

Unit 7 Describing Sculpture in Buddhist Art of Thailand

- Buddha images in different periods and postures
- Buddhist divinities and ornamental works
- Stucco decoration
- Vocabulary and expressions

Thailand is the land of Buddha images. They range in size from tiny miniatures to huge giants. They are made of many different kinds of materials—stone, plaster or terra cotta, crystal or jade, wood, ivory or metal. However, the overwhelming preference has been for bronze, an alloy of copper with smaller amounts of tin and other metals, to which silver and gold are often added. When the casting is completed, the image is nearly always covered with a coating of lacquer and gold leaf; and an old bronze, particular one that has lain for a long time buried in the ground, takes on a beautiful variegated (multi-colored) patina to which the remnants of gliding give added lustre.

For more than 1,300 years the artists of Thailand have concentrated on making Buddha images in large quantities.

Meaning of Buddha Image

Buddha image is very meaningful among Thai people. The image represents the Lord Buddha and reminds the Buddhists laymen to follow the Buddhism doctrine and the Lord Buddha's teaching while they are worshipping the statue. For some people, Buddha image could be a path to ceasing suffering. In art, Buddha image is an output of artisans' inspiration in creating Buddhist art.

Buddha Images in Different Postures/ Mudra

1. The Seven Hand Gestures (Mudra) of the Buddha in Thailand

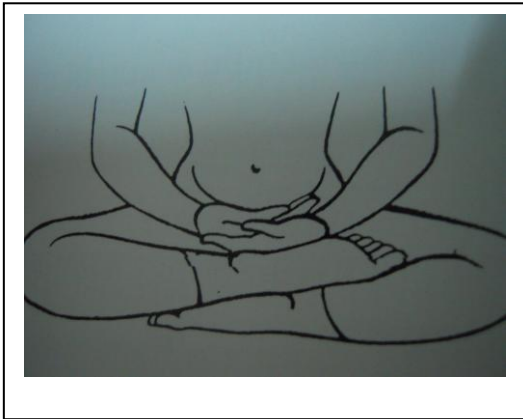
According to Indian ideology, posture of Buddha image is called "Mudra" (มูตรา). Mudra refers to the gestures performed by the hands of a Buddha image. Mudras have specific meanings that refer to some event in the life of the Buddha or denote a special characteristic. According to Indian ideology of Buddhism, there are 7 main hand gestures (Mudras) of the Buddha, as follows:

- (1) **Subduing the Mara/ or Calling the Earth to Witness (Bhumisparsa Mudra)** (ภุมิสปรศมูทรา): This is the most common representation of the Buddha in seated position. The Buddha is in the meditating posture with loosely- crossed legs. The Buddha's right hand is in the earth-touching position. The left hand rests on the laps.
- (2) **Meditating (Dhyana Mudra)** (ธยานมูทรา): This Mudra signifies meditation. Both hands are in the lap with palms upward. The right hand is on top of the left hand. The Buddha is most seated in the half-lotus posture or yoga posture. There are 2 patterns of the legs postures: one is the posture with tightly crossed legs (Khad Samathi Phet), so that the soles of both feet are visible; and another one is the posture with loosely crossed legs (Khad Samathi Rab).
- (3) **Turning the Wheel of the Law in Motion (Dharmachakra Mudra)** (ธรรมจักรมูทรา): The hands of the Buddha are generally held closely to the chest. The fingers of the left hand rest against the palm of the right hand (as if turning the wheel, made by the index finger and thumb of the right hand). This Mudra is rarely seen in Thailand. The Dharmachakra Mudra signifies the teaching of the first sermon of the Buddha at the Deer Park in Sarnath.
- (4) **Teaching, Giving Instruction, Reason (Vitarka Mudra)** (วิตรรกมูทรา): The hand is held closer to the chest than in the Abhaya Mudra. The palm is facing outward. A circle is made with the index finger and the thumb. The other three fingers point upward. This is made with the right hand. The Buddha is in a seated posture with his feet resting on the floor. This is the common gesture in Dvaravati Buddha images.
- (5) **Entering Nirvana** (the Buddha's final state of enlightenment before his death) (Saiyasna/ *mahāparinabbāna*) (ปางไสยาสน์): The Buddha rests on his right side of the body. The eyes close. The left arm rests along the body while the right arm serves as a pillow with the hand supporting the head.
- (6) **Imparting Fearlessness (Reassurance) (Abhaya Mudra)** (อภัยมูทรา): This gesture is made with the right hand raised and the palm facing outwards, fingers extended pointing upward. The wrist is bent at a right angle with the forearm. The gesture is sometimes made with both hands. Sometimes the Mudra is made with one hand. The Buddha may be either standing, sitting or walking.
- (7) **Symbolizing Charity (Varada Mudra)** (วรมูทรา): The Buddha can be in either standing or sitting. The Mudra It is mostly in standing posture. Sometimes it is also represented in the sitting position. For sitting posture, the hand lowered with the palm facing outward is the gesture of bestowing blessings or of giving charity. The hand is extended downward, palm out.

