

**Buddhist Architecture : Meaning and Conservation  
in the  
Context of Thailand**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to find an appropriate approach to the conservation of the Buddhist monastery in the context of Thailand that complies with international practice and values while, at the same time, it does not deviate from the traditional merit which constitutes the Buddhist culture. Conservation is an outcome or an attempt to solve a cultural problem; therefore it cannot be considered only as a technical or scientific process. Conservation is a way to manage and control cultural changes in order that the culture can be sustained. It must be based on cultural foundations. The application of tradition will enable us to arrive at solutions for conservation problems, and to form judgements about the nature of cultural heritage that are based upon truth and their real values, and not merely upon a set of conventional rules or sentimental preference.

Buddhism has been practised in Thailand since the beginning of the Thai kingdom in the early thirteenth century. Over the centuries, monastic architecture, as an outcome of the belief, has developed and changed its character along with the transformation of the religion and the role of the Buddhist Sangha. These changes became apparent at the end of the nineteenth century and have accelerated in the past five decades when Thailand has been facing the influx of foreign culture and modern technology. The new social and political situation results in the changing of attitude towards Buddhism, the Sangha, and the use of monastic architecture. As modern cities develop around them, monasteries are losing their original character, function, and spirit which were the essential qualities of a sacred place.

Conservation is seen as a way to control change and provide a basis for development. However, the care of Buddhist monasteries in Thailand can conflict with international approaches. Throughout Thai history, Buddhist monasteries have been repaired and restored as an act of piety. Interventions often involve the removing of original elements and replacing them with new ones, or the demolition of a structure and rebuilding without regard for its historical or archaeological values. The attitude of the Thai towards monastic architecture is based on Buddhist belief. It can be concluded that material representation of the fabric is not considered as important as the continuity and identity of the spirit of the place.

It is, therefore, necessary to identify the spirit or the essence of Buddhist architecture, if traditional repair and restoration are to be continued in order that the essence can be maintained or re-created.

The thesis will investigate the essence of Buddhist architecture; the social and political changes as well as the problems of development that affect monastic architecture; the nature of conservation, both traditional and international. Finally, suggestions for the philosophical and practical approaches to conservation will be given.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

## **1 Background**

Thailand is a country with a rich architectural heritage. Even though the first Thai Kingdom was founded in the early thirteenth century, which is relatively recent when compared with many countries in Asia and Europe, the archaeological remains of very much earlier civilizations can be found in the country. Nearly all of the historic monuments are of religious significance, either in ruins or still functioning. The task of conserving them is tremendous. Conservation activity, as known in international charters, is a relatively recent idea introduced to Thailand by the west and by western educated Thai. The development of a conservation philosophy is based on western traditions which are not always comparable to the eastern ones. The modern conservation approach, though internationally advocated, cannot be considered as an universal idea and hence the urgency of international debate -for instance- on ideas of authenticity.

There was a time earlier in the twentieth century that scholars, both in the east and west, held the concept that western culture equated world culture and that cultural phenomena that stemmed from it were universal. The unification of the world may be possible with regard to man's efforts to control, and utilize, nature. However, in the case of culture, tradition, and religious belief of each society, there is more diversity and it is also difficult to alter. It is suggested that the unique religious ideology is the determining factor of distinctiveness of the social and economic life of each nation (Nakamura 1971 : 35). Religion is not only a way of belief but also a fundamental source of civilization.

Buddhism has been the national religion of the Thai since the beginning of the kingdom. Social formations such as kingship, politics, morality, and tradition took shape on Buddhist foundations. Buddhism is not only a religion but also the basis of the civilization of Thailand. Buddhism and the Thai way of life are, therefore, inseparable. Belief has made a deep impact upon Thai society in many respects. It is interwoven in every Thai's life from birth to death. Buddhist monasteries are centres of life and places where not only religious but also secular activities are carried out all year round. Until the early years of this century and also in the case of present day rural society, people still regarded their local monastery as common property belonging to all of them.



Therefore, a monastery was a unified centre which functioned as an integrating and binding part of Thai society.

A monastery is a place for performing religious functions not only by monks but also lay-people. Rituals are regularly held and religious philosophy taught. Before the establishment of formal education in Thailand, monks were the only teachers available to the general population. They taught both sacred and secular subjects. Therefore, monasteries were and are considered as schools for boys and monks. They also served as public health centre for the surrounding community and as public places where villagers spent time for relaxation, exchanging news and knowledge. Monasteries were also used as meeting places for villagers for certain official functions. Government information is conveyed by the village headman using the village monastery as a natural local meeting place.

Monastic architecture is the direct outcome of the deep belief and devotion of the people and therefore becomes naturally the centre of fine quality craftsmanship. Apart from the architecture, a monastery is usually a place where sculpted images of the Buddha, mural paintings depicting scenes from Buddhist sacred texts, and the best examples of art objects can be found. It is a fact that the nation's greatest art treasures are found in monasteries and appreciated by a large proportion of the population. Monasteries play a major role in generating and maintaining traditional art and craftsmanship, and could play a much greater role in the future.

At the turn of the century, there were many social and political changes in Thailand. The country encountered western expansion and colonization. As a consequence, it was necessary to change the country in various ways for the sake of national stability. The role of the Sangha and its relationship with the lay-community were also changed due to the introduction of western concepts of civilization. Such changes, combined with the changing social and economic environment of the modern world, led to a changing of attitude towards monasteries.

Aspects of colonialism still have a strong imprint in the countries of South-East Asia. Thailand, although not politically colonized, has also come under its influence. A Buddhist scholar comments that the worst aspect of colonization is western intellectual imperialism which has influence over political elites who are ready to give way to modern



'progress' and to embrace western materialism. He writes:

*" This is harmful indeed to the teaching of the Buddha, which warns people against hatred, greed and delusion, whereas western materialistic development encourages this triad of Buddhist evils as great virtues of commerce and the power base. Politicians and economists work closely, hand in glove, for selfish materialistic ends, thus fostering ignorance. Modern development encourages competition and success, whereas it discourages collaboration and contentedness" ( Sivaraksa 1984 ).*

Materialism is in conflict with Buddhist ideology. Economic considerations that had never existed in earlier times play an important part in present day monasteries. This, obviously, affects the way a monastery is organized, its objectives and its physical characteristics.

## **2 Defining the Problems**

### **2.1 Controversy over two approaches in conservation**

During the colonial period, a large number of conservation works were carried out in South-East Asia by western countries according to various philosophies. The interpretation of the history and significance of archaeological remains and the management of the cultural heritage in Indochina ( present day Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam ) was initiated by French archaeologists and historians, while the British exercised a similar role in Burma and the Dutch in Indonesia. These systematic studies in the region were the works of Europeans and reflected the European ways of thinking. Bernard Philippe Groslier, a French archaeologist writes:

*" Western travellers found most of the remains [of Angkor] in ruins and so little understood that the local inhabitants often believed that only gods could have built them. It is a picture that has perhaps been a little too popular, giving rise to some well-known passages about the striking and painful contrast with the lamentable state of barbarism which afflicts the surviving descendants of the great people that built these monuments. ( Groslier 1975 ).*

He also quotes another writer commenting on the responsibilities inherent in the colonial period as follows:

*" A European nation which takes possession of an ancient and historic land is in a sense accountable to the civilized world of the memories entrusted to its care; it has a duty to preserve them and make them known. It is a debt of honour which a nation cannot repudiate without losing the respect of others and its own self-respect " ( Groslier 1975 ).*

With such preconceptions, western philosophies of conservation were imposed on the region. Oblivious to the inherent tensions, these western attitudes towards cultural heritage and its management inevitably brought conflicts with the eastern culture and belief system.

It has been accepted that an awareness of the past is a characteristic that is unique to human beings. However, attitudes towards the cultural heritage of different cultures vary.

It is suggested here that in less developed societies myth and history intermingle to create a tradition that is a living reality and the past is a living component of present day life ( Cleere 1989 : 6 ). One example is the 're-discovery' of Angkor by Henri Mauhot, a French naturalist, in 1860. The discovery prompted a great interest in the ancient civilization and the 'lost city' which, at the time, lay abandoned in thick jungle. However, Angkor was never lost for the Cambodian. Mythical stories about the place have been continuously transferred from one generation of Cambodians to the next and embedded into their present day system of belief and tradition. This concept of the past provides the people in that society with a sense of identity and tradition, a spiritual meaning of place which may or may not be represented by physical architectural elements.

The realization of the historical and archaeological values of ancient monuments is the result of the developing interest in classical history during the Renaissance. The cultural heritage was seen as a record of the past and the duty of conserving it evolved in order to ensure the continuity of these important documents. In the east where the Age of Enlightenment, in the western sense, had never happened, attitudes towards the past and heritage were deeply rooted in tradition and religious belief.

In the evolution of present day conservation policies for historic monuments in Thailand, international charters, especially the Venice Charter, are used as guidelines. However, as the Venice Charter states, its formulations should be regarded simply as a broad framework. They must be adapted to accommodate the specific needs of every country. In Thailand, one consideration in carrying out work is the fact that many of the monuments are religious monuments and that local people still continue to practice their religion.

The vast majority of the monuments in Thailand were erected in obedience to religious beliefs or in recognition of the royal personages who were regarded as god-kings. Repairing or adding on to a religious building has always been considered as an act of merit, since the good done in this life will give future benefit in the next life after reincarnation. Buddhists therefore seek to repair their monasteries and maintain them in as perfect a condition as possible. Repairing and maintaining a religious building is regarded as a way of keeping Buddhism alive. It is considered to be the duty of a good Buddhist and a contribution or act of great merit that one can make in this present life.



However, controversies have arisen over the loss of architectural and aesthetic values as the consequence of alterations, especially when judged according to western concepts of conservation. It is a broad generalisation that, in the west, conserving the physical *fabric* of the monuments is given the highest priority while in the east the *spirit* of the place is more important. Understanding the attitude of the public is necessary, since it allows us to determine cultural factors and social behaviour favourable to the care of monuments or, on the contrary, to reveal opposing tendencies that we have to overcome.

### ***2.2 The decline of traditional skills***

Care for religious monuments has always been considered an act of piety which assures the happiness of believers. The work was always conceived as meaning dismantling and reconstruction which is completely opposed to what is recommended in the Venice Charter of 1964. These activities were possible while the tradition of craftsmanship endured. Restoration often simply implied the remaking of original objects by using original materials, traditional methods of construction and continuing skills of craftsmanship. The continuation of such skills also brought about the development of the high art and architecture that can be regarded as the characteristic Thai style.

Unfortunately, the centuries-old tradition of building crafts have declined because of the drastic social changes at the beginning of this century. The introduction of modern materials and a western approach to building construction brought about the changing role of traditional builders, the relationship between patrons and craftsmen, changes in traditional styles and the breaking of the link between traditional and modern practice. Traditional approaches to repair, without skilled craftsmen to carry out the work, can bring about disastrous results and cause the loss of architectural, aesthetic, and historical values.

### ***2.3 The lack of awareness and education relating to monastic architecture***

The conservation of sacred architecture requires the understanding, support, and participation of a very broad circle of society. The Athens Charter of 1931 states that "...the best guarantee in the matter of the preservation of monuments and works of art derives from the respect and attachment of the people themselves". The lack of awareness of architectural and archaeological values of monuments can be seen in most of the more recent repair works in monasteries all over the country.



The conservation of the Thai cultural heritage is the responsibility of the Department of Fine Arts, a governmental body within the Ministry of Education. Historic monuments under their responsibility are vast in number. Inevitably, insufficient personnel is always a major problem. In theory, repair works to be carried out in a listed monastery must be approved by the Department and done under their supervision. However, this process is often overlooked and the repair work or new construction is often overseen by the monastery itself. Repairing or adding on to an old fabric was often done with good will for the cause. However, without the realization of architectural and aesthetic values, these always lead to a loss of physical and spiritual qualities of the monastery.

#### ***2.4 The lack of an effective management programme for the care of monasteries***

Monasteries are classified as 'living monuments' by the Department of Fine Arts. However, the care of a monastic fabric does not have any special consideration that is significantly different from the care of ruined monuments or archaeological sites. It is generally accepted that buildings of historical and architectural importance should be regularly maintained so that extensive renewal will not become necessary. This policy is also satisfactory from the financial point of view. However, regular inspection and maintenance have never been mentioned in the codes of practice, or carried out by the Department.

### **3 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to find an appropriate approach to the conservation of Buddhist monastic architecture in Thailand that can comply with international practice and values, and which, at the same time, does not deviate from the traditional merit that constitutes a Buddhist belief. Conservation is an outcome or an attempt to solve a cultural problem. Therefore, it cannot be considered only as a technical or scientific process. Conservation is a way to manage and control cultural change in order that the culture can be sustained. It must be based on cultural foundation. One of the main considerations, on planning and executing a conservation work, is the application of traditional data which will enable us to arrive at solutions of the conservation problems confronting us today, and to form judgements about the nature of the cultural heritage that are based upon truth and their real values, and not merely upon a set of conventional rules or sentimental preferences. Having this in mind, the following objectives are established to provide a framework to guide the investigation and development of the research.

*3.1 to develop a clear understanding of Buddhist monastic architecture, its symbolic meanings and architectural characteristics.*

If we accept that the conservation of Buddhist architecture is not only the conserving of the architectural fabric but also the retaining of its spirit, culture, and tradition, it is necessary to determine what is the real spirit or essence of Buddhist architecture in order that the values can be conserved and the physical character of the architecture enhanced. We cannot understand the soul of religious architecture without understanding the religious context. Therefore, the essence of sacredness in Buddhism must first be understood and how it is represented in the architectural elements be studied.

*3.2 to study and come to an understanding of the past and its changes in every aspect that relates to monastic architecture and its conservation in order to state the problems both physical and ideological.*

Monasteries have gone through a process of major change since the beginning of this century. Western influences affected the nature of Thai culture and society as well as its religious value and attitudes towards Buddhism as the key aspect of the cultural heritage. In order to define the positive or negative aspects of the changes, we must go back to the beginning by looking at the past and using it as a model in development for the future. Rabindranath Tagore writes that :

*" There are some who are exclusively modern, who believe that the past is the bankrupt time, leaving no assets for us, but only a legacy of debts. They refuse to believe that the army which is marching forward can be fed from the rear. It is well to remind such persons that the great age of renaissance in history were those when man suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past. The unfortunate people who have lost the harvest of their past have lost their present age " ( Tagore 1926 : 195-196 ).*

For many people today, the confusion of the present seems to promote a nostalgia for the past. In this case, the nostalgic past is used as an escape back to romanticized, secure, comfortable and less threatening times. For others, the past provides a critical perspective from which to inform the present and guide the future. Buddhist tradition is a 'living past' that can be used to fulfil the latter requirement. It has power to direct and inspire people's actions and attitudes to conform with the principles of the religion. Therefore, Buddhist ideas on development, the Buddhist world-view in society, and attitudes towards the built environment are to be studied and the possibility of assimilating the principles of Buddhism to conservation philosophy and practice will be explored.

*3.3 to do a comparative study between western conservation philosophies and practice and eastern ones.*



We need to state the differences and similarities, the advantages and drawbacks of both sides. Since conservation practice nowadays is influenced by the international value of cultural heritage, the rejection of the western thought is not rational. In order to arrive at the 'middle way' of conservation we must assimilate both traditional and western values and practice. The symbiosis of ideas is created by being deeply rooted in one's own history and culture and at the same time making positive efforts to incorporate into the work elements from other cultures (Kurokawa 1994 : 239). The result of the combination will be a new method which is both local and global.

*3.4 to give recommendations both on philosophical and practical aspects of conservation in order to solve the problems as they are perceived.*

#### **4 The Structure of the Study**

Chapter One focuses on the origin of monastic architecture, its functions, and the roles of the Buddhist Sangha in Thai society. Since Buddhism in Thailand is an amalgamation of various beliefs, an explanation of each belief and how it is reflected in the whole religious context are given.

Chapter Two is a study of the changes that have occurred in monasteries in Thailand. It starts from the process of modernization and how it has affected society, national identity, and the religious institution. The changes after the political revolution of 1932, which brought about the end of absolute monarchy, have also had a great effect on religious patronage and the role of the Sangha in a newly democratic society. All of these changes have resulted in new roles for the monastery and for the use of monastic land. The Buddhist concept of development will be explored in order to use it as a basis for controlling change.

Chapter Three is a look into the essence of Buddhist architecture in order to use it as a tool for the assessment of architectural values. A monastery is a sacred place, a symbolic representation of sacredness in Buddhism. Therefore, this chapter tries to identify the whole experience of sacredness in a monastery not only in terms of the physical experience of form and function but also the spiritual essence. The experiencing of sacredness is the essence of a religious space.

Chapter Four deals with the development of conservation practice in Thailand. The aim of this chapter is to address the changing attitudes towards historic monuments which



result in the way that the monuments are cared for; the nature of traditional intervention, which is the outcome of religious devotion and material necessity; and the western thinking that has influenced modern conservation philosophy.

Chapter Five focuses on understanding the different attitudes of east and west. These differences are based on the different world-views constituted around religious philosophies. The understanding of Buddhist attitudes towards life and built-form will help us comprehend the actions relating to the care of Buddhist architecture. Furthermore, we can identify and justify the norms of practice which should be taken into account when planning conservation projects.

Chapter Six is an attempt to establish a set of recommendations for improving conservation practice in Thailand especially in relating to Buddhist monastic architecture.

### **Research Methodology**

Since part of this thesis is about the history and development of Buddhist architecture, as well as identifying its meaning, it has been necessary to understand the essence of Buddhism in order to interpret the architecture. Buddhist texts and scriptures are used as a source of reference. All of them are English or Thai translated versions of the Pali and Sanskrit originals. Even though Buddhism in Thailand follows the Theravada School, Thai architectural style is also influenced by Mahayana ideology. Therefore, Mahayana as well as Theravada texts are discussed in this thesis. Pali terminology, however, is used instead of Sanskrit, for example 'Nibbana' rather than 'Nirvana'.

In those parts relating to the development of conservation in Thailand, and practical approaches to conservation, most of the examples given in the text come from primary sources such as translations of ancient stone inscriptions, reports of the Royal Academic Council and the Department of Fine Arts. The material for these parts is also drawn from interviews with various people working in the field of conservation as well as Buddhist monks who have direct responsibility for the care of their monasteries. There were no set questions for the interviews, since they dealt with different aspects of the matter. There were also site visits to 'living' monasteries as well as to historical sites with personnel from the Department of Fine Arts. The information gathered during the interviews and site visits are therefore not only from first-hand experience but also derive

from the perception and attitudes of professionals involved in conservation practice.

In the final chapter, examples are also drawn from English experience. Just as a Buddhist monastery is a place where the sacredness of the religion can be realized, so a Christian church is a building consecrated for the worship of God. The care of sacred architecture, no matter which religion it belongs to, requires a sympathetic and knowledgeable appreciation of the needs of the worshippers as well as a concern for the aesthetic, architectural, and historic values of the buildings. The conservation bodies concerned must show a true understanding of the doctrinal and liturgical significance of a building while being sensitive to their architectural and historical qualities. In England, the system of safeguarding ecclesiastical buildings has been developed and improved in the course of centuries and has recently been re-codified. The English experience, therefore, will be studied and compared to the Thai context.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND**

### **1 Introduction**

In order to have a clear understanding of the Thai cultural heritage, it is necessary to understand the importance of Buddhism in Thai culture and society. The religion is still a prominent institution that holds an important place in every Thai life, as well as for the nation as a whole. Buddhism is a foundation which forms the character and the world-view of the Thai population. The social structure, various traditions, and the political system are all affected by the religion. This is also the case with the culture including architecture and the built environment. It is generally accepted that the stability of the nation depends upon three institutions: the king, the religion, and the people. The term religion refers to any beliefs practised by Thai citizens. However, in practice, the majority of the population (95%) are Buddhists and the religion has been long established since the beginning of the Thai kingdom.

Thai culture and the social system were, however, not derived from Buddhism alone. It is the result of three amalgamated influences that dominate the life of every Thai. These beliefs are Buddhism, both Theravada and Mahayana, Brahmanism, and animism. Therefore, it is important to understand the development of beliefs other than Buddhism and how they were integrated into the Buddhist context.

### **2 Religions of Thailand**

The geographical situation of Thailand provides an important factor to the development of the culture and the civilization. The country is situated between the two important cradles of civilization, India and China. The area of present day Thailand had been inhabited since the pre-historic era. However, as far as the historical evidence is concerned, the first sign of a state formed in the southern part of present day Thailand can be dated back to the end of the second century A.D.

The area of South-East Asia at the time was divided into several small kingdoms. All of them had grown under the influence of Indian ideology. The relationship between India and South-East Asia began through trading. Several trading posts were set up along the long coastline of the peninsula. The intense trading brought about the



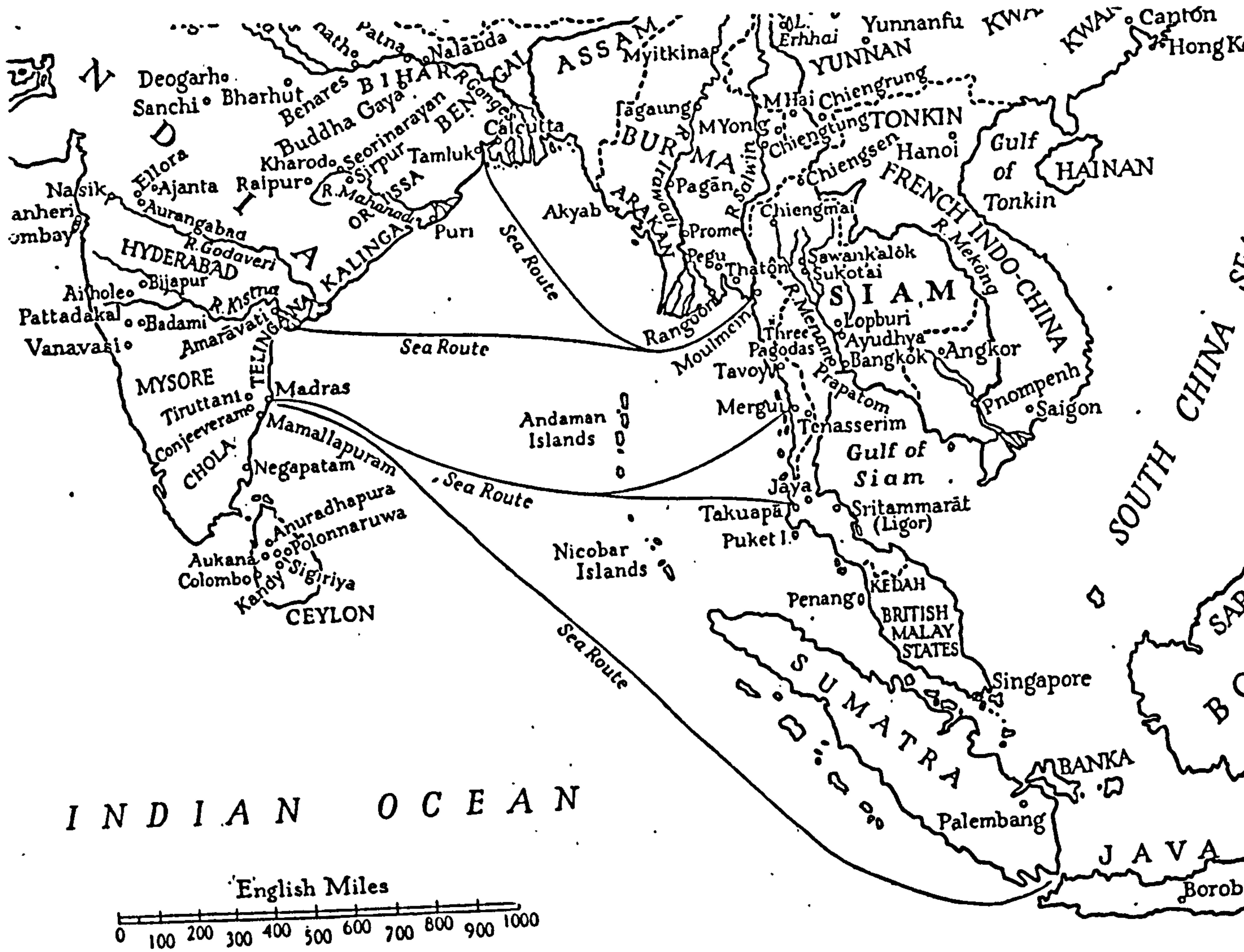


Figure 1 Relations and sea routes between India and South-East Asian Peninsular  
source : Le May : 1954

transmigration of the Indian population, religions, and culture (figure 1). Several scholars believe that the commercial contact alone is not adequate to enable the transmission of the high culture. It is suggested that there was as well the immigration of the ruling class and warriors to the area. These groups of people assimilated with the local inhabitants and local rulers by marriage and the Indian culture was introduced in peaceful manner.

## **2.1 Brahmanism**

The word Brahman refers to the impersonal absolute which was held to be the source of the world and its life. It also refers to the sacred word, or the chant, which was the essence of the sacrificial ceremony. The knowledge of this chant as well as the performance of the ceremony were confined to a certain group of priests who formed a special class. According to Brahmanism, the world had come into existence through a sacrifice and maintained in existence by the performance of sacrifices by the Brahman priests. Natural phenomena were represented by a pantheon of gods. The correct sacrifices to these gods would ensure the well being, success, and strength of the sacrificers.

It was the introduction of this culture to the higher class of the local society of ancient South-East Asian kingdoms that accentuated the development of the court system and idea of kingship based on Brahmanism, because, as suggested by Hall, "...more often than not it was a case of an ambitious ruler, anxious to copy the grandeur style of the Indian courts" (Hall 1964:19). Brahman priests from India were employed by the court of Angkor (the ancient Cambodian kingdom) and, in a later date, by the Ayutthaya court of Thai kingdom. The presence of Brahmanism in these areas of South-East Asia is the basis of the political constitution of the Indianized states of South-East Asia (see Appendix III). Brahmanism became the religion adopted by the South-East Asian courts. This led to the accepting of the sacred Hindu laws, Dharmasastra, the concept of kingship and the rituals in accordance with the ideas.

Brahmanism had very strong influence over Khmer civilization. The ancient Khmer kings were regarded as Shiva, the prominent Hindu god. This belief was expressed in almost every aspect of cultural elements from a grand scale such as the planning of a city to the works of art and the literature. At the end of the empire, the Khmer religion had transformed to Buddhism. However, Brahmanism still prevailed in the court. When the



Thai Kingdom of Ayutthaya was founded in the late thirteenth century, the Thai king, after sacking the Khmer empire, adopted the Brahman idea of god-king and its rituals. Brahmanism has existed side by side with Buddhism since this period. Most of the court rituals are Brahmanic and performed by the court Brahmans. The rituals were also integrated with Buddhist ceremonies and became Brahman-Buddhist ones which are unique to Thailand. Brahmanism is also integrated into the popular Buddhism of the ordinary citizen (see Tambiah 1975: 252-262).

## **2.2 The Thai and animistic belief**

Animism is the belief that came with the Thai race. The origin of the Thai is still a matter of controversy. It is generally assumed that the Thai immigrated into South-East Asia from Yunnan, the southern province of China. Evidences suggests that until around the end of the first millennium, the Thai inhabited an area around the border between China and north Vietnam. Around A.D. 1000, for unknown reasons, they began to leave their homeland and disperse throughout South-East Asia as far west as Assam and as far south as the present day Thailand.

The Thai were spirit worshippers and brought this belief with them wherever they went. They believed that natural features surrounding their life were protected by spirits, for example: the spirit of the fields, rivers, or mountains, the house spirits who protected their dwellings, and the territorial deity on whom the survival of the country ultimately depended.

The immigration of some Thai races to the south weakened the relationship between their kin in the north. The Thai who moved towards the northern part of present day Thailand had experienced the civilization of the ancient Khmer empire and learned of Hinduism and Buddhism which the Khmer had received from India many centuries before. Having been subjected to this influence, they gradually developed the culture that is much more associated with India than China. Inscriptions found at Sukothai, the first capital of the Thai Kingdom, mention the animistic rituals blending with Theravada Buddhism. Animism was practised by the kings and held an important position. It was a duty of the kings to make offerings to the guardian spirit of the city. It was believed that the fate of Sukothai depended upon the correct offering to the spirit. Animistic belief still has survived from the beginning of the first Thai kingdom until present day. It was

combined with the Buddhist belief and Brahmanic rituals and has been accepted as a part of Thai religion.

### 2.3 Buddhism

After the death of the Buddha, there were several meetings of the Sangha councils to settle disputes regarding the teaching of the Buddha ( the suttas ) and the monastic rules ( the vinaya ) that the Sangha should follow. The early canons were not written down but transferred by memory. They were passed down to younger generations of monks by recitation and were put into writing about four hundred years later. The canon grew larger through time due to the increasing complexity of the monastic communities. There were also attempts to summarize and analyze the content of the suttas which later became another branch of the canon known as the abhidhamma and was added to the existing two collections of the sutta and vinaya. The three collections of texts are referred to as the Tri-pitaka.

The first five centuries of Buddhism saw the development of sectarianism. Disagreement on matters related to discipline and doctrine led to the formation of different schools. Two major divisions are the Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle and the Mahayana or the Great Vehicle<sup>1</sup>. The Theravada ( the Doctrines of the Elder ), the major school of the Hinayana attempts to preserve the canons in Pali which is a dialect close to that which the Buddha originally used, while the Mahayana schools converted it into classical Sanskrit.

The Mahayana began as a movement centred around the newly composed texts which were accepted by the devotees as suttas. This contrasted with the early Buddhist schools such as the Theravada who did not accept the new suttas as the word of the Buddha. The Mahayana is seen by some scholars as a popular lay-movement that sought to restore the Buddha's original compassion through the idea of the bodhisattva, the person who sacrifices his or her own welfare in order to lead all beings in the universe to nibbana ( Lopez 1995 : 7 ). Some see that the Mahayana move away from

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<sup>1</sup> Yana means literally career, with second meaning of vehicle : maha means 'great' as oppose to hina, 'small'. The terms were invented by Mahayanists who claimed that their sect was a career or vehicle of life large enough to bring mankind to salvation while the Hinayana claimed to teach the way as pointed out by the Buddha.



the historical Buddha to the mythical Buddha. The Buddha was deified and became an object of worship, salvation became possible not through diligent practice but through faith in a pantheon of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Christmas Humphreys writes that :

*" It is easy to indulge in generalizations, but it is probably true to say that the cleavage between the two schools falls into the recognizable pattern. The Mahayana refused to be inhibited; the Hinayana was bound by the Canon. The former was speculative, metaphysical; the later rational and authoritarian. The Mahayana was fearless in its logic and its mystical flights; the Theravada was content to be the guardian of the Dhamma as handed down " ( Humphreys 1990 : 50 ).*

The difference between Mahayana and Hinayana is seen as the difference of psychological character, while the fundamental of the religion is the same. Many scholars disregard the sectarianism and see the difference as the two sides of a coin. It is suggested that there are not two Buddhisms.

*"...the Mahayana and the Hinayana are one, and the spirit of the founder of Buddhism prevails in both. Each has developed in its own way, according to the difference in environment in which each has thriven and grown, understanding by environment all those various factors of life that make up the peculiarities of an individual or nation " ( Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki cited in Humphreys 1990 ; 51-52 ).*

Buddhism is believed to have been established in the South-East Asian peninsula since 300 B.C. when Asoka, the great Indian king, initiated a Buddhist missionary movement by sending nine group of monks to foreign countries in order to spread the teaching of the Lord Buddha. One of these groups led by Sona Thera and Uttara Thera came to a land then know as Suwannabhum. Many Thai historians believe that this was situated in the central part of present day Thailand near the town of Nakorn Pratom, fifty kilometres west of Bangkok. Buddhism of this period was of the Theravada school. In the eighth century Mahayana Buddhism arrived through lower Burma/and gained the influence over the southern part of the peninsula, the area where the ancient kingdom of Srivijaya was situated. The exact area of the kingdom has not been confidently identified. The T'ang annals of China note that in Srivijaya, "...a man cast no shadow at noon on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes" (Van Beek 1985:73). Various locations for this shadowless spot have been determined ranging from the west coast of Borneo to Chaiya in the south of Thailand.

