



NOBLE  
EDUCATION  
PUBLISHER

PKP

PUBLIC  
KNOWLEDGE  
PROJECT

OJS

OPEN  
JOURNAL  
SYSTEMS



## Buddho Journal

<https://so13.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/Buddho>

ISSN: 3057-1200 (Online)

## Buddhist Sides in Krabi, Thailand

### Author & Corresponding Author\*

1. Phra kruwinithon Wuthichai Wuthichayo\*

### Affiliation:

1. Mahamakut Buddhist University, Sri Dhamma Ashoka Campus, Thailand.

Email: wuthichai.wut@gmail.com

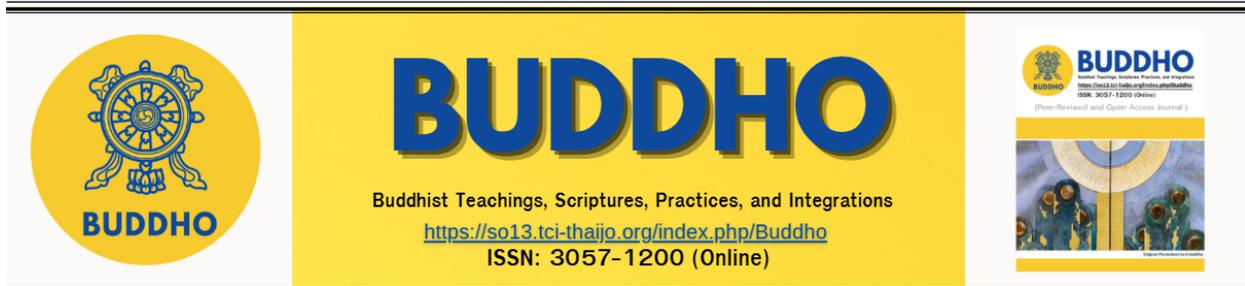
### Article history:

Received: 16/11/2022, Revised: 01/12/2022,

Accepted: 25/12/2022, Available online: 01/01/2023

### How to Cite:

Wuthichayo, P. W. (2023). Buddhist Sides in Krabi, Thailand. *Buddho Journal*, 2(1), 20-28.



Academic Review Articles

---

## **Buddhist Sides in Krabi, Thailand** **Phrakruwinithon Wuthichai Wuthichayo\***

---

### **Abstract**

Krabi, a province in southern Thailand, is not only renowned for its natural beauty but also for its rich Buddhist heritage. This study explores the various Buddhist sites in Krabi, examining their historical, cultural, and religious significance. The research focuses on temples, caves, and sacred landmarks that reflect the integration of Theravāda Buddhist traditions with local beliefs and practices. By analyzing architectural styles, historical records, and local narratives, this study highlights the role of these sites in preserving Buddhist teachings, fostering community engagement, and attracting religious tourism. Additionally, the study discusses the influence of Buddhism on the social and cultural landscape of Krabi, demonstrating how these sites serve as centers of spiritual practice and cultural identity. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of Buddhism's presence in southern Thailand and its impact on local communities.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Sides, Krabi, Thailand

### **Introduction**

Krabi, a province in southern Thailand, is widely known for its stunning natural landscapes, including limestone cliffs, pristine beaches, and dense forests. However, beyond its natural beauty, Krabi is also home to a rich Buddhist heritage that reflects the historical and cultural development of the region. Buddhism has played a crucial role in shaping the religious and social identity of the province, as seen through the presence of numerous temples, caves, and sacred landmarks that hold significant spiritual and historical value. These Buddhist sites not only serve as places of worship and monastic practice but also as centers of community life, cultural preservation, and religious tourism (Swearer, 2010).