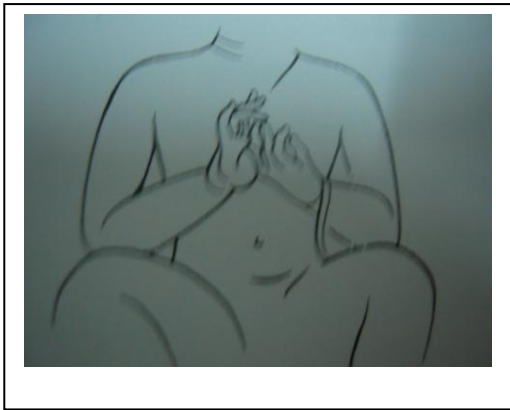
Patterns of Mudra



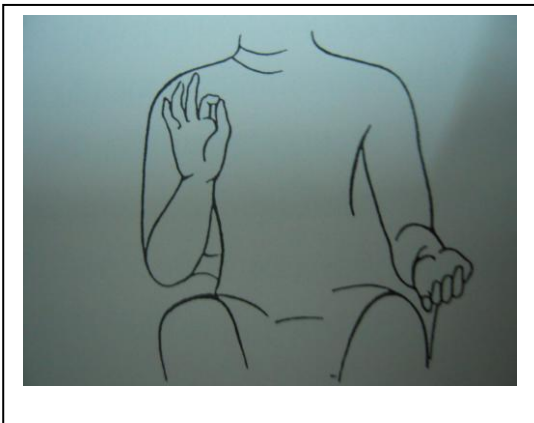
Subduing the Mara



Meditating



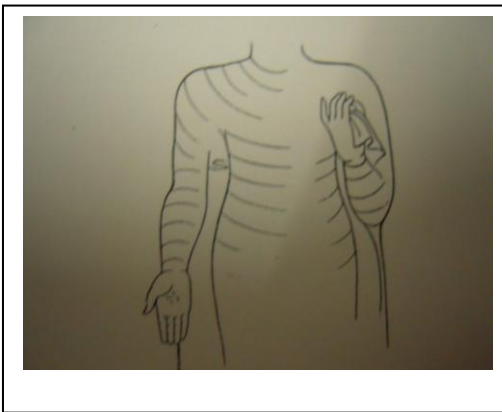
Turning the Wheel of
the Law in Motion



Teaching, Giving
Instruction, Reason



Imparting Fearlessness
(Reassurance)



Symbolizing Charity

2. Buddha Images in Different Styles: Four postures in general

- **Sitting/seated position:** If seated, the Buddha may be shown in one of three different positions:
 - In the 'heroic posture' or 'half lotus' with the legs folded over each other (Khad Samad Rab- ชัดสมาธิราบ). The right leg is folded over the left leg. For this posture, the legs are loosely crossed.
 - In the 'adamantine posture' (or full- lotus posture) (Khad Samad Phet- ชัดสมาธิเพชร) - Each foot is resting on the opposite thigh, right leg crossed over the left leg. Notice that the soles of both feet are visible. For this posture, the legs are more tightly crossed.
 - In the position of a person sitting in a chair



Subduing Mara (Calling the Earth to Witness) - Half lotus posture ขัดสมาธิราบ



Mediating in the full- lotus posture ขัดสมาธิเพชร

- **Standing:** If standing, the Buddha may be shown either with his feet together, or with one foot forward (walking)
- **Reclining:** The reclining posture may represent the Buddha resting or sleeping, but more usually represents the Buddha's final state of the enlightenment before his death (Nirvana).



3. Attitudes of the Buddha: Physical description of Buddha Images in different periods

Buddha image in each period has unique physical characteristics and details of the halo, the facial expression and the body. The Buddha images can be classified according to the periods in the history, as follows:

1. Dvaravati Period
2. Sukhothai Period
3. Lanna Period (Chiang Saen School)
4. U-Thong and Early Ayutthaya Periods
5. Ayutthaya Period
6. Rattanakosin or Bangkok period

Dvaravati Period

Dvaravati art was chiefly the work of the Mon people, who were settled around the northern coast of the Gulf of Siam in central Thailand. (There was also an important branch of the Mon people in lower Burma, who were later responsible for some of the greatest artistic triumphs at Bagan, the capital of Burma from the 11th to the 13th century A.D.)

The Buddha image sculpturing during Dvaravati usually was in stone carving, outstanding in its gigantic size, yet less massive than the Gupta's one (the art from which Dvaravati Buddha image was modeled.) The image is usually in the teaching posture- seated with his feet resting on the floor. Some Buddha images in this style (period) include the Buddha image housed in the ordination hall at Phra Pathom Chedi Monastery, Nakorn Pathom, at the Buddha image cast in sand stone at Wat Khon Sawan, Chaiyaphoom,



The facial expression of the Buddha image in this period is rigid with protruding eyes. The body shows muscle and manly figure. The monastic robe is in an open model.



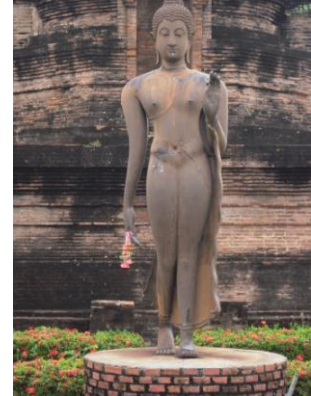
Sukhothai Period

It was at Sukhothai that the most beautiful and characteristic Thai art developed, including Buddha image. The image was made with a rather slender figure, the spiral- hair curls and distended earlobes. The arms are made like an elephant's trunk and the hands were made like lotus flowers just beginning to open—long and slim, with finger- tips bent delicately backward. The foot soles are flat and the heels projecting.

The body is softly rounded on its surface with bulging (fitting to bust/ full) breast and prominent nipples.

The face is delicately oval, the eyebrows arching, the nose aquiline (hooked), and the chin often incised. The facial expression is often wonderfully spiritual and graceful. The hair is arranged in spiral curls and a tall jet of flame or a halo that springs from the protuberance of the skull.

The monastic robe is thin and clinging. The finest invention of Sukhothai is the “Walking Buddha”.



Lanna Period

Buddha images typically feature a lotus bud or orb (corpulent) shape, with finial and large hair curls. The upper body or the chest torso is plump, with a slim waist line. The hands were made like lotus bud.

The face is round with smiling expression, high curving eyebrows, a hooked nose and mostly narrow lips. The face has the majestic and imperious (arrogant) expression.

The monastic robe is worn in the open mode, with a short flap of cloth over the left shoulder, descending only as far as the nipple.