Srivijaya monarchs were related by marriage to the dynasty of central Java who practised both Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. The art and architecture of this period were, undoubtedly, inspired by the creations of central Java. Apart from this, a number of Srivijayan kings were patrons of the Mahayana Buddhist university at Nalanda

in north-east India, which also added another influence to the art of this period. At a later date, Mahayana Buddhism from Srivijaya spread out to the northern part of the peninsula and reached the area of present day Cambodia where, at that time, was situated the ancient Khmer kingdom. The evidence of the Buddhist influence can be seen on several Khmer sandstone temples that were built according to Mahayana ideology.

In the twelfth century, Pakramabhahu, a Sri Lankan king who was a devout Buddhist and adopted the same concept of Dharma Raja as king Asoka of India, revived Buddhism in Sri Lanka and established the Singhalese sect of Theravada Buddhism which became known in Thailand as Langkavamsa. This school of Buddhism had reached Thailand in the thirteenth century. According to ancient inscriptions, a group of Thai monks had been ordained and studied in Sri Lanka, came back and set up a monastery in Nakorn Sri-Dharmmaraj, an ancient town in the south of Thailand. When the first Thai kingdom was founded at Sukothai in the thirteenth century, Theravada Buddhism had long been established in the South-East Asian peninsula. The kings of Sukothai were Theravada Buddhists. The social organization of the kingdom was of a feudal type. The relationship between the kings and their subjects, as a stone inscription mentions, was the same as between father and children. The principles of Theravada Buddhism that the rulers adopted supported this system. From an inscription of king Rama Khamheng, it is mentioned that Buddhism of Sinhalese orthodox pattern was the official religion of the kingdom. The king and his court practised the religion of the Buddha with devotion. Several monasteries were built within and around the capital city. The relic of the Buddha was acquired from Sri Lanka and enshrined in the main stupa situated in the middle of the city. The inscription gives a picture of a prosperous Buddhist state where during the Buddhist holy days, festivals were celebrated by the king and the whole population.

The Buddhism of Sukothai was practised with the integration of animistic belief and rituals. The spirit which was believed to be the guardian of the city was revered. A shrine was erected on the hill at the south side of the city. Rituals were performed by the king to ensure that the prosperity and the fate of the kingdom would be protected by the spirit. After the reign of Rama Khamheng, Buddhism maintained its importance under the patronage of the successor kings. Rama Khamheng's son, king Lo Thai



(1317-1347), was very interested in performing meritorious acts. He found a number of Buddhapada, the foot-prints of the Buddha, in imitation of the one on Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka. His son Lu Thai, also a devoted Buddhist, composed a treatise on Buddhist cosmology, Tri Bhumikata, which became an important work in the Thai language. An inscription describes the king as follows:

*"This King observed the ten royal precepts. He showed mercy towards all his subjects. When he saw another man's rice he did not covet it, and when he saw another's wealth he did not become unworthy...If he arrested people guilty of cheating or insolence, those who put poison in his food so as to cause him illness or death, he never killed or beat them, but forgave those who behaved evilly towards him. The reason why he repressed his heart and restrained his temper, and did not give way to anger when he might have done, was that he desired to become a Buddha and to take every creature beyond the ocean of the affliction of transmigration" (Hall 1964:165).*

Throughout the Sukothai period, the Sangha and the kings were closely associated. The learned and well respected monks were consulted by the kings in various matters including government related ones.

During the first half of the fourteenth century, the Ayutthaya kingdom gained prominence in the central part of present-day Thailand. It was the same time that the kingdom of Sukothai started to decline and later came under the control of Ayutthaya. It was during this period that the great Khmer kingdom was subdued by an Ayutthaya king. In order to accentuate his power over the region, he adopted the idea of God-king as used by the Khmer kings in the past. The Khmer influence gave the king the role of "Chakravartin" or "the wheel-turner".<sup>2</sup> The role is "...the blend of Hindu and Hinayana Buddhist conceptions derived from the monks which justified kingship not only socially, in the sense of the king as father of the people,...but also morally as a righteous ruler" (Suksamran 1977:24).

The characteristic father and children relationship between a king and his subjects had changed in the Ayutthaya period. Kings were regarded as "Lord of life" and "Lord of land". The relationship is like that of master and servant (Suksamran 1977:25). This was the result of the adaptation of God-king concept from the Khmer culture. Even though Hinduism was introduced into the court system, the Ayutthaya kings were still devoted Buddhists and maintained the roles of the great patrons of religion.

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<sup>2</sup> Somboon Suksamran explains the significance of the concept, that the image of the wheel symbolised the law of life, the principle of righteousness and the idea of power.

During this period, Theravada Buddhism reached its zenith. Monasteries were built in great number. The religious relationship between the Thai kingdom and Sri Lanka was very close. In 1753, the king of Kandy invited the Ayutthaya king at that time to send a deputation of Buddhist monks to purify Sinhalese Buddhism. A commission of fifteen under the leadership of a monk name Upali was sent to Sri Lanka. The mission was very successful and a new sect, known as Upalivamsa or Siamvamsa was founded and later became the largest sect in Sri Lanka.

The Ayutthaya kingdom came to an end in 1767 after the invasion of the Burmese army. During this period, the country was in turmoil. The war with the Burmese resulted in the loss of independence, the capital city, the national treasure, and the cultural heritage. Buddhism was also affected by the war. Ancient scriptures were lost, the Sangha communities were dispersed, and monasteries were left in dilapidation. Fifteen years after the fall of the kingdom, a new capital was founded at Bangkok by King Rama I, also the founder of the present reigning Chakri dynasty. One of the primary tasks the king performed after building the capital was reviving the religion. From this period the study and practice of Buddhism were revived. A great number of monasteries both inside and outside the capital city were built or restored. The reign of King Rama III (1824-1851) saw the birth of a new group of monks. This was initiated by his younger brother, the man who was later to become King Rama IV or King Mongkut. King Mongkut spent almost twenty years in monkhood and was famous for his knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures. The new reformed sect that he established, known as Dhammayutika, is regarded as strictly conformed to the Vinaya. It gained much recognition and new members. The sect then formally separated from the main group which is known as Mahanikaya. Since then, there have always been two groups of Sangha in Thailand.

### **3 The origin of monastic architecture**

The first monastic community (Sangha) was established shortly after the Buddha gained enlightenment in 528 B.C. The members of this community are called *Bhikkhu* which is a Pali word, which literally means one who receives a share of something. The objective of being a Bhikkhu is to understand the meaning of one's life and the condition of life in order to lead oneself towards Nibbana, the state of enlightenment. The principle of the practice is the elimination of "self" or individual existence, which is the cause of every human condition. The Sanghas' way of life accentuates the realization of non-self.



Bhikkhus are expected to live a very simple life with minimum necessities, only enough to sustain themselves. The Sangha provides a condition that can break down the walls between individuals. The aim of the Sangha is to form the "community of consciousness" and give the Bhikkus an ideal condition for "continued conditioning of consciousness away from individualism in all the ordinary, everyday actions of life" (Ling 1973:126).

At the beginning, the Sangha was a wandering sect. Bhikkus travelled most of the year either in a group or alone. The Buddha, like other monks, travelled intensively, several times accompanied by only a few of his disciples. The purpose of travelling was to take the religious message to society. It is also considered as a part of the way of life. The nature of travelling is explained as follows:

*" Travelling for a monk did not mean walking constantly day and night. When a group of monks arrived in a town or village they might stay for several days or weeks, for as long as there were people to listen to the Buddha's teaching. Sometimes monks would come to the town where the master was staying to visit him, and spend sometime with him" (Wijayarattana 1990:21).*

It is also stated that the travelling of Bhikkus is " a movement with which a man identified himself with the minimum of formal ceremony" (Ling 1973:126). A more poetical description of the conditions of the monk's life is extracted from Sutta Nipata, a Pali work of antiquity in which bhikkus are compared to a lone rhinoceros. A part of it is translated as follows :

*" The deer untethered roams the wild                      Whitherso'er it lists for food  
Seeing the liberty, wise man,                                  Fare lonely as rhinoceros.*

*Free everywhere, at odds with none,      And well content with this and that:  
Enduring dangers undismayed              Fare lonely as rhinoceros."*

*( Sutta Nipata trans. by E.M. Hare in Buddhist Scriptures ed. by Conze 1959 : 79 ).*

Some of the monks and nuns travelled throughout the year, even during the rainy season. The origin of the rules regarding the rainy season retreat is mentioned in Mahavagga. Monks travelling during the rainy season walked on young plants and damaged small creatures. This brought about angry complaints from villagers. When the complaints reached the Buddha, he ordered the Sangha to retreat during rainy seasons and the settlement areas were established at the beginning of the monsoon season.

The Vinaya mentions the types of place monks can take refuge during the rainy season

retreat, which lasts for three months. These types of dwelling are temporary shelters, erected by lay followers in a forest, next to a river, in a valley or at the foot of a mountain but they are always close to a village or a town where alms could be collected. The Vinaya also forbids monks to construct their own dwellings and they must take down their shelters and resume travelling right after the end of the rainy season retreat. Outside the rainy season monks also had to find a quiet place to retreat at night. At the time of the Lord Buddha, there were several parks set aside for the Buddha and his disciples. These were given by kings or wealthy lay-followers. The first park of this kind was given by King Bimbisarn. The donation of the park was not as a personal gift. According to the Vinaya texts, King Bimbisarn made his gift to "the community which has the Buddha as its head." This was also the case for every land donation found mentioned in the text. Pali donative inscriptions used a special phrase: "the community of monks from four corners of the world, present and absent which has the Buddha as its head."

The Sangha needs support from the lay-community for providing its basic necessities. It is obvious that the early Buddhist monasteries were situated not very far from the edge of a town or a village. This arrangement is rather different from the Brahman wanderers who always seek to stay in the most remote region away from crowds and busy settlements. This evidence shows that Sangha community has been inter-related with the secular community since the beginning. The teaching of the Lord Buddha was spread to the lay-community through this relationship.

It was after the death of the Lord Buddha that monuments were erected as commemoration of him. These monuments became places for pilgrimage where more structures were built to accommodate other functions. Dwelling places were built while more monks stayed in one place for a longer period. There were also halls for monks to perform religious functions; they were also used as a gathering space for lay-people.

During the first few centuries after the Buddha's death, conditions within the Sangha changed considerably. Buddhism gained more popularity and at the same time monks acquired high status in the eyes of the lay-community. Their living condition became increasingly comfortable and secure. They became established permanently in



monasteries and no longer necessarily lived as homeless mendicants, travelling for nine months of the year. Monks became more dependent on the lay followers who provided them with alms- food and other necessities. The idea of a Bhikku as a 'lone rhinoceros' wandering the forest and concentrating only on his own spiritual development was replaced by the idea of a Bhikku as a member of a monastic community with meditation as one of many activities of the monastic life. This trend was accelerated in the third century B.C. when Buddhism received much material support under the patronage of King Asoka.

The change from hermit's cave to permanent dwelling is recognized in the canonical Samyutta Nikaya and Thera Gatha as follows:

*" Seek out a distant hermitage apart,  
And there remain alone and free of ties  
But, if in solitude is found not peace  
Then with the Order dwell, guarded in hearth,  
Ever mindful, and ever self-possessed "* ( trans. by Allen 1959 : 84 ).

Since ancient time, Buddhist monks have been separated into two groups according to their religious practices : those who reside in a monasteries and have close contact with lay-communities, and those who live a contemplative life in forests and remote places

Buddhist missionaries sent by king Asoka to several parts of Asia brought along with them relics of the Buddha. This brought about the building of numerous Buddhist monasteries in the countries where the faith was established. Mahavamsa, a Sri Lankan chronicle, mentions the missionary activity of king Asoka's son, Mahinda, in Sri Lanka where a great monastery was built by a Sri Lankan king to commemorate the arrival of the great thera and the founding of Buddhism on the island. A branch of the great Bodhi tree which the Lord Buddha sat underneath when he gained enlightenment was brought from India and planted in the monastery. Mahavamsa also mentions, in rather mythical fashion, the arrival of the relic of the Buddha which the king received and enshrined in a stupa. The tradition of building stupas to enshrine the relics was carried out in many parts of the world which Buddhism had reached. This is also the case in Thailand. Since the beginning of the Sukothai kingdom, Thai kings accepted the concept of Dhammaraja and their role as patrons of Buddhism. This resulted in the firm support of Buddhism from the state as well as the building of a large number of monasteries all over the country.

The Buddhist monastery originated as a retreat house for monks and had gradually transformed to be a centre for pilgrimage or a shrine. Symbolic and functional elements were added on at a later date. The function of a monastery was determined not only by the Sangha community but also the needs of lay-followers who sought for spiritual representation in the religion.

#### **4 The functions of a monastery**

The reader who is more familiar with western monasticism might interpret the term "Buddhist monastery" in the same way as the western counterpart. In fact, the translation of the word "monastery" from the Thai word "wat" may not be adequate to explain the purpose, function, and character of the place, which is quite different from that found in the western world.

A monastery reflects the twofold function of the Buddhist Sangha : to provide the best possible condition for individual development, and to teach the Dhamma to mankind. The Buddhist monastery, apart from being the place for performing the religious rituals and the residence of the Sangha, also has other purposes both symbolic and functional. Before looking further into the functional meaning of a monastery, it is necessary to investigate the roles and relationship of the Sangha and the community, since these determine the characteristics of monasteries throughout the country.

##### **4.1 The religious role of a monastery**

The Sigala-Sutta illustrates the social relationship and duty between layman and the Sangha as regarded by the Buddha. It mentions that one should 'worship' six directions : east which represents parents; south:teacher; west:wife and children; north: friends, relatives and neighbour; nadir:servants, workers and employers; zenith: religious men. These social groups and family are treated in Buddhism as sacred, worthy of respect and worship. The act of worship, according to the Buddha, is done by performing one's duties towards them. Relationship between the religious institute and lay-community, therefore, is based on the duty mentioned. Lay people have a duty to look after the material needs of the Sangha with respect. In a similar way, the duty of the Sangha is to give knowledge and lead the lay people along the rightful path away from evil.

Buddhists with different background and education understand Buddhism in different



ways. Mumford Spiro initiates the terms "Nibbanic Buddhism" and "Kammatic Buddhism" to indicate the characteristic of two different ideas conceived by Theravada Buddhists. For learned Buddhists, who fully understand the essence of the religion, the objectives of their religious practice are to reach Nibbana, the liberation from the cycle of life and birth. The goal of Nibbanic Buddhism is considered to be difficult to reach, even in the time of the Buddha and that only learned monks and a few laymen only can achieve. For general people, the aim of salvation is not to detach themselves from the material world and walk on the path to Nibbana. Their objective is to gain a better condition in this life and the next.<sup>3</sup> To acquire merit, ten ways of merit making are suggested. They are Giving (*dana*), Respecting religious rule (*sila*), Meditation with the purpose to understand Dharma (*paawana*), Reverence, Helpfulness, Transference of merit, Rejoicing in others' merit, Listening to Dharma, Teaching and propagating Dharma, and Striving after the knowledge of the truth of good and evil.

The religious function of the Sangha in relation to the lay-community is, in some respects, not confined to the philosophical aspect of Buddhism. Somboon Suksamran suggests that the fundamental inter-action between monks and laymen constitutes upon the concept of merit (*bun*) and merit-making (*tambun*) (Suksamran 1977:7). It can be seen that the acts of acquiring merit can be done with an aid from the Sangha. The Sangha community is regarded, in Buddhist scriptures, as an "incomparable field of merit" where lay-men can sow their meritorious acts in order to gain the "harvests" as the rewards to these acts. The acts of merit making between monks and laymen feature in many forms. The giving ranges from giving alms to the monks to the donation of money for building and repairing a monastery. Religious rituals concerning laymen such as funerals, incorporate almost all kinds of merit making and inter-action between the monks, lay men and among the lay-community themselves. Food and gifts are given to monks as well as other friends and relatives. Chanting of scriptures and sermons are performed by monks as the ways to propagating Dharma, while laymen listen and strive after the teaching of the Buddha.

Thai society is based on the inter-relationship between kinship. Living together as a

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<sup>3</sup> A layman's expectations from his meritorious acts are mentioned in many Buddhist texts. These include: wealth, a long life, happy rebirth in heaven, beauty, happiness, and good reputation.

Buddhist community revolved around the concept of *"metta"* or loving kindness as well as several forms of merit-making. The Sangha is the group of people that exercise these concepts as part of their life to salvation. Sangha are the ones who willing to devote their lives not only to their own spiritual and intellectual development but also to the services of others. According to the Buddha's advice, the Sangha are in the position to devote their lives 'for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many'. The giving of necessary objects or spiritual advice are the few gestures that a monk can contribute towards the welfare of the community. Therefore, monasteries are always the place which lay people who have either material or spiritual needs can depend upon.

#### **4.2 The Secular Roles of a Monastery**

Most of the Buddhist rituals that involve laymen tend to create the sense of community. Buddhist monasteries have been the centre of Thai villagers' life and a place where many activities are carried out all year round. The monks residing in the village monastery have been spiritual leaders and are well respected by the community. The abbot of a village monastery tends to be a local man and selected by the villagers on the basis of his religious reputation and merit-making capability. Apart from these qualities, some abbots have other skills that attract villagers such as ability in meditation, knowledge of Buddhist scriptures, or a practitioner of traditional medicine. It has been suggested that an abbot will be selected because of his expected qualities as the spiritual leader and because the villagers feel that they can put their trust in him (Suksamran 1977 : 72). Throughout Thailand, people regard their village monastery as belonging to the community. The monastery is, therefore, a unified centre which functions as an integrating part of Thai society as a whole.

Most of Thai villages do not have a purposely built community centre. The meetings of a village headman and his committee take place in the monastery hall. The meeting could be presided over by the abbot. Even though he has no political role in running the village affairs, his role as a spiritual guide, and his knowledge of Buddhism and moral matters are vital. Through the centuries, monasteries have functioned as a public meeting place where villagers spend time for relaxation, exchanging news and experiences. They also served as a public health centre for the surrounding community. Various festive fairs and entertainments are organized in the monastery grounds in conjunction with a religious festival. In the past, a monastery also functioned as a legal



court where residents or monks acted as mediator between conflicting parties. Village monasteries are also used as a meeting place between the village headman and the villagers. Here, official information from the government is passed on and, during the time of general election, political campaigns take place.

Before the system of formal education was established in the early twentieth century, monasteries had an important role of providing education for the public, particularly boys who had been sent by their parents to a monastery for moral training. At the time when formal education was not available to everyone, a monastery was the only place where children could learn to read and write. Most of the monks were literate through their intensive studies of the scriptures and the texts on Buddhism. During the Ayutthaya period, state-regulated ecclesiastical examinations were periodically held. Degrees were granted for monks who had proficient translation of Buddhist sacred scriptures such as the Vinaya Pitaka, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka. These ecclesiastical examinations have continued until the present times. It appears that the aim of the examinations was a form of the purification of the Sangha by ensuring adequate standard of learning among the monks. An account of the Ayutthaya period comments that monks were exempted from the corvee service, therefore :

*"...to diminish the number of these privileged persons, he [the king] causes them to be, from time to time, examined as to their knowledge, which respects the Balie Language and its Books : and when we arrived in this Country, he had just reduc'd several Thousands to the Secular condition, because they had not been found learned enough" ( De La Loubere cited in Tambiah 1977 : 203 ).*

A monastery functioned as a school for both monks and laymen within a community. The teaching of the monks often infused elementary education with Buddhist principles. In this way religion became an integral part of the life of the people. To be ordained as a monk or novice was a way to receive a proper education. This practice is still carried out, especially in the case of children from poor families. The monastic education conducted by monks was also available for children even if they were not ordained.<sup>4</sup> There were a number of children sent to live in monasteries as "temple boys" The boys depended on the monastery's or individual monk's support for education and dwelling. They also had duties, to do various small tasks for monks and learning to read and write,

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<sup>4</sup> Because the restriction in the Vinaya about the relationship of monks and women, the monastic education was available only for boys. Education for girls was confined within their families until the establishment of the formal education in the late nineteenth century.

as well as acquiring an appreciation of moralities. It appears that those who received education from the religious institutions were mostly from rural villages where their families had low social and economic standards ( Dhitiwatana 1984 : 86 ). Poor peasants who cannot afford to send their children to state-run schools look upon the village monastery as the only available educational institution for their children. A monastery can assist a poor village boy to climb up into a better life and a higher position in society. It is not far from the truth to say that the Buddhist Sangha plays an important part in providing educational opportunity for a large proportion of the population in Thailand.

When the formal educational system was set up in 1891, the first step of establishing the school system was to improve the existing monastic education to the new standard as well as to maintain the Buddhist teaching of moralities. Several primary and secondary schools were established within monastery compounds as a result. When the Ministry of Education was founded, the educational system, which used to be the responsibility of the monasteries, was transferred to the government. The monks had no direct responsibility in providing basic education and the role of monastery in the educational system is consequently now diminished. However, monasteries still retain a very important role in providing another kind of knowledge: the basic moral principles for Buddhists. This role has been the main function of the Sangha. Laymen can gain the moral education by attending religious functions taking place in a monastery. Sermons are usually given as part of the rituals.

It is also a custom for a Thai man to be ordained as a monk once in his life time. There are no constraints over the period of an ordination or over the age of the person. However, the three month period during the rainy season retreat is a norm. Boys who are younger than twenty years old are ordained as novices (*seminary*). Only a man who is older than twenty can undergo an ordination ceremony called *Upasombot* which allowed him to be a member of the Sangha community (*Bhikku*). During the ordination period, monks will have to learn several religious texts which educate them not only in terms of the religious philosophy but also the way of living their life according to the teaching of the Buddha. They must observe the laws of the order (*Vinaya*) which govern every aspect of their life. Even if a monk stays in the monkhood for a short period and does not gain a deep understanding about the subjects related to religion, it can be



assumed that he would come out from the monastery as a better person. This belief is shown in the way that the ordained men are addressed by their communities, in adding a special word reserved for an ordained person to the front of their first names. It can be suggested that in the former time, Thai men had two separated types of education: the vocational education that they learnt from their families or communities which enabled them to pursue the careers of their choice; and the education that they received from a period in the monastery which enabled them to live in society as good Buddhists. This part of education has had a important contribution in creating aspects of the Thai way of life based on Buddhist concepts.

Even though the rules of the Vinaya are only intended to govern the behaviour of the monastic order, the ideas absorbed into the mentality of the ordained men form their social ethics and regulate their life after they leave the Sangha community. Apart from the Vinaya, the Buddha's advice to the house-holder regarding his moral duties were mentioned in a scripture<sup>5</sup>. These are the relationship and duties between parents and children, pupils and teachers, husbands and wives, masters and servants, friends and friends, and finally, laymen and monks. These duties give the basis for the Buddhist world-view towards the social structure and the roles and responsibilities within society.

Apart from the teaching of monks, religious education can come about in an indirect way; from the fabric of the monastery itself. Monastic architecture is usually decorated with mural paintings. It is mentioned that the purpose of these paintings is not only for decoration, but also for educating the visitors to the monasteries.<sup>6</sup> The contents of the paintings are usually related to the life of the Buddha, the *Jataka*, and the teaching extracted from sacred texts. However, there are also secular related paintings and inscriptions aiming to educate the population in those particular subjects. The most remarkable example of the monastery as a centre for knowledge and learning can be seen at Wat Pra Chetupon, commonly known as Wat Pho, in Bangkok. The old

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<sup>5</sup> Sigalovada Suttanta of the Digha Nikaya . It was characterized by Buddhaghosa as the Vinaya of the House Man.

<sup>6</sup> It is suggested that Thai monastic architecture, when compared to the Chinese monastery of Mahayana, is more "earth bound". The ichnographies are "...chiefly doctrinal and moral, providing the monks and laity with examples of Buddha's teachings and various virtues to be imitated" (Meyer 1992:87).

monastery pre-dated the Bangkok period and was re-built by King Rama I in 1793. A major restoration programme was carried out forty-two years later by King Rama III. The programme involved the restoration and the new construction of several buildings and stupas. The King intended Wat Pho to be a centre for learning for the general public and had texts on various subjects inscribed on stone slabs in cloisters and pavilions as well as recorded by means of mural paintings and decorative sculptures. The contents of the inscriptions, in particular, have the wide spectrum of subjects related to both religious and secular matters. They consist of :

1. *Names of the territorial divisions of the kingdom, arranged according to their geographical situation, and the names of governors of some provinces.*
2. *Illustration of the technicalities of Siamese poetic art, for example, four main categories which range from the literary to the lyrical and more popular modes.*
3. *Explanation of paintings depicting birth stories of the Buddha ( Jataka tales ).*
4. *Codification of medical knowledge, constituting a medical library ( written, it is said, by the court physician and dealing with the treatment of small-pox, technique of massage, childbirth and paediatrics, pharmacopoeias, etc.).*
5. *Citations of contemporary moralist literature.*
6. *Brief verses on the topics of astrology and omen.*
7. *Verses elucidating the statues representing various ethnic groups and nationalities - Siamese, Sinhalese, Karen, African, Dutch, French, Arab, Japanese, Turk, Chinese, and so on. The Dutch, for example, was described as : " the farang figure here represents a seafaring nationality, strong and unshakable in their faith of Jesus Christ, who they believe created the world...".*
8. *Descriptions of paintings of the nine Buddhist councils*
9. *Elucidations accompanying the painted story of the Thai New Year ( Songkrant ) ceremony, together with folk tales, popular myths, and accounts concerning it. (Tambiah 197 : 206).*

A monastery as a source of secular knowledge is not a new invention. Since medieval time, the development of herbal and traditional medicine had been developed by monks in monasteries.<sup>7</sup> In Thailand, medical services were given to the general public as well as within the Sangha community. The centre for native medicine in Wat Po, later became the place where the subject was taught. Several schools were set up in relation to the monastery and medical services were given to the public. Some of them operated within the monastic precinct. It must be mentioned that these activities at Wat Po became more or less secularized. In towns and cities monks now have no role in giving medical advice or services to the community. However, in a village monastery, the situation is different since the relationship between the monastery and its community

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<sup>7</sup> An excavation of a monastic site in the Cultural Triangle, Sri Lanka, reveals some important evidence of the development of native medicine (Ayurvedic). A hospital building located within the monastery, artifacts and equipments used in the traditional medical practice were found ( Prematilleke 1989:203-206). Though it obviously functioned as the part of the monastery, the evidence does not imply the service for the lay-community.



remains close-knit. The village monastery still retains its status as the centre for medical care where villagers depend upon the monks in providing them medicine and other care.

Since a monastery is the heart of a community, great efforts inevitably have been put into creating the monastic architecture. Monastic art and architecture are regarded as high art-forms, no matter if they were created by local or royal craftsmen. The works came out of a belief in the religion and the intention to create works to the highest standard. Monasteries, therefore, are the places where the works of master craftsmen of the community can be seen. The works generated from monasteries have been the lifeline of the traditional craftsmen. They are also the most important medium in the development of Thai art and architectural style throughout history.

The modernization of the country introduced new kinds of architecture in order to serve new requirements. Since then the landscape of the country, both urban and rural, has changed drastically. Monasteries are also affected by the modernization. Fortunately, the way of life of the Sangha has been transformed relatively little. This has enabled the monasteries to maintain their character amid the current of change. The monastic art and architecture are, to a certain extent, still intact. Therefore, monasteries have remained specimen examples of past architecture and a source of traditional art for modern craftsmen.

### **Conclusion**

For almost eight centuries Buddhism has had an important influence upon Thai society. Even though the principles of the religion have remained unchanged, it is inevitable that the role of the religion and the responsibility of the Sangha have changed with society and culture. In 1932, there was a revolution that brought about the end of absolute monarchy and the establishment of constitutional government. This event marked the change of relationship between the Sangha and the state. The king no longer had direct responsibility over the Sangha as had always been the case in the past, even though he still remained the patron of Buddhism. However, political change did not affect the stability of the religion. Buddhism and Buddhist values were not threatened and the Sangha was still venerated. Through the Department of Religious Affairs, the government took responsibility for the Sangha and monasteries. The Sangha acquired a new role in the community according to the policy of the government. The monastic

community has been regarded as a governmental representative in passing the government's policies to the local communities as well as an agent which has a role in community development.

The modernization of the country brought about changes in social, cultural, and environmental respects. These changes are more drastic in urban areas. For developing countries such as Thailand, modernization can be equated to westernization. The process is absorbed by every level and aspect of society. The religious institutions are therefore no less affected by the tide of change. New functions, almost all of which are secular, are absorbed by urban monasteries. The Sangha has begun to get involved in matters relating to management and finance, either by choice or involuntarily. It is likely that most of the monks saw the need for change, since Buddhism is a living religion and change is inevitable.

It is the objective of this thesis to study the changes in both ideology and materials and to use the philosophy of Buddhism as a guide for managing these changes. The physical alterations to monastic fabrics, the use of monastic land and properties are among the direct results of the social transformation which will be investigated in the next chapter.



**CHAPTER 2**  
**THE STUDY OF CHANGE**

# Chapter 2

## The Study of Change

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### 1 Introduction

The developing world has been looking towards the west as the model for modernization of its countries. Therefore, the development or modernization of these countries can be equated with westernization. Western models form the basis for the development of the physical world. Industrialization gave birth to the universal international style. The manmade environment, especially architecture and the urban fabric, is detached from the traditional perspective through the use of new materials and construction techniques. The universalism of western culture has also changed attitudes towards traditional culture and social norms.

The social, economic, and cultural changes in Thailand in the past two decades have been spectacular and rapid. The policy of the Thai government to bring Thailand to the forefront of the newly industrialized countries accentuates these changes. The modernization of the country in material terms means the acquiring of all kinds of modern products and employing the latest technology. At the same time, in non-material terms modernization governs all modern knowledge, beliefs, and values. The process of modernization can be regarded as development. However, the indiscriminate adoption of western models can have major implications including severe environmental problems. The Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a famous Thai Buddhist monk, once remarked that the word 'development' in its Pali or Sanskrit equivalent means 'disorderliness' or 'confusion', and in Buddhism 'development' refers either to progress or regress (Sivaraksa 1992:35). The adopted new cultural values always challenge the traditional world-view and the cultural norms which are the core of Thai identity. It can be argued that living culture has always changed and developed over time. Culture must maintain its importance and meaning in contemporary society otherwise that culture becomes stagnant. But how much are we prepared to allow culture to be transformed, and what kind of values should be maintained as the basis of society?

### 2 Modernization and Thai Identity Crisis

In Thailand, the change towards western culture has been apparent since the reign of



King Rama IV ( 1851-1868 ). The changes can be partly attributed to the king's progressive personality. He spent twenty-seven years as a monk before his accession. During this period he had studied western ideology, learned to speak and write English from western missionaries as well as taken a keen interest in scientific and technological development. During his reign, the king saw the changes caused in South-East Asia by the intervention of new powers from the west and became convinced that his country would have to accommodate itself to western influence or be subdued by it. This idea was emphasized when he saw the defeat of China by the British in 1842. The relationship between Thailand and the west became even more evident when the king signed the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce of 1855 with the British. Later, similar treaties were negotiated with the United States and France. As a result of the Treaties, Bangkok became another important trading post in South-East Asia for large western companies and Thailand saw the beginning of a major change towards westernization.

King Rama IV was succeeded by his son Chulalongkorn who before his formal accession, spent a period travelling in Java and India where he had first-hand exposure to western technology and administration as they were then exercised in Asian countries. It was during his reign that the idea of developing the country towards the western model of Rama IV was realized at great speed. The king "...realized forcibly that if his country were to preserve her independence she must, willy-nilly, put her house in order according to the prevailing European nations, or at least keep up the appearance of doing so" ( Hall 1964: 636 ).

The changes occurring during his forty-year reign were remarkable. They covered almost every possible social, political, and financial dimension. The king employed several Europeans to reorganize the new government services. They became the heads of departments and had strong influences on reforming according to the new ideas. Several Europeans were also appointed to be the king's advisers because of the lack of native people who had sufficient experience in technical or western administrative systems. The physical result of the modernization of the country was the establishment of new infrastructures. New road systems were constructed and canals were dug. New styles of architecture became evident. Most of them were designed by foreign architects employed by the court.