Theravāda Buddhism has been the dominant religious tradition in Krabi, deeply influencing local customs and belief systems. Buddhist sites in the province include prominent temples such as Wat Tham Sua (Tiger Cave Temple), Wat Kaew Korawaram, and Wat Sai Thai, each of which has a unique history and religious function. These sites often blend traditional Buddhist

architecture with local artistic elements, showcasing the syncretism between Buddhism and indigenous spiritual practices (Woodward, 2011). Additionally, Krabi is home to ancient Buddhist caves, such as Tham Phet and Tham Sadet, which contain old Buddha images and serve as meditation retreats for monks and practitioners.

The study of Buddhist sites in Krabi provides insights into how Buddhism has shaped the cultural landscape of southern Thailand. By examining the historical background, architectural styles, and religious significance of these sites, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of Buddhism in the region. Furthermore, it highlights the impact of religious tourism and community engagement in preserving Buddhist traditions. As globalization and modernization influence Thai society, the conservation of these sacred spaces becomes crucial in maintaining the spiritual and cultural identity of Krabi (Cohen, 2017).

### **History of Buddhism in Krabi**

Krabi, a province in southern Thailand, is widely recognized for its breathtaking natural landscapes, including limestone cliffs, pristine beaches, and dense forests. However, beyond its geographical beauty, Krabi possesses a deep-rooted historical connection to Buddhism that has significantly shaped its cultural and religious identity. The presence of Buddhist traditions in Krabi can be traced back to the early periods of Thai history when Theravāda Buddhism spread from India and Sri Lanka through trade routes and missionary activities (Swearer, 2010).

#### **Early Buddhist Influence in Krabi**

The introduction of Buddhism to Krabi is believed to have occurred during the Dvaravati period (6th–11th centuries CE), when Buddhism was flourishing in central Thailand and gradually extended to the southern regions (Skilling, 2009). Archaeological evidence suggests that early Buddhist communities settled in Krabi along the Andaman coast, which was a crucial maritime trading hub connecting India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia (Woodward, 2011). Buddhist artifacts, such as Buddha images, inscriptions, and stupas, have been discovered in caves and ancient temple sites across the province, indicating the long-standing influence of Buddhist culture. One of the most significant sites reflecting this early Buddhist presence is Tham Sua (Tiger Cave Temple), a meditation center known for its natural caves and historical relics. The temple, which is believed to have been used by Buddhist monks for centuries, serves as an important spiritual and pilgrimage site today (Cohen, 2017). Similarly, Wat Kaew Korawaram, one of Krabi's main temples, showcases the evolution of Buddhist architecture and monastic traditions in the region.

#### **Buddhism and Local Traditions in Krabi**

Buddhism in Krabi is deeply intertwined with local traditions and beliefs. Many Buddhist practices in the province reflect a blend of Theravāda Buddhism and indigenous animistic traditions, where local deities and spirits are often venerated alongside Buddhist rituals (Tambiah, 1970). This syncretic form of Buddhism is evident in ceremonies such as the Bun Phra

---

Wet (Festival of the Buddha's Past Life), as well as various merit-making activities observed during Makha Bucha and Visakha Bucha days. Additionally, Krabi's Buddhist temples and monasteries serve as cultural hubs where religious teachings, meditation practices, and social welfare activities take place. The province is home to several forest monasteries that emphasize traditional Buddhist monastic discipline and meditation practices in accordance with the Thai forest tradition (Taylor, 1993). These institutions play a crucial role in preserving Buddhist philosophy and fostering community engagement in religious life.

### **The Role of Buddhism in Contemporary Krabi**

In modern times, Krabi continues to be a significant center for Buddhist practices, attracting both Thai devotees and international visitors interested in Buddhist studies and meditation retreats. Religious tourism has become an essential aspect of the province's cultural economy, with temples like Wat Tham Sua and Wat Sai Thai serving as both spiritual and historical landmarks (Suksri, 2014). The conservation of Buddhist heritage sites remains a priority for local authorities, as these sites not only represent Krabi's religious legacy but also contribute to its identity as a place of spiritual and cultural significance. Despite challenges posed by urbanization and globalization, Buddhism in Krabi continues to thrive through monastic education, community involvement, and government-supported heritage preservation efforts. The province remains a testament to the enduring influence of Buddhism in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of southern Thailand.

