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## Landscape planning and design at buddhamonthon park, Narathiwat, Thailand

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**Abstract** Buddhamonthon Park, Narathiwat is located in the south of Thailand. This park has a total area of approximately 142 rais. This study focuses on landscape planning services for users by providing appropriate activities and design of Dharma Park which provides Buddhism knowledge. The research methods consisted of interviews, field surveys and a literature review. The results of this planning and design was divided into 7 major areas: the historical Buddha plant garden, the auspicious plant garden, the Buddha's Trail garden, the meditation ground, the peat swamp garden, the herb and native plant collection garden and the activities center.

**Key words:** Landscape, Buddhamonthon

### Introduction

Buddhism is one of the world's great religions by which millions of people have and continue to live. Buddhism is one of the principles of Thai Society and more than 90 percent of Thai are Buddhists. There are more than 30,000 monasteries throughout the country (Buddhist Summit, 2000). A commemorative site of the Lord Buddha, a Buddhamonthon, was constructed in order to mark the auspicious occasion of the 2,500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Buddhism, celebrated on Visakha Puja Day, May 13<sup>th</sup> BE 2,500 (CE 1975). In an expression of their deeply rooted faith in Buddhism and to commemorate the passing away of the Lord Buddha, the Great Light of the World, the government and people of Thailand agreed to build this Great Buddhist Monument. The first Buddhamonthon is located in Nakornpathom province and covers 2,500 rais (1,500 acres). The objectives of Buddthamonthon are: to provide a center for Buddhist studies, to mark the 2,500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

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Buddhism, to be spiritual center for Buddhists, to be a tranquil public park, to be a center of meditation study and practice, to be an ecclesiastical center for Buddhist monks, to be a Buddhist propagation center and to be a center where Buddhists can exchange their views on Dharma. In BE 2549 (CE 2006), the occasion of the sixtieth Anniversary Celebrations of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Accession to the throne, the government of Thailand agreed to build local Buddhamonthon. Each local Buddhamonthon comprises Buddhist structures, Dharma gardens and parks (Budhamonthon). Buddhamonthon Narathiwat is a local Buddhamonthon in the south of Thailand which has a total area of approximately 142 rais (Dumrongvong, 1993) and is currently going through a redesign and planning process.

### ***Objectives of this study***

To design and improve the landscape to accommodate users by providing appropriate activities. To design the Dharma Park which provides Buddhist knowledge.

### **Methodology**

Data collection was by questionnaires, a field survey and a literature review. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and descriptively analyzed.

### **Results for site survey and site analysis**

Buddhamonthon Park Narathiwat covers 142 rais. The main Buddha was given the name Phabuddha Thaksin Mingmonglul. In addition to the main Buddha Image, the constructions near the exit are a pagoda of Luang Pu Thau, a Buddha activity hall, a service center building, and a Buddhist library. There are two large ponds, one on either side, of the main entrance gate. There is a Holy Scripture Hall in the pond to the right hand side. The back of the area has long streams and peat swamp garden. (Fig. 1).