In later period, under influence of Sukhothai, the head had finer hair curls, an extended lotus shaped or flame shaped finial, and a thin hair band. Lanna Buddha image in late period, the face became more oval.



U-Thong Period

U- Thong Buddha images are characterized by a small band between the hairline and the forehead. The head features small hair curls. During the early period, the head is topped by a lotus bud. In later period, with Sukhothai influence, this is replaced by an elongated (stretched out) flame, and the body is more elongated.

The facial expression of the Buddha image looks rigid. The face of the Buddha image is rather square with Mon and Khmer characteristics, with a large mouth, double line on the upper lip, a broad nose, and very tight spiky hair spiral. The face became more oval later on. The robe is draped in the open mode with a long flap over the left shoulder ending in a straight line above the navel.



Ayutthaya Period

Buddha images during Ayutthaya period were produced in a great number of styles and positions. In the early period, the Buddha images were usually carved out of stone, as influenced by Lopburi art. In the middle Ayutthaya period, the bronze was the material of choice. However, sandstone, stucco, brick and wood were also popular. During the late Ayutthaya period, the Buddha images were made of bronze in royal attire.



The Buddha images from this period are usually characterized by the distinctive hair flame and two small lines curved above the upper lip and the eyes.



Rattanakosin or Bangkok Period

The Rattanakosin artistic style is essentially art of the modern Bangkok era, which incorporates classical Thai and western artistic elements. This does not mean that the Buddha images seen in Bangkok's temples are all Rattanakosin in origin as many of them were brought to the city from provincial sites to escape destruction during war.

Buddha images produced in the early Rattanakosin period closely follow the style of Ayutthaya. Later works become much more ornate (elaborate, ornamental) and regal (royal, majestic, noble) in appearance.



Vocabulary

1. อิริยาบถของพระพุทธรูป (Posture of the Buddha)

- พระพุทธรูปยืน = Standing Buddha image
- พระพุทธรูปนอน = Reclining Buddha image
- พระพุทธรูปนั่ง = Seated Buddha image
- พระพุทธรูปเดิน = Walking Buddha image

2. ปางต่างๆ ของพระพุทธรูป (Attitude/ Mudra of the Buddha)

- ปางมารวิชัย = The attitude of subduing Mara
- ปางสมาธิ = The attitude of meditation
- ปางห้ามญาติ = The attitude of persuading the relatives not to fight
- ปางห้ามสมุทร = The attitude of stopping the rainstorm
- ปางปฐมเทศนา = The attitude of giving the first sermon
- ปางประสูติ = The attitude of Nativity
- ปางปรินิพพาน = The attitude of Nirvana

3. พุทธลักษณะของพระพุทธรูป (Buddha Characteristics)

- ขมวดพระเกศา = Hair curl
- รัศมีเปลวเพลิง = Flame-like halo
- รัศมีบัวตูม = Lotus-bud halo
- พระพักตร์เหลี่ยม = Square face
- พระพักตร์กลม = Round face
- พระพักตร์รูปไข่ = Oval face
- คิ้วโก่ง = Curve eyebrows
- คิ้วต่อกันคล้ายปีกกา = Straight-connected eyebrows
- คางนูน = Dimple chin
- ตาโปน = Protruding eyes
- พระอังสะกว้าง = Broad Shoulder
- พระสะบั้นเล็ก = Slim waist
- อวบ = Corpulent body

- พระนาภี = Navel
- อมยิ้ม = Smiling expression
- นั่งขัดสมาธิราบ = Sitting cross-legs with one top of another
- นั่งขัดสมาธิเพชร = Sitting cross-legs with legs locked together
- นั่งพับเพียบ = Sitting with legs fold-back sideway

Unit 8 Describing Thai Paintings

- Characteristics of traditional Thai paintings
- Types of traditional Thai paintings
- Materials, methods and equipment used in Thai paintings
- Cases: mural paintings- motifs and spaces in mural paintings
Vocabulary and expressions

Definition of painting

Painting is creation of visual art that apply paint, pigments, color or other medium to a surface (support base) such as paper, canvas, wood, walls, glass, lacquer, clay, copper or concrete. The art of painting may incorporate multi other materials including sand, clay, paper or gold leaf. Painting is a mode of expression: telling or narrating stories, transferring painters or practitioners' imagination and ideas and expressing beauty from their imagination. The forms of painting are numerous.

Traditional Thai painting and its roles

Traditional Thai painting is a fine art, manifesting elaborate and beauty and reflecting Thainess, Thai value, belief and faith. The development of traditional Thai painting has been for a long time until it has a unique characteristic and style that reflect Thainess and manifest Thai mind in esthetic sense and value of motif. Traditional Thai painting is worthy in its roles of mirroring the history, anthropology, religion, traditions and culture from the old days to present.

The purpose of traditional Thai painting is not only for decoration of buildings, but also for religious purpose. Painting for religious purpose can be seen in religious buildings. In Thailand the painting for religious purpose is such as the paintings in Ubosot and Vihara.

Characteristics of Thai traditional painting

- Thai traditional paintings show subjects in two dimensions without perspective (The painting with bird- eyes view). The size of each element in the picture and the use of "Sin Thao" reflected its degree of importance. After the mid 19 century, Western influences introduced the concepts of the use of perspective and shading to give the illustration of depth.
- There was no self- portrait or self-expression in Thai traditional painting. Self- portrait in modern Thai painting is an influence from the West. Moreover, Thai painting places an importance on idealism rather than realism.
- Thai traditional paintings are stylized such that the celestial and or noble beings are always portrayed serene whilst those from the common folk are portrayed in ungainly (ungraceful) or realistic or comic postures or movements.

