ISSUE 11

THAILAND

The Common Thread

TCT

The Common Thread

CONTENT WARNING: THIS ISSUE EXPLORES ADULT THEMES AND IS SUITABLE FOR GRADE 6 AND ABOVE

Cover art by Anaaya (G11)

LETTER FROM THE TEAM

Why did we choose this theme?

Walk through the lively halls and on the feathery green grass of UWC Thailand and you'll find a beautiful mix of cultures, languages, and stories. Living in these buildings is like living the world. Still, many of us may graduate having barely scratched the surface of the culture, language, and story that hosts our UWC experience. With so much diversity demanding our constant attention, Thailand can unintentionally fade into the background of our day-to-day lives. But living in a place and truly knowing it are completely different journeys to embark.

We decided to make 'Thailand' the theme for this issue after we realised that this is an experience our past graduates faced, and an experience many of us still face. Appreciation for a culture can come in many ways, and this issue's goal is to explore the many dimensions through which you can appreciate this marvelous country: locations here in Phuket where you get to see remnants of Thai history, a piece on learning a new language, inputs on how our own school honours Thai heritage, and much much more. Each page here gives you a different entry point into understanding the place we all call home.

We hope this issue will inspire you to learn a few Thai phrases, maybe visit a local festival. And inspire you to not just live in Thailand, but live with Thailand. Enjoy! 😇🫶

– Syna
Editor

THAI RECIPES

Mango sticky rice

ข้าวเหนียวมะม่วง



1. 1 kg of Thai sticky rice
2. 800ml of coconut milk
3. 150g of sugar
4. 1 tsp of salt
5. Ripe yellow mangoes



1. Prepare sticky rice: Rinse the rice 3 times.
2. Soak it for 6 hours or overnight.
3. Make the coconut cream mixture: In a saucepan, add 800ml of coconut milk, stir in one direction to avoid curdling.
4. add 150g of sugar and 1 tsp of salt, stir until it dissolves. Once it begins to boil, turn off the heat.
5. Combine sticky rice with coconut milk: Transfer rice into a bowl and pour the coconut mixture, and stir.



Thai Lemon Tea

ชามะนาวไทย

- 2 tablespoons Thai black tea leaves (or 2 Thai tea bags)
- 2 cups hot water
- 2–3 tablespoons sugar (adjust to taste)
- 1–2 lemons or limes (for juice)
- Ice cubes
- Optional: a few mint leaves for garnish





1. Brew tea in hot water for 3-5 mins.
2. Strain and stir in sugar while hot.
3. Let cool slightly, then add lemon/lime juice.
4. Fill a glass with ice and pour the tea over.
5. Garnish with mint or a lemon slice.

The history OF PHUKET

Phuket, the city and island of Southern Thailand that we live on, wasn't always called Phuket and it wasn't always the touristy region that we know it as today. This island first started getting settled in the 1st century BCE. The jungle regions were inhabited by indigenous tribes while the coastal areas were inhabited by the Chao Leh people or sea gypsies who survived on piracy and fishing. The mellow lifestyle of the indigenous and Chao Leh people was disrupted in the 7th century when Phuket fell under the control of the Srivijaya empire. This empire was an influential maritime power that was based in Sumatra. Under the control of Srivijaya, Phuket became a bustling trade hub for merchants and ships to stop during their journeys between eastern and western empires. This became a point of connection between Arabia and India to the west and China to the east. As trade continued to grow with the increasing wealth of maritime and land empires, Phuket became subject to many foreign influences before other parts of Thailand. During this time, other parts of Thailand were under control of the Thai kingdom. In the 13th century Phuket joined the Thai kingdom state when Thai armies from the Sukhothai kingdom took control of Phuket from the Srivijaya empire. Over time the Sukhothai kingdom gave way to the Ayutthaya kingdom as powers shifted between the major Thai kingdoms.

