



## Report

# History of the Thai flag

## Members of the Thai Vexillological Society

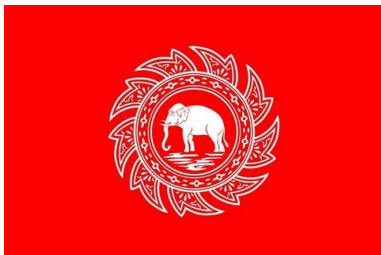
This year, 2017, is the centenary of the current Thai national flag.

In around 1790, King Phutthayotfa Chulalok (Rama I, reigned 1782-1809) introduced a new state and naval ensign to replace the existing plain red flag. The King decreed the introduction of a white chakra into the centre of the field. Private vessels retained the plain red ensign.



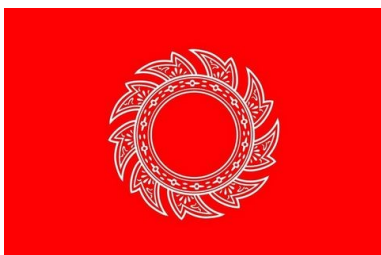
*State ensign introduced by Rama I*

In around 1820, the state and naval ensigns were amended by King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (Rama II, reigned 1809-24), who placed a white elephant in the centre of the chakra. The King had been offered three white elephants, an event so auspicious that he felt it should be commemorated on the flag.



*State ensign introduced by Rama II*

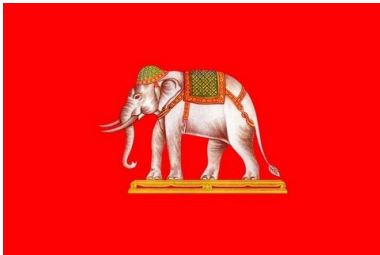
In 1855, King Mongkut (Rama IV, reigned 1851-68) decided that the devices on the existing flag were not visible enough, and the old flag without the elephant became the state and naval ensign once again. This flag was also introduced as the country's civil ensign in 1893, and was flown until 1916.



*State ensign of 1855*

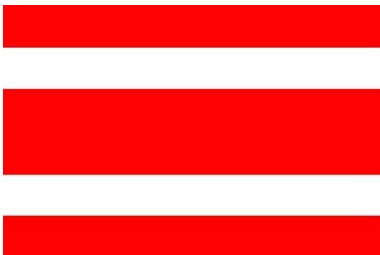


In 1893, a new state and naval ensign was introduced by King Rama IV, featuring a caparisoned elephant and a chakra in the upper hoist canton. The latter was removed in 1897. This flag was the state and naval ensign between 1898 and 1912. In 1912, a device consisting of a crowned gold anchor enfiled by a chakra was introduced into the upper hoist canton, and this flag became the naval ensign. The same design, but without the hoist canton device, was used as the state ensign and state flag from 1912 to 1917.



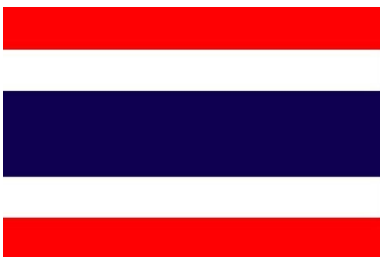
*State ensign of 1897, after removal of the canton device*

A new civil ensign was introduced in 1917. The design represented a complete break from the past, consisting of a pattern of red and white horizontal stripes. The King's objective was firstly to provide a simple flag that could be made inexpensively, and second to adopt a flag that would not cause embarrassment when flown upside down.



*New civil ensign of 1917, first pattern*

This design was amended almost immediately, changing the central red stripe to blue, and thereby making a more striking, distinctive flag. This flag became the national flag and the civil and state ensign, and is still in use today.



*Revised 1917 ensign, and the current national flag*

As part of the centenary celebrations, the largest ever Thai flag was made by Abina Co. Ltd (Thailand). Measuring 34 m x 63 m and covering 2,661.29 m<sup>2</sup> (28,645.89 ft<sup>2</sup>), it was hoisted in Chiang Rai, Thailand, on 30 November 2016. Dignitaries from Thailand and neighbouring countries presided over the inauguration ceremony, together with 32 monks and over 1,000 spectators. Attendees observed a moment of silence for the passing of His late Majesty King Rama IX (Bhumibol Adulyadej, who had died on 13 October), before singing the national anthem together. Three cranes were used to suspend the flag. The event was ratified by the *Guinness Book of World Records*.



The location will be the site of a new tourist attraction in the province, which is part of the Golden Triangle. The location will house a national flag museum that will in future provide knowledge on the history of the Thai national flag.



*The huge Thai flag hoisted at Chiang Rai to celebrate the centenary*