

Mae Phosop: Goddess of Rice



Rice is not merely a crop, it is the very essence of Thailand's cultural roots. Rice is believed to a divine being named *Mae Phosop*, or the Rice Goddess, taking care of it.

In most rice – growing countries in Asia, the spirit of rice resides in the Rice Mother, or the Rice Goddess. In Thailand, the Rice Goddess is *Mae Phosop*. Just as mothers give food and milk to their children, *Mae phosop* gives her body and soul to everyone.

Mae Phosop is the goddess and the protector of rice. Since ancient times Thai people have believed rice is important for their survival. Farmers in particular will hold various rituals that demonstrate their deep respect and gratitude to *Mae Phosop* at varying stages throughout the growing season, from preparing the land to seeing the leaf tips appear to harvesting. They believe this will bring them prosperity and wealth.

Many believe that whoever tills and cultivates the soil should worship the Rice Mother, for she will endow him/her with health and wealth. Whoever dose not worship her will suffer as a consequence. They will be emaciated by hunger and sickness and suffer poverty.

There are 3.7 million rice farming families across the country, with an area planted for rice covering about 60 million rais (1 rai = 1,600 square meters) nationwide. Rice is exported to 170 countries, bringing in hundreds of billions baht each year.