

## **CULTURAL SNAPSHOTS: DURIYATHEP (THE DEVAS OF MUSIC)**

Artist: **Phra Siriphong Kharuphankit**

Phra Siriphong was born on 7 July 1956. He was the only child of Mr. Maen (Khord) Kharuphan, the operator of an orchard at Bang Tamru District, and Mrs. Chaluey (Jaemjan), from Amphur Tayang, Petchaburi Province.

After finishing Prathom 4, elementary education, from Amnuaywongwittaya School in Thonburi, he continued his study at the Dance and Music College (Witthayalai Natasin) on 17 May 1967, starting from the first year of low level class. He left school on 1 March 1976 when he was still in the first year of high level class. His formal academic qualification is thus third year class of middle level, majoring in Thai Musical Instruments with a Thai music minor.

After leaving the Dance and Music College, he trained in the Thai art of making Khon masks. He has created many khon masks and teacher's heads (srisa khru). His remarkable achievement and superb craftsmanship was recognized in his being awarded a prize: the Master of the Arts (Sartmedhee), from Professor Mom Luang Pin Malakul Foundation, in the category of the Thai art of khon mask making, on 24 October 2001.

Phra Siriphong was ordained a monk at Wat Suttharam, Tambol Bang Lampoolang, Khlongsarn District, Bangkok, on 8 June 1986. *Tissapharano* is his ordained name. He passed his first level Dharma study at Wat Prayoonwongsawad Dharma School, and middle-level at Wat Anongkharam Dharma School. He was appointed Assistant Abbot of Wat Suttharam on 21 June 2005. On 4 September 2006 Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn bestowed on him a souvenir medal of "Thai Cultural Heritage Conservationist".

The following text and illustrations is from a booklet entitled "Bhuchakhruduriyathep". It exhibits his various masks and drawings and explains the various deities worshiped by musicians.

More of his work can be seen at his website at: [www.monnut.com/en](http://www.monnut.com/en)

*I bow in honor of the three devas: you Phra Visawakarm, who is the potent one who creates many things under the heavens, and you Phra Panjasinghkorn, who in your hands holds a Pin to play your enchanting music, and you Phra Parakhonthap, who is the ancient teacher.*

This is the royal command to invoke appearance of the three devas – Phra Visawakarm, Phra Panjasinghkorn, and Phra Parakhonthap – in the Wai Khru for the teacher of art and music (*duriyasin*).

## PHRA VISAWAKARM

Phra Visawakarm has many names, such as Phra Visanukarm, Phra Vetsukarm, Phra Phetchalukarm, but the people in ancient times who believed in black magic called him Phra Rishi Phetchalukarm.

Phra Visawakarm is considered the great deva of engineering. He is directly under the command of Phra In (Indra). And he also is the great engineer of Phra Phrom (Brahma). In this form his name is Phra Sivaphrom.

Although in Indian mythology he is an engineer in a more restricted sense, the original Thai term for engineer is *nai chang*, which means someone who is a handyman and can make anything. So in this



*Phra Visawakarm*



*Phra Rishi Phetchalukarm  
(Visawakarm)*



*Phra Rishi Phetchalukarm  
(Visawakarm)*



*Phra Visawakarm*

capacity, he is responsible for the creation and physical design of many beautiful things, including musical instruments. This is why Thai musicians consider him to be one of the devas of music.

In India there are many versions of his story. One source says that Phra Visawakarm is born from the blessing of Phra Isuan (Shiva), and was given as a gift to Phra In as his personal engineer. But in the Puranas, he is the son of Phra Phat (“the one to gives light”). He is one of eight Vasuthep servants of Phra In. It does not appear in these stories that Phra Visawakarm has a wife, but he does have one daughter whose name is Sanya. Later she became a wife of Phra Suriyathep (Phra Atit).

The Indian texts point out that Phra Visawakarm has three eyes, white skin, a crown, and dress of the color gold. But in Thai, he has green skin and wears a head sash. In one of his forms he holds the tail of a peacock. But in the form of an engineer (Nai Chang) he is depicted as holding in his right hand an early form of a plane for shaving wood, called a *pung*, which is shaped like a hoe, and in the left hand a plumb bob called a *luk ding*. Nowadays all schools of engineering worship the image of Phra Visawakarm. And the instruments he holds varies accord-

ing the school. I know from Khun Taluang Wisansulapakam that he also has a female form who is a teacher of sewing. Her name appears in the divine command of the Wai Khru Chang.

I honor you Nang Nilabanphot, whose name is in the ancient texts. You are the one to call forth all wealth and precious things.

## PHRA PANJASINGHKORN

*“I would like to worship  
and respect the Great Deva  
who has the knowledge of the Pin,  
who lives in the level of Karma.  
His name is Panjasinghkorn.  
He taught many disciples  
who have recorded the texts for singing  
which celebrate our land.”*

According to the song above, whose name is Wai Khru Mahori, the reason that Thai musicians respect Phra Panjasinghkorn is because he is considered the divine teacher of music. Phra Panjasinghkorn (or



*Phra Panjasinghkorn*

Phra Panjasinghkatheppabut) is a Kantapthevada, which means a *thevada* (angel) who is born of a fragrant tree. He is actually half human and half deva. He lives in Antarik, which is the region between earth and sky. His role is to play music, sing and dance for all the deities and devas.

In the Buddhist texts, it is pointed out that Phra Panjasinghkorn was very intelligent. He liked to make many merits for society: building roads, digging ponds, and constructing Salas. He died when still young. Afterwards he was born as a deva at the level of *Chattuckmaharajika*. In this form he is depicted with gold skin. As a result of his divinity he has no need to eat and is always full. He possesses many resources.