### **Buddhist Sites in Krabi**

Krabi, a province in southern Thailand, is well known for its breathtaking natural scenery, but it is also home to significant Buddhist sites that reflect its deep-rooted religious and cultural heritage. Among the most prominent Buddhist sites in the province are Wat Tham Sua (Tiger Cave Temple), Wat Kaew Korawaram, and Wat Sai Thai. Each of these temples has a unique history, religious function, and cultural significance, contributing to the preservation of Theravāda Buddhist traditions in southern Thailand. These temples serve as centers of religious practice, meditation, and community engagement while also playing an essential role in religious tourism.

### **Wat Tham Sua (Tiger Cave Temple): A Spiritual and Historical Landmark**

One of Krabi's most famous Buddhist sites is Wat Tham Sua, commonly known as the Tiger Cave Temple. Situated in a forested area surrounded by limestone cliffs, the temple is a renowned meditation retreat and pilgrimage site. The name "Tiger Cave" originates from local legends stating that a tiger once lived in one of the caves within the temple complex (Swearer, 2010). Wat Tham Sua is widely recognized for its sacred caves, where monks and practitioners engage in meditation and ascetic practices. The temple complex also includes a challenging 1,237-step staircase leading to a hilltop pagoda and a giant Buddha statue, offering panoramic views of Krabi's landscape (Suksri, 2014). This location is significant for Buddhist devotees, as it

symbolizes perseverance, spiritual enlightenment, and devotion. Many visitors come to the temple to make merit, meditate, and seek blessings from monks. The temple follows the Thai forest tradition, emphasizing strict monastic discipline and mindfulness practice (Taylor, 1993).

As the morning mist slowly lifts over the dense forests of Krabi, the distant sound of temple bells echoes through the limestone cliffs. Nestled in this serene landscape is Wat Tham Sua, or the Tiger Cave Temple, a sacred sanctuary known for its deep spiritual significance and breathtaking natural surroundings. The journey to this revered Buddhist site is not just a physical expedition but a transformative experience that challenges both body and mind. Legend has it that centuries ago, a great tiger once roamed the caves within the temple grounds, giving the site its name (Swearer, 2010). Today, the presence of the tiger is only a memory, but the cave remains a place of profound reverence. Monks and meditation practitioners silently sit within its depths, seeking wisdom in its stillness. The air is thick with the scent of burning incense, and the rhythmic chanting of monks fills the cavern, creating an atmosphere of peace and devotion. For those seeking a deeper spiritual experience, the ultimate challenge awaits—the ascent of the 1,237-step staircase leading to the summit. Each step is a test of endurance, an act of perseverance akin to the journey toward enlightenment. As pilgrims climb higher, the lush jungle slowly fades below, revealing an awe-inspiring view of Krabi's vast landscape. At the peak, a golden Buddha statue sits in quiet majesty, gazing over the province with a serene expression, as if blessing all who have made the arduous climb (Suksri, 2014).

For many, reaching the top is not just an achievement; it is a moment of self-discovery. The panoramic view from the pagoda reminds visitors of the impermanence of life, a core teaching in Buddhism. Standing there, with the wind carrying distant temple prayers, one cannot help but reflect on the path of mindfulness and devotion that defines Wat Tham Sua. The temple follows the Thai forest tradition, emphasizing strict monastic discipline and meditation, reinforcing its reputation as a place of deep spiritual practice (Taylor, 1993). Whether one visits Wat Tham Sua to seek blessings, meditate, or simply marvel at its beauty, the temple remains a powerful testament to faith, perseverance, and the timeless wisdom of Buddhism. In the quiet moments among its caves, in the sweat of the climb, and in the whispers of the wind at the summit, the spirit of Wat Tham Sua continues to inspire all who walk its sacred grounds.