While Phuket's relevance was growing as it was a strategic area for trade and multicultural interactions, its importance increased when tin was discovered in the region in the 16th century. The discovery of tin led to an exponential economic growth for the Ayutthaya kingdom and attracted more foreign powers, notably European powers, to trade with the Thai kingdom. By the time the first Europeans arrived, Phuket was already a well established trade post. While during this time Phuket was influenced by various cultures including Arabian, Indian, Portuguese, French, Dutch and British, the island was never colonized and remained governed by the Thai kingdom, as it still is today. However, the influences of these various regions are shown in the diversity of Phuket. Old Town on the island of Phuket is home to Buddhist temples, Chinese shrines, a mosque, a Catholic church, a Sikh Gurdwara, and a Hindu shrine. The buildings of the town itself have Sino-Portuguese influence, especially in the older areas of it.



As Phuket continued to prosper from tin mining and continued trade, its reputation gained the interest of neighboring powers, such as the Burmese. Tensions between the Burmese and the Thai kingdoms boiled over into warfare during the 18th century. One of Phuket and Thailand's proudest moments is centered around Phuket's victory over the Burmese people in 1785 when the sister and wife of a newly deceased governor rallied the people of Thalang to drive out the Burmese invaders. These two ladies became known as The Heroines of Thalang and are celebrated in an annual festival to commemorate the victory over the Burmese people. While the continuous growth of Phuket was important for the economy and power of the island, many irreversible changes began occurring and the physical and social environment of the island changed as well. The indigenous tribes that had inhabited the jungle parts of the island since the 1st century BCE were displaced by tin miners in the 19th century. The Old Town of Phuket became an important place for both trade and culture and was built up in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Coinciding with the theme of growth and development, rubber plantations began popping up on the island in the 20th century. These plantations dramatically altered the landscape of the island as large amounts of rainforests were cut down to make way for them, but they also were and continue to be a source of profit for the island. Then at the end of the 20th century tourism came as well and started to grow as well. First the island drew the attention of backpackers, but later became more of a luxury tourist attraction with the construction of the airport and beach bungalows. Now, Phuket is mainly known as a tourist area and gets over 3 million tourists a year. The history of Phuket is often overlooked for the beautiful beaches and tropical weather, but it is an important part of understanding the culture of Phuket.



Ainsley

Grade 11

FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM THAILAND

How do we know what we know about a country? Culture, politics...But what else? It's always about the people.

King Rama IX

King Rama IX, or King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was Thailand's longest-reigning monarch and deeply loved by his people. He cared a lot about the country's development and often visited rural areas to understand people's needs. Many Thai people remember him not only as a king but also as a kind and humble person, who always worked for the good of the nation.



Queen Sirikit

Queen Sirikit is known for her grace and her dedication to Thai culture. She supported traditional crafts and helped local communities keep their heritage alive. Many people admire her for her warmth and the way she has cared for women and children across Thailand.

Lisa (Lalisa Manobal)

Lisa from BLACKPINK is one of the most famous Thai artists in the world. She grew up in Buriram and became an international star through her talent and hard work. Thais are proud of her because she shows that people from Thailand can shine anywhere.



Buakaw Banchamek

Buakaw Banchamek is one of the most famous Muay Thai fighters from Thailand. He became known worldwide for his strength, discipline and sportsmanship. Buakaw helped popularize Muay Thai beyond Thailand and inspired many young athletes to take up the sport. Today, he continues to compete and promote Thai culture.



Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Apichatpong Weerasethakul is a Thai film director known for his unique and poetic storytelling. His film 'Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives' won the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010. Through his movies he shares a different way of seeing life, memory and Thai culture, which has made him one of the most respected filmmakers in the world.



Adelya
Grade 11

THAI CULTURAL COMMITTEE (TCC)

Discover Thailand. Share Culture. Have Fun.

TCC isn't just here for Thai-speaking students — it's for everyone! Our goal is to bridge the gap between UWC's international community and the vibrant Thai culture that surrounds us.







Each year, DP students from around the world come to live in Thailand for two whole years, yet many leave without truly experiencing its spirit. TCC wants to change that. Through hands-on activities like **Thai food and drink making, traditional games, cultural trips, learning Thai slang**, and formal major events we help organise such as **Wai Kru, Loy Krathong, Songkran,** we create opportunities for everyone to connect, learn, and laugh together, in addition to having the chance to lead initiatives surrounding accurate delivery of Thai culture.