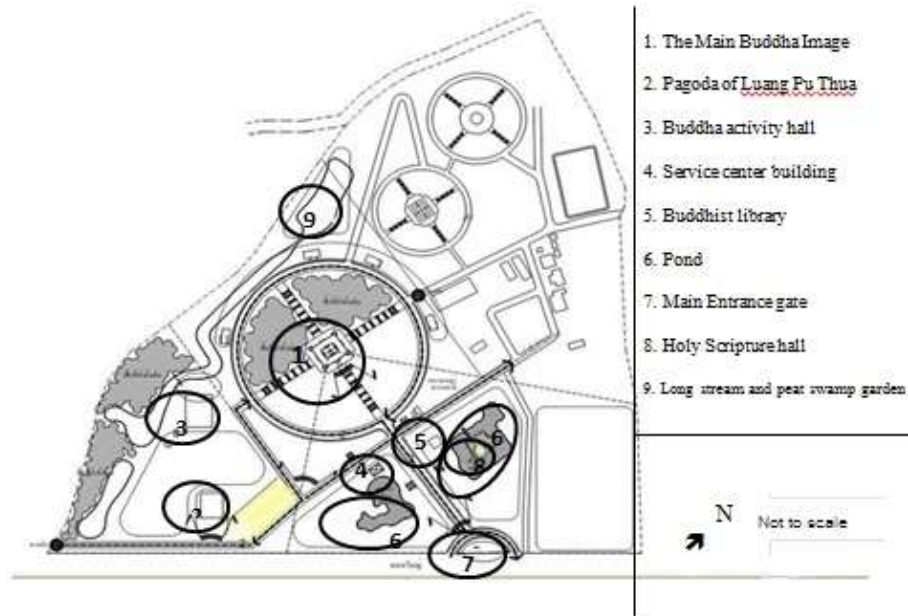


Fig. 1. Site plan

### *Questionnaire results and analysis*

Questionnaires were completed for 399 users. The results showed that the users were 21-50 years of age average. There were 205 male (51.40%) and 194 female (48.60%) respondents the main groups and the target users were government staff (26.80%), student (23.20%), and officers (18.50%). The main religions activities of users, from the most to the least, are paying respect to the Buddha image (80.70%), listening to a sermon and describing doctrine on Buddhist holidays (57.40%) and the main general activities of users from the most to the least are active activities (79.00%), relaxing (48.70%), studying the various plants (18.70%), picnicking (16.00%) and reading (4.30%). (Table 1)

**Table 1.** The users' activities

Activities	The main groups and target users								
	First level <sup>1</sup>			Second level <sup>2</sup>			Third level <sup>3</sup>		
	Users	Total	Percent	Users	Total	Percent	Users	Total	Percent
Paying respect Listening to a sermon and describing doctrine	Officer	104	38.10	Student	74	27.20	Government	42	15.40
	Student	67	24.50	Government	49	17.90	Officer	41	15.00
Relaxing Studying the various plant	Student	56	20.50	Officer	42	15.40	Government	35	12.80
	Government	21	7.70	Student	18	6.60	Government	12	4.40
Picnicking	Officer	17	6.20	Student	14	5.10	Officer	13	4.70
Active activity	Government	93	34.00	Student	65	23.80	Government	58	21.20
Reading	Student	7	2.50	Student	3	1.10	Government	2	0.7
				Government			Officer		
							Officer		

<sup>1</sup>First level of number users, <sup>2</sup>Second level of number users, <sup>3</sup>Third level of number users

The design concept was aimed at landscape planning and design for serving users by providing proper activities and design of the Dharma Park which provides Buddhism knowledge and activities. From data analysis the study area was separated in to 12 major zones. (Fig. 2) They were:

The main entrance of the area: there is a semicircle at the front of the entrance road to the area. There is a park entrance sign in this area. The garden is geometrical in style.

**The entrance road:** Both sides of the road were formal garden style. The gardens were the frame sight to the Buddha image.

**The large pond at the right hand side of the main entrance road:** There is a Holy Scripture Hall in this pond. The design concept of the garden in this area is a historical Buddha plant garden.

**The large pond at the left side of the main entrance road:** This area was designed as an auspicious plant garden which comprised auspicious plant species.

**Activity area:** developed as an activity center that comprised a conference building, a restaurant, shops, multipurpose plaza, a parking area, an ATM and a stage.

**The area in front of the step to the Buddha Image:** This area was developed as a Buddhist trail garden.

**Pagoda of Luang Pu Thuat:** This area was developed as a Dharma garden that was Historical Garden. The Historical Garden composed of plants that were relevant to the history of Buddha.

**Peat swamp area:** This area was selected as a conservation area that was developed to be a herb garden and a peat swamp garden.

**Buddhist activity hall:** This area was connected to from peat swamp area. This area was decorated with ornamental plants.

**The surrounding area of the main Buddha:** This area was the location of four commemorative sites.

**Meditation Ground:** This area composed of the housing area and meditation ground.

**The main Buddha “Phabuddha Thaksin Mingmongkol”:** This area was connected to the main entrance road. The plaza at the front of this area is a place of worship and consists of forestry.

