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## The Thai Spirit House

Almost every home and business has a Spirit House, the Thai word for them is **San Phra Phum**, here is an image of a typical Spirit House:



The Spirit Houses are used to house any spirits that live on the land, particularly spirits of ancestors who have passed, and providing a Spirit House helps to ensure that harmony and serenity will descend upon the land and property, the idea being that if they have their own dwelling in which to reside they will not feel it necessary to haunt the main house or building. To ensure the spirits are content in their abode they are provided with offerings of food, drinks, garlands and incense sticks. If properly provided for the spirit guardians will protect the dwelling and bring wealth and prosperity. Spirits that inhabit houses and private dwellings are known as Phra Phum and for businesses they are called Phra Chai Mong Kol.

San Phra Phum are placed on the land as determined by a Brahman Priest or another person specializing in these rituals who will find the best position, ideally to the North of the main building, and ensure that the shadow of the main house never reaches the spirit house as this is regarded as very unlucky. The priest will also determine the best day for the ceremony to invite the spirit into the Spirit House, this is calculated using certain dates - the best days are on Wednesday or Thursday, in the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 9th or 11th waxing or waning moon. They also

need to ensure that the selected date does not coincide with other dates in the calendar which are regarded as bad luck.

Once a suitable site is located a hole is dug for the main post to be sited upon. In the hole 9 stakes of lucky wood, each 12 inches in length and tapered towards one end, are driven into the ground. These are made from the following trees:

- 1 - Pudding Pine - provides more power
- 2 - Jackfruit Tree - provides support for wealth and fortune
- 3 - Javanese Cassia - provides luck and victory
- 4 - Indian Coral Tree - provides money and gold
- 5 - Bamboo - provides happiness
- 6 - Kalamona - provides strength and stability
- 7 - Teak - provides honorability
- 8 - Siamese Rosewood - provides wealth and fortune, same as the Jackfruit
- 9 - Tembusu - provides protection from any harm or danger

Prior to putting the stakes into the ground the Priest will chant an incantation 108 times to cast a spell on the woods, another incantation is chanted as the stakes are being driven into the ground until they are all level with each other and ready to receive the column for the Spirit House. It is also customary for the inhabitants of the property to throw jewelry such as gold, silver or copper into the hole to bring them wealth and finally a plate bearing the image of Yan Tra (a mystical symbol) made from copper or silver is placed in the hole. The pole to receive the spirit house is then erected.

Once fully erected a figure of the Phra Phum is placed in the spirit house, the image is shown holding a double edge sword in his right hand for conquering demons and a book in the left hand to record births, deaths and marriages which may occur in the dwelling. Also placed inside the house will be furnishings to keep the spirits comfortable, these can include household objects chairs, beds and in some cases even miniature TV sets. Other figures may also be placed on the spirit house to keep the spirits company. They can range from animals such as horses or elephants to statues of Thai dancers.

Once the spirit house is fully furnished, it is time for a spirit healer to invite the spirits to live in the spirit house, garlands of flowers are placed on the house, incense sticks are lit and offerings of food and drinks are placed in front of the house. The priest will then formally invite the spirits into the house, and this signifies the end of the ceremony.