

## Wat Phanan Choeng

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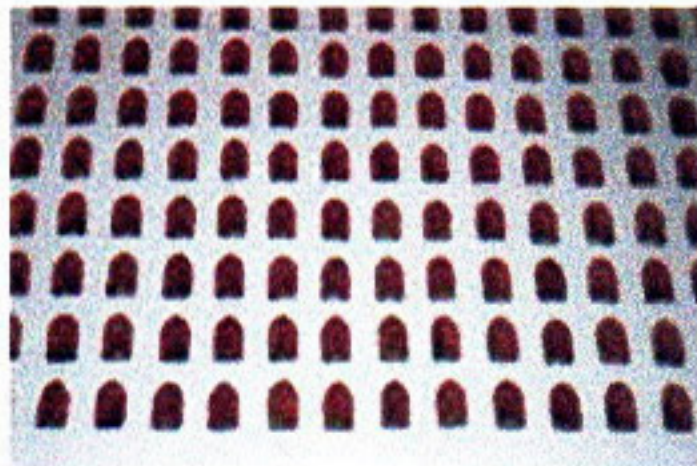
On the south side of Ayutthaya, right where the Chaophraya and Pasak rivers join up, is one of Ayutthaya's oldest temples, and one of its most lively to this day. The huge Buddha image around which the temple was built was cast in 1324.



The main **wiharn** is just barely big enough to house the colossal 19 meter (63 feet) high Buddha image. On special days, there can barely be enough room to squeeze past people praying in front the image in order to see the entire space. Press on through, because its worth it.



The central Buddha image is surrounded by many other minor figures. On the walls, especially at the back behind the image, are hundreds of niches containing small buddha images. Each Buddha in a niche represents a donation to the temple. If you make a big enough donation (about 500 Baht at least) you can get your own Buddha placed on the wall. This is one of the very few temples in Thailand where you can see this practice.



Hard up against the wiharn, between it and the river, is a small 18<sup>th</sup> century shrine. The story goes that the shrine was built to honor a Chinese Princess who drowned herself because of the king's infidelity (given that the kings of Ayutthaya had many wives, this story seems rather unlikely.) The shrine remains very popular with members of the Chinese community to this day.



The shrine is traditional in design, with the outer wall essentially joining two separate buildings together and an open space in between. The two-storey structure has a large altar below and a smaller one on a second floor. The window shutters and doors are highly decorated with dragons and phoenix birds.



There are numerous stalls lining the large parking area where food and souvenirs can be purchased.