to Phra Thepsophon
278-319	5A	95	Phra Thepsophon speaking to those present after receiving the Resolution from Mike Roos
320-345	5A		interpreter reading Phra Thepsophon's acceptance speech in English
346-358	5A		music played by Thai classical musicians inside the temple during the ceremony honoring Phra Thepsophon; monks chanting also
359-411	5A		others speaking during ceremony honoring Phra Thepsophon



<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slide(s)</u>	<u>Summary</u>
2 / B / 0- 50	5A	98	music played by Thai classical musicians inside the temple immediately after the ceremony honoring Phra Thepsophon
51- 74	15	103	speaker introducing the second dance
75-255	15	103	music playing during the second dance
256-260	12	100	speaker introducing California Secretary of State March Fong Eu
261-276	15	104	speaker introducing the third dance
277-346	15	104	music playing during the third dance
347-359	15	105	speaker inviting Mike Roos to present awards to winners of a health contest
360-427	15	105	Mike Roos speaking to the audience and presenting awards to winners of a health contest

<u>Tape/Side/Counter</u>	<u>Area(s)</u>	<u>Slide(s)</u>	<u>Summary</u>
3 / A / 0- 41	15		conclusion of awards presentations
42-209	15	109	music playing during the fourth dance
210-222	15	110	speaker introducing the fifth dance
223-278	15	110	music playing during the fifth dance
279-302	15	111	speaker introducing the sixth dance
303-427	15	111	music playing during the sixth dance
3 / B / 0-155	15	112	music playing during the seventh dance
156-175	15		speaker introducing an eighth dance
176-384	15		music playing during an eighth dance
385-427	15		young boy pictured in slide 19 speaking from the stage through the stage sound system

APPENDICES



## WAT THAI OF LOS ANGELES

12909 Cantara Street · North Hollywood · California 91605 · U.S.A. Tel. (818) 997-9657

Program of Water Festival (Thai New Year) 1986

at Wat Thai of Los Angeles

Saturday-Sunday, April 12-13, 1986

### Saturday, April 12, 1986

- 9:00 a.m. bring relics kept in urns, pictures or lists of the late ancestors to altar for merit-making;
- 10:00 a.m. monks chant blessing;
- 11:00 a.m. offering meals to the monks;
- 11:30 a.m. preaching by a monk followed by memorial service for the late ancestors;
- 3:00 p.m. essay contest by student;
- 6:00 p.m. evening chanting followed by meditation practice;

### Sunday, April 13, 1986

- 9:30 a.m. alms round by Thai Cultural Center and Thai Community;
- 10:00 a.m. Health Contest for children and senior citizen by medical group and Thai Nurses Association;
- 11:00 a.m. Offering meals to the monks;
- 11:30 a.m. stage shows by student and Thepthai Musical Band;
- 12:30 a.m. memorial service for the late King Rama 1-8;
- 1:00 p.m. changing the new robe for the Buddha Image;
- 1:30 p.m. award to the winner of picture drawing;
- 2:00 p.m. present the award of achievement and the resolution to Lord Abbot **Phra Thepsophon** by CA. State Assemblymen;
- 2:30 p.m. award to the winner of Health Contest;
- 3:00 p.m. bathe the Buddha Image and **pouring of water and dousing the head** (ceremony for Water Festival);

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## WAT THAI OF LOS ANGELES

12909 Cantara Street · North Hollywood · California 91605 · U.S.A. Tel. (818) 997-9657

### Water Festival

The Water Festival or the **Songkran Festival** is the traditional Thai New Year which usually falls on the 13th April, the hottest day of the year. It is the day marking the assumed entrance of the Sun into Aries. It's also the folk festival of throwing or sprinkling water on Buddha images, monks or elders of the family (or the community) to express their respect. Fish and birds are set free. This is one of the Thai ways of making merit. After all, a life, no matter whether it is that of a dumb animal or a human being, is entitled to existence and freedom. That is why, at **Songkran**, people take the opportunity to release birds and fish so that they can lead a life of freedom in their natural surroundings.

One rather interesting tradition observed in the **Songkran** is the **Rode Nam Dam Hua**, which literally means **pouring of water and dousing the Head**. On the Songkran, all people are out in the streets, merrily hurling water at each other to wash away the misdeeds of the old. Drenching people is a part of a free-for-all dousing. This is to help welcome the Thai Buddhist New Year and to wash away any misdeeds.

**Songkran Festival** is the time for old folks to clean Buddha images by pouring lustral water on these in the temples with great celebrations. At home, they fetch out Buddha images from the altars and clean them with perfume water. It is also a **spring cleaning day** for the people, when everything in the house was cleaned up and put in order, and refuse burnt up, with the idea that they should start everything new and afresh with luck and happiness in the new year, and all the dirt and unhappiness should be left behind in the old year.