### **Wat Kaew Korawaram**

Located in Krabi Town, Wat Kaew Korawaram is one of the province's largest and most important Buddhist temples. This temple serves as a religious and administrative center for Buddhist monks and laypeople. Its history dates back to the early 19th century when Krabi was developing as a regional hub of trade and culture (Woodward, 2011). Architecturally, Wat Kaew Korawaram stands out due to its grand white structure with intricate golden decorations, reflecting a blend of traditional Thai and modern architectural styles. Inside the temple, visitors can find a large golden Buddha statue, murals depicting Buddhist cosmology, and sacred relics. The temple is not only a place of worship but also a center for Buddhist education, hosting sermons, meditation programs, and community service initiatives (Cohen, 2017). Additionally, Wat Kaew Korawaram plays a crucial role in organizing Buddhist festivals such as Visakha Bucha

and Asalha Bucha, where devotees gather to participate in candlelight processions and merit-making ceremonies. The temple's central location and its active involvement in community events make it an integral part of Krabi's spiritual and social landscape.

Nestled at the heart of Krabi Town, Wat Kaew Korawaram stands as one of the province's largest and most revered Buddhist temples. Its towering white walls and golden accents shine brightly against the bustling backdrop of the town, making it a symbol of both spiritual devotion and architectural grandeur. The temple's origins trace back to the early 19th century, a time when Krabi was beginning to flourish as a regional hub for trade and culture (Woodward, 2011). As the town grew, so too did its role as a center of Buddhism, and Wat Kaew Korawaram quickly became a cornerstone of both religious and community life.

Approaching the temple, one is immediately struck by its majestic structure. The grand white exterior, adorned with intricate golden motifs, reflects a harmonious blend of traditional Thai Buddhist architecture and modern design elements. It's a temple that bridges the past and present, standing as a testament to Krabi's rich cultural evolution. Upon entering, visitors are greeted by the serene presence of a large golden Buddha statue, seated in quiet meditation. The glow of the golden figure invites contemplation, drawing individuals into a space of reverence and peace. Surrounding the Buddha are murals that depict the vast Buddhist cosmology—scenes of divine realms, the cycle of birth and rebirth, and the path to enlightenment. These artistic representations not only capture the essence of Buddhist teachings but also serve as a visual guide for the faithful to deepen their understanding of the Dharma.

Wat Kaew Korawaram is more than just a place of worship; it is a thriving center for Buddhist education and community engagement. Within its walls, monks and laypeople alike gather for sermons, meditation programs, and educational initiatives that offer spiritual guidance to those seeking inner peace. The temple's role in shaping the spiritual lives of Krabi's residents cannot be overstated. It serves as a refuge for those in search of wisdom and tranquility, a place where the teachings of the Buddha come alive through both practice and study (Cohen, 2017).

The temple's significance extends beyond the daily routines of worship and education. It plays an active role in organizing key Buddhist festivals such as Visakha Bucha and Asalha Bucha, where thousands of devotees come together to engage in candlelight processions and merit-making ceremonies. These festivals not only celebrate important milestones in the life of the Buddha but also strengthen the bonds of the community, reinforcing the temple's central position in Krabi's spiritual and social fabric. As the sun sets and the candles flicker in the evening breeze, the temple grounds come alive with devotion, filling the air with prayers and offerings that echo through Krabi Town.

Wat Kaew Korawaram's central location, coupled with its involvement in local cultural and religious events, ensures that it remains an integral part of the town's identity. It is a place where the past and present converge, offering both a sanctuary for personal reflection and a hub for community connection. As visitors step through its gates, they enter not only a sacred space but a living symbol of Krabi's deep-rooted Buddhist traditions and its ongoing cultural evolution.