- “Lai Thai” or Thai pattern usually used is “Kanok”. Most depicted is floral pattern.
- In mural painting, there is a line called “Sin Thao” (เส้นลันทา) which is the name used among mural painting artisans. Sin Thao line is the jagged line (หยักฟันปลา) that makes boundary for each scene on the wall and distinguishes important scenes on the landscape from other less important scenes such as the scenes about palace and different scenes of Chadok.



Mural painting at Wat Phra Kaew (The Temple of the Emerald Buddha), Bangkok



Sin Thao line on mural paintings



Sin Thao line above the Palace Rajamontien, the mural painting at Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan during early Rattanakosin, presently exhibited at the National Museum, Bangkok

Types of Thai Traditional Painting

Thai traditional painting can be generally categorized into 2 groups:

- (1) **Drawing:** usually made with pencil, ink, charcoal
- (2) **Akarong Painting** (จิตรกรรมประเภทเอกรงค์): painting using **chromatic color** or one, two or three colors and the colors need to be in similar tone. *Akarong* painting which has been practiced for long time ago can be classified in 2 styles:
 - (2.1) **Painting style called ‘Lai Rod Nam’** using golden as the main material with covering or gilding gold leaf (จิตรกรรมลักษณะเขียนน้ำยาปิดทองรดน้ำ): shortly called “Lai Rod Nam”. “Lai Rod Nam” can be translated as a work of an ornament merging from washing the work with water. Mostly it is seen in lacquer works (งานลวัก). This style saw its best in Ayutthaya period from the 17th to the first half of 18th century. And when the capital of Thailand was shifted from Ayutthaya to Thonburi first and afterwards to Bangkok, it was where the technique of the lacquer work followed exactly the characteristics of the classic specimens. But artistically it gradually degenerated, particularly due to Chinese artistic influences, very noticeable in the later productions.

The change in style was due to new fashion feeling, desire for designs differing from the traditional ones. In doing so, the very Thai artistic peculiarities were lost; on the other hand, this later production could not compete with the Chinese classic lacquer works because the principles ruling the styles of the respective arts are quite different.

What does the *Lai Rod Nam* look like?

The outstanding characteristic of this painting style is golden painting: that the painting manifests the golden “Lai” or the golden patterns on the black surface. The last process in making “Lai Rod Nam” is washing the work with water in order to wash out the chemical solution (gold size- น้ำยาลิตทอง) used with the painting during the making process. At the end of the process after washing the gold size, the painting reveals clearly the golden “Lai” or golden patterns as wanted on the surface. This is the origin of the name “Lai Rod Nam”



- (2.2) **Painting style called “*Kamaro*”** (จิตรกรรมลักษณะเขียนสีกำมะลอ): *Kamaro* is the named called for a painting painted with powder color mixed with liquid or latex from “Lac tree” (ต้นรัก). This type of painting art came with the Chinese merchants during the late Ayutthaya period, brought with them the Chinese furniture that showed the painting of this style in its ornamental elements. This art had been seen as the new style of painting. However, Thai artisans during the period didn’t know the technique of creating this painting. Later, according to “the Tales from Khun Luang Wat Pradoo Songtham” (คำให้การของขุนหลวงวัดประดู่ทรงธรรม), some Chinese merchants started the furniture business. From this, Thai artisans had observed and memorized the techniques and later tried

creating the works until this became the individual character of traditional Thai art.

The painting style called *Kamoro* here had been ignored and discontinued during the fall of Ayutthaya until the reign of King Rama the 3rd or *Phra Nang Klao Chao Yu Hua* when it was brought to life again at the highest prosperity. Most *Kamora* paintings during this reign had served Buddhism.

What does the *Kamoro* painting look like?

The outstanding characteristic of this kind of painting is the “black surface” of the painting which is the result of Lac tree liquid (ยางต้นรัก) painted at first. The process of making color for painting is to mix different powder colors/ tints with liquid from Lac tree. The result is dim paint ready to brushing on the black (from Lac tree liquid) wall surface.



- (3) ***Pahurong* Painting** (จิตรกรรมประเภทพหุรงค์): this is the painting with multi colors. In Lanna it is called “Nam Tam” (น้ำแค้น) (the act of dabbling <painting> with water). The decoration of painting is more various and with notably beauty and this is why this type is popular nowadays, both in traditional and applied arts.

Materials, Methods and Equipment

Materials used in *Lai Rod Nam*

An important material of this painting style is a “surface” which mainly includes wood, lime or mortar work wall or plaster work, metal and leather. The materials for creating *Lai Rod Nam* include:

- Black liquid or latex from “Lac tree” (ยางรัก) boiled with low fire until it becomes sticky. This is used for attaching the gold to the work.
- “Samuk” (สมุก) or charcoal or cinder powder pasted from different materials such as coconut shell, dried leaves (i.e. banana, grass)
- Liquid or solution got from Horadan (หรวดาน). Horadan is a kind of ore. It is used for making *Lai Rod Nam* or lacquer work as its color shows red and yellow.

- Gold leaf (ทองคำเปลว) for making the golden patterns on the Lac tree liquid- painted surface (usually black and red are used as basic tints (สี)).

In making Lai Rod Nam, there are other materials mainly used which are similar to making the painting style called “*Kamaro*”. Those materials include:

- Soft- prepared chalk or white clay filler (ดินสอพอง) for polishing the surface and use of removing oil stain
- Paddle used in mixing *Samuk* and painting the surface with *Samuk*
- Brushes used in the process from a brush for painting Lac tree liquid, one used in brushing gold powder, one for painting lines, and one for filling the surface
- Compress or Luk Pakob (ลูกประคบ) for tightening and rubbing the gold on the surface

To make Lai Rod Nam or lacquer work, at first a surface is painted with Lac tree liquid latex. After that, it is continued with making “Lai” or patterns with liquid or solution got from Horadan (หอราดาน ชื่อแร่ชนิดหนึ่ง - powder from stone crush). Next, the work is gilded with gold leaf before washing it with water, leaving the “Lai” in gold.