In spite of the physical transformations, the core of Thai culture within these two reigns was still unshaken. The need to modernize the country resulted from the need to avoid losing independence. It has been suggested that Rama IV went along with western demands in order to preserve Thai political, cultural, and spiritual independence (Swearer 1992:154). The modernization of this period was a process of altering 'outer identity' while the core of Thai culture was still deeply rooted in Buddhist belief. King Rama IV himself was an advocate of the Dharmaraja or Righteous King. The benefit from the extensive pilgrimages undertaken while he was still a monk was a real understanding of the conditions of his country and people. After his accession, the king formed a closer relationship with his subjects by giving ordinary citizens the opportunity to converse with him directly. The tradition related to the concept of God-king was discouraged. It can be said that the king went back to the concept of Buddhist kingship as practised by Sukothai kings of the early fourteenth century. It has been suggested that the principles of Righteous King were "...not only compatible with the west but also inherently and universally just, namely the principles of independence, equality, fraternity, and liberty" ( Sivaraksa 1992:155 ).

During the reign of King Rama IV, missionary movements were active in the South-East Asian region. In Thailand, permanent Christian missions both Catholic and Protestant were established during the early part of the nineteenth century. For these missionaries, teaching the religion was not the only activity. Modern science and technology, western medicine, and formal education were integrated into their mission. French missionary also combined their works with French political aspirations for power over the region (Jumsai 1987 : 90). Historical accounts illustrate the tolerance of the Thai Buddhists especially the king towards the spreading of Christianity. Apart from studying English, Latin, and modern science from a French bishop, the king gave a building in a royal monastery to an American missionary to preach Christianity and allow Buddhist monks to attend the sermons.

Undoubtedly the king had seen both advantages and threats from the missionaries in term of culture and politic. Buddhism was used by the king to counter-balance the western influence introduced through Christianity. The king must have seen that Buddhist wisdom in its purest form cannot be undermined by western thoughts and that the understanding of Buddhism by the whole population was the foundation for



maintaining Thai culture and identity. Buddhism was a basis of mentality that was solid enough to withstand alien culture and beliefs. It also provided the basis for an analytical mind which enabled the Thai to observe, select, and assimilate the new culture and technology with conscious discrimination.

Rama IV set up a new reformed Buddhist movement 'the Dhammayuttika' with the objective to 'purify' mainstream Buddhism as was practised in that period. The movement emphasized the strict following of the Vinaya, correct performing of the rituals, and of discarding the false beliefs and non-canonical Buddhism such as magic practices. As a result, the standard of religious education was raised, and scriptures were translated and printed. The reform movement was not confined only to the monasteries. The king visualized that it should be actively propagated and taken to the people. He, therefore, popularized religious festivals such as Visaka Puja whereby the new forms of worship devised by the king were observed. Monks were encouraged to preach religion directly rather than read from set written pieces. The number of sermons given on Uposatha days were increased. They were also delivered at festivals and special occasions.

King Rama V, his successor, saw the need to present an image of monarchy to suit the European counterpart along with the modernization of the country. The process to bring about the new image included the removing of an extreme aspect of his sacredness by communicating and travelling extensively among his subjects. However, while some protocol of European monarchy was adopted, the king still retained the full rites of kingship. Court ceremonies that involved elaborated Brahman rituals representing the king as a God-king were performed. The classical model of a Buddhist king was exercised by the king who was perceived as the supreme protector, benefactor, and the head of the Sangha.

The reforming of 'outer identity' was carried out by successive Thai monarchs until the revolution of 1932 which brought about the end of absolute monarchy. The revolution was carried out by the People's Party whose leading members were the western educated elite. They have been characterized by some historians as the ones who had little or no appreciation of traditional cultural identity, a disdain for indigenous neighbouring cultures and who admired blindly the west for its material progress ( see

Sulak Sivaraksa's works ).

Pibul Songkram, one of the leading member of the revolution party, was appointed Prime Minister in 1938. He proclaimed national reconstruction as his policy which aimed at making Thailand a progressive country. In support of this policy, he issued ten State Conventions which obliged the people to comply with the wishes of the government. He actively promoted the spread of a new national culture through the enforcement of such measures as dress reform whereby Thais must dress in western style and the readjustment of certain habits of the Thai people. It was also after the revolution and under the regimes of military governments that the culture of materialism was advocated by the rulers. The past two decades have seen the deterioration of the core of Thai culture as the result of this 'development'.

The symbiosis of two different cultures is possible only when a true understanding of each culture is developed. Western culture was not truly understood. Selected parts of the culture were spread through economic and political influences. It is truly believing and understanding our own culture that enables us to retain our cultural identity. We must see that our culture is not inferior to but compatible with others. The crisis of cultural identity occurs when a people overlooks the rectitude of traditional culture.

### **3 Development and Buddhist Monastic Life**

Buddhist monastic order, according to early Buddhist teaching, is to be an exemplary model of personal virtue and social organization. The Sangha life also illustrates life in the middle way, the assimilation between the detached way of Sangha life and the worldly lay community. The Sangha's conducts are governed by the rule of vinaya, a discipline that regulates the life of the community. These rules of conduct differentiate the monks' way of life from that of laymen physically and spiritually. A monk's life is highly regarded by layman as being full of austerity, discipline, and blameless activities. A monk's mental attitude is also regarded as clean, pure, self-denying and intellectual (Suksamran 1977:3). The monastery, therefore, should be the place that indicates the religious philosophy as practised by the Sangha.

Monasteries, as with other institutions, underwent a process of change both physical and spiritual as a result of development. Change was unavoidable as Buddhist tradition is



a living entity. If it remains unchanged whilst society is changing it will become obsolete. However, change must not contradict the basic principles of the religion.

Before we go further to explain the various aspects of physical change within a monastery, we should investigate the causes that brought about these changes.

### **3.1 The Change of Sangha Administration**

From the Ayutthaya period ( 1350-1767 ) until the early Bangkok period (1782-1851 ), the Sangha was administered and supervised directly by the kings. During the reign of king Rama V the first Administration of the Sangha Act was issued with the following objective:

*"...it is obvious that the religious affairs of the Buddhist church [ the Sangha ] are also of no less importance to the development and prosperity both of Buddhism and of the country in that, systematically administered, they will serve to attract more people to the study and practice of Buddhism under the guidance of Bhikkus, thereby leading them to the right mode of living in accordance with the Buddha's instruction" ( The Sangha Act, 1902 ).*

The Sangha was organized at the time in accordance with the administrative structure of the government. The Council of the Elders ( Mahathera Samakom ) was formed to act as counsellors to the king on religious affairs and on Sangha administration in general. The major change in Sangha organization came only after the revolution of 1932. The end of absolute monarchy transferred responsibility over the Sangha from the king to the state. However, at present the king still plays an important role as the protector and supporter of Buddhism. The role is more symbolic than before, since he is now a constitutional monarch and acts in accordance to the government.

The new Sangha Act of 1941 shows that organization of the Sangha was adapted to the state patterns of parliamentary government. The government gained control over the Sangha through the Department of Religious Affairs. All administrative work involved in the implementation of decisions or enforcement of regulations enacted by the ecclesiastical assembly was performed by this department. The administrative structure of the Sangha was changed again in 1962. Under the new Sangha Act, the administrative body is divided into two: central and local. The Supreme Patriarch is the head of the central body and chairman of the Council of the Elders which is the sole executive and administrative body of the Sangha. The local administration is divided into several levels ranging from the regional level down to local communities. This division

corresponds with the state administrative system. Monks holding high office within the Sangha administration are appointed by the Minister of Education. In this way the government can control the Sangha and enforce its policy through the Sangha system.

The organization of the Sangha has evolved through time and, in many ways, deviates from the original form of Sangha community. The modern Sangha automatically becomes a part of the political machine. This change has both direct and indirect impacts on the roles of monk and the monastery as a whole.

### **3.2 Monks and Honorific Titles**

It has been a tradition since the Sukothai kingdom that the king awards ecclesiastical titles to monks. These titles indicate the status of the monk in Sangha hierarchy. In the Ayutthaya period honorific titles were associated with administrative position within the Sangha. The higher ranks were assigned to govern the Sangha over a wider geographical area. This system has been continued until present day. The criteria for awarding titles has varied over time. It has been suggested that in the Sukothai, Ayutthaya, and early Bangkok periods, competence in ecclesiastical education, knowledge of Dharma and Buddhist scriptures, and good behaviour were the main qualifications for securing honorific titles ( Suksamran 1982:19 ). Now, criteria have been added for consideration which indicate the changing roles of modern Sangha and the expectations of the lay-community. The ability to conduct social service projects has been included as well as the ability to develop monastic property.

Honorific titles not only relate to the position of monks within the Sangha administrative system but also to a high and valued status in Thai society. It is claimed that the acquisition of such awards is a prime motivation for ambitious monks, and that the merit system based on learning, teaching, and practising the Dharma is given less importance as a qualification for conferment of titles than other abilities. A critical comment from a fundamentalist monk may be cited as follows:

*"...priority has been given to abilities in promoting the construction of material things such as bot ( a building in a monastery in which important religious ceremonies and rituals are performed ) or sala ( preaching hall ). It became a practice that if a monk could have a bot built, he would be given a preceptor position ( Uppachaya ) and a sala could be exchanged for a Phra Khru title" ( cited in Suksamran 1982: 24 ).*

The concept of honorific award is incongruous with Buddhist philosophy and the Vinaya.



According to the Sangha rules, there is no hierarchy among the Sangha apart from the respect accorded to those who are more mature in knowledge and period of ordination. Such awards also accentuate desire and attachment to worldly matters as well as promoting material development. However, it would be unjust to generalize that the greed and desire of an individual monk are the only motivation of monastic development. Most of the monks also see development as a way to maintain the stability and prosperity of Buddhism. The notion is obviously popular as we can see that many material developments have been carried out in monasteries all over the country. The development of material things is a dangerous approach and can be controversial. Materialism is harmful to Buddhism, especially if it is supported by monasteries with the approval of the state. A social critic writes that Buddhism is being killed by capitalism when:

*"...the Sangha get itself involved with capitalistic ventures. Abbots become landlords. Monasteries operate as tourist attractions and religious trust funds act as private banks. Meditation masters can hardly exist in the city, but forests and jungles are being cleared away in the name of progress. So forest Bhikkhus too find it difficult to practise mindfulness in remote areas" (Sivaraksa 1986: 199 ).*

### **3.3 Roles of the Sangha in Community Development**

Since the second World War, the Thai government has pursued a national development policy. This policy includes a community development programme in which the Sangha is assigned an active participation. The Sangha had already been involved with the promotion of village welfare before it became a policy of the government and such involvement was free from governmental interference. After the development and social welfare policies were introduced and systematically put into operation, the Sangha felt that its roles in this respect must be redefined and modified to accommodate government policy. In 1966, the training project for encouraging the participation of monks in community development was set up in order to prepare the monks in various respects to be effective leaders of the people in development, both materially and spiritually. The training subjects covered in the programme ranged from Buddhism, including both the theory and application of Dhamma, rituals, community development, selected laws, and development of monasteries. However, the emphasis was put on the development of the welfare of the community. It has been suggested that monks who had been trained were expected to exercise their educational responsibility through participation in educational administration, propagate activities and community development

programmes as well as to take a lead in the repairing of the monastic fabric, building new buildings in the monastic compound, and promoting hygiene and discipline within the monastery ( Suksamran 1977 : 78-79 ).

Monasteries were seen as examples for villagers of material as well as spiritual development. To achieve this purpose the government laid down a guideline for monastic development. It was mentioned in the guide that the monastery must be clean and tidy; it should be the place for sanctuary; each monastery should provide facilities for the people who come to make merit, to practise Dhamma and perform religious activities. It is believed that if a monastery was developed well, it would attract people and that the people may learn lessons of development for themselves.

### **3.4 The Royal Patronage**

The classical three-fold structure of a Buddhist state is the king, the Sangha, and the people. Each has their own particular but related role to play. Thai kings throughout the history maintain their roles a Dhammaraja or Righteous king by following the model of king Asoka of India who had used Buddhist virtues and qualities as the foundation for his ruling. The concept of a Buddhist ideal society is that the well being of the country depends on the morality of the ruler as well as the ruled. In promoting a tranquil and prosperous state, the king has a duty as the patron and protector of Buddhism and the Sangha. He is expected to practise the Ten Virtues for a King or Rajadhamma which includes, for instance, the act of giving and generosity, having 'sila' or high moral conduct, and showing kindness and gentleness to his inferior.

During the Ayutthaya period, the idea of kingship was dominated by Hindu-Khmer concept of Deva-raja where the kings were considered as divine essence, and also Mahayana concept in which they were revered as a potential bodhisattva. The kings became persons who have ultimate power over their subject. However, the idea of Righteous King and the virtues of Rajadhamma still prevailed and have been practised by Thai kings until present time.

Buddhism is seen as a core of the state which the king must protect and support. In promoting and supporting Buddhism and the Sangha, Thai kings give alms to the monks, build and restore monasteries, supporting the study of Dhamma and performing several



meritorious acts which not only benefit the Sangha and Buddhism but also result in the accumulation of their own merits as well.

### *Land Donation*

Land donation together with endowment of man-power resulted in the material prosperity of monasteries. Buddhist kings are able to gain merits by donating land to monasteries. This meritorious act has been practised since the time of the Lord Buddha. Several park land were set aside for the Buddha and his disciples by lay-followers. According to the Mahavagga, the first park of this kind was given by king Bimbisara :

*" The king of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisara, took a ceremonial golden cup filled with water, poured it over the Blessed One's hand, and thus made the donation : ' Blessed One, I give this Bamboo Grove to the Community with the Blessed One at its head'; then the Blessed One accepted the park" ( The Mahavagga cited in Wijayarata 1900 : 22 ).*

It is inevitable that the acts of the king have been used as a role model for Buddhist kings through out the centuries. Land donation together with endowment of man-power result in the material prosperity of monasteries. Fa-Hien, a Chinese pilgrim, writes about royal patronage and royal monasteries that he had visited in India during 450-411 AD. that the kings and the leading merchants would build monasteries and endow them with fields, gardens, orchards as well as resident population. In the late seventeenth century, another Chinese pilgrim writes about Indian monasteries that "...its wealth is too great...granaries full of rotten corn, many servants, male and female, money and treasures hoarded without use in the treasury" (cited in Dutt 1956 : 184). The donation of land by kings and wealthy lay-followers were mentioned in the chronicles of many Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand.

In Thailand, the types of donated land can be divided into three categories. The first one was the land given for the building of a monastery which comprised the Buddhavas and the Sanghavas areas. The second one was the land given to a monastery in order that it could be used to generate an income which would provide economic benefit to the monastery and the Sangha. The revenue collected from the land was divided into three parts for three different uses: for caring of the monastic fabric; for maintaining the Dhamma such as the copying the religious scriptures; and for the welfare of the Sangha ( from the edict of King Rama IV ). This type of land usually is of an agricultural nature which may or may not be connected to the monastic precinct. Before the abolition of the slavery, it was the duty of monastic slaves to work on the land while the revenue from

the farming went to the maintaining of the monastery. The final category was a piece of land from which the owner donated the revenue generated to a monastery but still maintained its ownership.

Most of the monastic lands were rented to farmers who had to pay the same amount of rent as for non-monastic land. However, before the emerging of the modern economy, some monasteries were not strictly concerned about collecting the rent. There were records mentioned about monasteries that allowed lay-people to build their dwellings on the monastery land without charging the rent, since the monasteries expected to create an inter-dependent relationship between the Sangha and the lay-community.

The revenue from the monastic land was first seen as the primary source of income after the abolition of the slavery, since the subsidy that a monastery received from the government could not provide the sufficient funding for maintaining its fabric and the Sangha. Since 1895, several monasteries have managed their monastic land in a more organized manner that can ensure a regular income and financial effectiveness from the use of land. Most of the royal monasteries are situated in or around city centres, therefore, it is feasible to use the monastic land for commercial purposes. Rows of shop-houses were built. Where monasteries were situated on the river bank, piers for public transportation were built. The reports of monastic committees from twenty monasteries in Bangkok indicated that between 1903 and 1910, the revenue generated from the monastic land come from the rental of the land for farming purpose, commercial buildings, the use of monastic piers, to name a few. Most of the royal monasteries at present still maintain the ownership of the land and benefit from the income which has been increased dramatically in the past eighty years.

#### **4 The Use of Monastic Land**

Since the reign of King Rama V, monasteries in urban areas have been, in one way or another, using their land to generate revenue for their monasteries. In many cases, the use of the land for financial purposes is not confined to the land that is adjacent to the monastic complex but is extended to the monastic area, creating an undesirable mix of land use between the commercial and religious functions. It has been found that 99% of the monasteries in Bangkok use their land for functions other than religious activity and many monasteries in inner area of the city use more than 45% of the monastic



complex for the secular functions ( Nakavachara 1982 : 305 ).

#### **4.1 Land used for Educational Purposes**

Educational purposes are an important function for the secular use of monastic land. This is because monasteries have had a prominent role in providing education for the majority of the population. This role is still maintained in spite of the change of educational administration. A part of monastic land is used to house a school under the Ministry of Education or the local authority. These schools are attended by lay-pupils. Some monasteries also have schools for religious studies which provide traditional studies of Pali, Dhamma, and Abhidhamma. These kinds of schools are attended by monks and novices. Two exceptional monasteries, Wat Bovornives and Wat Mahathat in Bangkok accommodate two Buddhist universities for monks. Monastic schools usually occupy a separate area from the Sanghavas and the Buddhavas. However, in a small monasteries, this separation is not clearly marked. Buildings in the sacred area of the monasteries or the Sangha residence are used for educational purposes which can cause a conflict between the new use and historic buildings.

#### **4.2 Land Used for the Residence of the Lay-community**

This type of use can be found in most of the monasteries. Even though the monastic lands that are rented to lay-communities do not provide a high financial return, it has long been the practice that the community within the boundaries of a monastery can support the Sangha in other matters. It is unfortunate that the low rental rate can be a cause of the abuse of the land use. Blighted areas and slums can be found in the land of almost 8% of Bangkok monasteries ( Nakavachara 1982 : 310 ). This brought about various problems such as vandalism and crime as well as visual pollution.

#### **4.3 Commercial Use of Land**

Monasteries in urban areas gain financial benefit from the rental of land for commercial use. The nature of the activity varies from small scale business such as temporary food stalls to permanent market stalls, for instance, the images and amulets market in Wat Rajanatda, Bangkok. Large commercial buildings are also built in monastic land and become the major source of income for the monasteries. A monastery that owns a large piece of land in the centre of a city can become very wealthy by building shops and business premises on its perimeter and leasing them to lay businessmen. It has been

said that a prosperous monastery will keep growing and invest its new found commercial wealth in newer and larger buildings ( Tambiah 1977 : 331 ). The major problems caused by the commercial uses are the encroachment of the commercial activity into the Buddhavas and the Sanghavas areas. This brings about visual conflict and inappropriate activities within the sacred areas. The harmony between the monastic architecture and its surrounding has gone when new commercial buildings are built adjacent to it. Open space that once was an important feature of monastic lay-out is often lost to the demand for commercial buildings or their related requirements.

#### **4.4 Crematorium and Related Activities**

Thai Buddhists have always organized funerals and cremations in monasteries. In the past, however, there was no permanent crematorium constructed for this purpose. This is because a crematorium was considered as an inauspicious kind of structure. Wealthy Thai had the structure built for each funeral while the people who could not afford to have one built would use a common crematorium which was a temporary structure and could be taken apart after the funeral.

The first permanent crematorium was built in the reign of King Rama III at Wat Saket, a royal monastery situated immediately outside the old Bangkok city wall. But the building of a permanent crematorium in each monastery was not widely practised until the reign of king Rama VII. As the result of the low national economy, the building of a crematorium for each funeral became too much to afford. At present, it is a normal practice to organize a funeral and cremate the body in a monastery. These activities become one of the major and constant sources of income for most monasteries. Sixty eight percent of the monasteries in Bangkok have a crematorium in their monastic precinct. The traditional Thai funeral is long and can be an expensive process. The religious ritual for a funeral can last for seven consecutive days and the deceased can be kept at the monastery up to one year before the cremation. Monasteries will have to provide spaces and structures for this purpose. Several new buildings were built within the monastic complex. Sometimes a part of a historic building was adapted to accommodate this function. New buildings often are not in keeping with the historical existing.

A modern funeral also needs other support facilities such as parking space. Monasteries



that provide an intensive funeral service often are urban monasteries with a substantial piece of land that can be converted to a vast parking lot. Parking space can also generate another income since the monastery can operate a parking service for the public, especially in the city centre where the shortage of parking space is a major problem. It is beyond doubt that the environment of the monastery and its architectural fabric have changed because of commercially oriented activities.

### **5 Problems of Modernization**

Modernization emphasises the increasing use of science and technology through complex organizations and it is assumed that modern human problems can be solved by simply increasing the involvement of science and technology. As a result, only a group of the population which is in a position to gain access to both science and technology and who can manipulate the organizations receive the benefit of development. It has been suggested that, according to the historical experience of the developed countries in the west, urban pressures were instrumental in raising the living standards of the non-urban population (Dube 1988 : 30). However, this pattern of development does not appear to be the case in many developing countries. In Thailand industrial development creates a difference in living standards between the rural areas and urban privilege. Apart from this, concentrating development only in particular urban areas leads to other problems such as the over-growth of the areas, inadequate infrastructure, pollution, mass immigration of rural population, and the change of social and cultural characteristics of both urban and rural communities.

In most developing countries, the pattern of urban growth can be identified with two needs. The first is the need to improve infra-structure such as accessibility for cars which has resulted in the widening of streets, provision of parking spaces, and improvement of access routes. The second is the need for modern accommodation for commerce or residences as well as the need to accommodate more population in places where the cost of urban real estate is high. The increase of traffic including heavy trucks and other vehicles may damage the fabric of old buildings, cause vibrations, and air pollution.

### **6 Monastery and Development**

One of the new roles that the modern Sangha has acquired from the state is participation

in the modernization of the country. It has been a long tradition that monasteries are used as local community centres and the monks provide the lay community with social welfare. Nowadays, however, the role of monks in modernization is still more prominent. They have been involved in the government policy of national development and various programmes have been drawn up by the government with Sangha collaboration and carried out by monks.

The nature of change within the monasteries can be divided into two types: those of rural monasteries and those of urban monasteries. Change in both types is the result of modernization but with a different emphasis. The community development programme is carried out in rural areas partly as advocated by the local monastery. The objective is to promote the well being of the local population. The role of the monks is as the collaborators between the policy maker, ie. the government, and the villagers. In this case, it is the role of the monks that has changed from the original role given by the vinaya. However, in the case of monastic buildings, the change has not had great impact.

A leading characteristic of a closely knit community is the sharing of the same memory and history. Historical knowledge is collectively produced and shared. Historical awareness implies group activities ( Lowenthal 1990: 213 ). A group history can have a long time span extending back over several generations. While an isolated individual can remember or have memory only of his personal experiences, groups of people, such as a traditional Chinese clan living in a cohesive extended family share the collective memory of a common ancestor who may have lived many centuries ago. The realization of a collective history is the foundation of group identity. Memory and history are apprehended in surviving relics and the intangible but significant continuation of customs and traditions. As long as the group sharing the common history is still intact, this heritage is likely to be maintained and valued as the group identity.

One of the characteristics of modern cities is heterogeneous population. Cities are inhabited by multi-racial populations that have diverse origins with different languages and religions. There are also immigrants from other parts of the same country. The uprooted and mobile population inevitably cannot have the strong sense of the local history that can be valued as their identity. As a result, past relics and cultural heritage



either become redundant or their functions and meaning are altered.

The life of a Buddhist monastery depends very much on a strong sense of community. Monasteries in rural areas play a part in every day village life in one way or another. By contrast, the relationship between the urban population and their local monasteries is less evident. The role of the urban monastery as a part of local or personal identity has diminished. However, this does not mean that the role of monastery as the centre of religious activities has lessened, since Buddhism is still very much practised by most of the population. Urban monasteries gain wider but more loosely knit lay-communities. Religious festivals that were once organized and participated in by the community cease to continue or change their formats. Monastic activities, including the care of the monastic fabric, formerly attended to by the whole community, have become the responsibility of a small group of people. The monastery has become another institution, separated from every day urban life: a domain that has no sense of belonging or identify with the ordinary urban population.

## **7 The Buddhist's View of Development**

The nature of development in the developing world can be seen as twofold: the material development which governs elements that can be measured or visible, and the development of mind which is qualitative rather than quantitative. In the modern world, the quantitative aspect of development is considered more important. Foreign investment, gross national income, rate of economic growth, or other material indications such as housing or factories are seen as the way to measure the degree of development. Every economic and social development plan issued by the Thai government indicates a concentration on this type of development. The aim of the government to turn Thailand into a new industrialized country has accentuated the implications of capitalism. It can be said that the economic system dictates government policy. Therefore, development concerns only such matters as economics and politics. Development in this direction is contradictory of the principles of Buddhism. It has been suggested that:

*"...economists see development in terms of increasing currency and things, thus fostering greed ( lobha ). Politicians see development in terms of increased power thus fostering ill-will ( dosa ). Both then work together, hand in glove, and measure the results in terms of quantity, thus fostering ignorance ( moha ), and completing the Buddhist triad of evils" ( Sivaraksa 1986: 57 ).*

From a Buddhist point of view, development must aim at the development of spirit over and rather above material things. It is the process of developing from inside out which is in total contrast to quantitative development. Buddhism emphasizes the extinction of desire, which is the cause of suffering while material development aims at producing materials to serve desire. It has been suggested that western economists go for maximization of developmental goals in such a material sense that they hardly care for people. In Buddhism, emphasis on the creation of material things can be overwhelming, since man can come under the influence of the material to such an extent that he is unable to gain the complete awareness of the world which is beyond the material realm.

The Buddha did not take life out of the context of its social and economic background, since economic and social environment also condition our behaviour. Digha-nikaya (Cakkavattisihanada-sutta) states that poverty is the cause of immorality and crimes, such as theft, violence, hatred, and cruelty. Rulers, such as kings or governments who try to suppress crimes by punishment can never succeed. In order to eradicate crime, the Buddha suggested that the economic condition of the people should be improved. When people earn enough, they will be contented and live without fear or anxiety. Consequently, the country will be peaceful and free of crime. However, this does not mean that the Buddha advocates the accumulation of wealth, desire, or attachment to materials. Material welfare is only a means to an end. Fundamental material and social means are needed in order that human beings can live in the condition that enable them to achieve a higher spiritual life.

The objectives and processes of modernization are, in many respects, fundamentally opposed to Buddhist ideology and traditional culture. The introduction of new technology in order to maximize the end product does not always benefit other aspects of society. It is generally accepted that the use of the latest technology in a certain area is unavoidable. However, technology can function as an instrument in the service of humanity and not the reverse. Unfortunately, this understanding was not fully realized when the first wave of modernization hit Thailand. The newly introduced modern technology rapidly gained control over the whole of humanity. In 'Small is Beautiful', Schumacher writes that, in the Buddhist point of view, there are two types of mechanization which need to be clearly distinguished in order to understand the character of human production. These two types are :



*" One that enhances a man's skill and power and one that turns the work of man over to a mechanical slave, leaving man in a position of having to serve the slave " ( Schumacher 1973 : 50 ).*

The objective of production is the quality of goods without regard to the importance of human involvement in the production process. Working and creating are the important parts of human personality. Coomaraswamy writes that a machine and its significance is the destroyer of a culture. This is because it does the essentially human part of the work.

Time and economic constraints do not enable man to achieve artistic creativity. Modern technology has brought about the loss of skill and material understanding. The use of hands and brain to manipulate the materials are a very important basis for the creation of art and crafts. It is undoubtedly true that after the introduction of mass produced goods, there comes a declining of traditional crafts and the diminishing of craftsmen. This is true also with architecture. When building craft became building industry, traditional builders found themselves no longer fitting into mainstream work and were not able to survive by maintaining their traditional practice in the modern-day context. Modern industry that employs the use of technology regardless of humanity is contradictory to Buddhist thought. It is suggested that :

*" Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of human character. Character, at the same time, is formed primarily by a man's work. And work, properly conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, blesses those who do it and equally their product " ( Schumacher 1973 : 50 ).*

The stress in the modernization approach is on quantity and material gains while the spiritual development is not adequately mentioned.

## **Conclusion**

Buddhism is a continuous force that withstands change throughout history. The religious is the strain that links past thought with present-day value, since the truth and the rational teaching of the Buddha are timeless. What developed through time is the practical side of the religion. Nevertheless, for some lay-people, this practical aspect of Buddhism does not have any meaning or influence over their secular day to day life. The world-view and outlook of the modern-day Thai are based on a 'pseudo-western' concept of the modern and developed world. For some modern Thai, religion can be seen as a relic of the past. Religious practices are given new meanings or connotations. The non-soteriological side of Buddhism, for some Buddhists, is considered to be more

important than the Dhamma.

Since the end of the nineteenth century Theravada Buddhism in Thailand has experienced different kinds of transformation in response to various challenges from the modern west. Buddhist philosophy has been used by Thai rulers as a basis for the development of the state. At the same time, the modernization of political and economic structures, which were inevitable changes, challenged the traditional Buddhist world-view and the form of religious life associated with it. Thai Buddhism developed an institutional structure and a modern world-view that has enabled the Thai to retain the identity of a Buddhist society reasonably well. Thai kings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries launched various changes because they believed in progress in which the imitation of certain western technical and administrative achievements was to be combined with the preservation of Buddhism and traditional social concepts and institutions.

Buddhism had been used as a basis for the transformation of Thai society since the beginning of the kingdom. It is the foundation of Thai civilization and provides a critical perspective from which to inform the present and guide the future. We have seen that it has power to inspire and organize society by using the Buddhist virtues and ideal society as exemplary models. After the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the social and cultural changes, accentuated by industrialization and the western economic system, became apparent and brought about the undermining of traditional Buddhist values. The influx of technology, information, and western ideology is erupt and unavoidable. The globalization of modern economy has radically transformed Thai society without the chance for understanding the inner dimension of the change. This has caused modern society to deviate from the traditions that are rooted in the religious values, spiritual depth, and humanity of Thai culture.

It has been suggested that simply performing the outer rituals of any tradition has little value, if it is not accompanied by personal transformation (Sivaraksa 1992 : 61). Buddhism should be combined imaginatively in the development of the country and population as it had been before throughout the history. The Buddhist Sangha and monasteries, as a representation of the religious dimension, must be at the forefront in the revival and reinterpretation of religious ideas in order to face present day problems



effectively. Development within the monastery should emphasize the religious ideology of development. This should include not only the policies and planning for the use of monastic land but also the reviving and conserving of the spirit of the sacred place, maintaining the monastery as the symbolic representation of Buddhist virtue and the continuity of the rich living tradition in modern society.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**MEANING IN BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE**



### 1 Introduction

One of the most important tasks in the conservation process is to determine the value of historic monuments. These values will be used in specifying the true objectives and the correct processes and techniques for the conservation project. Several criteria have been established by the international authorities. It is generally agreed that historical, archaeological and artistic values are the vital elements in these criteria. The determination of these values is, however, a difficult task and can be subjective. It depends upon many factors such as a society's attitude towards historic monuments, economic and governmental policy. However different, the bottom line for conservation work is that the identity of the architecture and its authenticity should be conserved and retained over the period of its existence. In practice, determining what elements signify the identity of a building often causes controversy. The emphasis on one set of values can lead to the neglect of the others. It is suggested that such elements may not only be the physical appearance of the building but its essence which is the abstract quality. The aim of this chapter is to define the elements, both physical and philosophical, that can signify the essence of Buddhist architecture.

### 2 The Spirit of the Place

Heidegger states that modern man and the age in which we are living are dominated by technologies. Though man seems to be able to control the technology and whatever consequences that can occur, we find ourselves alienated from the world and from our own human nature. He cites that " Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry "( Heidegger 1966:?. ). Modern communication systems brought about the modern mode of thought which is governed by technology. This modern system of communication is "... already much closer to man today than his fields around his farmstead, closer than the sky over the earth, closer than the change from night to day, closer than the convention and customs of his village, than the tradition of his native world" ( Heidegger 1966: 50 ). Even though this statement suggests opposition to modern technology, Heidegger does state that man cannot deny the progression of history into the atomic age. The danger of this progression and the destruction of nature as the result of technological advance is inevitable. However, it is concluded that the destruction caused by "specific

technologies" is not as much in Heidegger's concern as the human "distress" caused by the "technological understanding of being" ( Dreyfus 1993: 305 ). Since the technological revolution can "...captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking" ( Heidegger 1966 : 56 ). Dreyfus suggests that:

*" The danger, then, is not the destruction of nature or culture but certain totalizing kinds of practices - a levelling of our understanding of being. This threat is not a problem for which we must find a solution, but an ontological condition that requires a transformation of our understanding of being" ( Dreyfus 1993:305 ).*

Technology and technological understanding of being are present situations that modern man is facing. How can we live amid modern technology but still be able to step out from the technological understanding of our existence? Dreyfus gives an example of Japanese way of life where advanced high-tech products exist along side non-technological practices as follows:

*"The television set and the household gods share the same shelf- the styrofoam cup coexists with the porcelain tea cup. We thus see that the Japanese, at least, can enjoy technology without taking over the technological understanding of being" ( Dreyfus 1993: 307).*

Heidegger's works are concerned with the relation between man and environment as well as the way to recover the understanding of environment. The approach to this understanding is the way to recover the meaning of the built environment as conceived by man.