What makes TCC special is that it celebrates Thai culture through the diverse perspectives of international students — and often, they end up having even more fun than the Thais themselves!

Our members describe TCC in one word as:

"Inclusive. Funniest.
Proactive. Organized.
Thai Tea. Unique.
Diverse. Dance. Heritage."

Join us and learn more about Thailand, one chayen at a time



PHUKET

VEGETARIAN FESTIVAL



The Thai Vegetarian Festival, originated in Phuket, is a celebration of 9 days that begin during the spring in Thailand.

At the heart of the celebration lies hope in a more fortunate and happier future. It is believed to be possible by receiving the blessings of the Gods.

To receive the blessings of the Gods, locals avoid consuming meat and any other food that has a strong smell. Like soy sauce, garlic and honey. This is believed to make them approach the purifying energy of the Gods. The food that is eaten during the festival is named 'Jay' (เจ) food – which means vegan food in Thai.

Food stalls usually carry a flag that reads 'Jay' (เจ) in Thai. The writing is written to deliberately imitate Chinese writing style due to the Chinese cultural roots.

During the celebration, temples offer 'Jay' food cooked in large portions by volunteers for any pilgrim. Visitors can pay respect to the gods and the culture with the candles and incense offered in the temple to be lit throughout the celebrations. The photo above is the scripture that reads as 'Jay' in Thai.

Celebrators that want to go further in their spiritual cleansing can also pierce various parts of their body, mainly their faces. “Masong”, ”**ม้าทรง**” in Thai, is the name for it. The “Masong” believers wear elaborately and pierce their cheeks and tongues with various objects : Including swords, guns, flowers, and lamps.

Masong are followed by teams that help with their bleeding. Keeping the wounds clean and uncontaminated by bacteria. It is believed that the Masong do not feel pain during this ritual practice. Around the temples, firewalking and blade-ladder climbing is also practiced. We can see how the practitioners are serious about their rituals if we observe them during the practices. This also reveals the significance of the event for the Thai people.

Some grade 11 and 12 students visited the festival on Saturday Oct. 25, which took place in Phuket Old Town. Fernando Lara who visited the festival remarks :

“It felt really fun. The food was quite cheap. The exploration. Every stall was different, as you move along stalls offering different food. Curry mushrooms, fried mushrooms, sorbet, mochi, there was a lot of food. There was 0 meat.”

Indeed, it is quite a unique experience for those of us who are coming from abroad.

- Eray



Scan here to view Kru Matt’s incredible photos of the festival.

These are not suitable for children, as they are of the rites being practiced by the Masong, including bodily mutilation.

CULTURAL BUCKET LIST

Hidden gem #1: Phuket Art Village
In Rawai, a vibrant and creative community shared by local artists who live and contribute to a beautiful ecosystem of art made in studios that are colorful and hand-built. Going here feels like stepping through a gallery that came alive. Murals on every wall, sculptures in every garden, and the sound of creation humming in the air. Every corner has a story to tell.





Hidden gem #2: Moh Seng Historic Museum
In Old Town, a time capsule that shows a glimpse of Phuket's multicultural history. It was once the home of the Moh Seng family, who were Hokkien Chinese merchants during the time of the tin mining boom in Phuket. Stepping into the house, you'll be able to see a blend of Chinese, Portuguese, and Thai designs. The museum is a precious artifact that shows how Chinese settlers helped to shape the identity of Phuket.

Hidden gem #3: Wat Nai Harn
A very serene Buddhist temple near the Nai Harn Lake, only moments away from one of our most beautiful beaches. It's smaller and quieter than many of Phuket's grand temples, but that's where its charm lies: in the simplicity. Golden Buddha statues, murals, and rooftops that glimmer under our hot sun. These are things that make it a great spot for some tranquil reflection.