Thai style in this kind of Lai Rod Nam painting is designed with two- dimensional appearance and the composition is formed by many elements such as architectural features, human and animal figures, which intermingled amidst rocks, vegetation, rivulets, etc., fills up with well distributed masses and details all the space of the panels or other decorated surfaces.

Chinese style has been applied in Lai Rod Nam as well. Chinese rendered spatial views wherein large areas of sky, earth or water contrast with the comparatively small figures of trees, human beings and animals from which ensues a three- dimensional appearance.

Materials used in *Kamaro* painting

- Powder color, usually two or three colors which are clay- like red, white and green and indigo blue used in Chinese porcelain
- Gold powder (ฝุ่น/ ผงทองคำ)
- Gold leaf (ทองคำเปลว)
- Black liquid or latex from “Lac tree” (ยางรัก)
- “Samuk” (สมุก) or charcoal or cinder powder pasted from different materials such as coconut shell, dried leaves (i.e. banana, grass)
- White, sticky and thick liquid from Cluster Fig tree (มะเดื่อชุมพร) (for use in the process of covering or gilding gold leaf)
- Soft- prepared chalk or white clay filler (ดินสอพอง)
- Oil from Camphor (น้ำมันการบูร) to be mixed with Lac tree liquid to help dry the painting
- Kerosene (น้ำมันก๊าด) for washing the brush after used with liquid from Cluster Fig tree

Mural Painting

Traditional Thai painting is a fine art, manifesting elaborate and beauty and reflecting Thainess, Thai value, belief and faith. The painting on temple wall (mural painting) is therefore usually depicting the center of the Buddhist which is the Lord Buddha and Buddhism. This motif is usually assembled with celestial beings, imaginary creatures, half human, half animal or bird, and all inhabitants of the idyllic Himaphan Forest, the mythical region of the Universe associated with the Himalayas. These represent the concept of idealism outstandingly applied in traditional Thai painting. The motifs or subjects in traditional Thai painting include mainly the following:

Tossachat Chadok and Jakata Tales

Tossachat Chadok is the Jataka stories, narrating about the last ten lives (ten reincarnations) of the Lord Buddha before becoming the enlightenment, such as the life as the king and the graduate. In each ten live, the Lord Buddha had performed virtuous deeds and the ten meritorious acts in order to attain the enlightenment in the life as the Lord Buddha. The ten Chadok includes:

1. Temeeya Chadok (เตมียชาดก)
2. Mahachanok Chadok (มหาชนกชาดก)
3. Suwannasam Chadok (สุวรรณสามชาดก)
4. Nemiracha Chadok (เนมิราชชาดก)
5. Mahosot Chadok (มหอสถชาดก)
6. Phurithat Chadok (ภูริทัตชาดก)
7. Chantakumara Chadok (จันทกุมารชาดก)
8. Nart Chadok (นารทชาดก)

9. Withura Chadok (วิฐูรชาดก)
10. Wessandon Chadok (เวสสันดรชาดก)

Thai way of life including Thai art has been influenced by Tossachat Chadok as the story is fun with meaningful teaching. Artisans usually depict different episodes from the Tossachat Chadok and paint on temple walls of Ubosot and Vihara and to decorate temples architectural buildings, high and bas relief styles. Thai people have known about Tossachat Chadok since Sukhothai period or before, according to Sukhothai Inscription in 1923 B.E approximately. The Inscription described that “Thai people have listened and appreciated the sermons of Tossachat Chadok. The Chadok is touching the heart of all Thai people.” However, the fact that the role of Tossachat Chadok found on temples’ Ubosot and Vihara has been found since Ayutthaya period, as found, for example, at Wat Yai Suwannaram, Phetchaburi (2193 B.E), Wat Phutthaisawan, Ayutthaya (2243 B.E) and Wat Prasat Thong, Nontaburi (2293 B.E).



Mostly, the practice of mural paintings with Tossachat Chadok depicted in Ubosot and Vihara is on both sides of the wall spaces and between each window. Below is the list of temples in Thailand that have remarkable paintings of Tossachat Chadok:

- Bangkok – Wat Chong Nonsi (วัดช่องนนทรี), Wat Thep Nimit (วัดเทพนิมิตร), Wat Bang Yi Khan (วัดบางยี่ขัน), Wat Ratchasittharam (วัดราชสิทธิาราม), Wat Suwannaram (วัดสุวรรณาราม)
- Ayutthaya – Wat Chang Yai (วัดช้างใหญ่), Wat Cherg Tha (วัดเชิงท่า), Wat Phutthaisawan (วัดพุทธไสสวรรคย์)
- Suphanburi – Wat No Phutthangkun (วัดหน้าพุทธางกูร)
- Lampang – Wat Phrathat Lampang Luang (วัดพระธาตุลำปางหลวง)
- Nan – Wat Chang Kam (วัดช้างค้ำ), Wat Phumin (วัดภูมินทร์)
- Phetchaburi – Wat Yai Suwannaram (วัดใหญ่สุวรรณาราม)
- Angthong – Wat Kien (วัดเข็ญ)
- Chonburi – Wat Yai Intharam (วัดใหญ่อินทาราม)

Tossachat Chadok is important in the teaching of the virtues of truthfulness, patience, courage, wisdom, devotion and charity, etc. It is all about virtue triumph over evils and the horrible ends of evil doers. It is to foster Buddhist Thai people to appreciate and apply good and moral way of living and the above-mentioned as the Lord Buddha had done in His ten lives before enlightenment.