Heidegger writes that the reality of the world is separated from a human being because attempts to explain its meaning were based on metaphysical thoughts. He tried to free his judgement from traditional philosophy as developed since the Classical period. He believes that we can understand things as they really are without philosophical assumptions that could distort our point of view and that such access is to be found by paying very careful attention to our actual experience of the world and of ourselves ( Hall 1993 : 125 ). Human, built thing, and the world are inter-related, which can be summed up as follows:

*" This world just is the network of relations into which can be fitted the systems of equipmental totalities with their internal relations ( references ) among the tools they contain and their external relations ( assignments ) to the purposes of the humans who use them, and human beings with their practical ties to one another and the objects they deal with " ( Hall 1995: 127 ).*

The built environment as defined by Heidegger is different from the one that was



understood throughout the periods of history.<sup>8</sup> It is suggested that in the "no-longer-metaphysical" condition, the built environment, according to Heidegger is the "sites or occasions where the four fundamental dimensions of reality -earth, heavens, mortals, and the divine- concretely gather together in the world" ( Mugerauer 1994: 68 ).

It is obvious that, from Heidegger's point of view, the way built thing is treated at present (as resource or standing reserve) cannot lead to the understanding of its meaning. Man is brought into the state of "homelessness" by the lack of relationship with the world surrounding us. To bring us toward a "homecoming"<sup>9</sup> again is to understand fully the concept of "thing" and to retrieve the relationship between man and natural and man-made environment.

The way to retrieve this meaning is by means of interpreting the past and the present nature of things. It is suggested that Heidegger does not look at history in order to escape from today's situation and go back to live in the past. He considers the historical concept of the thing and sees "...how historically given things actually are aspects of the still occurring, epochal unfolding of what once was call Being but now is thought of as the event of the fourfold world" ( Mugerauer 1994: 78 ).

The concept of "thing" as the event of the fourfold world ( earth, heaven, mortal, and the divine) is illustrated by Heidegger when he give the example of a jug. The character of the jug which is its essential nature is explained as follows:

*" The jug's jug-character consists in the gift of the pouring out. Even the empty jug retains its nature by virtue of the pouring gift, even though the empty jug does not admit of a giving out. But this nonadmission belongs to the jug and to it alone. A scythe, by contrast, or a hammer is incapable of a non admission of this giving...The spring stays on in the water of the gift. In the spring the rock dwells, and in the rock dwells the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the rain and dew of the sky. In the water of the spring dwells the marriage of sky and earth...In the gift of water,...sky and earth dwell. But the gift of the out pouring is what makes the jug a jug. In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell" (Heidegger 1971: 172).*

From this explanation we can see that the jug is no longer to be considered as an object

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<sup>8</sup> The built was understood by the Greeks as "that brought forth into presence", by Judeo-Christian onto-theology as "that created by Creator", by the modern era as "the set of objects perceived by subjects", and by the present technological era as " a standing reserve or stock" (Mugerauer 1994:68).

<sup>9</sup> "homelessness" and "homecoming" are the terms used by Mugerauer in his book "Interpretations on Behalf of Place". State University of New York Press: Albany, 1994.

or artifact alone; it performs a function which in turn forms a part of the whole world. Heidegger calls this function "truth setting itself to work", and anything that performs this function is called a work of art ( Dreyfus 1993: 297 ). Norberg-Schulz calls this participation of the thing in the place between earth and sky "taking place". The thing is part of " the place " in which life is concretized. He also states the function of the "real-thing" that is to concretize or "reveal" life in its various aspects. " If a thing does not do that, it is not a thing but a mere commodity...Things are made with the purpose of revealing; they gather the world, and may themselves be gathered to form a microcosmos" ( Norberg-Schulz 1980: 169 ).

This approach to the deriving of meaning in natural and man-made environments emphasizes the relationship between the entities which create the whole "place". Man plays the important role in interpreting the relationship, since man creates and brings together the things that are independent either natural or man-made, to create a place that can convey meaning according to man's purpose. The place holds what is important to a man and gives direction and meaning to his life. Man knows where he stands and what he has to do. Man also finds himself in the state of homelessness when the place has lost the meaning it intended to convey.

## **2.1 The Making of Place**

Norberg-Schulz writes that the nature of a thing resides in its gathering. The jug gathers the earth and sky, the bridge gathers the landscape around the stream. In short, things gather world and this gathering means setting-into-work of truth ( Norberg-Schulz 1980: 170). The making of place can be seen in architecture where concrete elements with substance, shape, texture, and colour are gathered by man in order to visualize and symbolize the human life. Heidegger illustrates the example of gathering in a Greek temple as:

*" It is the temple work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human beings. The all governing expanse of this open relation context is the world of this historical people" ( Heidegger 1971: 42 ).*

Since the gathering of concrete things depends on the human beings who gather, the value and meaning the things symbolize must vary according to the human background, practice, and perspective. This leads to different styles of encountering and dealing with the things involved. The character of a place is created in this way. Different cultures



create different kinds of place. Similarly, the character of different types of place can also be created by man from the same cultural background but in a different period with different ideology. The character of a place is the important part of experiencing the place. There are some characteristics of places that can be considered as common experiences regardless of cultural difference. Norberg-Schulz gives examples of these characters : "protective" for dwellings, "practical" for offices, and "solemn" for religious buildings. He states that "... all places have character, and that character is the basic mode in which the world is given" (Norberg-Schulz 1980 :14).

## 2.2 Genius Loci

It has been believed since ancient times that each place has its own particular "spirit" or "genius". In the past man has had to learn how to accommodate himself within the various characters of natural environment where his life taken place. In another word, to understand the genius of the place and create his place accordingly. A particular natural feature such as mountain, river, or desert possesses a particular genius. Each of them is the basis for man to create the dwelling place that reflects the genius of the landscape as well as shaping the character of the man himself. Hegel writes that nature plays a part in helping to produce the spirit of a people. He geographically divides the world and states that:

*" These natural distinctions must be first of all regarded as special possibilities, from which the spirit of the people in question germinates, and among them is the Geographical Basis. It is not our concern to become acquainted with the land occupied by nations as an external locale, but with the natural type of the locality, as intimately connected with the type and character of the people which is the offspring of such a soil" (Hegel 1956 : 79-80).*

According to Hegel, nature is a vital element in determining the distinctive locality and system of life, or, even, civilization. He gives examples of the valley plains where kingdoms arise, and the foundations of great states begin. Agricultural operations and legal relations were invented in order to facilitate the fertile lands. In the part of the world which is next to the coast, the sea gives human beings the idea of indefinite and unlimited and :

*"...in that Infinite, man is stimulated and emboldened to stretch beyond the limited: the sea invites man to conquest and to piratical plunder, but also to honest gain and to commerce. The land, the mere valley-plain attaches him to the soil involves him in an infinite multitude of dependencies, but the sea carries him out beyond these limited circles of thought and action" (Hegel 1956: 90 ).*

Every natural place has its own meaning which can be experienced by men. They also possess some kind of structure which forms on the basis of earth-sky relationship.

These structures consist of topography, colour, texture, and vegetation which belong to the earth as well as the colour, light, and climate that belong to the sky.

Man-made place is created to represent the spirit of the natural place as man experiences and understands it. The meaning of earth and sky is represented by concrete elements. In the case of architecture, spatial organization and the articulation of architectural elements symbolise the relationship between men, earth, and heaven. The character of a man-made place creates the identity of the place. The gathering of meaning by a place is its "genius loci". The spirit of a place can be experienced through the concrete determinants of the spiritual manifestation. For example, the presence of the cosmic order or relationship between sky and the place are concretized in the orientation of the building. Norberg-Schulz calls these determinants "objects of identification". Where the object of identification is lacking or ambiguous, the character of the place as well as the meaning it conveys are lost. The main idea derived from the study of genius loci by Norberg-Schulz is that man will feel "at home" when he experiences and understands the meaning of the environment. On the contrary, he will be confused and lost when this meaning cannot be presented.

In the technological age, we are often faced with the loss of place, the consequences of this loss, and the attempts to gain back the familiar meanings through the built environment. Therefore, it is important to understand what are the "objects of identification" that contribute to the spirit of the place and how the genius loci manifests itself through them.

### **3 The Essence of Architecture**

The essence of architecture conveys itself, to some extent, through the physical form. Therefore, the physical appearance of a building is often mistaken for its essence. Several historians have tried to define the essence of architecture by focusing only on some particular architectural qualities. For example, one definition of the essence of High Gothic architecture is that it should have such elements as pier, pointed arch, ribbed vault, and buttresses (Frankl 1960:826). This is obviously not a sufficiently satisfactory definition. By explaining in this way, the real essence of Gothic is not touched. In the same manner, the cultural, social, and intellectual background alone cannot be considered as its essence.



The essence of architecture derives from a true understanding of architecture and its meaning. Architecture has meaning that can communicate quite as well as language. However, meaning in architecture, as most Semiotists suggest, is not a matter of "stand for" something as it is in the case of language. Architecture has "...second order meaning which is called connotative" (Broadbent 1973:55). For example, Gothic architecture, for many people, connotes church. The connotation, however, needs "social contract", it needs to be agreed upon and cannot be changed at will. Meaning derives from this social contract and architecture signifies its meaning through style and form.

Form and space are not sufficient to convey the essence of architecture. Physical appearance and spatial organization, though complex, represent only a level of meaning. Style and form can be compared to the body of an architecture. A Buddhist conceives the meaning of Buddhist architecture in a different way from the non-Buddhist who does not have an understanding of the religion. What contributes to this difference is the understanding not only of the body of the architecture but also its soul. Frankl summarises the essence of Gothic as follows:

*"The essence of Gothic is, in a few words, that cultural and intellectual background insofar as it entered into the building and was absorbed by it; it is the interpenetration, the saturation of the form of the building by the meaning of the culture" (Frankl 1960:827).*

It can be concluded that the essential abstract quality of an architecture derives from many aspects: the purpose of the architectural, cultural, spiritual and intellectual background that creates the physical 'body' of the architecture. Therefore, in order to understand the essence of Buddhist architecture, it is crucial to identify the aspects that surround this essence.

### **3.1 Function as the Essence**

The essence of an architecture also derives from its purpose. Meaning in architecture, as differentiated from other forms of art, involves its function or utilities. "With utilitarian objects, the purpose is the essence of thing" (Frankl 1960:827). For functionalism, a true architectural experience of forms is inseparable from functions. The value of a building is determined by how the function can be fulfilled. Architecture cannot express its real meaning without regarding its function or utility. However, "...an essential property may not suffice to define the nature of the thing which possesses it" (Scruton 1979:39). There are some arguments about what should be defined as 'function' in architecture: function of the building or function of the parts. Scruton raises these questions and

concludes that "...buildings have uses and should not be understood as though they did not" (Scruton 1979:40). Function must depend on aesthetic if it is to be understood, since it is only if we know what architecture is that we understand the function. Style needs to be decided for a form that can express the function. Functionalists' doctrine ignores a large part of architectural experience.

However important, the function forms only a part of the essence. Even though the purpose of the architecture has ceased, the essence can still endure. For example, although a redundant church no longer serves a religious function, its form and style were created to fulfil liturgical purposes. Although the rituals have ceased, the architecture nevertheless still represents the spirit of the Christian church.

### **3.2 Space and Form as the Essence**

Space is another aspect of architecture that has been held by some critics as being the most important feature of architectural experience. Theorists such as Frankl and Zevi regard an enclosed space and the way the space is organized as the essence of architecture. Scruton argues that the space theory, as with functionalism, can explain only one side of architectural merit. In experiencing a building, we encounter not only spatial organisation but also light, shadow, ornament, texture, and architectural elements such as mouldings. The spatial effect, therefore, depends upon significant detailing. Frankl explains that the meaning of space derives solely from its furnishings and it is "...a grave error to attempt to explain architecture aesthetically or historically without them" (Frankl 1968:157). Space theory alone cannot give a satisfactory answer to what the meaning of architecture really is.

### **3.3 Sacredness as the Essence of Religious Architecture**

Mircea Eliade writes that a religious phenomenon will be recognized only when it is studied from a religious point of view. He also suggests that the essence of the phenomenon cannot be determined by means of psychology, sociology, economics, art, or other studies if the most important and irreducible element in the religious phenomenon is not included. That element is 'the element of sacred' (Eliade 1971:xi). Religious architecture is the outcome of religious phenomena, both beliefs and rites. Sacredness is one of its dominant qualities which is indispensable. It is not sufficient to explain about form, spatial articulation, and architectural style without relating them to the idea of sacredness. In a similar manner, it would be inadequate if the study of



religious architecture concentrated only on the symbolic representation of the sacredness. The two approaches must be considered alongside each other. The meaning of the sacred element can be interpreted in several ways according to the background and the understanding of every individual. Eliade states that the different interpretations of meaning are equally important and yet not contradictory but complementary (Eliade 1971:7).

#### **4 The Sacred and the Profane**

The idea of sacred and profane is a fundamental characteristic of all religious beliefs. Men have classified all things, real and ideal, into two opposite classes: the sacred and the profane. We divided the world into two realms. It is suggested that the virtues and powers of sacred things are represented through beliefs, myths, and legends (Durkheim 1957:37). The sacred manifests itself in a different order from the profane world. Eliade used the term '*hierophany*' to define the manifestation of the sacred in objects that are an integral part of our natural profane world. Therefore, the hierophany can be anything such as stones, trees, buildings, rites, as well as human beings.<sup>10</sup>

##### **4.1 Sacred space**

It is the nature of a human being to be conscious of our existence in the world. We attempt to establish our understanding of the relationship between ourselves and the transcendental power which governs our life. It is emphasized that man cannot gain a foot-hold through scientific understanding alone. We need symbols that can represent our life-situation (see Norberg-schulz 1984). Sacred and profane are two existential situations assumed by man. The difference between the two realms is that the profane space has no orientation, no qualitative differentiation, and is homogenous while the sacred space establishes its orientation in homogenous space. It is suggested that "...something sacred shows itself on us" (Eliade 1961a). The hierophany reveals itself by the help of a sign. The determination of a sacred site can be associated with different phenomena. These phenomena can be, for example, the general beauty of the environment and prominent features of landscape: volcano, mountain, or waterfall; and miraculous events or dreams.

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<sup>10</sup> Eliade cites as an example the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ (Eliade 1961:12), while Durkheim argues that Buddhism is a religion. Even though denying gods, it accepts the existence of sacred things such as the four noble truths, the practices derived from them and the saints who practice these truths (Durkheim 1957:37).

When these signs do not exist, sacred space can still be consecrated. There are various ways of defining a sacred space. The space that is the representation of a cosmology is sacred, since it was given an orientation. The realisation of a sacred space differs from one culture to another. What is considered to be sacred may be represented by a specific object or as a geographical unit in which that object is located (Grappard 1982:198). The boundary of a sacred space, either permanent or impermanent, is marked and a ritual is performed to consecrate the space.

#### **4.2 Sacredness in Buddhism**

A sacred space is a place where man can communicate with transcendental power. Eliade writes that the barriers between a human being and this power are broken because of the effect of the hierophany. The three cosmic levels: earth, heaven, and the under-world have been put in communication (Eliade 1961:36). The sacred space is regarded as the pillar of the universe or 'axis mundi'. The conception has been realized in every religion and represented in most religious architecture.

If sacredness is the essence of religious architecture, what is regarded as sacred in that particular religion must be identified in the first place. Once it is identified, the abstraction of the concept should clearly be seen and experienced as the architectural characteristic and quality. In Thai Theravada Buddhism, the aspect of sacredness can be divided into several main categories dependent on where the ideas derived from. Buddhism, in origin, was the 'philosophy of a civilization', where Buddhism was characterized by its rationalism and humanity (Ling 1973:240). The word 'religion' comes from the Latin word 'religio', which means a bond. This suggests a bond to the divine which engulfs one's whole being (Sumedho 1995 : 3). If we think of religions as a belief in a deity, Theravada Buddhism is by no means a religion. Buddhism is seen as a way, or a path that leads human beings to the state of peace of mind or to enlightenment. The Buddha, himself, compares Dhamma to a raft which is used to convey man across a river and then abandoned. Buddhism is considered by many as a system of ethics. Practising Buddhism can be done without rituals, rites, ceremonies, god-worship. The emphasis is upon self-control, interior states and liberation from rebirth. The meditation practice of early Buddhism was oriented towards purifying and controlling inner states of mind so that the person could perceive the transcendent. However, the transcendent in Theravada Buddhism is not to be interpreted in terms of union with a supreme being as in Christianity but the liberation from the impermanent state and cycle of rebirth



(samsara). Theravada Buddhism, therefore, is "mysticism without God" (Smart 1970 : 14).

Buddhism gradually became a religion within a few hundred years after the death of the Buddha. It embraces the characteristics and expressions of a religion which, as Eliade defines them, comprise rites, myths, divine forms, sacred objects, symbol, cosmology, etc.(Eliade 1971:2). Therefore, in order to grasp the essence of Buddhist architecture, it is inevitably necessary to consider both aspects of the religion. The essence must exist within both contexts. It is important to point out that between the religion and philosophy, in spite of being two different sources of inspiration, there are always integrations and the architectural outcome can be traced back to both concepts.

### *Buddhism as Philosophy*

It is suggested that in all cultures, the nature of the holy will be felt when "...it is hard to reach, it requires layers of access, waiting, levels of approach, a gradual unpeeling, gradual revelation, passage through series of gates..." (Alexander 1977:133). It can be argued that the concepts of sacredness and holy in Theravada Buddhism are different, as 'mindfulness' is considered to be a sacred state. The detachment from a worldly condition is the process within the mind. What is regarded as sacred is that which "transcends all historical and empirical entities". This absolute is nibbana. It is suggested that whatever is venerated for its sacred character is that which has a close relationship to nibbana (Ling 1971:235). The examples given are Dharma which proclaims it, the Bhikkus who are the bearers, and stupas which symbolically represent it. The path, a condition that can deliver a man to nibbana, is also considered sacred.

Personal salvation is the ultimate activity. To reach nibbana, a Buddhist does not need aid from the divine. The architectural form and the spatial articulation of a Buddhist monastery naturally reflect this important principle. The space and the architectural envelope must be able to stabilize one's mind and create conditioning for concentration. The physical passage, the revelation of the holy, or the spiritual uplifting by the unknown transcendental power through the articulation of space, form, light, and shadow, therefore, are not essential elements in the architecture of Theravada monasteries.

## 5 The Representation of Sacredness

### *Cosmology According to Brahmanism*

Brahmanism had prevailed before Buddhism and provided a foundation for the development of the Buddhist cosmology. According to the Brahman idea, the cosmos consists of a central continent, Jambhudavipa, with Meru, the cosmic mountain, rising at the centre. The continent was encircled by six concentric rings of land, separated by seven oceans, the outer one of which was enclosed by a rock wall. At the summit of the Meru was the city of Brahma, the home of the gods, surrounded by the eight guardians of the cardinal points ( Coedes 1975 : 41 ).

The architectural symbolism of ancient religious architecture reflects a close relationship between the universe and the earth. The influence of cosmology on architecture is based on the belief in a relation between microcosm and macrocosm, the human world and the universe, and between the terrestrial manifestations on one hand and the constellations on the other. Professor Robert Von Heine-Geldern writes about the effect of cosmology on the civilized countries of Indochina that :

*"...elements, colours, animals, plants, stones, metals, the parts of the body, personality, every occurrence, age and sex, asceticism and indulgence, birth and death, all had their allotted place in space, and were controlled by the stars...each thing had its 'magic position' in the structure of the universe, and its 'magic moment', which was related to the motion of the planets...Kingdom, city, monastery, nothing could prosper unless it was in harmony with this universal forces" ( trans. by Coedes 1975 : 39-40 ).*

The cosmology was recreated in ancient Khmer cities and its architecture, though they were not exactly the transference of the idea, the main architectural and urban elements signify this ideology. A temple was constructed at the temple of the city to represent Meru, the magic mountain. At Kor Ker, the first city of Angkor, a temple was built on the top of a stepped pyramid cut out from a natural hill. It represents the dwelling of a god while the architecture of the temple is the replica of the celestial palace. The mountain at the centre of the city is the axis of the world. The oceans and the wall of rock surrounding the universe are represented by moats and enclosed city walls. This kind of planning has been repeated in every city of the Khmer Empire.

The concept of cosmology is also reflected in the architecture. In architectural design of the ancient South-East Asian civilization, the concept of cosmology usually fused with



the idea of mandala,<sup>11</sup> the basis format of a central structure and surrounded entities. The main sanctuary of a temple complex, representing Meru, was built approximately at the centre and oriented according to the four cardinal points (figure 1). The sanctuary was also decorated with sculptures and reliefs with depicting the deities and mythical creatures as would be found on the cosmic mountain. The roof structure of the sanctuary is the Khmer evolution of the Indian 'sikara'. The term which means 'mountain peak', also represents the architecture of the sanctuary as the world mountain or the sacred dwelling of the god.

### *Buddhist Cosmology*

Different types of sacred space represent different levels of religious experience and diverse human perspectives on the universe. The concept of *axis mundi* in Buddhist monasteries is represented in many forms. This basic ideology incorporated with the other forms of religious belief results in a diversity of planning and architectural articulation. In order to explore more about the transference of the concept into monastic architecture, a general overview of Buddhist cosmology should be explained.<sup>12</sup> The understanding of Buddhist cosmology is the understanding of "...the universe in terms of space, time, and matter" (Tambiah 1975:34). Thai Buddhist cosmology explains not only the physical aspects of the universe, the pantheon of deities, the existence of humans, animals and demons but also involves basic Buddhist doctrine. The explanation of the origin, the path, and the goal of human beings is described and the direction for their religious practice in order to achieve the goal is suggested.

According to Thai Theravada cosmology, there are infinite world systems and our universe is one member of these innumerable entities. Each system has the same physical features. It has its own sun and moon. At the centre of the universe is a mountain called *Sumeru*. It is surrounded by seven concentric mountains which are separated by seven rings of ocean (figure 2). The eighth ocean, which is the last one, spreads out in every direction until it reaches the edge of the universe. Upwards from *Mount Sumeru* extend the heavens, downwards the hells, both of which are divided into

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<sup>11</sup> In Indo-Tibetan tradition, mandala is composed of two elements: a core (manda), and a container or enclosing element (la) ( Tambiah 1976 : 102 ).

<sup>12</sup> The Thai cosmological treatise or Tri Bhumikata was written in 1345 by a viceroy of Sukothai, Luthai, who later succeeded to the throne. Tri Bhumikata or the three worlds (tri = three, Bhumi = world) is probably Thailand's most remarkable literary work.

several levels. Four continents are situated at the four cardinal points of the outer concentric circle which is inhabited by human beings. The most important one is *Jambhudavipa*, the southern continent where India and China are supposed to be situated. The system of the universe consists of thirty-one planes of existence divided into three major categories. The four uppermost realms are the formless one known as *Arupa loka*, in which there is no perceptible form and no sensation. Just below them are the sixteen realms of the highest gods in which there is form but no sensual enjoyment and only a kind of intellectual enjoyment can be experienced. These are called *Rupa loka*. The bottom eleven realms are the world of form and sensual desire or *Kama loka*. They comprise six levels of radiantly jewelled, lotus-filled heavens of lesser gods. Next to these are the world of humans, demons, ghosts, animals and hells respectively. But it is on the human realm that the deeds of human beings can lead to a change in their existence. The result of good deeds is to be reborn in a higher plane of existence or even achieving nirvana. While, on the contrary, bad deeds will lead to a rebirth in the plane of animals, demons, ghosts or suffering in hell. For the Thai Buddhist, there is one particular realm that is of special interest, *Tavatimsa*, the heaven placed on the second level above the human plane. It is ruled by the god *Indra*, whose place is situated at the apex of the *Sumeru*. There are four guardian angels at the four cardinal points. Most important for Buddhist believers is the '*Chulamani stupa*', the stupa that contained the tooth and hair of the Lord Buddha, this is situated in this realm of heaven.<sup>13</sup>

Several scholars suggest that this triadic schema of the three worlds is a conceptualization based on the achievements of monks advanced in the practice of meditation rather than on a theoretical cosmology. It is difficult to know how much traditional craftsmen have a scholarly understanding the philosophical interpretation of the cosmos. However, the explanation of the Three-world as integrated into Buddhist teaching is tangible enough for the artists and craftsmen to use it as an essential metaphor in art and architecture in every Buddhist monastery in Thailand.

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<sup>13</sup> According to legend, the relic enshrined in the stupa was stolen at the distribution of the Buddha's relics which took place after his cremation by a Brahman. The God, Indra, then took the relic from the Brahman and enshrined it in the stupa of the Tavatimsa heaven. The Chulamani stupa is believed to be the site visited by the Buddha during his lifetime. The iconographic representation of the Buddha descending from the Tavatimsa can be found in Thai religious art such as mural paintings and images.



## **5.1 Cosmological Representation In the Planning of the Thai Monastery**

### *The Monastery within an Urban Context*

Even though the idea of cosmology is reflected clearly in Thai art and architecture, the concept is not fully manifested in the planning of the Thai city. Compared with the Khmer models, Thai cities were loosely based on the cosmological layout. It is possible to pinpoint the 'centre of the universe' in ancient Khmer cities which every urban element related to. It is also possible to indicate the boundary of the universe which is represented by a uniform water feature or city walls (figure 3). The legacy of Khmer planning can be seen in Sukothai, a city that used to be under Khmer occupation before it became the first capital of the Thai Kingdom. The concept of cosmology as modeled in ancient Khmer cities was amalgamated with the idea of kingship and Buddhism. The city is encircled by three concentric walls, the inner one is of laterite and the outer two of earth. It has four gates at the four cardinal points.

The king of Sukothai assumed the status of Dhammaraja which was based on not only the Buddhist principles of kingship but also the Brahman model. At the coronation of King Lo Thai, a Sukothai inscription mentions that four kings who lived at the four cardinal points brought him his crown, the sacred sword, and the white parasols and conferred the 'abhiseka' (coronation) on him. A.B. Griswold comments that the four kings represented the four vassal states surrounding Sukothai "...like Mount Meru surrounded by its four peaks...Sukothai had to be surrounded by a strong system of vassals in every direction, all standing on the same firm base ( the cardinal points subsume the sub-cardinal and the infinity of space) (Griswold cited in Tambiah 1977 : 87-88). The palace, therefore, was built as the centre of the cosmos with the king at the paramount. However, the palace was not only the centre of the city. The Monastery of the Great Relic (Wat Mahadhatu) was built to the east of the palace and considered to be the most important monastery of the city. The stupa, situated at the centre of the monastic complex, was constructed on a raised square base. It has more the character of a tower than the dome shaped appearance of a Singhalese stupa. The top of this tower was adorned with a 'lotus bud' finial which together form a structure that can be identified as unique to Sukothai. An inscription of King Lo Thai who undertook the building of the stupa, describes the completed monument as "...large and lofty, as white and beautiful, as Mount Kailasa". The stupa, therefore, is compared to the cosmic mountain, the dwelling of the gods in Buddhist cosmology. The stupa also contains the relic of the Buddha that was brought from Sri Lanka. A stone inscription at Wat Sri

Chum, dated between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, gives an account of the supernatural power of the relic such as the emission of bright golden light from the stupa. Here, we can see that the worship of the Buddha's transcendental power was combined with cosmological representation and reflected in the architecture and the planning of the monastery. The palace and the monastery, thus, form a dual entity that symbolize the centre of the city as well as the cosmos on the basis of Khmer-Hindu ideology, Buddhist stupa cult and cosmology.

Physical representation of cosmology in city planning can hardly be detected in Ayutthaya. The city is surrounded by natural waterways which make the city an island in the river basin. The main feature of the cityscape is the crisscross of the canal network (figure 4). These man-made canals functioned as the major means of transportation. There are more than five hundred ancient monuments in the city. The majority of them are monasteries which were scattered around in every area of the island without specific planning determination. Since the main transportation was by river and canals and the transportation on land was limited, we can suggest that the planning of monasteries used the waterways as the main orientation. Even though the ideology does not physically transfer into the planning, the idea of dual entity, the palace and Wat Mahadhatu, or the kingship and Buddhist cosmology as found in Sukothai, was practised here.

Ayutthaya kings regarded themselves as god kings according to Hindu ideology. The concept was signified by ritual and laws as well as in art forms and the architecture of the palaces. The kings sat on the throne that was the representation of Mount Sumeru within the palace that was designed and decorated to signify the dwelling of gods, while the Buddhist monasteries were planned and built to signify Buddhist cosmology. Therefore, we can suggest that the ancient city of Ayutthaya was not planned as a single cosmos but consisted of several cosmologies combined together. It is the same in the case of Bangkok where the centre of the city is at the palace and Wat Mahadhatu, but also it possesses several important monasteries where cosmology was clearly represented. Bangkok was established as the centre of universe where the kings were represented as the god, Indra, according to Buddhist idea of cosmology; as the reincarnation of Vishnu according to Brahmanism; or as the Universal King or Bhodhisattva according to Mahayana sutta.



The sacred realm was also extended beyond the capital city as well as its topological and political boundaries. It was defined and united by important centre of Buddhism in different parts of the country. Charles Keyes who writes about Buddhist pilgrimage centres in northern Thailand, suggests that monasteries which are the centres of pilgrimage serve to promote inclusiveness and shared values as against the conflict divided by political divisions of space (Keyes 1975 : 85). We can also see the expansion of the Buddhist realm over the whole kingdom, where the Mahadhatu (the Great Relic) of each prominent city is the source of merit. The pilgrimage of the Buddhists to these monasteries and the collective meritorious activities that they perform constitute a 'moral community', a kingdom of the Buddha that is unified by the faith.

### *The Planning of a Monastery*

The arrangement of structure within a monastery complex is radiated from the centre where a stupa is situated. During the Sukothai period, the sacred area of the early monasteries comprised a stupa and a vihara. These structures are surrounded by walls which function as a demarkation between the sacred space and the beyond. If we apply the idea of a Buddhist universe to the planning, the walls are the symbolisation of the walls of the universe which divide the sacred plane from profane ones (figure 5).

The idea of a concentric plan radiating from the centre can be seen clearly in Hindu architecture such as Angkor in Cambodia and a few of the Mahayana monuments, Borobudur in Indonesia is one example. However, in early Buddhist monasteries, this concept is not clearly represented. If we consider the plans of Sukothai monastery we can come to the conclusion that the representation of the cosmology is loosely realized. The rigid planning of the Khmer was not strictly followed. While cosmic symbolism is clearly transcribed in the structure, and in the rituals related to a stupa, it is not obvious in the planning of the monastery as a whole. When comparing the planning of Hindu temples built in Thailand and Buddhist temples of the Mahayana sect with Theravada temples, we can see that cosmological interpretation had been carried out physically in the two former types. The diagram of the universe or mandala, and the visual representation of spiritual and natural forces, forms a crucial part in Chinese iconography and architecture while the Hindu temple is an interpretation of a cosmology map.

Thai monasteries are usually divided into three parts according to their functions: the Buddhavas consists of buildings where religious rites and ceremonies conducted by

monks are performed; the Sanghavas are the living quarter of the monks; and the public area contains buildings used by the lay-community as well as the Sangha either for religious functions or other public purposes. The three divisions show clearly the functional meaning of the monastery. The Buddhavas represent the idea of the religion as being both rites and beliefs. The Sanghavas includes the area that retains the original concept of an ancient monastery as in the time of the Buddha. It represents the living-together of the Sangha community with Vinaya as the law. The public area of the monastery indicates the close relationship between the monastery and the lay-community as well as the secular roles of the monastery.

The whole monastery complex is enclosed within a wall. The three main areas are clearly divided, though there is no rigid rule where these areas should be placed in relation to each other. The Buddhavas, regarded as the most sacred part of the complex, is more or less symmetrically planned and orientated. This area usually contained the *ubosot*, *vihara*, and a number of stupas (figure 6).