He always carries a lute shaped musical instrument called a *pin* (or *vina* in Indian music). He has long hair which is parted in five sections and wears a crown with five peaks. He is also the model of the tonsure ceremony. Among royalty, Thai children before they have their hair cut in the tonsure ceremony, will divide the *juk* into five strands (common people will divide the *juk* into three strands).



*Phra Panjasinghkorn*

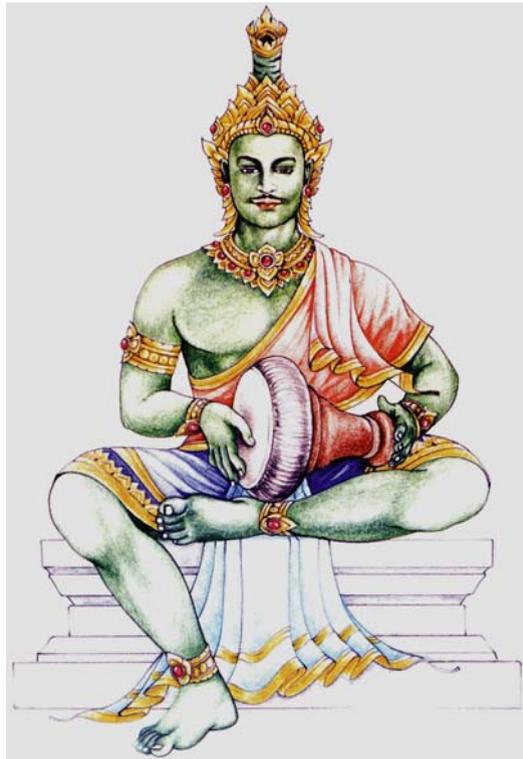


*Phra Panjasinghkorn*

## PHRA PARAKHONTHAP

His real name is Narot. There are many stories concerning him in the Brahman and Buddhist literature. The meaning of the name Phra Parakhonthap is “the highest of the Rishi”, or “the king of the Rishi”. So Phra Narot receives the highest respect – more than all the other Rishis.

He was the one to first invent the *pin*. In reference to his role in music, some call him Thepkorntam or Korntamrat (meaning an angel or person who is great in music). In addition to playing music, he was considered a specialist in many other areas including: singing, astrology, law, and medical science. In black magic, they call him Phra Rishi Narod. In the ancient Indian scripture, he was called Phrom Rishi Mahaphrachabodhi. Some believe that Phra Narot is the son of Phra Manu. But some texts point out that Phra Narot was born from the forehead of Phra Phrom. This is why he sometimes has the name “Son of Phra Phrom”. But the Vishnu Puranas point out that Phra Narot is the son of Pakot Sayathep Bidon.



*Phra Parakhonthap*

He has many other names. For example Phra Bisuna, which has the meaning of a “journalist”, some call him Phra Kri Kalka, the meaning is one who incites arguments and fighting. Some call him Phra Kapak or “monkey face”. Phra Narot has also a female form. Her name is Nang Nartee. She is the wife of Phram San Nayasi, an avatar of Phra Narai (Vishnu). She had sixty children.

According to one story, Phra Parakhonthap transformed himself to be a great bird and perched in a large fig tree near a river. His weight caused the figs to fall into the river, and the bobbing figs created a kind of music, which inspired him to create a musical instrument.

Phra Parakhonthap has many roles. In the form of Phra Pisuna he causes many events to happen among the devas. King Rama VI points out that Phra Narot is a Triksan, or a person who knows the three dimensions of time: past, present and future. His omniscient abilities are the result of his ascetic practice. He knows many charms. He is credited with composing a sacred treatise on law whose name is *nartiyathamasat*. He is also the one to tell the story of the Ramayana to Phra Rishi Valmiki, who then recorded the sacred treatise of the Ramayana when commanded by Phra Phrom.



*Phra Parakhonthap*



*Phra Parakhonthap*

The *piphat* musician and *natasin* dancer revere Phra Parakhonthap (Narot). They believe that he is the one who controls the musical rhythms, and who conducts the playing of instruments and dancing. Thus he is associated with the *tapone* drum. This drum has the function of controlling (*natap*) the rhythm of the *piphat* ensemble. That is why the *tapone* is the symbol of Phra Parakhonthap, and is why it is also greatly revered. In the *piphat* ensemble, the *tapone* placed in a position higher than all the other musical instruments. Before the playing begins a bowl of offerings are made to the *khru tapone*. When the *piphat* ensemble plays for the Wai Khru, they will cover the *tapone*, and the stand that supports it, with a white cloth. The person who conducts the Wai Khru ceremony should honor the *khru tapone* first. They then fill up a conch shell with pure water which is used to wash the *tapone* whereupon the water becomes sacred. Then this water is used to bless the other instruments, and then bless the participants in the ceremony.

While it is believed that Phra Parakhonthap is the Phrom Rishi Mahaphrachabodhi, most prefer to honor Phra Parakhontap as represented by the *tapone*. He is honored with a white cloth and offerings which do not include any animal flesh. This includes flowers, incense, candles and other fragrant things. The offerings before playing music should also include money, consisting of six and twelve baht offerings. When the playing of the *piphat* ensemble is finished, there is a beating of the *tapone*, whereupon the performance is formally closed. Then all the offerings are brought in a bowl to make merit to the *khru arjan*: both the divine teachers and the human teachers who have passed away.