The Three Domains (Tri Phoom Phra Ruang)

Mount Sumeru or the Sacred Mountain is the name of the center of the three worlds or Tri Phume in Buddhist Cosmology. The Mountain is at the height of 80,000 *yojanas* (โยชน์) above the water surface and is usually with Khao Sattaboriphan (the 7 Mountains). The concept of Sumeru is closely related to the Hindu mythological concept of a central world mountain, called Meru, but differs from the Hindu concept in several particulars. Sumeru is often used as a simile for both size and stability in Buddhist texts. Triphoome consists of Heaven, Human World and the Four Low Realms or they can be called “Karma Phume, Roop Phume and Aroop Phume. Tri Phume Phra Ruang (or Tri Phumikata) is the first philosophy literature of Thailand written in 1888 B.E. by Phraya Litai, the king of Sukhothai Kingdom in order to use as a way to foster and promote Buddhism among his people. Tri Phume has very much influence on Thai way of thinking and living, especially those relate to Buddhism. An example is about the belief of Karma and making merit for better reincarnation.

In an aspect of art, Tri Phume shows its influence over painting and architecture. Behind the principle Buddha image at temples, Tri Phume (and Mount Sumeru) is usually depicted as the story of the mural paintings as decoration especially in Ubosot, Vihara, Mondop or Busabok. Mythical creatures in Tri Phume such as Garuda, Asura demons, kinnon and kinnaree, including flowers in the mythical Himmaman Forest are those always the inspiration.

Creatures in Legendary Myth: Thep Chumnum

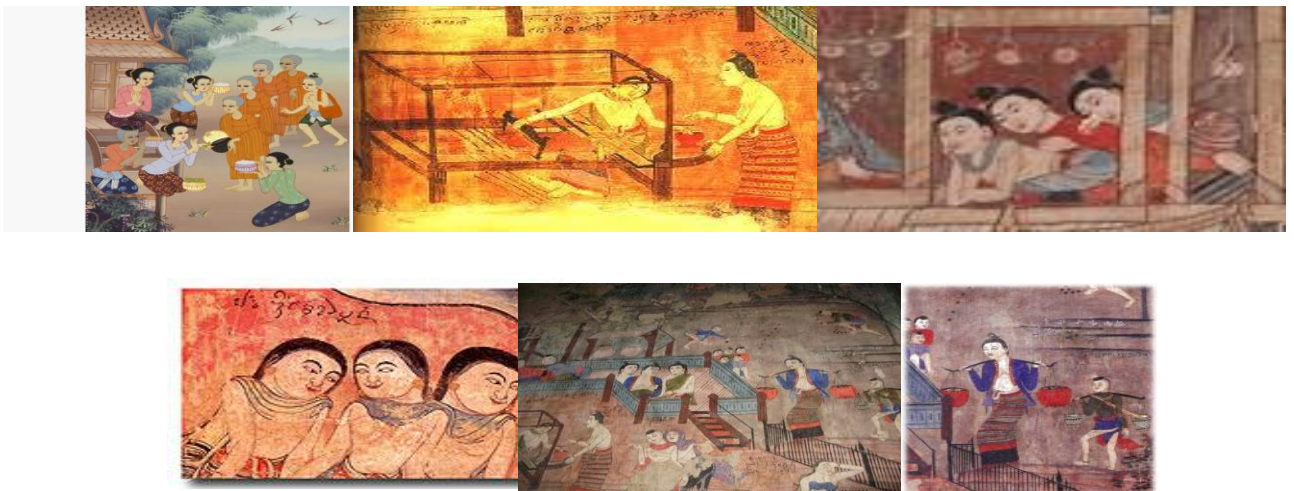
Thep Chum Num (the Gathering of Angels) - Thep Chumnum is another scene popularly painted on the walls of Thai temple, derived from the Tosachat Chadok theme. Thep Chumnum represents the most significant part of the Buddha Chronicle. It was believed that Thep Chumnum was derived from the event after the Lord Buddha attained the enlightenment. It was after the Maras came to obstruct the cultivation of the practice of the Lord Buddha. Mara, the god of demon used his spiritual powers to threaten, tempt, disturb and hinder the enlightenment of the Buddha. However, the Lord Buddha could resist and conquered the Mara* and attaining the enlightenment by the witness of the Goddess of Earth. This event was depicted in the attitude of the Subduing Mara. The event was followed by the gathering of angels who came to witness, praise and celebrate the victory over the Mara and achieving Self-Enlightenment. The group of angels is mostly painted in three or four rows with the alternating background colors of red and violet (or brown). In each row, angels are painted in the gesture of Thai-style greeting with hands joined together at the chest. Painted in the lowest row are, as normally, low rank angels, demons and Garuda.



*This description about the Mara symbolically tells us about the truth of the 5 obstacles (or Mara) as following:

- (1) **Mara of defilements** ('defilement' means ruining/ corruption)- passion, delusion
- (2) **Mara of five aggregations**- 5 khandha/ khantha: physical form (rupa), feelings (vedana), thoughts (sanya), inclinations (sankhara) and sensory awareness (vinyan)
- (3) **Mara of Karma**- formation (forms accumulated actions), conditioned existence, causes samsara (cycle of rebirth)
- (4) **Mara as a deity** (Devaputra) - creates vision or sign to dissuade or interfere us from doing skilful deeds or liberation of defilements (ความเสื่อม สกปรก มลทิน)
- (5) **Mara of death** - deprives us from a chance to complete the practice or doing good things

Other motifs depicted in traditional Thai painting are the Buddhist heavens and hells, and scenes of daily life, the latter mostly seen in temples in Northeastern Thailand (especially old temples). Pictures of men and women in daily life painted on wood can be also often seen in the northern Thailand.



Spaces in Mural Painting

The paintings seen in Ubosot and Vihara of Thailand usually are related to Lord Buddha. The “*spaces*” traditionally seen with the motif related to the Lord Buddha with the assembly of the celestial beings include the following, as the examples:

Space 1: The roof ceiling is usually painted depicting the stars as the ceiling is characterized as a sky (comparable to the universe).