In monasteries of the Sukothai and Ayutthaya periods, a stupa containing relics of the Lord Buddha was built in the Buddhavas area as the centre of the monastery. There was also a vihara containing a large Buddha image constructed on the axis that radiates from the main stupa. The orientation of these viharas is varied, but they usually face east, the auspicious direction representing prosperity. The accessibility to the rest of a monastic complex also dictated the orientation. For instance, there are several monasteries that have their viharas facing the main waterway<sup>14</sup>.

The Buddhavas area is surrounded by a low masonry wall called the '*kumpang keow*' or the jewel wall. In royal monasteries these walls are elaborately decorated with hand-painted ceramic tiles while in the less important ones they are white-washed and decorated with simple mouldings. Though the interpretation of cosmology is not clearly shown in the plan, by considering a stupa as a representation of the axis mundi connecting the planes of existence, the Buddhavas area can be considered as a mandala which is not only a diagram but a materialisation of a consecrated region. The jewel wall which delineates the boundary of the mandala is the line that separates the

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<sup>14</sup> It has been suggested that ubosot and vihara should face a waterway because the Buddha is said to have sat under the Bodhi tree facing a river when he attained Enlightenment ( Van Beek 1991 : 16 ).



terrestrial from the celestial, the sacred from the profane (figure 7).

In large monastery complexes, the Buddhavas area may be enclosed by rectangular cloisters. The ubosot at Wat Po which was built in the Early Bangkok period, is situated in the middle of a rectangular court surrounded by double cloisters. At the four cardinal points stand four small pavilions which function as gateways to the ubosot. This can be compared to the mandala which has a circular ground that opens on four sides, each of which leads to the inner sanctum.

Inside the inner and outer cloisters are lined with 394 bronze Buddha images with 244 images in the outer cloister and 150 in the inner ones (figure 8). The idea of building images to line a cloister has been practised since the Ayutthaya period. Cloisters were constructed to surround the main stupa or an ubosot and a large number of images were placed in a row against the wall of the cloisters. The symbolic representation of the images surrounding the stupa or ubosot may have been derived from Mahayana concept. Mahayana Buddhists believe that innumerable Buddhas exist at the same time. Their number is 'as numerous as the sands of the Ganges'. They were assigned places in the stars outside the galactic system where they reside in what is known as 'Pure Lands'. The most famous of these 'Kingdoms of the Buddhas' is that of Amittabha in the west which is called Sukhavati. The world system of Sukhavati is explained as "...rich and prosperous, comfortable, fertile, delightful and crowded with many Gods and men". It is explained in the sutta that lotus flowers grown in this land are half a mile in circumference and :

*"...from each jewel lotus issue thirty-six hundred thousand kotis of rays. And at the end of each ray there issue thirty-six hundred thousand kotis of Buddhas, with golden-coloured bodies, who bear the thirty-two marks of the superman, and who, in all the ten directions, go into countless world systems, and there demonstrate Dharma" ( Sukhavativyuha trans. by Conze 1959 : 232 ).*

It is clearly illustrated that the Buddhavas area is laid out and designed on the basis of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Buddha images in the cloisters are one of the physical representation of the Mahayana ideology to designate the surrounded area within the cloisters as the heaven realm.

The symbolic representation of the images in a cloister acquired an indirect function in a later date. When King Rama V built Wat Benjamabopit in 1899, the king suggested that ancient Buddha images of various periods and styles should be collected from all

over the country and displayed in the cloisters surrounding the ubosot. Of the fifty-two images, thirty-three are originals and nineteen are enlarged copies. The idea is to introduce a kind of art gallery into the monastery for the educational benefit of the population. It can be considered as the first art gallery in Thailand. The layout of the cloister and its decoration still retain the ancient formation but the concept behind the design had deviated from the religious ideology.

## **5.2 The Stupa as a Representation of the Cosmology**

The centre of an early period monastery in Thailand is a stupa, since it is the place where the relic of the Buddha was believed to be encased. Though Theravada philosophy discounts the Buddha as the personification of a god, it was generally believed by Buddhists that his relics retained the life potency of the Buddha. The Buddha is revered as a semi-divine being. Miraculous phenomena related to the power of the relics were mentioned in ancient texts of all Theravada countries. King Boramaraja I of Ayutthaya ( reign 1370-1388 ) built Wat Mahadhatu ( Temple of the Great Relic ) in 1384. It is one of the first monasteries built in the centre of the city. It is said that the king was meditating in his palace in the pre-dawn hours when he sighted a glow from the ground to the south-east of the palace. Deciding that it emanated from a Buddha relic, he ordered the construction of the monastery on the site. Various sightings of glowing light at the great stupa of Nakorn Pathom were also reported during the early part of this century. The most spectacular one was recorded by Prince Vajiravud (who later reigned as King Rama VI) when he visited the site in 1910. In the correspondence he sent to King Rama V mentioned the mysterious light illuminating the structure of the stupa which lasted for seventeen minutes. Being educated in England, the prince tried to explain the phenomenon by scientific theories, but came to the conclusion that these theories were not able to explain all aspects of the case and so he gave the phenomenon as the transcendental power of the relic within the stupa.

The stupa which contains the relic is believed to symbolize the centre of the cosmology or Mount Sumeru. An account given in the Mahavamsa suggests this concept. It explains that the Singhalese king placed the relic in the relic chamber of the great stupa. In the middle of the chamber, he placed a Bodhi tree made of jewels. The stems of the tree were festooned with flowers and rows of four-footed beasts and birds. The tree had a canopy where the figures of the sun, the moon, and the stars, all made of jewels, were fastened. A throne was erected to the east of the Bodhi tree and a golden image of a



Buddha was placed on it. Other thrones were also erected facing the other seven regions of the heaven (Mahavamsa: 203-204). The Bodhi is seen as the centre of the world. The mythical side of the story of the Buddha claims that under the Bodhi tree was situated a 'diamond throne' where the Buddha and the past Buddhas sat and gained enlightenment. At the time when the sacred goal of Buddhahood was reached, the great earth was shaken but this spot alone was unmoved (Lethaby 1974:87). The explanation of the relic chamber is comparable to the description of Buddhist cosmology. One can see the stupa as a microcosm of the universe in the centre of which are placed the relics of the Buddha (Bloss 1973:48).

The most obvious example of the transference of the three planes of existence into architecture is in the structure of a stupa (figure 9). The structure of a stupa consists of three main parts: the base, the central dome which is the feature derived from ancient Indian burial mounds, and the pinnacle which is a tall ringed spire. Thai Buddhist scholars explain the link between the three-part division with the symbolic representation of the Buddhist trinity: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha as well as the three worlds. The number of rings on a spire which varies from one stupa to the other has been also analyzed by an architectural historian as possibly the representation of the number of the planes of existence according to the Tri Bhumikata (Kalayanamitra 1982:318-325). The vertical axis of a stupa is *axis mundi* which connected the three worlds together.

The boundary of the mandala is emphasized by elevating the base of the stupa. A stupa or a group of stupas built as the centre of a monastery are usually built on a succession of elevated platforms. In some monasteries, this part is clearly separated because of the height. The stupa is accessed by steps which are placed at the four cardinal points. The platform, if of some width, is used as the space for the ritual of circumambulation. In other examples, the mandala of the stupa is separated from other parts of the monastery by low surrounding walls or a series of cloisters. The building of cloisters surrounding a stupa can be dated back to the early style of monastery found in Sukothai and Nakorn Sri Dharmaraj. A cloister with one side connected to the base of the stupa was built at the Temple of the Great Relic (Wat Mahadhatu) in Nakorn Sri Dharmaraj. The sloping tiled roof is supported by a row of square columns. A row of Buddha images is placed along the cloister on raised pedestals with their backs against the stupa. This semi-open space of the cloister was used by monks for walking meditation

and performing the ritual of circumambulation. Surrounding cloisters are also found as structures separated from the body of the stupas. The sacred area, in this case, is expanded from the stupa to the area surrounded by the cloisters and the cloister itself. A row of Buddha images is again placed along the four sides of the cloister. The concretization of the microcosm is emphasized when one considers the images as the Buddha in the past. The walls behind the images are usually decorated with mural paintings which incorporate the images into scenes of the heavenly realm.

In Thai, the word *chedi* is used to signify a stupa edifice. The word is derived from *chetiya* which is a Pali word meaning to 'pile up', originally used in particular connection with the building of a fire-altar or funeral pile ( Coomaraswamy 1977: 156 ). However, the word *chetiya* does not mean only a stupa or any constructed edifice but also includes anything that symbolises the Buddha such as images or sacred trees, as well as important places related to his life. A stupa or *tupa* in Pali is a mound of earth which was possibly created by piling up ashes from cremations and covering it with earth and stones. The building of these hemispheric mounds had been a common practice in India before the time of the Buddha. They were erected for great rulers ( king of kings or Chakravartin ) according to the old Aryan tradition.<sup>15</sup> It is mentioned in Digha Nikaya that the Buddha proclaimed that the same honour should be given to the Awakened Ones. In one of the final instructions given to his disciples, the Buddha states as follows:

*" As they treat the remains of a king of kings, so, Ananda, should they treat the remains of the Tathagata. At the four crossroads a cairn should be erected to the Tathagata. And whosoever shall there place garlands, or perfumes, or paints, or make salutation there, or become in its presence calm in heart, that shall long be to them a profit and a joy" ( Digha Nikaya trans. by Rhys Davids in Dialogues of the Buddha ).*

After the death of the Buddha, his body was cremated and the relics were distributed among the rulers of eight various states. Each of the relics was enshrined in a stupa.

Stupas can be divided into four groups according to the contents within the structures. The first one is Dhatu chetiya which contains the relic of natural substance that is assumed to be the relic of the Buddha. The second in the category is Boripok chetiya

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<sup>15</sup> During the time when Buddhism was established, Brahmanism was widely spread in Indian sub-continent. Therefore, Buddhism, in becoming a religion, borrowed and adapted some aspects of Brahman belief. Though Buddhism disregarded the scarification ritual, it accepted the cult of chetiya or sacred spots. These were often a grove of trees, or a single sacred tree or tumuli where ashes of important persons were buried ( Basham 1954 : 262).



which contains the personal belongings of the Buddha such as his robes or rice bowl. The stupas built to mark important places associated with the Buddha are in the third category, which are called Uddesika chetiya. These include the Buddha's birthplace, the place where he gained enlightenment and the place where he passed into Parinibbana. The final category is stupas containing elements representing the teaching of the Buddha. Sacred verses were inscribed on a piece of cloth, paper, metal, or brick and installed inside a stupa. It is also a common practice to make small images or amulets and enshrine them in a stupa.

Since the beginning of Buddhist tradition, there have always been two opposing concepts regarding the Buddha. One is to regard him in his physical presence which is represented by images and relics. The other approach regards the Buddha as the dharma or his teachings. This can be typified by a canonical passage in which the Buddha states : " He who sees the dharma sees me, he who sees me sees the dharma". In the medieval period, the essence of the Buddha's teaching was located in a single four line verse from a scripture. The verse is translated as follows:

*" The conditions which arise from a cause,  
Of these the Tathagata has started the cause,  
Also the way of suppressing these same  
This is the teaching of the Great Ascetic" (trans by Boucher 1995 : 61).*

Therefore, the enshrining of the inscription in a stupa is the combination of both ideologies. The physical form of the Buddha was represented by a relic and the form of stupa while the metaphysical Buddha is represented by the dharma verse inscribed on a clay tablet, amulets, or other materials (figure 10).

The tradition of creating several amulets and encasing them in a stupa derive also from an ancient prophecy. It was believed that the Buddhist religion would pass away after a thousand years after its foundation. Therefore, several thousands of amulets and clay tablets inscribed with the Buddhist creed were hidden inside stupas or caves to be rediscovered and to serve to revive the faith should the time arrive. It is an irony that these amulets considered as sacred by modern man as well as antiquity were dug up from abandoned stupas all over Thailand. Clay votive tablets from caves also passed from the hands of treasure hunters to collectors in Asia and the western world. The original intention of the ancient Buddhists to secure the survival of the Buddhist faith may have been achieved but this proved to be a cause of the destruction of other Buddhist monuments and sites.

### 5.3 The Form of Stupa and Buddhist Philosophy

The early schools of Buddhism are more empirical and realistic than the later ones, since the historical personality of the Buddha still prevailed and influenced the attitude of Buddhists of the earlier periods. One writer states that :

*" Their [ Buddhists' ] minds are directed to the practical fulfilment of his precepts and the monastic rules as given by his first disciples. The Vinaya stands in the centre of their attention; to them the life here is more important than the life to come, the empirical world more actual than the worlds beyond, the objects of perception have comparatively more reality than the perceiving subject; concentration and pacification of mind are the highest virtues" ( Govinda 1976:9 ).*

The early form of Buddhist architecture reflected the early philosophy of the religion. The early form of stupas, when compared with those that were built two hundred years ago, shows significant differences. The hemispherical dome of early stupas, its square terrace, and square 'harmika' on top of the dome were proportioned to produce an "earth-drawn effect". This characteristic corresponded with early philosophy which declared that there is neither an immortal soul that survives the body, nor an Absolute which is in and behind all things. The world is composed of a flux of phenomena and these phenomena compose beings and things. They are real, as we experience every day and they should be treated as reality. It is suggested that the early Buddhist regarded the earth as "...the foundation of his experience, as the firm ground on which, ever conscious, the structure of his life and thought were erected" (Govinda 1976 :11 ). Therefore, the earth-drawn effect in the form of a stupa corresponds with this ideology (figure 11).

The three main parts of the stupas in the later periods became more united and the distinction between the dome and the base is less evident. Sinhalese style had a strong influence over Thai stupas. The hemispherical dome, though amalgamated with raised platforms, still retains the resemblance to the early form of ancient Indian burial mound. The honorific umbrella (chatra) was transformed to a tall ringed spire. It was placed on top of the harmika which was now proportionately reduced in size. As the style developed the dome became more elongated. Together with the bases which simplified into layers of moulding and the tall spire, the structure became one united structure (figure 12).

The stupa of Late Ayutthaya Period illustrates the deviation from the Sinhalese influence. The dome rests on square platforms and has its form derived from a square rather than a circle. The four corners of the square are chamfered to form a square with



indented corners. It is the base where the form of the dome 'grows'. It is as if there was an immense force that lifts the whole form up towards the sky where the finial, which is the topmost stage of the ringed spire, disappears (figure 13). An art historian writes that one of the characteristics of Buddhist architecture is the uplifting of the form (Kalayanamitra 1982:342). It is possible to parallel the characteristics of the form with Buddhist philosophy. It is suggested that the number of rings on the spire correspond with certain stages of consciousness on the way to enlightenment as well as the number of the planes of existence according to Tri Bhumikata (Govinda 1976: 14-15; Kalayanamitra 1982:314-346). The metaphysical representation of form and path to nibbana can also be used to explain the form of a stupa. According to Buddhist thought, Life and Form are warp and weft of the changing pattern of existence (Humphreys 1984: 26). Form is represented by a cycle which is moving from birth through growth to maturity, and through decay to death. The path of life, on the other hand, is represented by a line. The path leads to the understanding of existence and finally reaches the state of nibbana.

*" These two symbols, the circle and the line, respectively female and male, are the two modes of manifestation. Inspired by the upward movement of the line, the circle strives to rise, and its efforts form a spiral, the symbol of progress" ( Humphreys 1984: 24 ).*

#### 5.4 The Ubosot

Since the time of the Lord Buddha, monks have to gather every fortnight for the observance of Ubosotha, a ritual whose principal feature is the recital of the Partimokha rules. This provides monks with an occasion to reveal any offence they may have committed<sup>16</sup>. In Mahavagga, many details concerning the Ubosotha are determined. For example, it is mentioned that only monks living in the same area should gather together on an Ubosotha day. This is due to the difficulties experienced by monks who had to travel from afar for the day. Therefore, methods of fixing boundaries had to be established. Marks for boundaries using natural features such as hillsides, rocks, trees, or rivers are mentioned. Moreover the Ubosotha cannot be held in any chosen place. It has to be agreed upon within each area so that all the monks living there know where

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<sup>16</sup> Patimokha is the 'confession-formula'. It is mentioned in the Mahavagga that the Patimokha will be recited by the Sangha and everyone present is given an opportunity to admit to his fault. The monk, if he had committed an offence against the law of vinaya, he should at once, when the offence is mentioned, reveal it. Whoever has committed no offence should keep silence. By their silence, the Sangha will know that they are pure. Whoever avoids revealing his offence is guilty of an intentional lie which is a hindrance to emancipation ( Mahavagga ). The patimokha recitation is still observed in all Buddhist monasteries.

to go and arrive there in time. The Buddha allowed monks to "...carry out the observance having agreed upon an observance hall that the order desires: a dwelling place or a curved house or a long house or a mansion or a cave" (Mahavagga II).

This gathering space for the observance of the Uposotha became an important place and required a form of architecture to accommodate functions which evolved at a later date. Other religious rituals, such as ordination and the receiving of the *Katina* at the end of a rainy season retreat, are also held in the ubosot hall. The size of the hall usually relates to the size of the monastery. It should be able to accommodate all the monks resident in the monastery for the Partimokha recitation. It generally contains a large image of the Buddha, although some ubosots may house more than one image (figure 14, 15).

The land for building an ubosot must be carefully chosen. According to tradition, it must be the purest land. The purity does not refer only to the physical qualities of the soil but also to the former function of the land. Some activities are considered inauspicious in a way which can make the place contaminated and impure, for example, places formerly used for cremation, execution, or a cemetery. A ritual to purify the land is always performed by monks before building a new ubosot.

### 5.5 The Vihara

A vihara originated as a dwelling place of the Sangha. During the time of the Buddha, monks were allowed to reside in five kinds of dwelling. The vinaya mention that vihara is one type of these residences. The Pali word 'vihara' was used for describing an ordinary residence which was built of non-durable materials such as branches and leaves. In the later date, it was used to signify larger and more permanent structures that were built for the Sangha in monasteries. When Buddha images were first built in the second century, a vihara was constructed to enshrine the images. The building was supposed to be the dwelling place of the Buddha as in the time when he was alive. Religious rituals related to the Sangha were also performed in the vihara as they would have done in front of the living Buddha.

In Thailand, the vihara was first constructed to provide Buddhists with a space to perform a 'puja' to the stupa as well as to enshrine Buddha images. In the monasteries of the Sukothai period, when a stupa was built at the centre of a monastic complex, a vihara



was constructed at the eastern side of the stupa. In this way the Buddhist could pay homage to the image inside the vihara and the Buddha relic enshrined in the stupa at the same time ( Kalayanamitra 1982 : 378 ). From the Sukothai until the end of the Ayutthaya period, a vihara was given more importance than an ubosot. It was treated as the centre of the Buddhavas together with the stupa. It is during the Bangkok period that the importance was shifted. Most of the monasteries in this period were built with an ubosot as the centre of the Buddhavas. It can be seen that instead of worshipping the stupa which is the symbolic representation of the Buddha, the emphasis is now on the doctrinal and moral effects of the Buddhist teaching that can happen by the interaction between the Sangha and lay-community inside the ubosot space.

While a monastery can possess only one ubosot, many viharas in various sizes and designs can be constructed. A vihara can be without space for a congregation. This kind of vihara is built specially for housing an important Buddha image, for instance, the vihara at Wat Po which was built over the largest reclining Buddha in Thailand. Though the building is of considerable size, most of the interior space is occupied by the image, leaving a long narrow space in front of it for small altars.

## 5.6 The Exterior and the Interior

The architecture of a Thai monastery should be derived from Theravada ideology. However, the elaborate decoration and the complexity of forms which are the principal features of the architecture are in contrast to the fundamental discipline of Buddhist teaching which emphasizes the simple and straightforward way of living by the Sangha community. As stated before, Buddhism in Thailand was influenced by other forms of religion. Mahayana Buddhism, though it no longer prevails, was amalgamated into Theravada thought and affected various aspects of Thai culture. Sukhavati-vyuha or Pure Land Sutra, the most popular Mahayana sutra in East Asia, describes the wonderful western paradise of the Amittaba Buddha. The explanation of the heavens in Thai cosmology and other ancient inscriptions is also similar to the Mahayana sutra. A Thai inscription (the Book of Indra) gives the following description of heaven:

*"There is a celestial abode in the Dewa heavens, an aerial dwelling covered with gold and gems, with roofs shining with gold and jewels, and roof points of crystal and pearl; and the whole gleams with wrought and unwrought gold more brilliant than all the gems. Around its eaves plays the soft sound of tinkling golden bells..." (Alabaster cited in Tambiah 1970: 39).*

It is conceivable that the ancient builders attempted to construct a celestial abode for the

image of the Buddha as described in the Mahayana sutra. This concept is well conveyed by all of the royal temples in Bangkok where the ubosots are richly decorated with coloured tiles, light-catching glass and gilded ornaments (figure 16).

The idea of a celestial abode is clearly reflected in the interior of ubosot and vihara. The space is dominated by the image of the Buddha which is usually placed on a high pedestal facing the main entrance of the building. The walls of the building are usually decorated with mural paintings. The subjects for these paintings vary but revolve always around a religious theme. There is also a traditional format for the subject matter. The wall behind the image is traditionally painted with the scene depicting the universe according to the Tri Bhumikata, while the wall opposite the image depicts the scene of the Buddha spiritually battling against the army of Maras (demons) before gaining enlightenment. The lower part of the side walls are decorated with scenes from the Jataka or the life of the Buddha while the upper parts are painted with rows of angels and gods. All of them sit in salutation facing the direction of the image. It is in this created heavenly realm that lay worshippers as well as monks encounter the spiritual form of the Buddha.

The interior space of the ubosot also illustrates the combination of the earth-bound approach to the religion of the Theravada and the Mahayana concept of the transcendental power of the Buddha. It is suggested that, according to the Theravada approach, the purpose of the iconography is chiefly for teaching Buddhist doctrine and morality. They provide monks and laity with examples of Buddhist teaching and various virtues to imitate (Meyer 1992 : 87). The interior space is the space where the boundaries between human existence, heaven, and the under-world become invisible. The firmament between the three worlds has opened and enable man to see the way down to Avici Hell or up to the Brahman world. The terror of hell or the bliss of heaven as depicted in the painting behind the Buddha image can convincingly reinforce the explanation of the Dhamma. At the same time, the sacred space of the ubosot is the realm of 'rupadhatu' where the great spiritual form of the Buddha may be encountered and lead the worshippers to 'arupadhatu', the ultimate realm of the formless (figure 17).

The heavenly realm is also represented by an atmosphere that is created from light and shadow. The early style of ubosot, such as those of Sukothai and Ayutthaya periods, is lit by shafts of light pouring into the interior through narrow slits in the wall which is a



style similar to much Khmer architecture. Many ubosots are entirely without windows, being lit by light entering through the door and candles or oil-lamps.<sup>17</sup>

The ceilings of ubosots and viharas are usually decorated with patterns representing the sun, the moon, and stars. However, this celestial sky is always half-hidden in dark shadows. The most illuminated part of the space before the introduction of electric light must have been in front of the image where candles from worshippers were lit. The presence of the sacred must have been accentuated by the contrast of light and shadow. It is stated that light against shadow carries with it a human poetry and kindly rhythm (Powys 1987 : 60). Therefore, the way the space is illuminated not only suggests the sacred relationship between man and the transcendental power that makes night and day but also enhances the aesthetic experience of human beings.

It is hard to imagine the authentic effect of light and shadow in the buildings nowadays. The use of artificial light often too bright and garish eliminates the mystery of the space and discourages imagination. Lighting, for many people who carry out conservation work, is not considered important and often is left to the unprofessional to deal with. The results are often unsatisfactory. One thing that we should keep in mind is that beauty and divinity reside in mystery. It has been written that:

*" There is no need that these qualities should be paraded in public, like a horse is paraded in market...It is pleasant that beauty, like antiquity, should lurk out of sight, gently revealing its presence to the mind. It is of their nature to be sensitive of publicity and advertisement - under blatant exposure they flag " ( Powys 1987 : 60 ).*

## 5.7 Buddha Image

Buddha images did not exist in the time of the Buddha or even for a long period after his death, since the Buddha taught that his doctrine should be remembered and not himself. Buddhists of a later date were not satisfied with this idea. Concrete reminders of the Buddha were required. During the reign of king Kaniska (AD. 78-144) who ruled the kingdom of Gandhara in the north-west of India, Buddha images were first created. They were invaluable in spreading the doctrine and winning converts.

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<sup>17</sup> This style of ubosot is particular favoured by Aranyavasi ( Forest ) monasteries where monks concentrate their practice on meditation and performing ritual that required solitude and concentration ( Kalayanamitra 1982:381). Some historians attribute the absence of windows, the thick walls, and stout columns, to the lack of structural engineering knowledge (Van Beek 1991 : 145).

Buddha images can be found in any size ranging from a few centimetres in height to such gigantic images as the reclining Buddha at Wat Po in Bangkok which is forty-five metres long. They can also be found in great number, though there is only one principal image in an ubosot. A row of identical images can usually be found in the cloisters surrounding a hall or a stupa. The building of several images again derives from the Mahayana sutra which explains that there were several Buddhas before the birth of Gothama Buddha. When a stupa or an ubosot was built to represent the centre of the universe, these numerous images represented the other Buddhas born in other continents. Since these continents were situated at the four cardinal points of the centre, a rectangular cloister was built and images placed on all four sides of the cloister to signify the four important directions.

Buddha images are consecrated objects and are treated with reverence. This is due to the dual concept of Thai Buddhists towards the Buddha as explains by Tambiah:

*"On one hand, the Buddha, a human being, is dead and has reached nirvana. This being so he cannot directly affect human beings or influence their future status, because salvation is a personal quest. On the other hand, the Buddha has been credited with spiritual powers; when alive he had extraordinary markings and qualities, and after his death his relics have spiritual power; so do consecrated images" (Tambiah 1975:44).*

Sacred objects are saturated with spiritual influences either by the nature of their own past, such as relics, or by an intentional concentration of conscious forces upon them through the elaboration of their shape as in the case of amulets or images (Govindha 1976:29). Buddha images were first created several hundred years after the death of the Buddha. Therefore, sculptors had to rely on ancient texts which describe the characteristics of deities or heroes (*Magapurus Luksana*) in Sanskrit and Pali sutras. Images were also made to represent various events in the Buddha's life. Therefore, when viewing an image, one should see it not as a man but as a doctrine in a human form. It is suggested that an amulet [or image] is:

*"...an imitation of a materialized life process. It is an abridged growth, an artificial process of reshaping certain life forms or potential moments of consciousness into the condensed form of symbol" (Govindha 1976:29).*

Thus it is purely a symbolization of doctrine that an image represents. But since it contains dual interpretations, as stated at the beginning, Buddha images are said to have personalities and super-natural power. This can be seen clearly in the way that Thai Buddhists behave towards images and the legendary stories that attach to them. For example, the Emerald Buddha in the Royal Chapel in Bangkok, 'wears' a different set of clothes for each season. Ceremonies are held when the clothes are changed at



the beginning of each season. The image in Wat Srichum at Sukothai is said to have spoken on several occasions and the image in Wat Pananchoeng in Ayutthaya was said to have wept tears when the city was sacked by the Burmese in 1767.

Apart from their philosophical meaning, Buddha images are also a high quality art form exhibiting the craftsmanship of their period (figure 18). Building or repairing an image is considered to be an act of merit. This can cause considerable conflict with modern conservation policies which will be investigated in detail in a later chapter.

## **6 Sanghavas**

The part of a monastery that still retains the function of the original retreat of the Sangha is the Sanghavas area. The residential part of a monastery varies in size and character depending on the size, type, and the status of the monastery. Tracing the development of the residential architecture is a difficult task, since most of the buildings were constructed in non-durable materials. However, it is generally accepted that all such dwellings were built in the same style as the ordinary residences of the period. Sanghavas, in theory at least, should be an area of a monastery that reflects the philosophy of a Buddhist community where Buddhism is regarded as a set of ethics and humanistic values. The way of life of the Sangha community is the living representation of the ideology. In order to understand the spirit of the Sanghavas area, it is essential to approach it through the idea of the Sangha community and investigate how it is reflected in the characteristics of the architecture and planning

Monastic life is an education and a training. It is a pattern of living the life of purity which, eventually, will lead to the state of enlightenment. During the time of the Buddha, to join the community and be ordained as a Bhikku was the ultimate path to salvation. In the present day, however, laymen join the community for reasons other than to gain Nibbana. It is considered that for a man to spend a certain period in his life as a monk will bring him great merit. For some, being a monk is the only opportunity to gain a proper education. Regardless of these reasons, monks have to live in the Sangha community according to the Vinaya, the rules of the Sangha, which have been established since the time of the Buddha. It has been suggested that the Vinaya were regarded as 'educational precepts' (Wijayarattana 1990:15). The Vinaya constrains every aspect of a Bhikku's life ranging from behaviour, clothing, the type of dwelling place, furniture, and personal belongings. The possessions of a Bhikku are reduced to

the level of necessity and survival. According to the Vinaya, a Bhikku can own three robes, a waist cloth, a begging bowl, a razor, a water-strainer, and a needle. In Thailand, Bhikku can add other necessary objects such as, an umbrella, sandals, and books. Most of the rules relating to their material well being were established with two important intentions: Bhikkus should live a simple life and survive on minimum support; and they should not abuse the generosity of their benefactors.

### **6.1 The Sanghavas According to Buddhist Scriptures**

The Buddha, according to the Chulavagga, allowed five kinds of dwelling place to be inhabited by Bhikkus. They were an ordinary residence (*vihara*), residences which were round (*addhayaga*), long (*prasada*), or with several stories (*hamiya*), and a cave. At the time, these residences were built for the Sangha by wealthy lay-followers and kings. The tradition of donating money or building materials for building monks' residences still prevails until the present day.

According to the Vinaya, there are three main criteria in considering a suitable dwelling place: the size and the character of the dwelling; the location; and the approval of the chosen place by the Sangha. It is mentioned in the Vinaya that the dwelling place of a Bhikku must not exceed 3.00 by 1.75 metres. It is obvious that the space is only large enough for using as a shelter from natural elements and danger from animals. It does not enable the Bhikku to accumulate possessions which can lead to attachment to material things. The simplicity of the building illustrates that it does not need much resources and man-power to construct. The Vinaya also mentions that the dwelling place must not be constructed in a place that has been occupied by animals and must not be near a place that can distract or obstruct the Sangha way of life. The destruction of animal life had been the concern of the Buddha. It is mentioned that when a monk who was familiar with clay from his former profession as a potter, built himself a hemispherical hut of clay and, by firing it from inside, created a solid brick hut, the Buddha disapproved and prohibited the practice of burning which killed many small creatures ( from Suttavibhanga cited in Schumann 1989: 173 ).

The construction of the residence was not to entail the destruction of plant life or of ancient sanctuaries belonging to other religions, and there has to be an open space around the building. The chosen place for the dwelling must be approved by the community of the Sangha. This is to prevent Bhikkus from settling in places that are



prohibited in the Vinaya. Regarding benefactors, if a benefactor had a monastery built, or added some rooms to a monastery, he could do so without regard for size, but the building site still had to be approved by the Sangha. After the building work was completed, monks were not allowed to ask for more rooms (The Vinaya cited in Wijayarattana 1990 : 24).

The dwelling place of the Sangha, not long after the time of the Buddha, started to develop and deviated from the original clay hut and flimsy huts of leaves and mats. However, the idea in the Vinaya can be interpreted and applied within the contemporary context, since the intention of the Sangha way of life does not change. It can be said that harmony with natural environment and the suitable social condition are the main considerations in creating a suitable place for dwelling.

It is noticeable that the origin of the Sanghavas and the character of the dwelling places derive from the functional requirements of the Sangha. These characteristics are different from the Buddhavas whose functions are related to religious rituals and the sacred symbolism of the religion. The materialization of the concept into the architecture and planning is obvious. The architecture in the Sanghavas area is of domestic quality. The materials used in construction give an indication. Since the Sukothai period until the eighteenth century, light materials were used in constructing the superstructure of dwelling places including royal palaces while the religious monuments such as stupas, viharas, and ubosots were constructed of bricks and stucco.