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4. การควบคุมเสียง

- 4.1 วันเสาร์-อาทิตย์ หรือเวลายามงานเทศกาล ต้องควบคุมเสียง จากเครื่องขยายเสียง และเสียงดนตรี ให้เป็นไปตามกฎ ข้อบังคับ ของบ้านเมือง
- 4.2 ต้องตั้งเจ้าหน้าที่รับผิดชอบ เพื่อกวดขัน เรื่องเสียงมิให้รบกวนชาวบ้าน

5. เจ้าหน้าที่ควบคุมและตรวจตรา (Mornitor)

- 5.1 ต้องแนะนำควบคุมมิให้มีการนำอาหาร ออกไปนอกบริเวณวัด โดยเด็ดขาด
- 5.2 ทุกวันเสาร์-อาทิตย์ เจ้าหน้าที่ (มอร์นิเตอร์) จะต้องเดินตรวจตราการจราจร และรักษาความสะอาดถนนรอบวัดทั้ง 4 ด้าน
- 5.3 ต้องเพิ่มจำนวนเจ้าหน้าที่ (มอร์นิเตอร์) ในเมื่อมีคนมาวัดมาก ตามจำนวนที่ตกลงไว้กับบ้านเมือง

จึงขอเจริญพร มายังท่านผู้มีศรัทธาทุกท่าน ขอจงได้ช่วยกันปฏิบัติ ตามประกาศนี้ โดยเคร่งครัด เพื่อเป็นการพัฒนาการอยู่รวมกันระหว่างวัดกับชาวบ้าน หวังว่าจะได้รับ ความกรุณาพร้อมด้วยดี ขออนุโมทนา

ประกาศ ณ วันที่ 15 กันยายน 2528

*(Signature)*

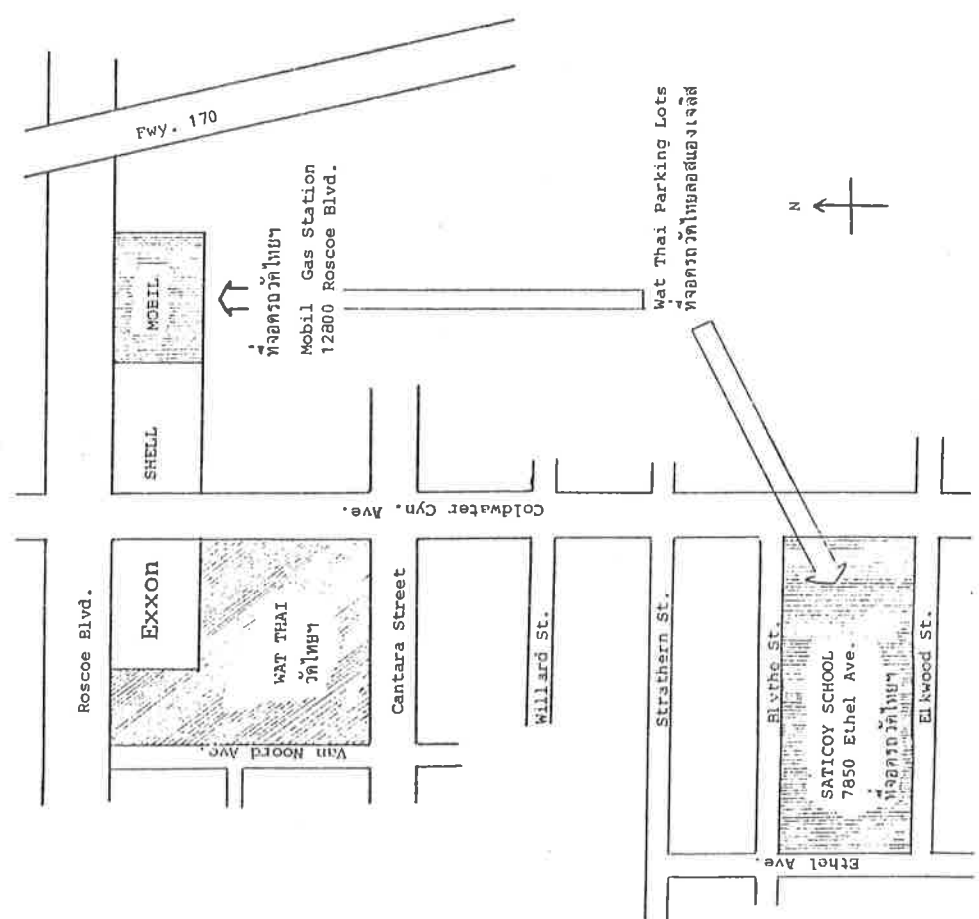
(พระเทพโสภณ)

ประธานกรรมการวัดไทยลอสแอนเจลิส

หมายเหตุ ในกรณีที่อยู่ตรงของวัดเดิม กรุณานำรถของท่านไปจอดที่ปั๊มน้ำมันโมบิล เลขที่ 12800 ถนนโรสโก โท หรือที่โรงเรียนแซตค็อกอย เลขที่ 7850 ถนนเอ็ทเธล (Ethel Ave.) ซึ่งทางวัดได้เช่าไว้สำหรับทานโดยเฉพาะ.

แผนที่แสดงที่ตั้งวัดของวัดไทยลอสแอนเจลิส

- 1. ปั๊มน้ำมันโมบิล เลขที่ 12800 ถนนโรสโก (Mobil Gas Station, 12800 Roscoe Blvd.)
- 2. โรงเรียนแซตค็อกอย เลขที่ 7800 ถนนเอ็ทเธล (Saticoy School, 7800 Ethel Ave.)



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