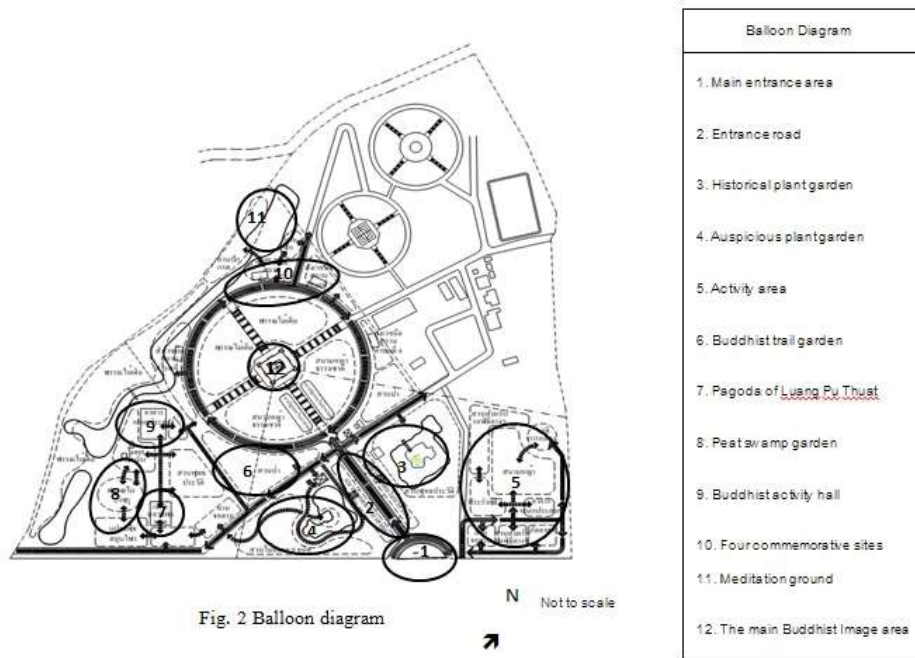


Fig. 2 Balloon diagram

Fig. 2. Balloon diagram

After the layout of Buddhamonthon Narathiwat, the park was divided into 12 zones that were developed and designed to be a master plan. From the master plan of Buddhamonthon Narathiwat, the park was designed to meet Buddhist beliefs as well as landscape architecture points. The Master plan comprised the major areas: (Fig 3).

**Historical Buddha plant garden (Klumdee, 1993).**

These garden contained plants related to Lord Buddha's Birth to Nirvana. There are twenty-eight such plant species; 1) *Nyctanthes orbor-tristis* L., 2) *Carteva adansonii* DC. Subsp., 3) *Manikara hexandra* (Roxb.), 4) *Barringtonia acutangula* (L.) Gaerth., 5) *Santalum album* L., 6) *Myristica iners* Blume., 7) *Myristica fragrans*., 8) *Myriopteron extensum* (Wight)., 9) *Hopea odorato* Roxb., 10) *Borassur flabellifer* L., 11) *Ficus benghalensis* L., 12) *Nelumbo nucifera* Gaerth., 13) *Bambusa* sp., 14) *Gossypium* sp., 15) *Ficus religiosa* L., 16) *Magnolia liliifera* (L.) Baill., 17) *Mangifera indica* L., 18) *Phyllanthus emblica* L., 19) *Cassia fistula* L., 20) *Terminalia chebula* Retz.var. *chebula*., 21) *Acacia catechu* (L.f.) Willd., 22) *Shorea robusta* C.F. Gaerth., 23) *Soraca indica* L., 24) *Citrus* sp., 25) *Azadirachia indica* A. Juss. Var. *indica*., 26) *Imperata cylindrica* (L.) P. Beauv., 27) *Myriopteron extensum* (Wight) K.Schum., and 28) *Ficus rdligiosa* L.

### ***Auspicious plant garden***

The auspicious plant garden contains species of Thailand's plants which are believed to be auspicious and good luck. There are nine kinds of auspicious plants:

*Cassis fistula* L. related to power or strength

*Atocapus heterophyllus* Lamk. related to support or aid.

*Cassia javanica* L. ssp. *Nodosa*. related to luck or good fortune

*Erythrina variegata* L. related to wealth or opulence

*Bambusa vulgaris*. related to happiness or cheeriness.