Since the Sukothai period, the Bhikkus in Thailand have been divided into two groups according to their practice of the religion: forest-dwellers (*Aranyavasi*); and city-dwellers (*Gamavasi*). The monasteries of the Aranyavasi monks are situated in remote areas far from large cities, even though most of them remain in the proximity of a village. The dwellings enable the monks to pursue meditation, which is the main preoccupation of their practices. Wat Aranyik in Sukothai, dated between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is an example of early forest monastery. Several stone bases of small cubicles believed to have been dwellings are found scattered around the forest. The ubosot is small in size and is situated at some distance from the dwelling place. Forest monasteries still remain until today, despite urban expansion. The dwellings or '*kuti*' are single-cell residences which are placed far from one other in order to provide solitude, the essential atmosphere for the practice of meditation.

In contrast to Aranyavasi, Gamavasi, or city-dwellers live in a large Sangha community and have close relationships with lay-followers. Dharma teaching and giving spiritual guidance for the lay-community are important duties of the monks in addition to practising the Dharma for their personal salvation. The nature of the Gamavasi is seen in the characteristics of their dwelling places. The traditional Thai house, suitable for an extended family is also appropriate for the member of Sangha community. The arrangement of the residence provides an individual with privacy as well as a sense of community (figure 19).

It is obvious that the planning and architectural characteristics of the Sanghavas derive from a different source and ideology from the Buddhavas. It can be said that the idea is more secular and functional-oriented. The emphasis of the Sanghavas area is on living together as a community. It lacks the mythical symbolic representation of a sacred space. Here, Buddhism is presented in its philosophical and practical aspects. The sacredness exists through the way of living. The practising of the Dharma and meditation as a path to nibbana are considered sacred activities just as much as living life according to the Vinaya. The sense of sacredness in 'good behaviour' is hard to define in physical form. Nevertheless, the conditions that designate its opposite can at least be eliminated.

## **7 Buddhism and Nature**

Every religious thinker of ancient India sought to live in nature and there to have direct communication with the Absolute. They renounce the world and kept themselves detached from worldly affairs and concentrated their thoughts on the quest of truth. It is even suggested that Indian civilization had been not in the city but in the woods. It has been a civilization of tranquil life in the forests and there are no cities in India that prosper throughout the whole history of the country to represent its civilization (Nakamura 1971 : 163).

One of the important aspects of Sangha life is living in solitude. The Buddha started his practice by leaving the city and worldly life and entering a forest. At the bank of the river Neranjara, he settled down to the solitary life. The spot was described in a scripture as "a charming plot of land, a lovely wood and a clear-flowing river which was good for bathing and quite delightful, with villages all about for gathering alms" ( Majjhima Nikaya cited in Schumann 1989 : 50 ). It was in the forest of Uruvela ( today Bodhi- Gaya )



under a papal tree that he gained enlightenment. According to sacred scripture, the Buddha spent seven days under each of a number of other trees at Uruvela reflecting on his doctrine. It was within this natural environment that his first sermon was given. After the founding of the Sangha community, the Buddha and his followers lived the wandering life in the forest of the monsoon. The life of the early Sangha synchronized with the cycle of the seasons. The atmosphere of the approach and the arrival of the monsoon and the transformation it brought about later determined the pattern of the Sangha's life such as the practice of the rainy season retreat and the characteristic of the Sangha's dwellings as mentioned in the Vinaya.

Nature was used by the Buddha to illustrate his teaching. It is mentioned, in the Pali Canon that there are more than eight hundred similes drawn from all spheres of life and nature. These are, for instance,

*"...the lion ( which was frequent in western India ) and the elephant, the nervous greed of the monkey, the gracious shyness of the gazelle, the cunning of the crocodile - all these are referred to as well as the world of plants : lotus and banyan, mango and palm. The Buddha's imagery reflects the subtropical world" ( Schumann 1989 : 206 ).*

The Buddha knew the value of forests and plant life for calming and quickening the mind. He would say to his disciples at the end of a sermon : "Here are trees, go and think it out" ( Majjhima Nikaya cited in Eliot 1921 : 242 ). In many ancient scriptures such as books of the Tripitaka and especially the collections known as the Songs of Monks and Nuns, the relationship between Buddhism and nature is clearly illustrated. It is suggested that the early Sangha community passed their time in solitary meditation in the depth of the forests and had a sense of freedom and joy in a life in the wild not found in a worldly environment. Nature had always been a part of monastic environment. A British traveller in South-East Asia around the end of the nineteenth century wrote that :

*" If you see a grove of trees before you on your ride, mangoes and tamarinds in clusters, with palms nodding overhead, and great broad-leaved plantains and flowering shrubs below, you may be sure that there is a monastery" (Hall 1905 : 125).*

Unfortunately, this pleasant atmosphere of monastery has become very rare, especially in urban areas where the use of monastic land is dictated by material development rather than the need for spiritual progress. Nature, as an enhancement to a spiritual life is neglected.

The true understanding of Buddhism is the understanding of Dharma. Dharma not only refers to the doctrine, the Buddha's teaching, but also to the nature of things

(*sabhavadhamma*) and its correlated aspect as the law of nature ( *Buddhadasa* cited in *Tambiah 1977 : 424* ). It is inevitable that the Sangha realized and came to spiritual understanding from nature. In Thai the word nature is 'Dhammachart'. It means the natural ways of things, the law of nature. In Buddhism, all things are interrelated, living together, or co-existing. It has been suggested that "...all existence not only lives, but, at the same time, is being given life by the rest of existence...Human beings live and are kept alive through their co-existence with animals, plants and materials" (*Kurokawa 1994 : 260-261*). Thus, natural environment is to be treated as a vital element in a balanced, co-existing life. The Western idea of nature, on the contrary, tends to be something outside the religion. The metaphysical structure in Christianity does not have much to do with the natural law, so salvation depends on the believing in metaphysical doctrines rather than the understanding of the natural law ( *Sumedho 1995 : 211* ).

### **7.1 The Bodhi Tree**

A Pali scripture mentions that the Buddha gained enlightenment under an 'assatha' tree (*Ficus religiosa*) which has distinctive heart-shaped leaves. In Buddhist countries it is generally known as the bodhi tree. The original bodhi tree believed to be the one under which the Buddha had gained enlightenment 2500 years ago is in Bodhi-Gaya, India. The tree was replaced several times throughout the course of the history, though always with descendants of the original tree. Therefore, the present tree is descended from the original one in direct line. During the reign of the great Buddhist king, Asoka of India (265-232 BC.) a stone fence was built around the tree and the sacred spot was marked by an edict-pillar with a lion capital. In the first century AD. Mahabodhi temple was erected right behind the tree and has since become a place for Buddhist pilgrimage. The shoots from the original bodhi tree have been distributed to many Buddhist kingdoms since the time of king Asoka. Mahavamsa mentions that King Devanampiyatissa of Lanka who had been converted to Buddhism about 242 BC. received a shoot of the bodhi tree to plant at his capital, Anuradhapura. Thai kings at a later date also acquired the bodhi shoots from India and Sri Lanka which were planted in several monasteries all over the country.

A bodhi is considered by Buddhists as a form of "chetiya", a symbolic edifice that represents the Lord Buddha. The bodhi tree symbolized his enlightenment. The tree is sacred and is treated in the same way as other kinds of chetiya such as stupas or Buddha images. However, not every bodhi tree can be regarded as a sacred chetiya.



Prince Vajirayana Varoros, a former Supreme Patriarch states in a meeting of the Council of the Elders that only bodhi trees that were planted as the symbolic representation of the enlightenment can be considered as sacred. The Supreme Patriarch mentions that the bodhi trees grown on stupas, the roof of an ubosot, or other structures in monasteries are not considered sacred but can also be dangerous to the sacred architecture. Therefore, the destruction of the tree is recommended and is not considered to be a sinful act. However, the destruction of a sacred bodhi tree is prohibited except in the case of pruning. Branches and small roots can be cut back in order to maintain the tree in a good condition. In the case that the sacred tree was grown next to a stupa or a vihara, branches or roots of the tree that can cause damage to the sacred structure can be cut back, since "... the sacred structures are considered to be more important than the sacred tree".

The sacred bodhi tree in most Thai monasteries is surrounded by low walls, some by a raised masonry base. A small shrine, sometimes, was built to adorn the sacred tree. It is mentioned in the report of the Council of the Elders that if these structures were damaged by the sacred tree, the branches or roots of the tree should not be cut back, since these structures were secondary to the tree. The Council's recommendation was based on the Mahavagga. It illustrates the priority of sacredness where the sacred structures are more important than the sacred bodhi tree. But it also shows the importance given to other old and large trees in monasteries. A tamarind tree in Wat Bavornives had grown so large that its trunk grew into the roof of a nearby pavilion. The Supreme Patriarch gives his opinion that " Even though the tamarind tree is not a chetiya it is an ancient tree which would take very long time to grow to the size. If it was taken down, it cannot be replaced within a short period, while a structure can be reconstructed, if money and resources are available. Therefore, removing the pavilion is preferred to cutting down the tree ".

### **8 Meaning of Ritual**

The spirit of a place is not constituted from the physical elements alone. Man's actions and the meaning of the actions are also an important part of the meaning of a place. To understand a built environment the whole phenomenon of the place must be considered. The concrete properties are only the extroverted part, the shell of the functioning body, while the relationships between a human being's actions constituting and effected by the place are the life within. In places with religious significance,

religious rituals are very much of a part of the spirit of the place. In a similar way as architectural elements symbolize the relationship of man and the cosmos, ritual is a 'living symbolism' that exemplifies the actions of human beings towards the transcendental force. Ritual is an integral part of Buddhism as it is of all other religions. It is defined as "...a shared action, expressive of common striving, rooted in common values" ( Sangharakshita 1995 : 29 ). According to Buddhist tradition, human nature is threefold: body, speech, and mind together make up our total personality. Therefore, ritual as an action involving body and mind, is an important part of practising the religion. Sangharakshita writes that because ritual is a shared action based on common values, Buddhist rituals thus reflect the Buddhist spiritual attitude. This means that rituals imply a spirit of metta ( Loving Kindness ) and solidarity. In the presence of these qualities, a very powerful spiritual atmosphere can be created.

The fundamental reason for performing a ritual is devotion. In Buddhism, ritual has grown out of the devotion to the Buddha. Some people, especially western Buddhists, tend to disregard ritual as the essence of the religion or as the most primary level of the religious practice. However, for most Thai Buddhists, devotion is the basis of the belief. Many Thai who cannot observe the Five Precepts, the fundamental ethics, will at least perform devotional rituals to Buddha images or stupas. The devotional practice, or 'puja', can be done in many forms. The basic puja is to give offerings such as flowers, incense, and lights ( of candles or oil-lamps ) to the objects representing the Lord Buddha.

Ritual and architectural form and space are closely related. Ritual forms the space and give the space meaning. When space and form have been created, they provide the ritual context for spiritual experience. Borobudur in Central Java, one of the most important Buddhist monuments in South-East Asia, illustrates how ritual and architectural form and space intermingle. The monument was built around a hill to form a gigantic structure representing Mahayana Buddhism's cosmology as well as its theology. The structure consists of six square terraces forming the base, followed by three circular ones with the whole arrangement surmounted by a large stupa. In the middle of each side of the structure, there are staircases that give access to the upper parts of the monument.

The meaning of the monument has been interpreted by many historians. The model of



the cosmology can be seen in the division of the layers of the structure. It is the representation of the three spheres of Buddhism: Kamadhatu, the sphere of desire, Rupadhatu, the sphere of form, and Arupadhatu, the sphere of formlessness. The divisions represent the advancement in meditation and to the state of bodhisattva-hood. Borobudur, in another word, is a mandala, an instrument which assists meditation (figure 20). The path of the spiritual development fits perfectly to the planning of the monuments. When a person performs a ritual of '*pradaksina*', which consists in moving around the structure by keeping it always on the right hand, he would ascend through the three worlds and its different states of existence in a form of spiral, spiritual circumambulatory path. The *pradaksina* ritual is still carried out in Buddhist countries at present. It became an act of devotion to a stupa or the representation of the Buddha.

The *pradaksina* movement around a stupa may have originated from the ancient Indian concept of 'macrocosm-microcosm parallelism'. The idea was widely held in the sixth century B.C. The belief is that the microcosm, usually referred to man himself, and the macrocosm, usually referred to the world or universe that man inhabits, are a reflection or replica of each other. The idea can be found in graphic expression in certain cosmological diagrams depicting the universe in the form of a human figure where the earth was located at the cosmic man's waist, and the levels of heaven and hell were at different levels in the upper and lower half of his body. It has been suggested that the parallels between microcosm and macrocosm could be found everywhere:

*"...the out-breath and in-breath were day and night, or on a grander scale, the alternating evolution and dissolution of the universe; the two main nerves of the body were the river Ganga and Yamuna, while the spinal column was the world-axis, Mount Meru; and every object and gesture employed in Brahmanical sacrificial rituals was equivalent to some cosmic principle " ( Bucknell & Stuart-Fox 1993 : 91 ).*

The stupa is symbolic of the centre of the universe, the axis mundi. We may then conclude that the ritual of *pradaksina*, where Buddhists circumambulate in a clockwise direction around the stupa, is the re-enactment of the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. The wave of the human being's direction is compared to the current in the cosmic ocean which flows around the cosmic mountain (Jumsai 1982 : 184). It is during the ritual that man and universe are unified and become one.

Ritual is a living symbol of sacredness and devotion. Ritual must be beautiful and inspiring, and the aesthetic sense is essential. The importance of ritual experience is the impression of spiritual beauty, because "...in the presence of such beauty we readily

feel uplifted, devotional" ( Sangharakshita 1995 : 28, 53 ). Architectural space, therefore, must be able to create the right setting and accentuate this symbolism. The loss of essential physical elements can lessen or eliminate the sacredness of the living symbol. If we consider ritual as another symbol, another 'object of identification' that constitutes a 'place', the loss of ritual, therefore, can bring about the loss of the spirit of the place. However, the 'loss' in the case of ritual is different from the loss of physical architectural elements. As long as Buddhists still venerate the 'Triple Gems', the ritual still prevails. But ritual can lose its richness and beauty and no longer satisfy and calm the heart which is the objective of a devotion.

### **Conclusion**

Buddhist Architecture and its environs are the expression of Buddhist belief both in philosophical and religious aspects. The idea behind its characters is far deeper than its mere envelope. Orientation, replication of cosmology, and hierarchy of sacredness form the whole identity of the place which, in turn, constitute our history and culture as a whole.

Modern development and acceleration of progress create a lot of confusion for human beings both within their mind and their physical environment. Man is faced with an identity crisis as well as the loss of his relationship with the cosmos that used to form the frame of reference for his existence. The boundary of the cosmology itself became unclear. The cosmos that was the basis of Thai design from artifacts to the cities, is broken up and overlapped by the contemporary realm. Modern architects and planners are much more aware of the public and private realms rather than the sacred one. Modern society also emphasizes political, administrative, and economic factors which together form a new set of orientations for man and built environment. Spiritual value was replaced by the materialistic one.

Patterns and images of culture are generated by age-old myths such as cosmology and mandala. Throughout history, the images had changed, developed, and transformed but still held on to the basis of the beliefs. Charles Correa writes that there are two types of changes in cultural patterns. Transformation which involves an absorption, an internalization, and re-invention of the myths; and a mere transfer which is a superficial process (Correa 1988 : 26 ). Most of the traditional architecture and built-environment of modern day Thailand can, unfortunately, be categorized as of the latter type. Since few



architects and designers remain sensible to the fundamental elements of their essence, the identity of the architecture is merely symbolized by the physical elements such as roof form and detail of the ornaments, while its mythical values and the religious foundation which it has grown from are disregarded or unheard of. The future of Thai architecture can be rather grim. The loss of this wisdom and the emphasis on the materialistic realm will widen the gap between the sacred tradition and the profane present as well as preventing the creativity that can be regarded as the sacredness of the modern age. Without the realization of this architectural spirit, we will choose to maintain only the physical forms which are the most obvious entities of the much more complex and subtle whole.



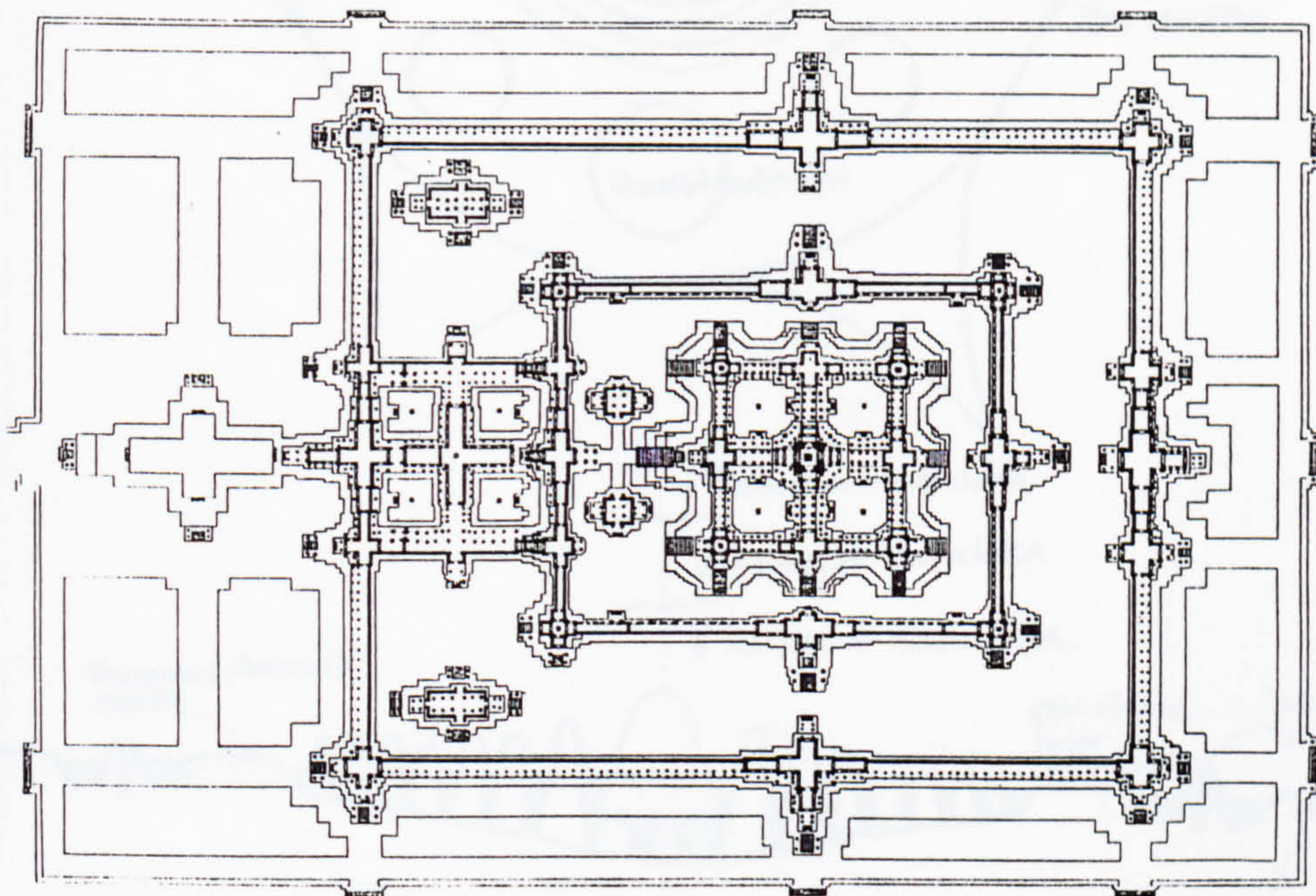


Figure 1 Plan and general view of Angkor Wat, Cambodia  
Source : Mario Bussagli :



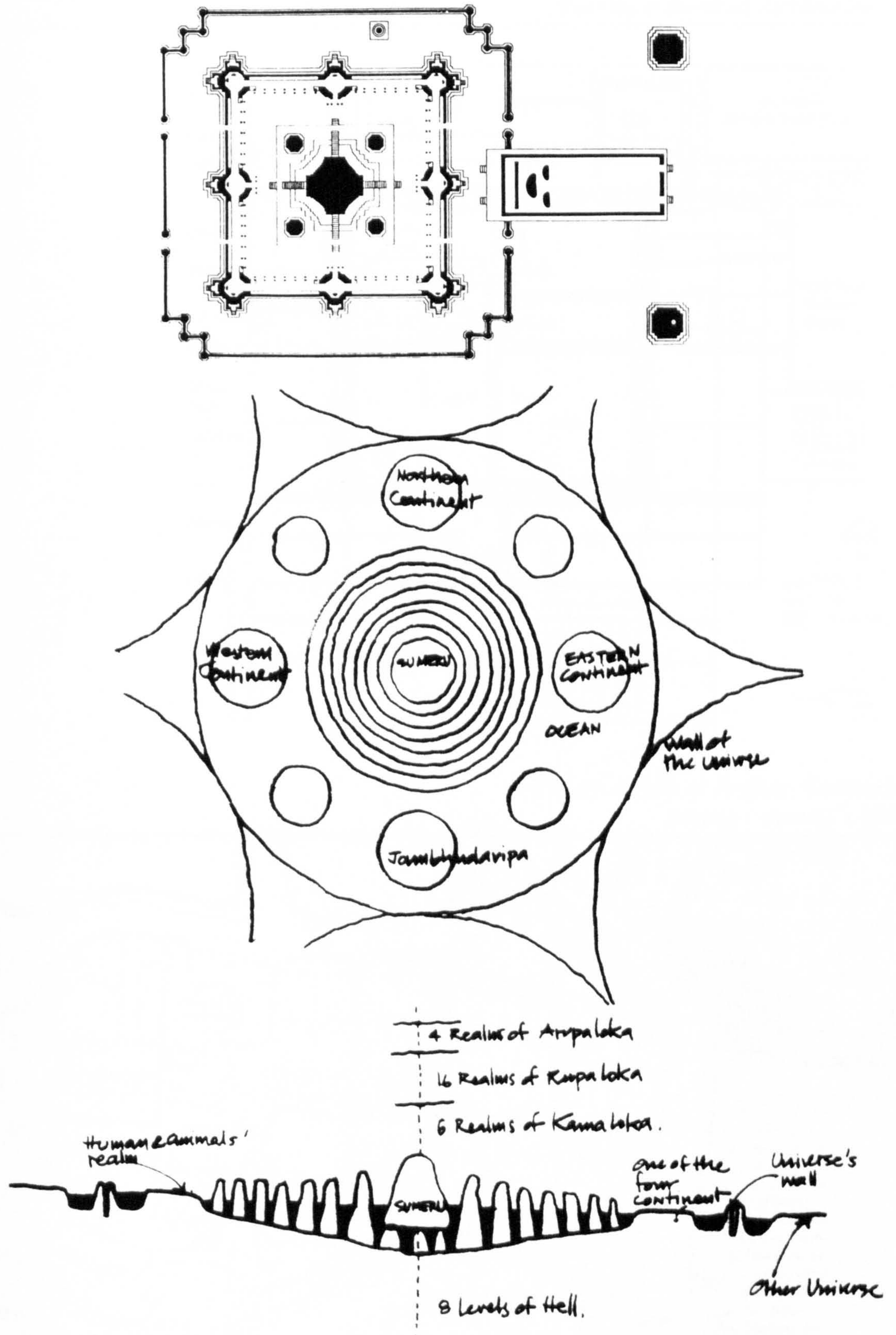


Figure 2 Model of Theravada Cosmology and plan of Wat Chai Wattanaram, Ayutthaya (top) illustrates the representation of the cosmology in the planning  
 Source : Kalayanamitra : 1982