### **Wat Sai Thai**

Wat Sai Thai, another significant Buddhist site in Krabi, is well known for its reclining Buddha statue, which rests under a natural rock overhang. This temple, situated along the road between Krabi Town and Ao Nang, serves as a prominent stop for travelers and locals alike. The reclining Buddha at Wat Sai Thai symbolizes the Buddha's final moments before entering Parinirvana, reminding devotees of the impermanence of life and the path to enlightenment (Skilling, 2009). The temple is an example of how Buddhist sites in Krabi integrate local cultural elements with religious traditions. Wat Sai Thai hosts various religious ceremonies, including ordination events and almsgiving rituals, which are essential in maintaining Theravāda Buddhist practices within the local community (Tambiah, 1970). Many people visit the temple to seek blessings, make merit, and pay respect to ancestors, following traditional Thai Buddhist customs.

Nestled along the road between Krabi Town and Ao Nang, Wat Sai Thai is a tranquil haven that draws both locals and visitors to its serene surroundings. What makes this temple truly stand out is its revered reclining Buddha statue, which rests peacefully beneath a natural rock overhang, as if sheltered by the earth itself. The sight of the Buddha in this serene posture is both humbling and awe-inspiring, as it depicts the Buddha's final moments before entering Parinirvana—the state of complete liberation from the cycle of rebirth (Skilling, 2009). For those who visit, it is a reminder of the impermanence of life, the transient nature of existence, and the importance of walking the path toward enlightenment.

The reclining Buddha at Wat Sai Thai is not merely a statue; it is a profound symbol that invites reflection on the nature of life and death. Its serene posture offers a glimpse into the Buddha's ultimate peace, a peace that believers hope to attain through following the noble truths and practicing mindfulness. Visitors often sit in quiet contemplation before the statue, finding solace in its calm presence, reflecting on their own lives and their journey toward spiritual awakening.

Beyond its symbolic importance, Wat Sai Thai is also a place where local traditions and Buddhist practices intertwine. The temple hosts various religious ceremonies that hold deep significance for the Krabi community. One of the most important rituals is ordination, where young men enter the monkhood to follow the monastic life and study the Buddha's teachings. Additionally, the temple is a focal point for almsgiving rituals, a practice where laypeople offer food to monks as a way of accumulating merit and supporting the monastic community (Tambiah, 1970). These rituals are vital in preserving the Theravāda Buddhist practices that have been a part of southern Thailand's cultural and religious landscape for centuries.

The temple's role as a spiritual and cultural center extends beyond its daily rituals. It is a place where local people gather to make merit, seek blessings, and pay respect to their ancestors. In traditional Thai Buddhist customs, making offerings and participating in religious ceremonies are seen as ways of ensuring spiritual well-being and building a stronger connection with both the community and the divine. The peaceful atmosphere at Wat Sai Thai provides an ideal setting for these practices, allowing devotees to deepen their faith and reflect on their spiritual journey.

Wat Sai Thai, like Wat Tham Sua and Wat Kaew Korawaram, is a vital part of Krabi's rich Buddhist heritage. These sacred sites not only serve as places of worship and meditation but also

---

as custodians of tradition, culture, and community life. Through the preservation of these temples, Krabi's unique spiritual identity is maintained, offering both locals and tourists alike an opportunity to engage with the teachings of the Buddha. As the province continues to attract visitors from around the world, the importance of protecting and promoting these sacred spaces remains essential to ensuring that Krabi's spiritual and cultural legacy endures for future generations.

### **Conclusion**

The history of Buddhism in Krabi highlights the profound spiritual and cultural legacy that has shaped the province's identity. From the early introduction of Theravāda Buddhism during the Dvaravati period to the current integration of local traditions with Buddhist practices, Krabi's Buddhist heritage remains vibrant and influential. The province's significant Buddhist sites, including Wat Tham Sua, Wat Kaew Korawaram, and Wat Sai Thai, continue to serve as vital spiritual centers, supporting religious practices and community engagement while also contributing to the growing religious tourism sector. The deep connection between Buddhism and local traditions enriches the cultural fabric of Krabi, and the preservation of these sacred sites ensures that the teachings of the Buddha will continue to inspire future generations. Buddhist sites such as Wat Tham Sua, Wat Kaew Korawaram, and Wat Sai Thai reflect the rich spiritual and cultural heritage of Krabi. Each temple serves a distinct religious function, from meditation retreats and community engagement to cultural preservation and religious tourism. These sites not only reinforce the influence of Theravāda Buddhism in southern Thailand but also contribute to the local community's religious and social life. As Krabi continues to develop as a tourist destination, the preservation and promotion of these sacred sites remain vital for maintaining the province's cultural and spiritual identity.