*Cassia surattensis* Burm.f. related to stability or strength.

*Tectona grandis* L.f. related to honor or worship.

*Dalbergia cachinecinensis* Pierre. related to assistance or help.

*Fagraea fragrans* Roxb. related to protection or prevention.

Buddha's Trail garden.

### ***There are 7 important places related to Buddha's history.***

Place 1: Buddha's birth place

The place where the Bodhisatta was born is known as Lumbini. The important tree related to this place is *Shorea robusta* C.F. Gaerth.

Place 2: Buddha's place of enlightenment

The great being chose the Uruvela senanigama forest as the place to undertake the ascetic practices that would comprise his next experiment on the search for the path to enlightenment. The important tree related to this place is *Ficus religiosa* L.

Place 3: Imbibing the bliss of deliverance place

After the enlightenment, the Buddha sat under the Great Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa* L.) imbibing the bliss of deliverance for seven days. The term imbibing the bliss of deliverance is used to refer to those who are enlightened. In ordinary terms some may say that the Buddha was resting after his heavy labors. There were four kinds of trees related to this place. They are *Ficus benghalensis* L., *Barringtonia acutangula* (L.) Gaerth., *Manikara hexandra* (Roxb.) and *Terminalia chebula* Retz. Var. *chebula*.

***Place 4: Buddha gave his First sermon place.***

Two months after his Enlightenment the Buddha decided to communicate the Dharma, the Truth, he had realized to his former friends, the fine ascetics knowing that they were living at Varanasi (Benares) in the deer park at Isipatana (modern Sarnath) (Soonthornsima, 2000). There were three kinds of plants related to this place which were *Mangifera indica* L., *Phyllanthus emblica* L. and *Citrus* sp.

***Place 5: The first Buddhist Monastery place.***

The Buddha departed from the palmyra grove and entered the palace of King Bimbisara. The officials had arranged the alms food already. The King offered the food to the Buddha and his Order of monks (sangha). When the Buddha and all the monks had eaten enough, King Bimbisara approached the Buddha and sat respectfully to one side. He pointed out to the Buddha that the palmyra grove was very far from the city. Moreover it was in a remote area not convenient for entrance and egress. Then the king went on to say that his own Bamboo Grove. The Veluvana was situated neither too near nor too far from the city, easy to get to, not crowded during the day and peaceful at night. In short, it was a fitting place for the Buddha and the order to stay. When the Buddha expressed his approval by remaining silent, King Bimbisara formally consecrated his offering of the Bamboo Grove as the first Buddhist monastery in the world by pouring water onto the Buddha's hand (Mahidol university computing center, 2002). The important trees related to this place were *Borassur flabellifer* L. and *Bambusa* sp.

***Place 6: Buddha spent the rains retreat place.***

Buddha spends a rains retreat in which he tried to avoid destroying the plants and crops of people and being a danger to animals. There were three kinds of trees related to this place were *Acacia catechu* (L.f.) Wild., *Azadirachia indica* A.Juss. Var *indica.*, and *Mangifera indica* L..

Place 7: Buddha's passing away place.

Kusinara was the town the Buddha passed away in. The important trees related to this place were *Robusta* C.F. Gaerth., and *Magnolia liliifer* (L.) Baill..

Meditation ground

The meditation area was located at the back of the park because it was a quiet place away from other people and noise. This area comprised the housing area and meditation ground in a tree shaded area for sitting meditation, walking meditation, and meditating under a long-handled umbrella.

### ***Peat swamp garden***

The landscape improvement design in this area collected the native plants which were various ground cover plants, shrubs and trees.

Herb and native plant collection garden

This area is the place for keeping native herbs for people to study and scientific research.

### ***Activities center***

This area was designed to accommodate users by providing proper activities. There were important structures and facilities which were a conference building, a restaurant, shop, parking area, multipurpose plaza, ATM and stage.