Space 2: The wall space between the area downward from the ceiling and above the windows is painted depicting the scene of Thep Chumnum or the Gathering of Angels (Thevada), by intentionally painting all angels turning with pressing hands together as a gesture of respect (*Phanom*) to the principle Buddha Image. Flowers are also painted in this scene as symbolizing the celebration from the angles.

Space 3: The wall space between each window normally depicts the Jakata Tales, narrating the episodes from the life of the Lord Buddha including the last 10 lives (10 reincarnations- *Thosachat Chadok*) before he became the enlightened Buddha, as to teach Buddhist laymen who come to the temple.

Space 4: The rear wall space (the wall area behind the principle Buddha Image) can be usually seen with the painting of Tri Phume as this area is the spacious one and seems to be intentionally reserved for the depiction of the Buddhist concept of cosmology dealing with the universe.

Space 5: The front wall space (the wall area in front of the principle Buddha Image) depicts a scene of the life of Lord Buddha which is the scene of “Subduing Mara” (or in Thai “มารวิชัย”)

Space 6: On the two doors are painted with Thevada as the celestial guardian (holding a sword and flowers) or the one who protects the building.

Other traditional Thai paintings can be seen on different objects such as lacquer ware, specimens of book case (Tu Phra Tham ตู้พระธรรม), panels of book case, garment case or columns in Buddhist buildings.

Unit 9 Describing Vernacular Art and Architecture in Thailand

- Definition of vernacular art and architecture
 - Thai houses as the vernacular architecture
 - Some important house elements
 - Thai houses in different styles by regions
- Vocabulary and expressions

Vernacular Thai Architecture: ‘Ruen-Krueng-Pook’

Ruen Krueng Pook is locally called “Toob” (ต้อบ), defined itself by the elements used and the way to build it. Ruen Krueng Pook is built from natural materials available in the area. Usually Ruen Krueng Pook can be found with bamboo as the main material in order to build a house in this style.

The characteristics of Ruen Krueng Pook

- Simple style with no decoration, usually for temporary use or for keeping rice such as farm house
- Bamboo is the main material, used to tie each part of a house together.
- The roof is usually a thatch style (straw roofing). A thatch can be made by dried leaves or any materials from nature found in the area.



Fig.9 Ruen Krueng Pook in the rural village
(Source: National Archive)

- The wall or partition is made with bamboo, made in strips (wall of plaited bamboo strips) that look like a bamboo mat but stronger.
- The floor can be both made with bamboo or wood.
- The house’s stilts are made with bamboo and wood, depending on the house’s function. If the house is for temporary use, the stilts can be made with bamboo.
- If the house is built with high stilts, a ladder will be built additionally, and during the night time, the ladder will be drawn up into the house, in order to keep safe from animals and thefts.

Below are some pictures of Thai houses in Ruen Krueng Pook style.

Ruen Krueng Pook (This is in Southern Thailand)



Farm house in Bangkhunthian, a good example of a traditional Ruen Krueng Pook, a farmer style house built from natural materials. The structural components are made from coconut and mangrove wood; the wall covers and roofing are made from nipa palm (dton jaak). These materials grow here.



The picture demonstrates how to tie each element of the house



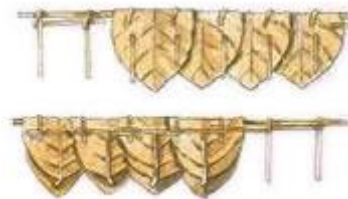
The floor



The wall/ partition



Use of thatch for roofing



Ladder



Classical and Traditional Thai Architecture: ‘Ruen-Krueng-Sab’

Ruen Krueng Sab is another type of Thai house. It can be also called “Ruen Thai” (Thai House). This kind of house has been developed from Ruen Krueng Pook and it is normally seen in every part of Thailand nowadays).

Ruen Krueng Sab is usually built by strong wood as to serve functional need for permanent living. In the past, teak wood was normally used, especially in the northern part of Thailand, but nowadays, we forest resource is very important and the forest areas in Thailand have been reduced from deforestation, resulting in less use of teak wood.

General characteristics of the house called Ruen Krueng Sab include the fact that:

- (1) It is built for permanent living. This is the reason why wood is the main resource for building.
- (2) There are more rooms (2-3 or 4, up to family members).
- (3) To tie each element of the house, the technique of wood splice (joining pieces of wood together), dowelling, bolting, and nails are also used.

From the explanation above, Ruen Krueng Sab is therefore called by the following:

- Ruen Thavorn or permanent house (เรือนถาวร)
- Ruen Krueng Pradu
- Ruen Fa Kradan (เรือนฝากระดาน)

Below are some pictures of Thai houses in Ruen Krueng Sab style.