– Syna
Grade 12

Language as Connection: Exploring Thai

At UWC Thailand, our hallways echo with dozens of languages—English, Spanish, Mandarin, French, Hindi, and, of course, the mother tongue of our host country, Thai. Whether it's from our classmates, teachers, staff or the local community, all of us have been immersed in this language in one way or another. For many of us who didn't grow up speaking Thai, learning it can feel like stepping into a world that's both musical and mysterious.

The Thai language traces its origins back over a thousand years, evolving from the Tai language family of southern China and later influenced by Pali, Sanskrit, and Old Khmer as the Thai people migrated southward. In the 13th century, King Ramkhamhaeng developed the Thai script, which remains in use today. With 44 consonants, 32 vowels, and five tones, Thai is as intricate as it is expressive.

Each tone gives a word a new meaning. The syllable 'mai' can mean "no," "new," "wood," "burn," or "silk," depending on how it's pronounced- a phenomenon that is fascinating and prone to unfortunate mistakes at the same time.

For international students and teachers at UWCT, learning Thai is both a challenge and a joy. Learning Thai often becomes more than just a language lesson. It's an act of connection. It opens doors to friendships, cultural understanding, and moments of shared laughter.

Fernando, who has picked up a considerable amount of colloquial Thai says the circumstances led him to learn Thai, more than anything, especially the need to be able to communicate with locals.

"I took the bike and went out. I had to learn from the source one way or another." - Fernando (G12)

If you are around Shalom even for a little bit, you'll know how much Thai she knows and confidently understands —whether it's from her roommate, the kids from the CCP she heads, or locals in general.

"Learning Thai has been such a joyful experience for me! I love picking up trendy words I can use with my Thai friends, and useful phrases for shopping or taking a taxi. I'm especially thankful for my roommate, who randomly throws Thai words at me- even when I have no idea what they mean."-Shalom (Grade 12)

ไม่เป็นไร

Samaira
Grade 12

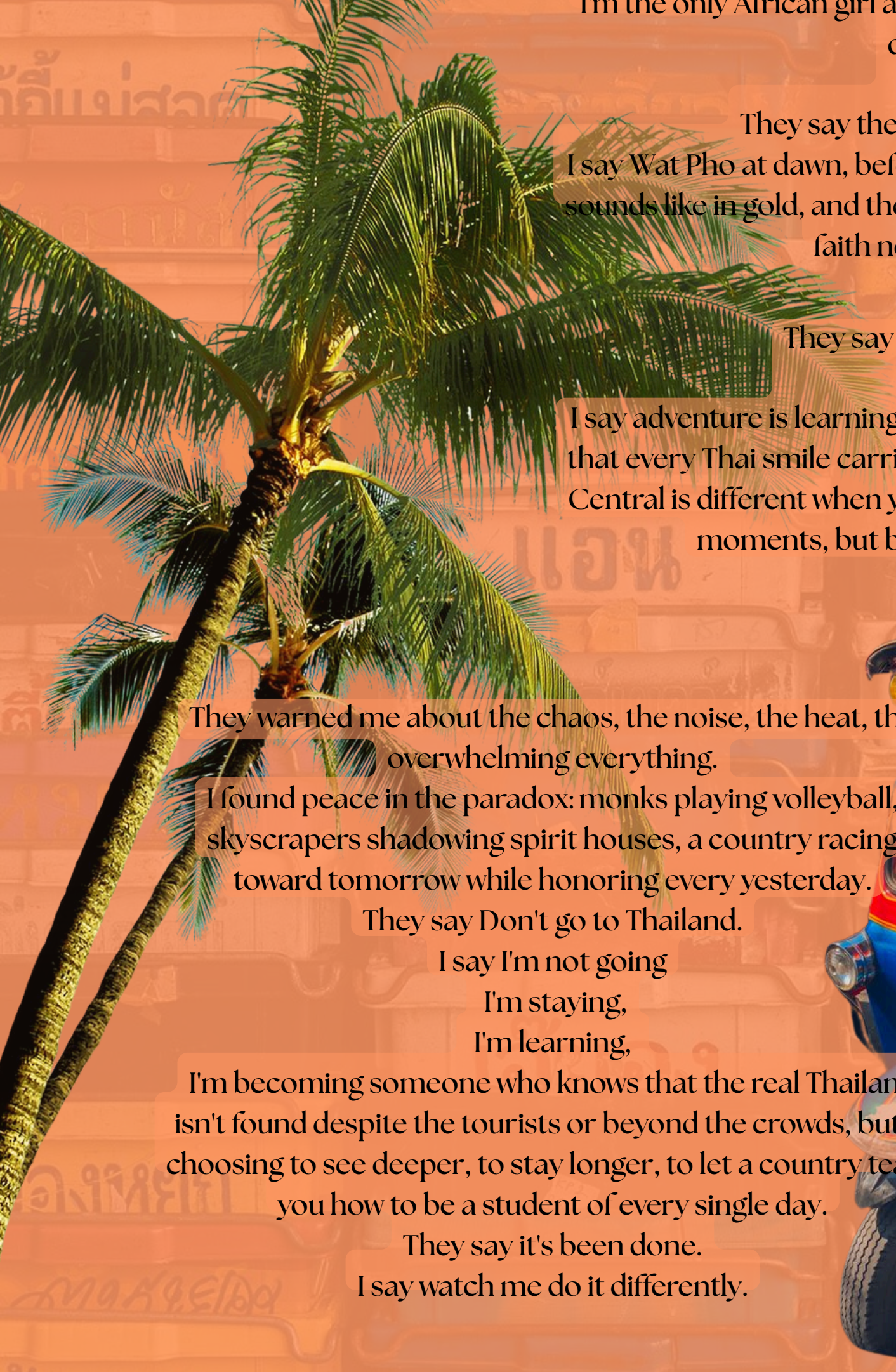
THEY SAY "DON'T GO TO THAILAND"