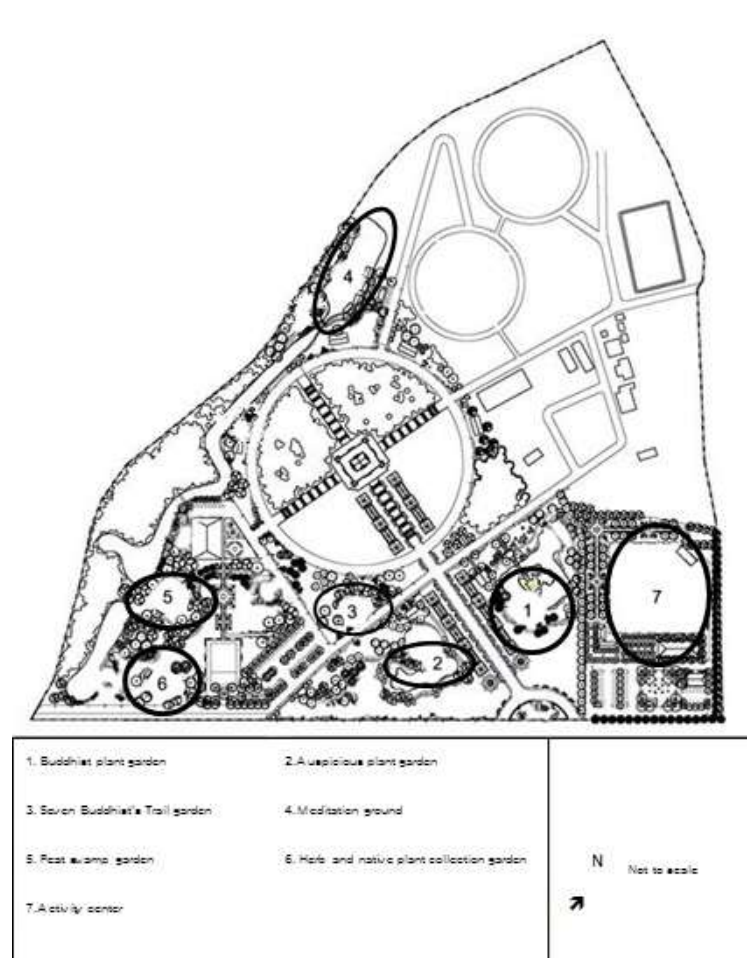


Fig. 3 Master Plan

## Discussion

Buddhamonthon is now affiliated with the commission of office of Buddhism Thailand. The prime minister of Thailand is the president of commission of layman and the supreme patriarch of Thai Buddhism as the president of commission of clergyman. Each Buddhamonthon have to comprise Buddhist structure, Dharma gardens and Public Park (Office of National Buddhism, 2007). Buddhamonthon Narathiwat is a local Buddhamonthon park in the south of Thailand. The concept design of Buddhamonthon Narathiwat is to meet the main concept of office of Buddhism Thailand. The Buddhist structures comprise of the main Buddha image (Phabuddha Thaksin Mingmongkol), Pagoda of Luang Pu Thua, Buddhist activity hall, service center building, Buddhist library, Holy Scripture hall and meditation ground.

The concept design of Dharma gardens were explained the sequence events of Lord Buddha's history by trees and plants related to Lord Buddha's history (Viriyapiendee *et al*, 2004). The Dharma gardens comprise of historical plant garden, auspicious plant garden, Buddhist trail garden and four commemorative sites.

The design concept of public park was aimed at landscape planning and design for serving by providing appropriate activities and for aesthetic purpose (Wittick, 1974). The activities of users were studied by interview the needs of local users. The main religions activities are paying respect to the main Buddha image and listening to a sermon and describing doctrine on Buddhist holidays and the main general activities are active activities, relaxing, studying the various plants, picnicking and reading.

## **Conclusion**

Landscape planning and design at Buddhamonthon Park, Narathiwat aims to landscape planning serving for users by providing appropriate activities and design of Dharma Park which provides Buddhist knowledge. The Dharma parks try to use many kinds of trees related to Buddha's history for landscaping. These trees can explain and gave knowledge to people about the history of Buddhism. This park is not only a tranquil public park but is also the hub of Buddhism in the south of Thailand where people meditate, study and exchange views on Dharma.

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