### **Suggestions**

To further preserve and promote Buddhism in Krabi, it is recommended that local authorities and religious organizations enhance efforts to protect Buddhist heritage sites from the pressures of urbanization and environmental challenges. This can include the implementation of sustainable tourism practices that ensure the conservation of these sacred spaces while allowing visitors to engage meaningfully with Buddhist traditions. Additionally, expanding educational programs related to Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and monastic life can help deepen both local and international visitors' understanding and respect for Krabi's religious heritage. Collaboration with universities and international Buddhist communities could also bring fresh perspectives and foster cross-cultural exchange, ensuring that Buddhism in Krabi remains relevant and dynamic in the modern world.

### **Body of Knowledge**

Buddhism has played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and religious landscape of Krabi, a province in southern Thailand known for its stunning natural beauty. The introduction of Theravāda Buddhism to Krabi is believed to have occurred during the Dvaravati period (6th–11th centuries CE), when Buddhist teachings gradually spread from central Thailand to the southern regions through maritime trade routes and missionary activities (Skilling, 2009). Archaeological findings, such as ancient Buddha images and inscriptions, suggest that Krabi was an important center for early Buddhist communities along the Andaman coast, which served as a vital link between India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia (Woodward, 2011).

The discovery of Buddhist artifacts in caves and temple sites across the province, particularly in Tham Sua (Tiger Cave Temple), underscores the long-standing presence of Buddhism in the region. Over time, Krabi's Buddhist practices became deeply intertwined with local traditions, blending Theravāda Buddhism with indigenous animistic beliefs. Local deities and spirits are often venerated alongside Buddhist rituals, reflecting a syncretic form of spirituality (Tambiah, 1970). Krabi's Buddhist temples, including Wat Kaew Korawaram, Wat Tham Sua, and Wat Sai Thai, serve as focal points for both religious and cultural activities. These temples are not only places of worship but also act as community hubs for education, meditation, and social welfare. The Thai Forest tradition, which emphasizes monastic discipline and meditation, continues to thrive in Krabi, with several forest monasteries dedicated to preserving these ancient practices (Taylor, 1993).

In modern times, Krabi remains a significant center for Buddhist practices, attracting both Thai devotees and international visitors interested in meditation and Buddhist studies. The preservation of Buddhist heritage sites, along with the continued involvement of local communities in religious activities, ensures that Krabi's Buddhist identity remains strong. As the province develops as a popular tourist destination, the ongoing integration of Buddhist teachings with local culture and traditions will play a key role in maintaining the spiritual and cultural integrity of Krabi.

### **References**

- Cohen, E. (2017). *Buddhism and tourism: Perspectives on Buddhist tourism in Thailand*. Routledge.
- Skilling, P. (2009). *Buddhism and Buddhist art in Southeast Asia*. Silkworm Books.
- Suksri, N. (2014). *Thai Buddhist heritage: Temples, art, and culture*. River Books.
- Swearer, D. K. (2010). *Buddhism in Thailand: A cultural and religious history*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Tambiah, S. J. (1970). *Buddhism and the spirit cults in North-East Thailand*. Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, J. (1993). *Forest monks and the nation-state: An anthropological and historical study in northeastern Thailand*. NUS Press.
- Woodward, H. (2011). *The art and architecture of Theravāda Buddhism in Southeast Asia*. Brill.