They say don't go to Thailand because of the tourists, the Instagram beaches, the backpacker trail worn smooth, the "authentic" experiences packaged and priced.
I said I'm going because of the woman and the child who doesn't speak my language, who doesn't know me, but has taught me real love by their genuine smile.
because of the school boarding house at midnight, Thai students and international dreamers united by coffee and impossible deadlines.
They say it's all been discovered.
I say I'm discovering it anyway, not the Thailand in guidebooks, but the one in morning alms rounds where no camera feels right, in late-night conversations with my roommates explaining tone marks while I fumble through tones, in the local restaurant where I'm the only African girl and the aunty remembers I only always drink Thai Tea.

They say the temples are too touristy.
I say Wat Pho at dawn, before the crowds, taught me what silence sounds like in gold, and the small shrine near campus showed me faith needs no translation.

They say the adventure is gone.

I say adventure is learning that Krungthep means "city of angels," that every Thai smile carries a whole language, that getting lost in Central is different when you live here, when you're not collecting moments, but building a life and surviving IB.





They warned me about the chaos, the noise, the heat, the overwhelming everything.
I found peace in the paradox: monks playing volleyball, skyscrapers shadowing spirit houses, a country racing toward tomorrow while honoring every yesterday.
They say Don't go to Thailand.
I say I'm not going
I'm staying,
I'm learning,
I'm becoming someone who knows that the real Thailand isn't found despite the tourists or beyond the crowds, but in choosing to see deeper, to stay longer, to let a country teach you how to be a student of every single day.
They say it's been done.
I say watch me do it differently.

Marceline
Grade 12

LOY KRATHONG



Loy Krathong is a traditional Thai festival celebrated on the full moon night of the 12th lunar month, usually in November. During the festival, people float small decorated baskets called krathongs on rivers, lakes, or ponds to pay respect to the Goddess of Water and to symbolically release anger, grudges, and bad luck.



The krathongs are often made from banana leaves, flowers, candles, and incense sticks, creating a beautiful scene of flickering lights on the water. It's a time of gratitude, renewal, and celebration across Thailand.









Love



Shy



Angry



Sad



Khon dance is a traditional Thai masked theatrical art form dating back to the Ayutthaya Period (1351-1767) that tells the epic story of Ramakien through intricate physical storytelling. Every element carries profound meaning - from character types (regal phra, graceful nang, powerful yak, energetic ling) to specific body positions like the "wong" curved arms and "liam" bent knee angles that communicate character and emotion.