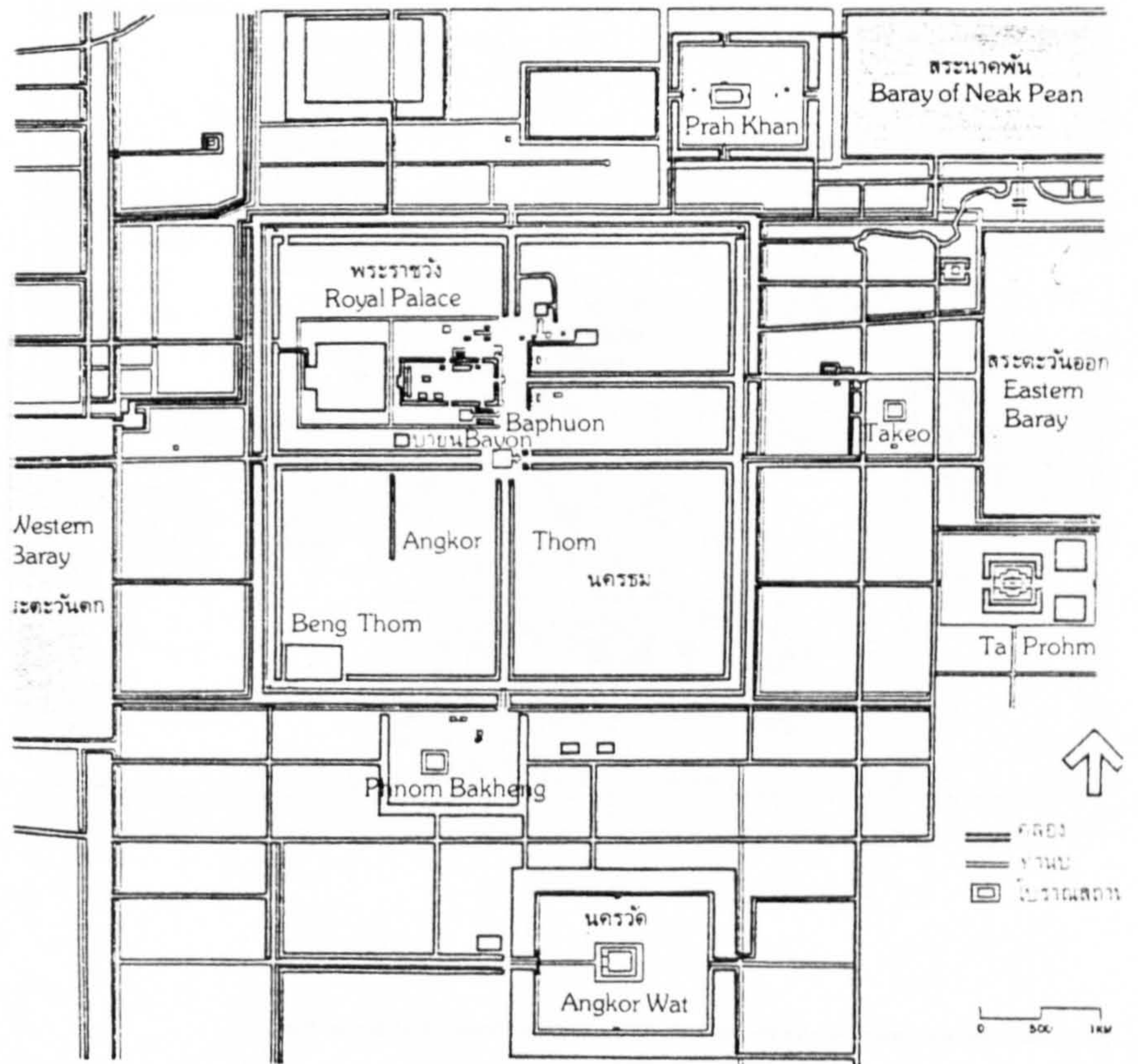


Figure 3 Plan of Angkor, Cambodia  
Source : Jumsai : 1982

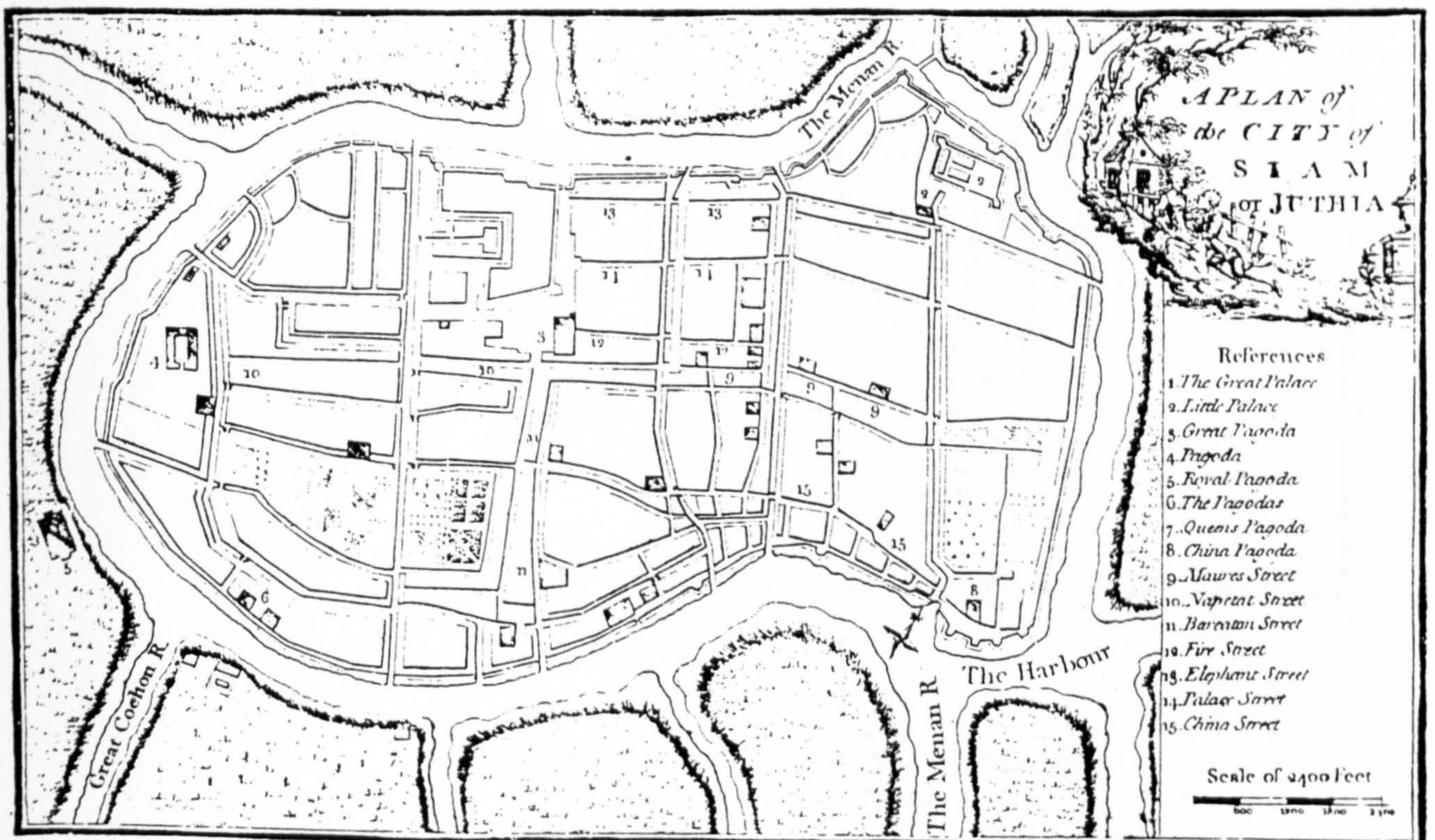


Figure 4 Plan of Ancient Ayuttaya



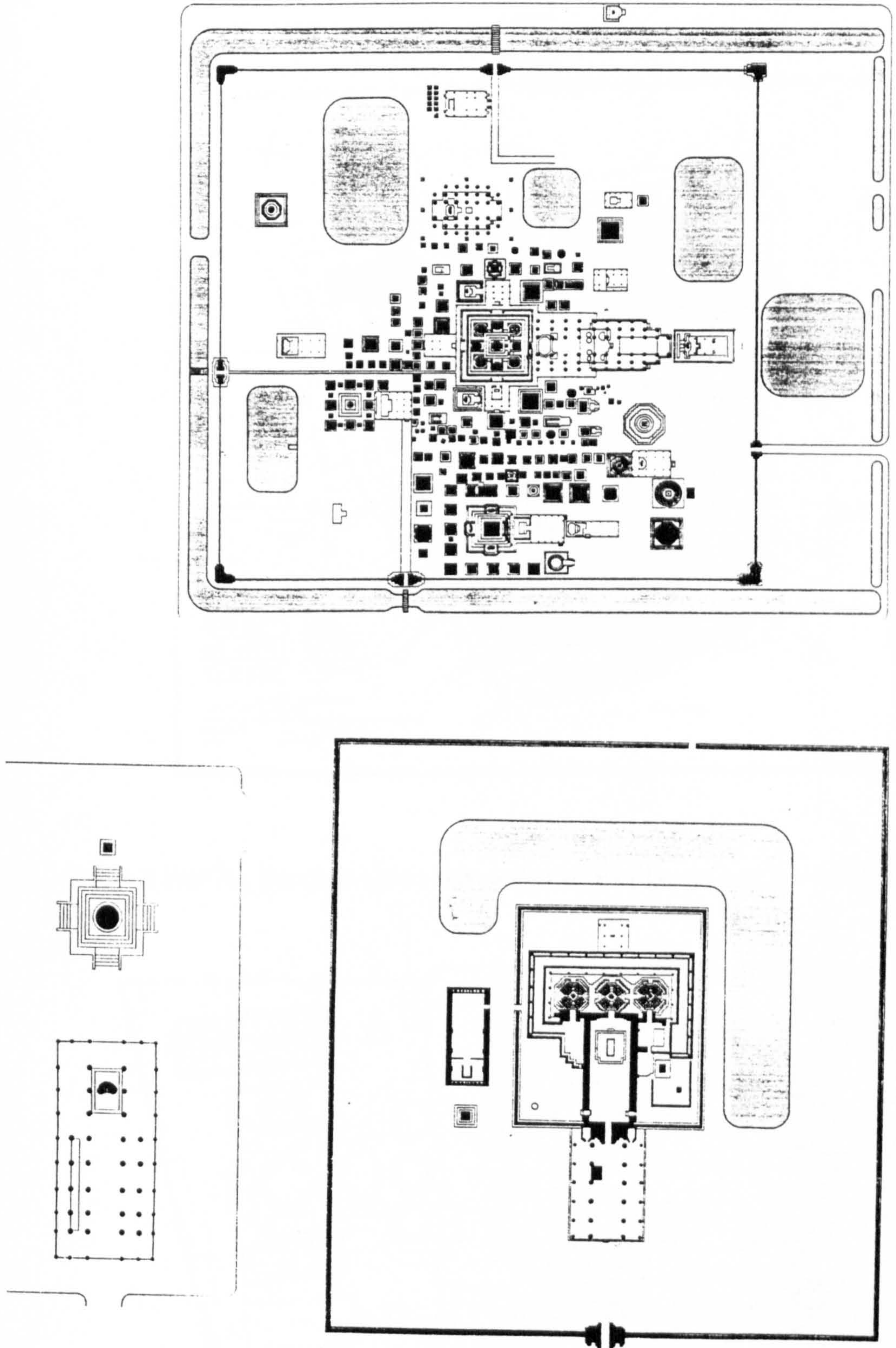


Figure 5 Plans of monasteries of Sukothai period  
source : Jumsai : 1982



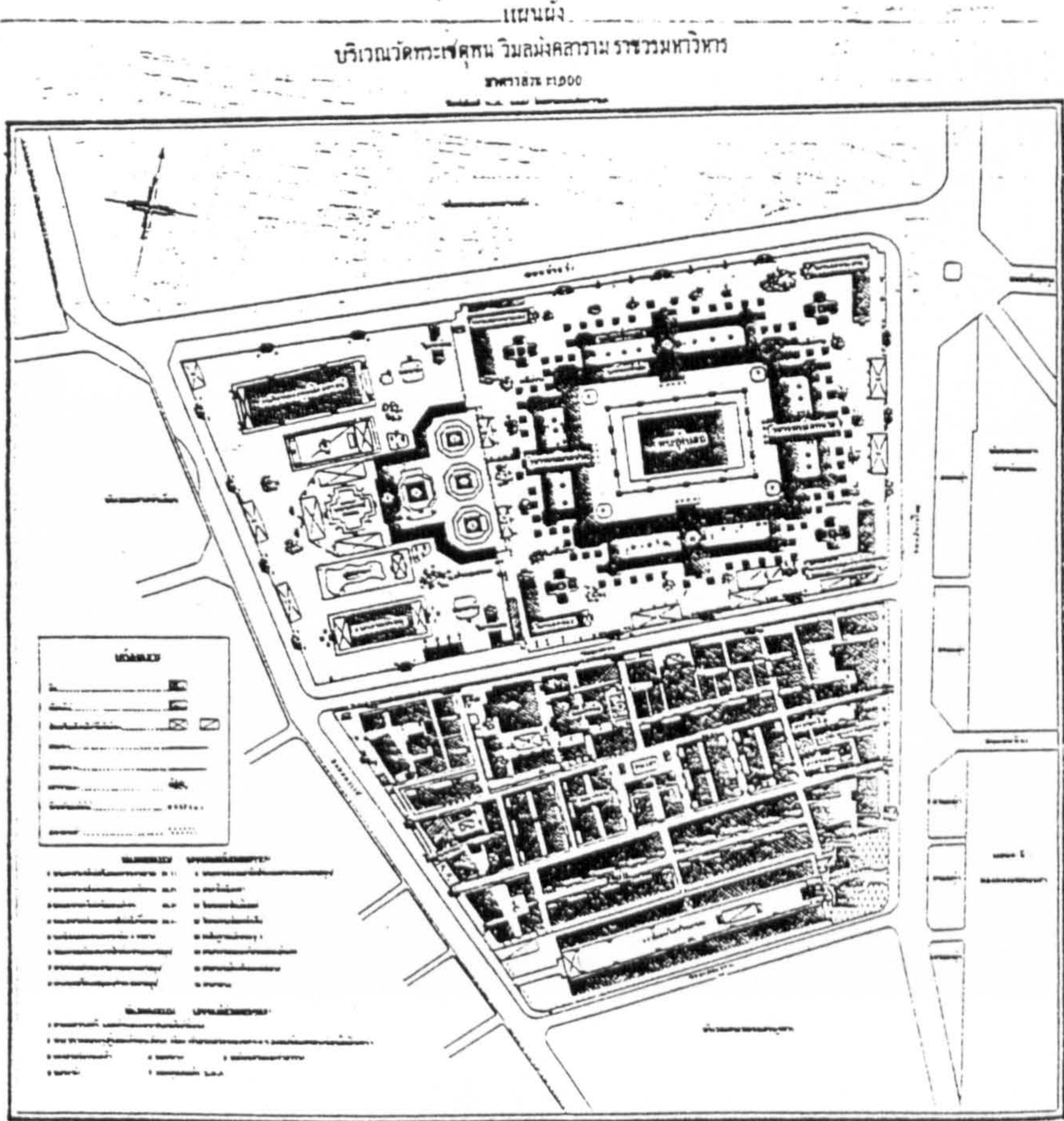


Figure 6 Wat Po, Bangkok : plan illustrates the Buddhavas and the Sanghavas

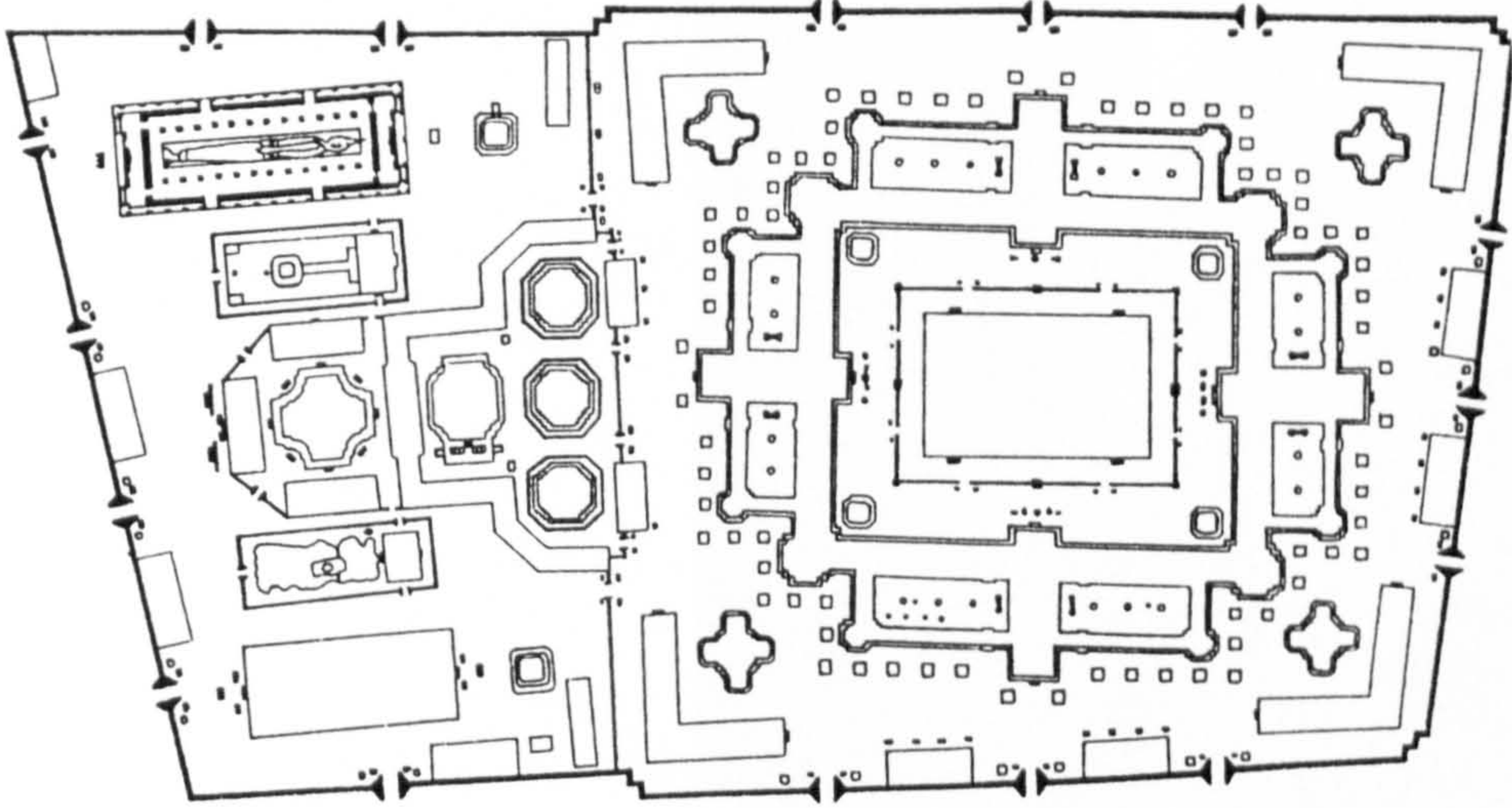


Figure 7 Plan of the Buddhavas of Wat Po, Bangkok



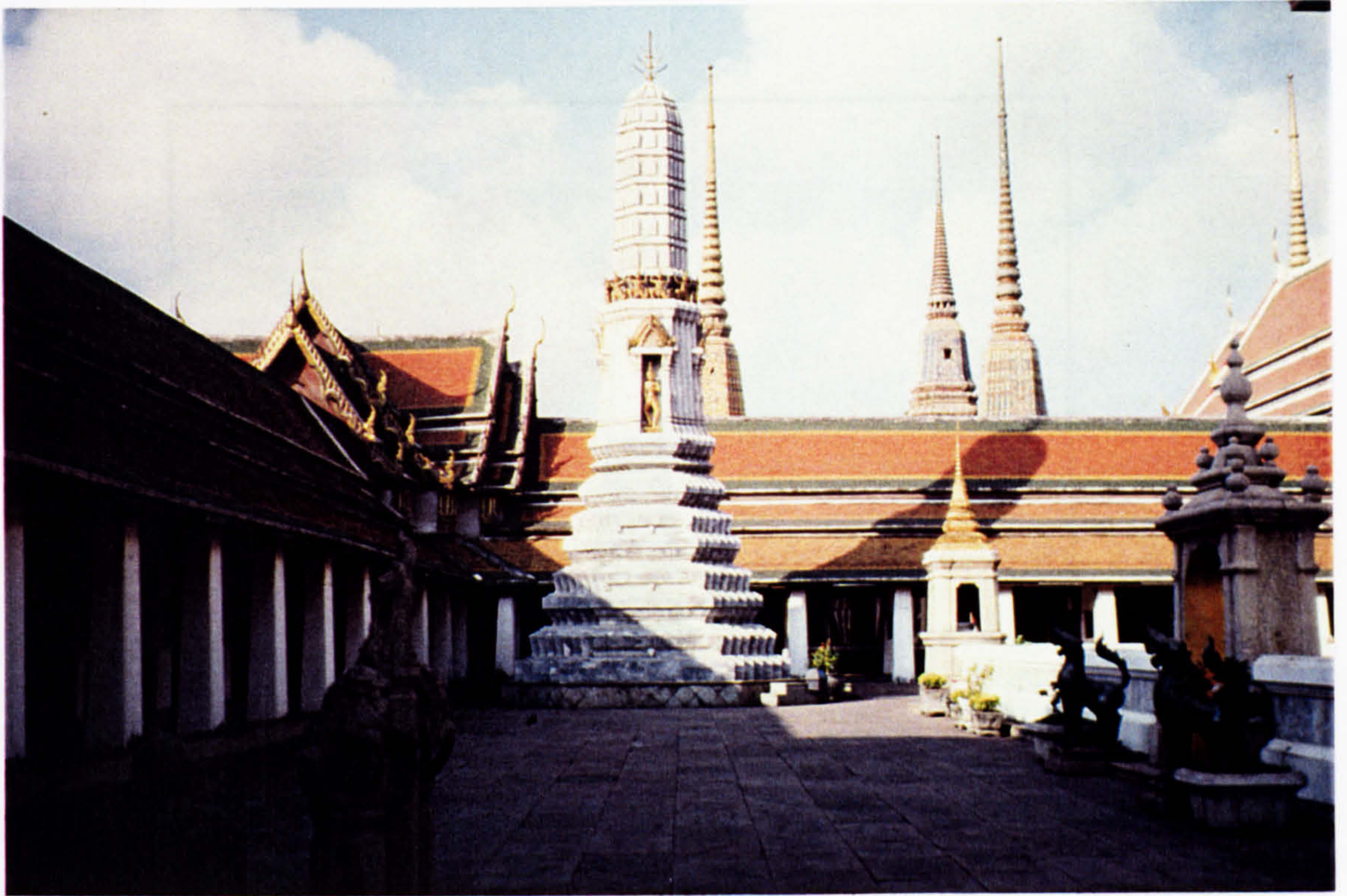


Figure 8 Cloister and the Buddha Images at Wat Po, Bangkok



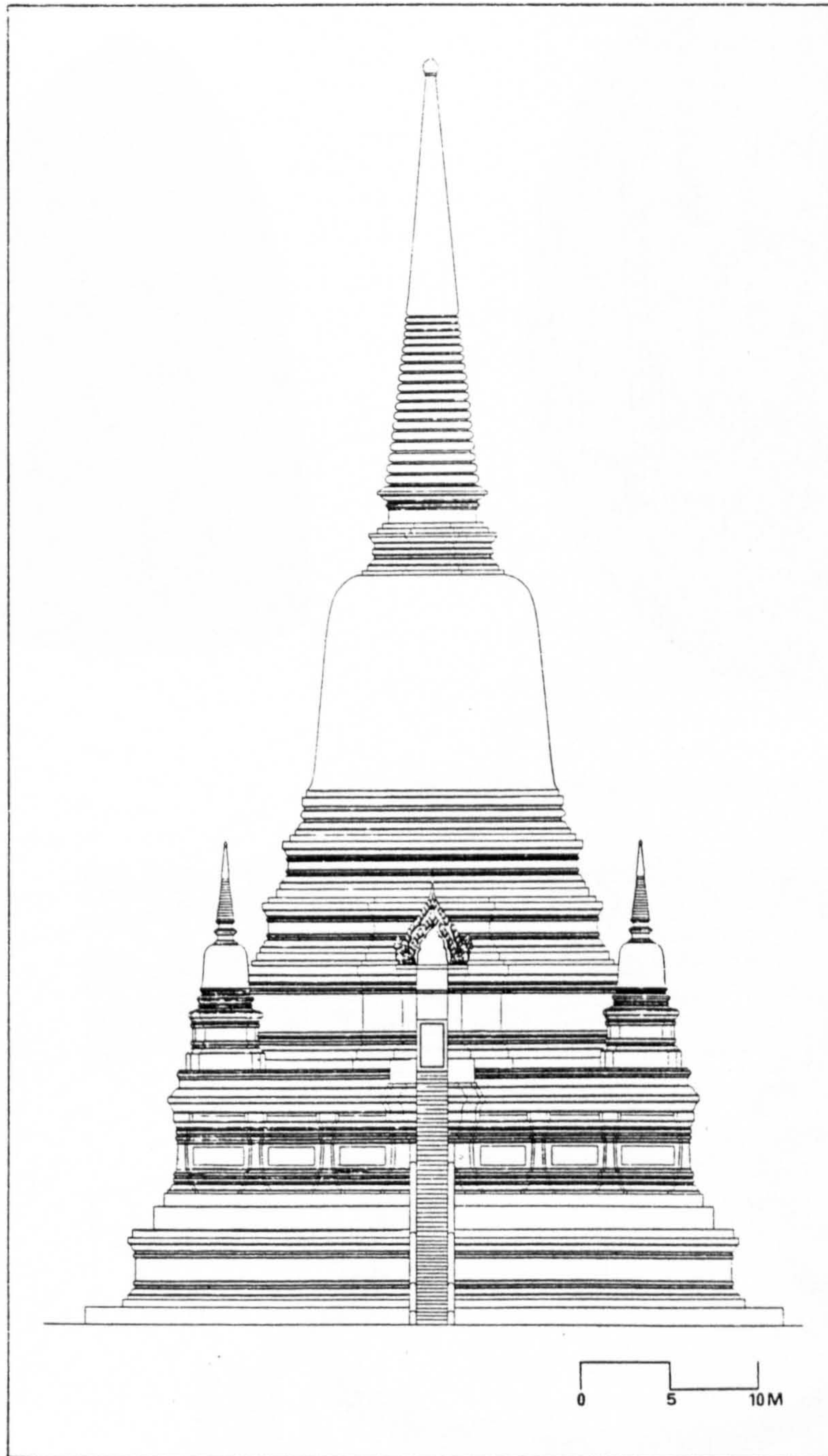


Figure 9 Typical elevation of a stupa





Figure 10 Ancient votive tablet from Nakorn Pathom  
Source : Wales : 1937

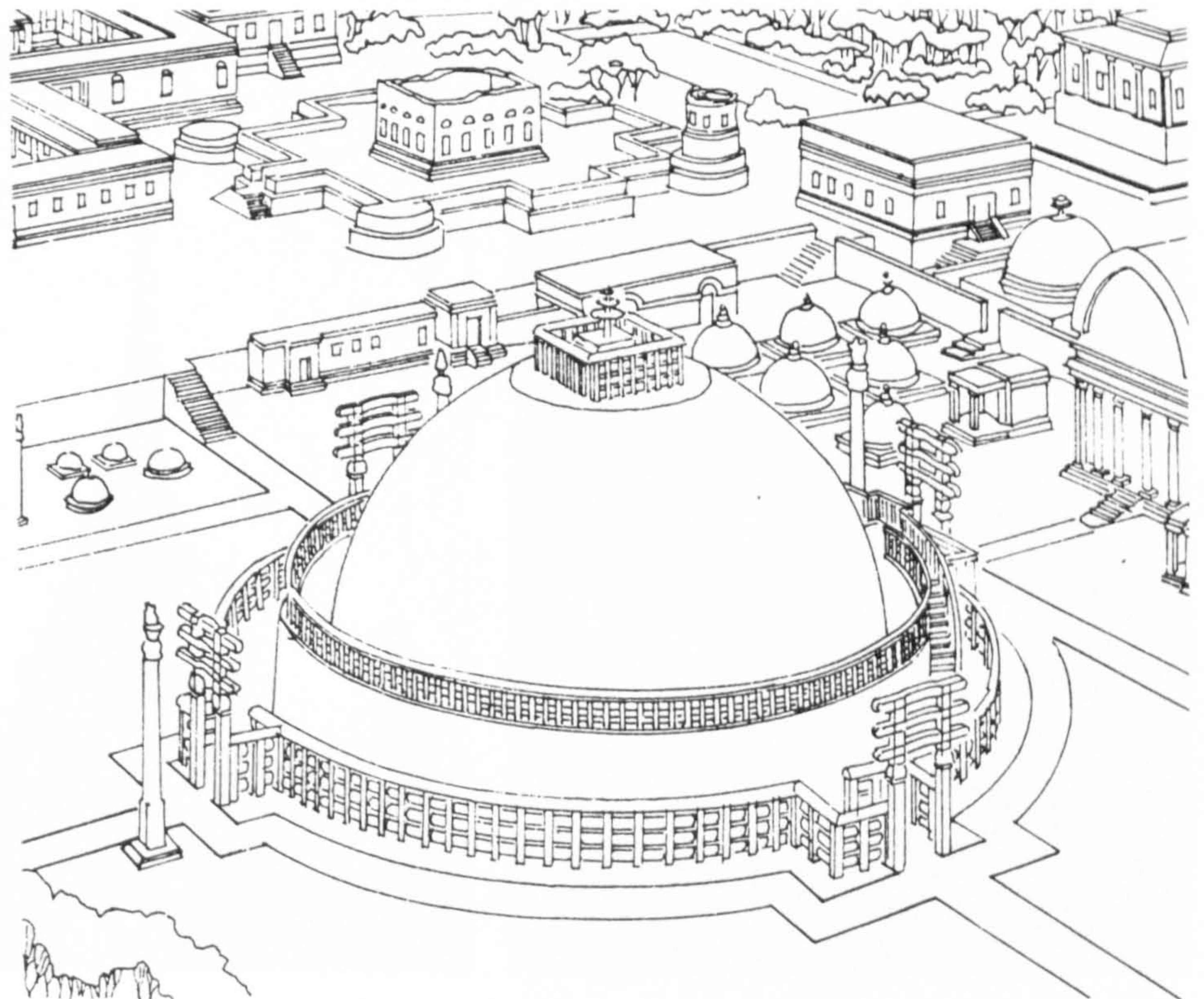


Figure 11 The stupa at Sanchi, India





Figure 12 A stupa in Singhalese style, Wat Rajabopit, Bangkok

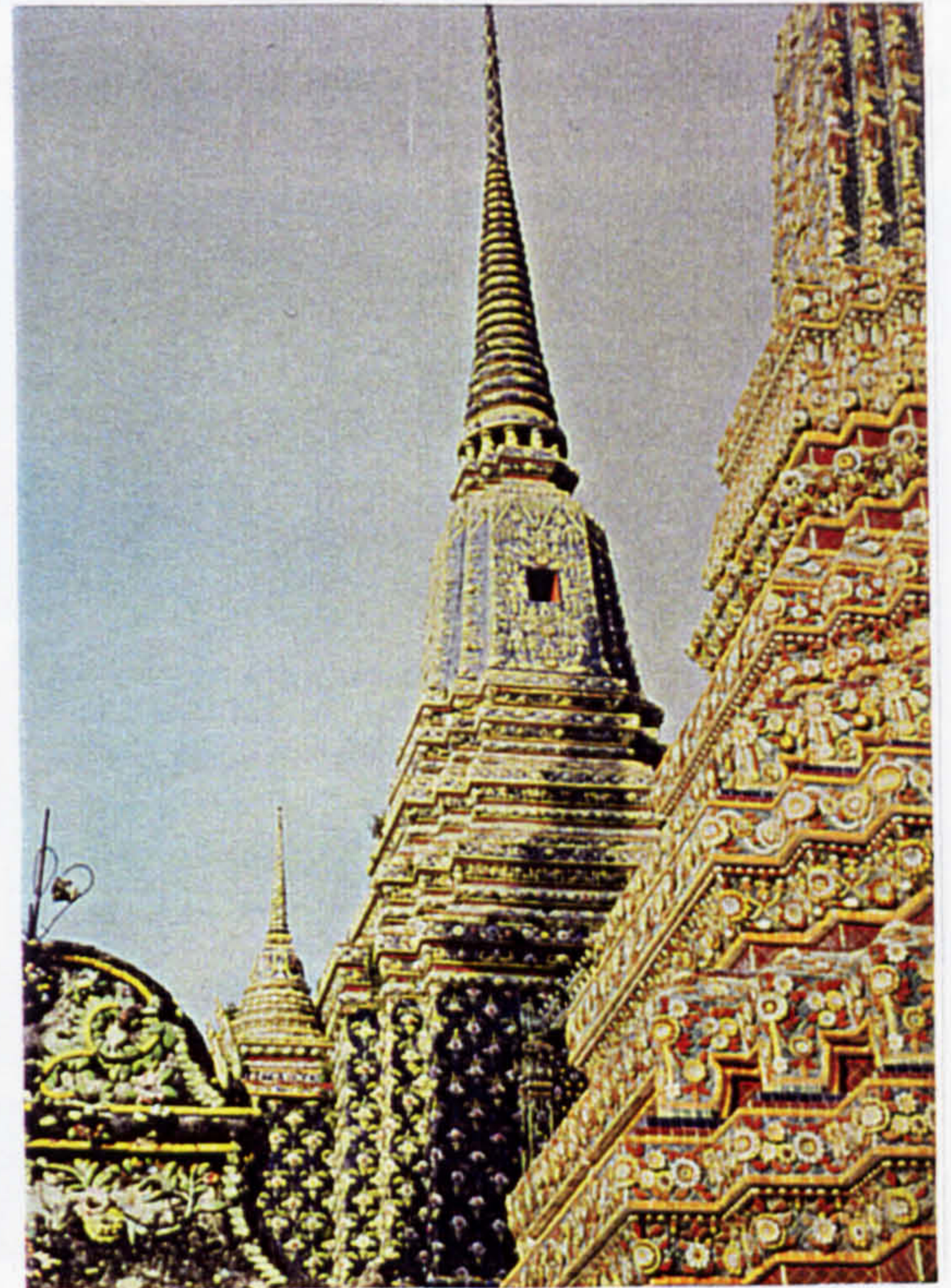


Figure 13 Square base stupas at the Royal Temple (left) and Wat Po, Bangkok





Figure 14 The Ubosot of Wat Na Phrameru, late Ayutthaya period  
*Source Van Beek : 1991*

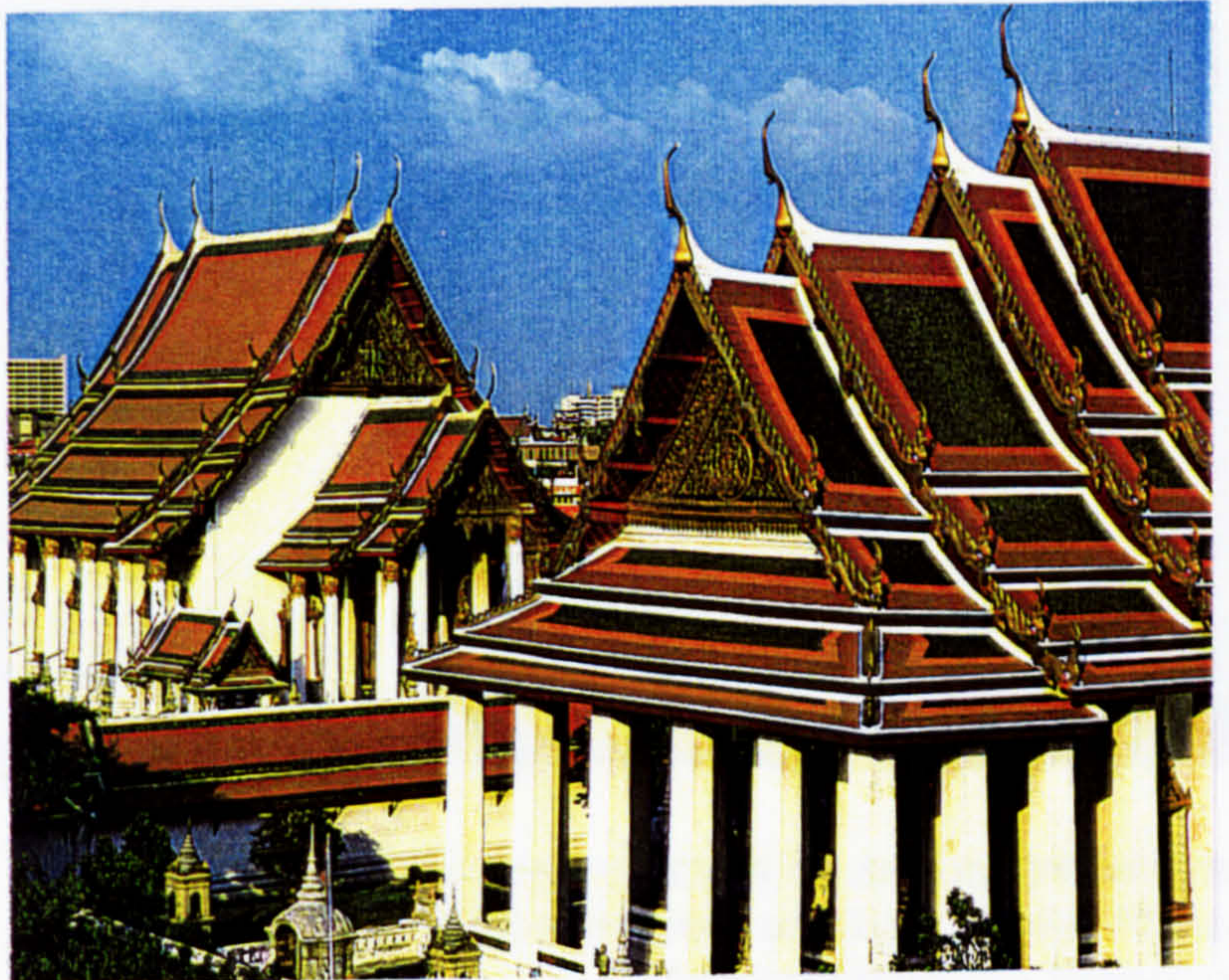


Figure 15 The Ubosot of Wat Suthat, early Bangkok period  
*Source : Van Beek : 1991*