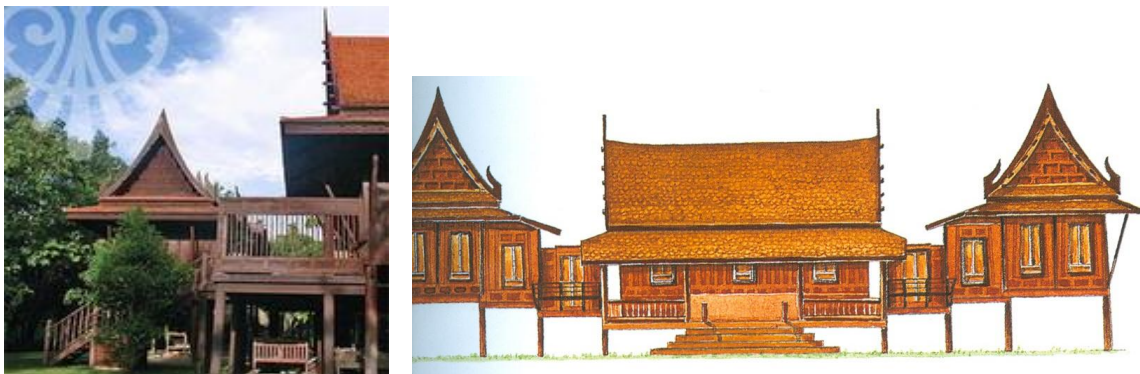
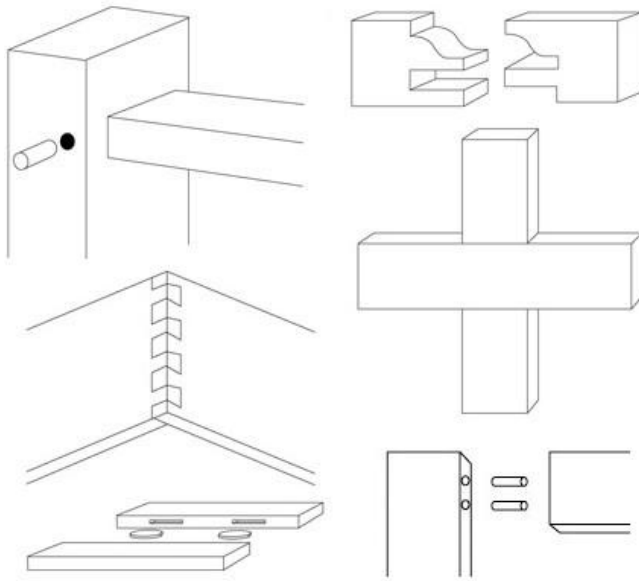


Fig.10 Ruen Krueng Sap
(Source: National Archive)



Residential Arts and Culture in Thai Architecture: Central Region, Northern Region, North-Eastern Region (E-Sarn) and Southern Region

Thai houses in each region are called differently.

- (1) Ruen Kalae is called for houses in northern part of Thailand.
- (2) Ruen Song Thai is called for houses in central part of Thailand.
- (3) Ruen Phak Tai is called for houses in southern part of Thailand.
- (4) Ruen Phak I- San is called for houses in northeastern part of Thailand.

Ruen Kalae: House in the northern part of Thailand

Outstanding elements:

- Wooden/ woven bamboo
- Roof gable with Kalae
- House built in parallel
- Roof is not steep, making the space between the roof gable ends broader
- “Hum Yon” (ห้ายอนต์)



รูปที่ 5 และ 6 ห้ายอนต์ ไม่ถึงกัศัตตเหนือประตูจึงทำม่านมตราขี้การลัดเลาะจากลวดต่างๆ และไม่มีกัศัตตมาขึ้นไป จนกระทั่งกลายเป็นวิจิตรศิลป์ ซึ่งมีความงดงามเป็นอย่างยิ่ง

- Low structure
- Usually in twin structure
- Water pot & scoop in front of the house
- Small number of windows and usually done with bedrooms
- Roofs made from dried banana leaves in some rural area
- The terrace called “Tern” (เต็น) and usually connected with kitchen, used for “housewife activities”

Ruen Song Thai: House in the central part of Thailand

Outstanding elements:

- Roof gable with curved end (Ngao) (เหงา)
- Steep and curved roof gable
- Higher structure (high post)

The pictures below are different styles of “Ngao” (เหงา).



- Design for good wind flow
- Many windows, high and wide
- Separate kitchen
- Terrace area in the middle
- The house faces to the river (especially in the past)



Ruen Phak Tai: House in the southern part of Thailand

Outstanding elements:

- Gable roof (Jua) but without gable or Ngao like central Thai house
- House is built parallel with beach and road
- Post/ pillars usually in plaster block
- “Ruen Pan Ya” is popular among Muslim community



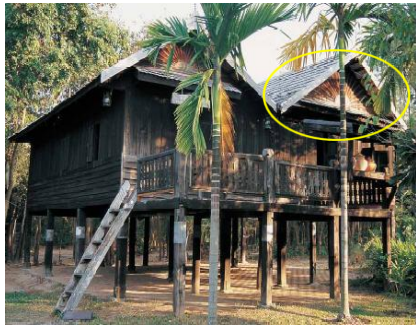
“Ruen Pan Ya” เรือนบ้านหย้า - Thai pattern of common Thai houses without the gable



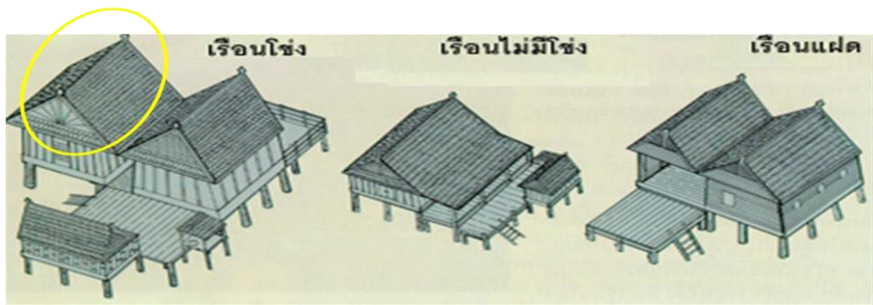
Ruen Phak I- San: House in the northeastern part of Thailand

Outstanding elements:

- They are categorized into:
 - (1) Ruen Thai Korat (เรือนไทยโคราช): similar to central Thai house but the roof gable is not high and no Ngao
 - (2) Ruen Geuy (เรือนเกษ): 3- room house with a terrace and a kitchen section
 - (3) Ruen Fad (เรือนฝัด): 2 houses with 2 Jua, with room for parents, son and daughter
 - (4) Ruen Khong (เรือนโข่ง): houses connected with terrace kitchen separated
- Multi household compound- 4-5 houses within the same compound



The roof gable or “Jua” (จั่ว) is not high.



Ruen Fad

Ruen Geuy - Ruen Khong