Thai Dance

The gestures function as a complete language, with distinct movements expressing love, shyness, anger, and sadness, while characters like Hanuman embody core Thai values of loyalty, devotion, and cleverness. Recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage, Khon represents centuries of cultural wisdom preserved through disciplined physical practice, though modern adaptations now blend electronic sounds and athletic choreography to keep this meaningful tradition alive for younger generations.

Summarized from the work of

View

Class of 2024

Thailand Beyond The Stereotypes

“Ladyboys/Kathoeys are the butt of the joke”

I’m sure that before many of us arrived we received many jokes about Thailand and LadyBoys. I know I did. But Ladyboys also known as Kathoey here in Thailand, are so much more than the world likes to give credit for. While many countries around the world are filled with homophobia and hate, Thailand has created an inclusive country for all gender identities. Thailand’s society tends to be a lot more open minded and non-judgemental. Kathoey individuals are visible in mainstream media, workplaces, runways, and everyday life. They aren’t hidden or silenced. This visibility directly impacts the way that Thai communities are welcoming and kind to those who express themselves differently. The outside world likes to poke fun at this side of Thai Culture, but this piece would like to highlight that it’s nothing to be ashamed of, instead it is something to be proud of. Even in a world where negative stereotypes are consistently used for transgender communities it is important to recognise that Thai Culture values freedom and kindness over judgement.

“Every Thai festival involves buckets of water or crazy parties”

Songkran is a festival that I’m sure we have all heard about at this point. Firsties are dying to experience it and Second years can’t wait to go back. We hear these stories for crazy parties filled with water because that is what is spread to the non-Thai community. But Songkran has a deep and rich history that deserves praise. It is originally a Buddhist new year tradition focused on cleansing and renewal of people. The water symbolises starting fresh. They say it gets rid of bad luck. And even besides that, there are so many other Thai festivals that do not revolve around water or crazy parties. Makha Bucha and Visakha Bucha are quiet and religious, but still very important to Thai culture. Festivals like Loy Krathong (which you can read more about in this issue of the Common Thread) is a peaceful and reflective festival. Thai festivals are generally based on the idea of community and balance, not those crazy out of line parties that some medias like to depict.

“Sexualisation and Sex Tourism in Thailand”

One of the most common stereotypes about Thailand is its association with sex tourism and the sex industry in general. This stereotype is harmful in the way that it overshadows the many great things about Thailand. While I personally love the movie The Hangover 2, It is an understatement to say that it definitely manipulates the way that an outsider views Thailand. Thailand in the media is shown as a land of cheap pleasure instead of a place of deep spirituality and rich history. It brings the wrong types of tourists and makes people forget about the beauty of this country.This perception also ignores the harsh reality of the economic struggles. Many people involved in this industry are not there by choice. They are there because they are struggling economically, or are there by force. The dark side of this industry is truly pitch black. With problems like human trafficking and sex exploitation, Thailand’s sex tourism industry is filled with problems. It is not something to romanticise or congratulate. Thailand has a beautiful culture outside of this, which gets hidden by these problems. Thailand is a magnificent country full of beauty and inspired youth in many fields. We shouldn’t let one stereotype, such as this one, define it permanently.

Manu
Grade 11

THAi PHRASES TO TRY WiTH YOUR FRiENDS

PBĚN YẠNG NGỊ̀BĀNG?
(HOW'S IT GOING?)
เป็นยังไงบ้าง

RERD-LOEY-LA
(THAT'S AMAZING / SLAY)เริ่ดเลย หล่ะ

YAA-OMM
(MORE ENERGY !!) อย่าอ่อม ๆ

AJ-JA-YOUNG-NA
(MAY BE NOT / MAYBE LATER)อาจจะยังน้า

Thank you to:

Design team:
Miona
Anaaya (cover art)
Sonam
Sophia

Journalists:
Kru Amanda, Nara, Syna, Adelya, Ainsley, Boling, Martina, Eray, Manuela, Marceline, Samaira, and Scarlett