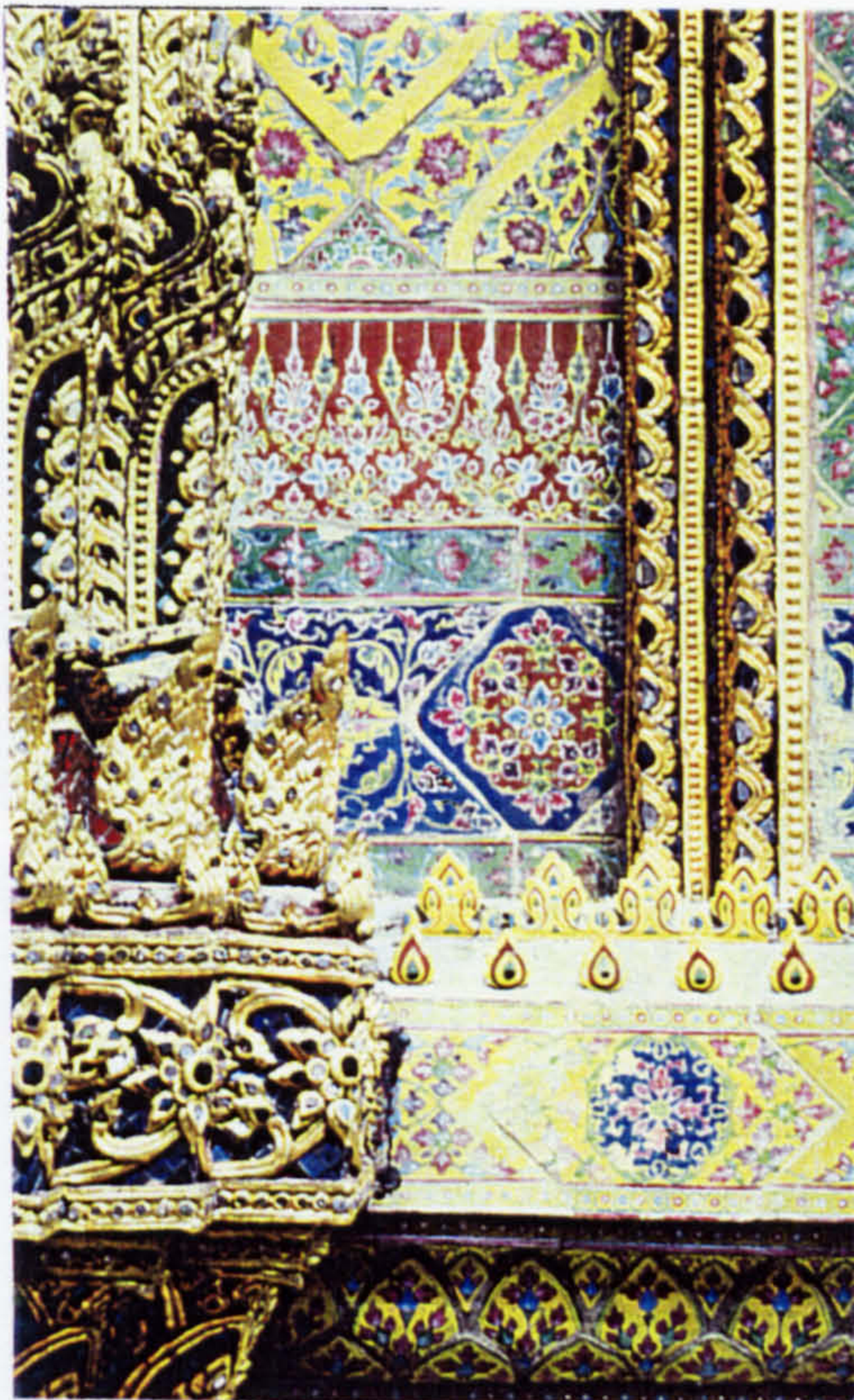
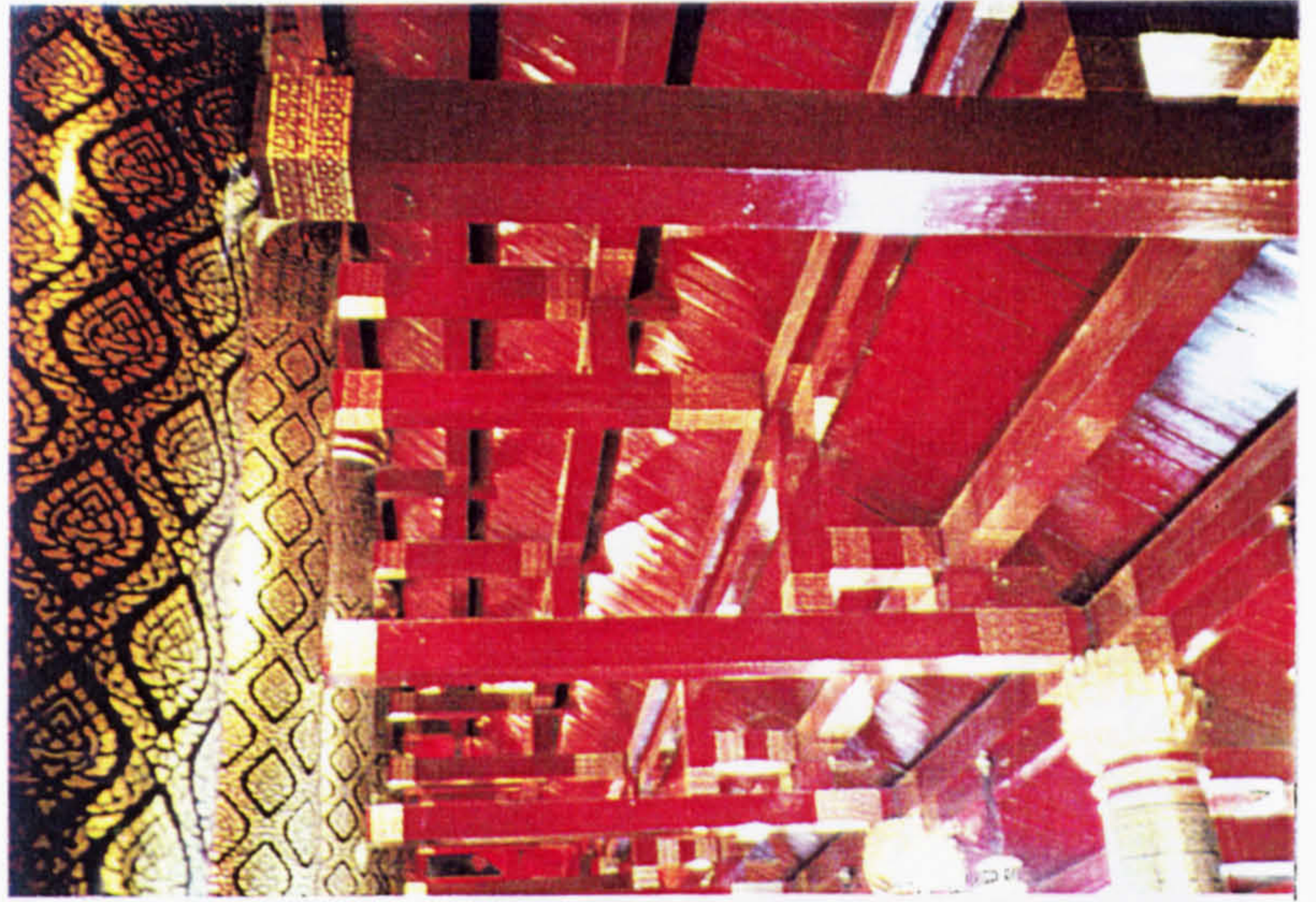


Figure 16 The decorative details of ubosots and viharas  
(top) *Celing and painted columns of Vihara at Wat Phrasri Rattanamahadhatu, Pitsanulok*  
(above left) *Painted tiles and gilded stucco on the exterior of Ubosot, Wat Rajabopit*  
(right) *Guardian angles painted on the door of ubosot, Wat Suwanaram, Thonburi*





Figure 17 Interior of Wat Pra Sri Rattanamahadhatu, Pitsanulok

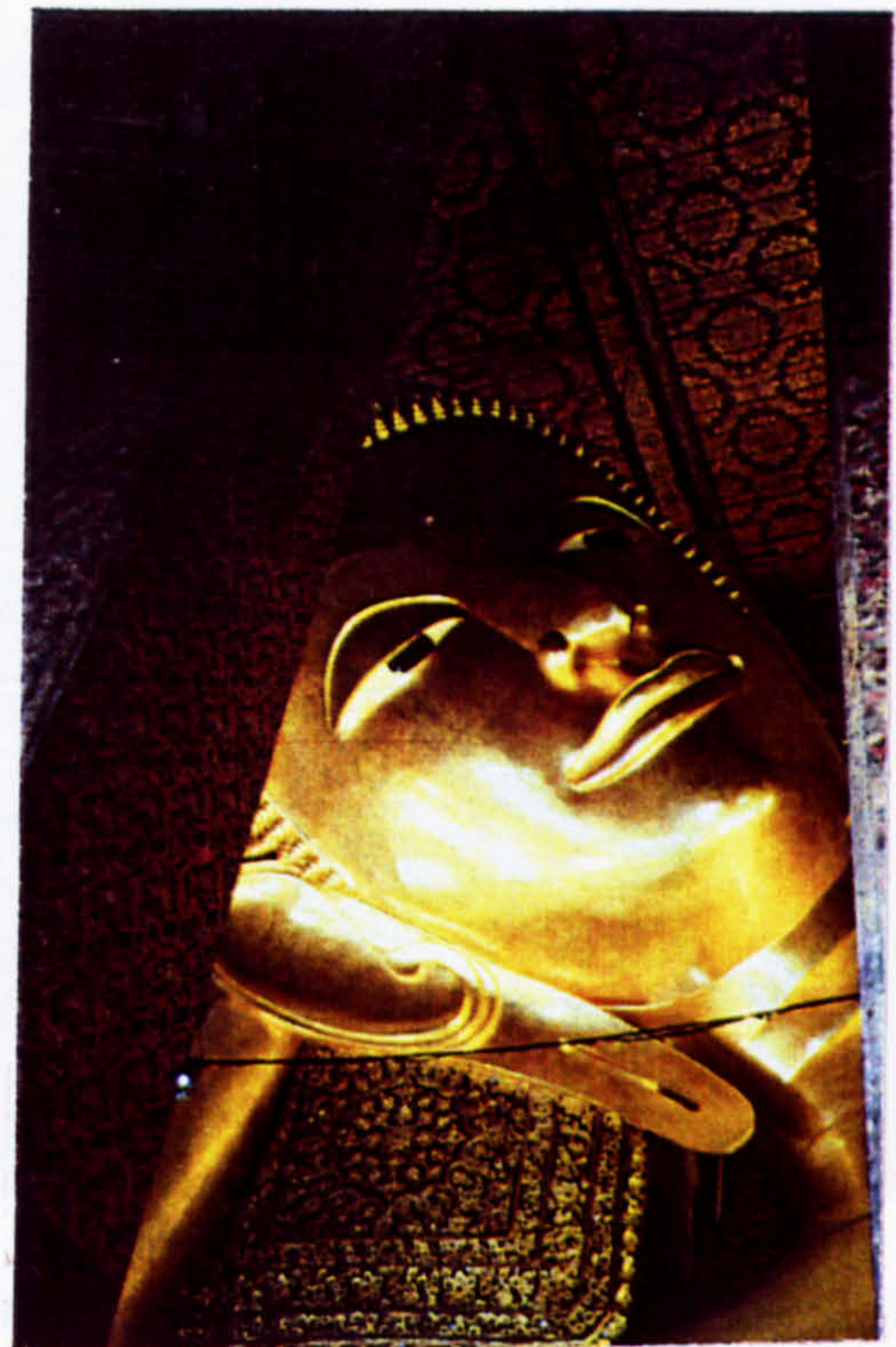


Figure 18 Types of Buddha images





Figure 19 The Sanghavas (above) Wat Mahadhatu, Bangkok  
(below) Wat Suwannaram, Petchabury



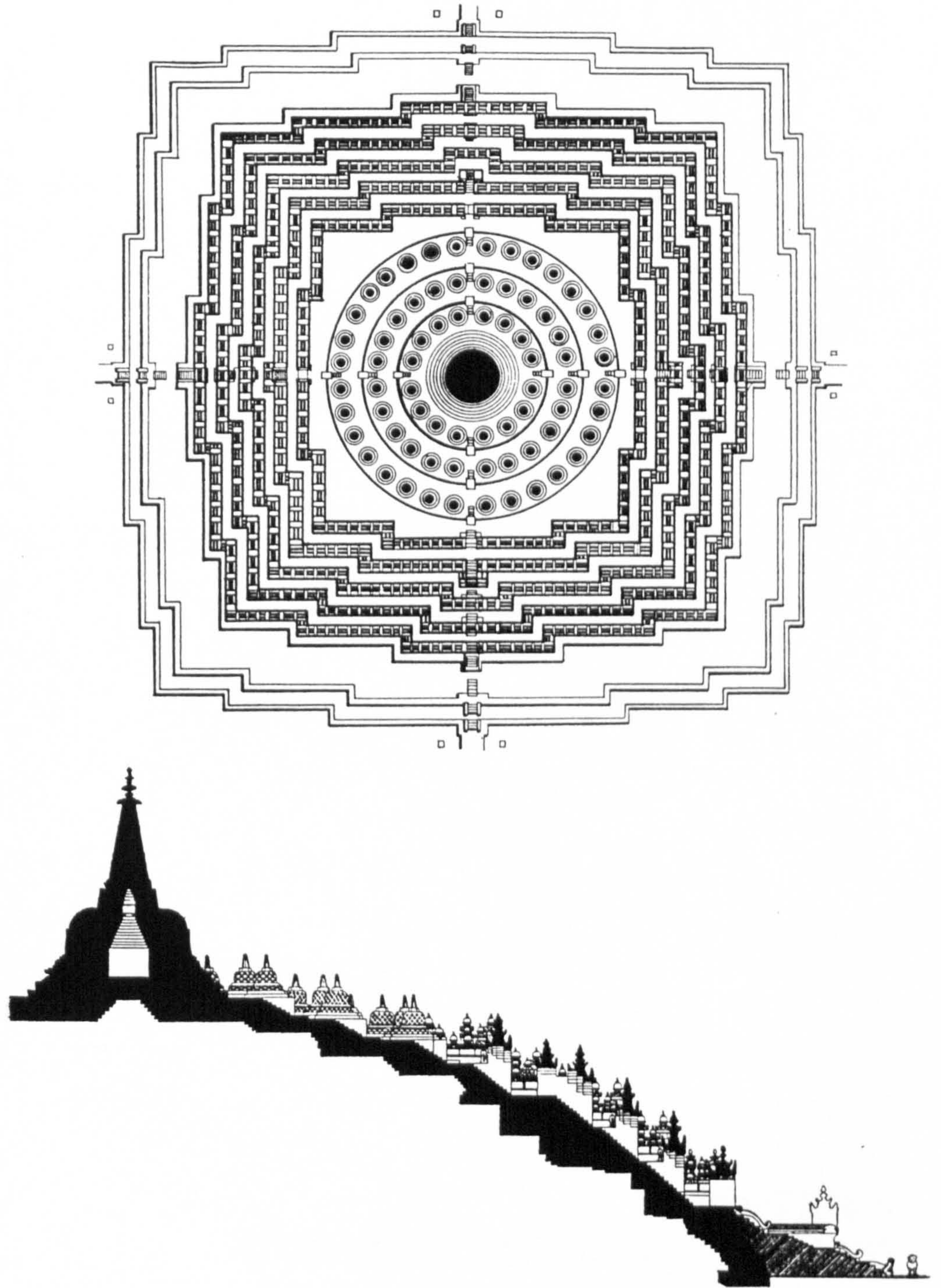


Figure 2o : Plan and elevation of Borobudur, Central Java  
Source : Roland : 1959



## **CHAPTER 4 CONSERVATION IN THAILAND**



## **1 Introduction**

The history and the development of conservation practice in Thailand can be divided into three phases: the period before the modernization of the country in the nineteenth century; the transition period; and the period after the establishment of the Department of Fine Arts. The distinctions between the three periods are characterized by the different attitudes towards the historic monuments, and the different conservation philosophy and practice as a result of the social, political, and economic changes. This chapter will be examined those factors that determine the development of the conservation process and its problems.

## **2 Conservation before the Nineteenth Century**

### *Sukothai Period*

There are a number of lapidary and other records of the construction or restoration of monasteries in the past. However, only a few provide enough detailed explanations for us to understand their construction or restoration process. Nevertheless, we are able to conceive the general concepts of construction and the attitudes of the period towards religious architecture. The earlier records of restoration work in Thai history can be dated back to the Sukothai period. A stone inscription found at Wat Sri Chum, dated around 1345 gives a detailed account of a prince, Mahathera Srisattha, who following the way of the Buddha, left his worldly life to be ordained in a monastery. His pilgrimage to various places including Sri Lanka is mentioned. During his many pilgrimage trips in Thailand, he performed many meritorious duties which demonstrated not only his support for Buddhism but also his dedication to the preservation of the heritage left behind by ancient forbears. It is mentioned that old stupas and broken stone images were discovered in the jungle by Mahathera and repaired by using lime.

Mahathera returned from the pilgrimage trip to Sri Lanka accompanied by Sinhalese craftsmen. At the time of his arrival, Wat Mahatat, built in the reign of king Rama Khamheng (1275-1317), had fallen into ruin. Mahathera renovated the monastery and enshrined the relic of the Buddha brought by him from Sri Lanka in the main stupa. The inscription mentions the search for fragments of ancient stone images of the Buddha and



collecting them together in the monastery. The restoration of the sacred images was vividly explained as follows:

*"...in one place a neck or a bust had been found; in another place the hair or an arm or a breast; sometime the head had fallen and was far from the body and it needed four men to carry it... All of these stones of the Buddha were of large size. They had to be placed on a barrow or a cart to be transported to the great sanctuary where they were joined together with lime" ( Le May 1954 : 180 ).*

Meritorious acts similar to the ones carried out by Mahathera have been repeatedly carried out by kings and wealthy Buddhists throughout Thai history. It is a tradition for Buddhists to build, repair, and restore sacred images and religious buildings of earlier date as an act of merit making. The objective of restoration and conservation of the relic of the past, therefore, is considered as an effort to conserve and maintain the religion itself.

#### *Ayutthaya Period*

One of the most important conservation events of the Ayutthaya period was recorded in detail by means of stone inscriptions. The account is about the meritorious act done by King Taisa ( 1707-1732 ) at Wat Pa-mok. Wat Pa-mok, situated in the north of Ayutthaya on the bank of Pasak River, was one of the important monastery of Ayutthaya period. The important feature within the monastery is a gigantic Buddha image in a vihara. The image is in the reclining position representing the Buddha entering the state of 'parinivarna'. It is built of brick and stucco with gilded finish and is more than twenty meter long. At the end of March 1726, the vihara was in an imminent danger from the collapsing of the river bank. The abbot of the monastery informed the matter to the king who promptly took on the mission of safeguarding the Buddha image. Since the image was constructed of brick and stucco and of colossal size, it was suggested that it should be completely dismantled and reconstructed again by using the original material as much as possible.

It was a common practice of Thai kings to ask learned monks for advice on various matters especially when the matters were related the religion. Stone inscriptions at the monastery give an account of the Sangha's deliberations which opposed the dismantling of the image. It is mentioned that " After deliberating, they [ the Sangha] said: the statue is already the Lord Buddha. It would not be proper to dismantle in order to remove and reconstruct it " The decision of the Sangha was final and the king ordered the image to be removed intact. The inscriptions also give a detailed account of the operation which



involves elaborated engineering works and a great expense of time and man-power. It must have been an ambitious project when we consider the viability of the machinery for the task. The vihara was demolished and the image was moved 168 meter further from the river bank where a new vihara was built over.

The inscriptions are a rare example of their kind, since they do not only give details of the operation that illustrate the technology used but also indicate the attitudes of the period towards the sacred image and the monastic building. We can conclude that the image was valued as the most important structure and was the priority in the entire operation, while the destruction of the building was not taken to be of any importance. It is not the architectural fabric but the spiritual representation of the Buddha that was the aim of the activities to safeguard it.

### *Bangkok Period*

During the three hundred years of the Ayutthaya kingdom Thailand was involved in several major wars with Burma which resulted in many victories as well as defeats on both sides. At the end of the eighteenth century, Ayutthaya engaged in the final war which resulted in the fall of the kingdom in 1767. The capital suffered greatly as the consequence of the war. Most of the architecture, art, and literature were destroyed overnight. Most of the population migrated to safer places and Ayutthaya was deserted. Tak-sin, a Thai general, led a small army to fight against the Burmese and restored the independence of the country. Having seen that Ayutthaya was in a dilapidated state, impossible to be reconstructed without exhausted manpower, he moved the capital to Thonburi, an old custom post on the west bank of the Chao Praya River. Thonburi period is one of the most critical period in Thai history. It was the time of the restoration and preservation of national independence. The new capital was not properly built. Social and economic improvement as well as political stability were the priorities. The political situation, however, was in turmoil until the end of King Tak-sin's reign.

In 1782, a new king ascended the throne. Rama I, the first king of present Chakri Dynasty, served as a high rank officer in the Thai army and fought against the Burmese along side King Tak-sin. The new king decided that the geography of Thonburi was difficult to defend if it was invaded again by the Burmese. It was also constricted by canals to permit future expansion. He, then, moved the capital to a small village of Bangkok, on the opposite bank of the river.



Apart from the restoration of political, social, and economic system, the king also took on the duty of a Buddhist king to restore the stability of the religion. Buddhist scriptures, destroyed during the Ayutthaya war, were gathered and Pali texts were translated. Rama I had an ambition to build a new capital which would have the same glory of Ayutthaya. Therefore, the creation of art and architecture in the Early Bangkok period, especially during the first three reigns, is characterized by looking back towards the past in an attempt to recreate a lost heritage. After the fall of Ayutthaya, the new capital was established in Bangkok and vigorous construction programmes were carried out. These included the building of several major monasteries and large Buddha images. A number of Buddha images were also transported from Ayutthaya and other towns in order to be reestablished in royal monasteries in the new capital.

Wat Po is one of the monasteries restored by King Rama I. The work started in 1789 and lasted for twelve years. A stone inscription on a wall of a vihara gives an account of the construction of a new ubosot, surrounding cloisters, several stupas, and other buildings. It also mentions the transference of more than two thousand Buddha images from Ayutthaya, Pitsanulok, Lopburi, and Sukothai to Bangkok. Most of the images were damaged. The king gave orders to have them restored by adding the missing parts, and "beautifying" the faces. The images that were made from brick and stucco were repaired and regilded. After the restorations were complete, the important images were installed in different viharas of the monastery while the lesser ones were placed along the cloisters. Here one can see the similarity of the restoration works carried out by Rama I and the works of Mahathera Srisattha of Sukothai four hundred and fifty years previously.

The restoration of monasteries by the successive kings were intensively carried out. The nature of the interventions always involved the demolitions of old structures and replacing with new architecture in the style of the period. One of the examples which illustrates the typical restoration method of a stupa is at a monastery at Nakorn Pathom. The town lies about thirty miles to the west of Bangkok. According to the local tradition, the city situated on the site of an ancient city called Chaisiri which believed to be visited by King Asoka's Buddhist missionary. Even though this claim is rejected by some modern historians, the area around Nakorn Pathom is surrounded by remains of ancient stupa. Recent excavations reveal ancient images and other art objects that possess strong influence of the Gupta tradition. There is also a speculation that Nakorn Pathom



may have been a sea port and the capital of the Dvaravati Kingdom.

Before his accession , King Rama IV who, at the time, was in monkhood, made a pilgrimage trip to the city. There he found a ruined dome of an ancient stupa. According to archaeological evidence, the stupa was constructed by the Mon in the style of a Singhalese dagoba ( stupa ) and can be dated back to the first Dvaravati settlement.<sup>18</sup> The stupa had undergone some restoration even before the king's discovery. It appeared that a Khmer style sikhara had been constructed on the top of the dome to replace the missing original spire. The date of the new structure is given between 1000-1400 AD. The ruin of this tower was still standing in the nineteenth century though completely overgrown with vegetation. The restoration of the old stupa did not start until King Rama IV ascended to the throne. The work began in 1853 and lasted for seventeen years. The king died before its completion and the work was carried on by his son, King Chulalongkorn.

The restoration of the stupa by Rama IV typifies the ancient way of restoring stupas in Thailand. An old stupa was usually enclosed within a new larger and taller structure and can be of different style. At Nakorn Pathom, the new structure does not bear a resemblance to the original and very much larger. It becomes the tallest and the largest stupa in the country. With 120.45 meter in height, 233.5 meter in circumference and covered with orange glazed tiles, it dominates the plains for miles around. The king also built a round gallery surrounding the stupa and four viharas at the four cardinal points. It is interesting that the restoration work was recorded, though not with architectural or archaeological correctness. A replica of the old stupa was built on the outer platform to the east of the gallery. It was from this model that archaeologists and historians speculate on the style and the date of the original structure (figure 1).

This intervention on the monument, again, emphasises restoring of the structure to its original glory, or what the original should have been, regardless of the archaeological or historical evidence. The stupa became once again the shrine suitable in every way for the relic of the Lord Buddha and resumed the function as the centre of pilgrimage as it was in ancient times. This intention was illustrated, though indirectly, by the mural

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<sup>18</sup> The exact date of this ancient stupa is still debatable. It ranges from the first to the eleventh centuries.



painting in the main vihara. It depicts the original stupa enclosed within the new structure. The walls of the chamber also contain murals showing gods, angles, and various mythological creatures paying homage to the great stupa.

## **2.1 The Roles of Kings in Caring for Monasteries**

In the past, most of the restoration works were carried out under kings' orders. The role of a Thai king as the supporter and protector of Buddhism and the Sangha had existed since the beginning of the Thai Kingdom. Kingship and religion are interdependent since the stability of the country and the well being of the nation depends upon both institutions.

Throughout the Sukothai and Ayutthaya periods, the relationship between the state and the Sangha was closely knit. Buddhism, in a way, was exploited by politics. It was used to legitimize the king on the throne especially when that king was an usurper. Buddhism was manifested in the unification of Ayutthaya and Sukothai in the reign of King Treelike of Ayutthaya (1448-1488). Although Sukothai was under Ayutthaya's rule, it was still not totally subdued. It has been suggested that the king succeeded in integrating the two kingdoms because he understood the importance of Buddhism and recognized that military occupation alone would not be able to ensure stability. The king temporarily left the throne to be ordained and stayed for a period in a monastery in the north. He also made great efforts to restore and build monasteries in that region. Among these activities, which gave him the reputation of being a good Buddhist king and which greatly impressed the population of Sukothai, was the restoration of Wat Mahatat ( Temple of the Great Relic) in Pitsanulok which once was the centre of the Kingdom.

It was an ancient tradition that when a new king ascended to the throne, he would build a new monastery or completely restore an existing one. That monastery was regarded as the royal monastery of the reign. The vast number of monasteries and the magnificence of the buildings signified not only the stability of the reign and prosperity of the religion but also the righteousness and merit of the ruling king. The king's meritorious acts would have been followed by members of the royal family, nobles and wealthy patrons. These resulted in the large number of monasteries in the country both under the royal patronage and privately built and the vast amount of land donated to monasteries. At present, building a new monastery is no longer in practice. Most of the money donated to a monastery goes to the repair or restoration of the existing fabric or



construction of new buildings for the benefit of the community and the monastery such as schools, multi-purpose halls, and new ubosots or viharas.

### *Slave Endowment*

Another tradition that had been practised by the kings of the Ayutthaya and Early Bangkok periods was the donation of slaves for working in royal monasteries. During the Ayutthaya period when there was a shortage of man-power because of the wars with Burma, large numbers of the population were recruited by the government to do military service and work as forced labour. This drove many people into hiding. It was suggested that one method of avoiding becoming an outlaw was to register with the government as a monastic slave or *Kha Phra* (Suksamran 1992:14). *Kha Phra* were also slaves captured from countries defeated in war (Pramoj 1982:18-19). The aim of South-East Asian warfare in the past was not only to extend the country's boundaries but also to find new human resources. It was then a common practice of the victors to take away people of the defeated country as slaves, as well as looting their cities. Most of the captives belonged to the king and were categorized as royal slaves. They would be distributed by the king to high ranking commanders as a reward and were also donated to royal monasteries. *Kha Phra* were required to look after the monastery and provide security for its sanctuaries and properties. If the monastery also possessed agricultural land, they also had to work in the land for the benefit of the monastery.

*Kha Phra* settled their families in the compound of a monastery and were bound there for life. The tradition of donating slaves for a monastery had long been practised in Hindu-Buddhist countries and was widely accepted in Theravada Buddhist kingdoms of South-East Asia by the thirteenth century. The status of *Kha Phra* was low when compared with other types of slaves since they were usually captured slaves from war-defeated countries and could not be liberated by paying back money. Slavery in Thailand was abolished in 1874 by King Rama V. The abolition was non-violent but a long and gradual process. It took more than thirty years totally to eradicate the system of slavery from the country and brought about changes within the social and political structure.

The care of monasteries, especially the royal ones, was also affected by these changes since most of the care of the monastery fabric had been done by the *Kha Phra*. Two years after the last legislation for the abolition of slavery was issued, the new policy for



the care of monastery fabric was established to solve the problem which was the result of losing the essential man-power.

The policy divided the royal monasteries into four categories in order to define the amount of money and man-power each monastery should receive as a subsidy from the government. The monasteries in the first group were classified as of special importance. They were monasteries built by the king of each reign and regarded as the royal monastery of that particular king. Wat Po and Wat Bavornives in Bangkok were examples of this category. Monasteries containing chetiya or stupas with relics of the Buddha were included such as the monasteries of the Great Relic outside Bangkok, and Wat Phrabat where the foot prints of the Buddha had been found. These monasteries received money and man-power for maintaining their fabric. The sum of money was not fixed, as it depended on the requirement of each monastery.

The second category was all the other monasteries built by kings within the capital city. These monasteries received a fixed amount of money once a year. It was mentioned in the official announcement that the money was for repairing the fabric in time for the Katina ceremony which takes place at the end of the rainy season retreat. In addition to this, the monasteries received a separated sum of money to pay for the monthly salaries of three men to do the maintenance works.

Monasteries in the third category were those built by kings in other towns outside Bangkok and those built by member of the royal family by the royal commands both within and outside the capital. The final category consists of monasteries built by members of the royal family or by high ranking government officials who presented them under the royal patronage. The last two categories received the same kind of subsidy as the second category. However, the amount of money and hired labour was reduced according to the category. The granting of government subsidy was the responsibility of the Department of Church Administration (Krom Dharmakarn), a ministerial department whose duties included the inspection of monastic revenue and the management of monastic lands to their best benefit.

We do not have much information of how small privately built and village monasteries were looked after or about their financial situation at this period. But it can be assumed that the abolition of slavery may not have had much effect on these monasteries since



they probably did not have access to slaves in the first place. It was always the duty of monks in the monasteries and their communities to care for and maintain the fabric by using money from donations.

## **2.2 The Roles of Sangha**

The Sangha have always had a duty to care for their dwellings and monasteries. Even though there is no direct rule relating to the care of a monastic fabric mentioned in the Vinaya, it is generally agreed that cleanliness and tidiness are the qualities required of dwelling places. An abbot of a monastery also has a duty to report on the condition of the monastic fabric to the appropriate authorities in order that repairs can be carried out. Before the establishment of the responsible organization, the condition of a monastery and its environment depended solely on its abbot and the Sangha community. The Sangha have also an indirect role in caring for monasteries. In the past, they acted as advisors to the kings and lay-community. Learned monks were consulted by kings not only on religious matters but also political and social problems. The monks who supervised the kings usually were the Supreme Patriarchs who were chosen from monks associated with religious dwellings under the king's support, or from the monks who were of royal descent (Suksamran 1977: 31). In some particular matters, a committee of learned monks was appointed and consulted.

The advice of the Sangha was, inevitably, based on Buddhist philosophy and ethics. Therefore, advice on the care of the monastery and sacred structures was very much influenced by religious attitudes towards the subject. The judgement of the Sangha was considered to be final as illustrated by many examples in the past.

## **2.3 Merit Making and the Care of Sacred Buildings**

In Thailand, the construction and the care of monasteries are very much related to the concept of merit making. In order to understand the philosophy behind the conservation and care of religious buildings, it is necessary to understand the religious philosophy and beliefs that together form the architecture and its context.

Buddhism in Thailand has a complex background. It is an amalgamation of several beliefs which forms the characteristic of Theravada Buddhism in South-East Asia. Three different "norms of conduct" can be distinguished (Spiro 1972). Even though the aim of religious practice is to discover the way of release from the endless cycle of existence,



or to reach Nibbana, this concept is confined to a small group of people whose primary concern is with salvation. Another group is the majority of the Buddhist population who consider the cycle of rebirth as a kind of religious pilgrimage and the doctrines comprising this system provide the means for enhancing one's position within the cycle by improving one's karma. Apart from these two types of canonical Buddhism, there is also a non-canonical type which is concerned with man's worldly welfare. In this type, religion is used as a protection from devils, to care for the sick and as an aspect of mythical belief.

In Thailand, the knowledge of sophisticated doctrines is restricted to dedicated monks and a few lay-people. Most Thai, though understanding that Nibbana is the ultimate aspiration of life, believe that Nibbana cannot be achieved in a single lifetime and do not consider Nibbana to be a religious objective. The religious aspiration of ordinary Buddhists is the hope to be reborn in a better world. Better status in a future life or a time in paradise are the less abstract versions of the ultimate goal. Since Nibbana cannot be achieved in a single life time, it needs accumulations of good deeds done by an individual throughout his previous existences which will, in turn, result in the spiritual perfection.

Though Buddhism regards life as suffering, to be born as a human being is considered a good position. This is because human beings have the opportunity to be exposed to the faith and to gain merit for attaining enlightenment in a future life. Most Thai are linked to Buddhism through popular beliefs about merit (punna) and demerit (pub). The relationship between merit and karma is explained as follows:

*"It is merit that determines one's destination; that is why some people are born with wealth, wisdom, beauty, power, and have long lives as against the ones who are born with poverty, suffering, ugliness, idiocy, and have short lives. Merit and demerit determine who will be the ruler and who will be the servant or governed..." ( Tambiah 1975).*

Merit is gained by several means, for example, by giving gifts, particularly to monks, by leading a pure life and by observing the Five Precepts in order to avoid demerit. Merit is also gained from worship. This means the worship of "the visible traces of the Buddha on earth." Stupas and shrines are the focus of this worship. The worship or "puja", requires the offering of food, flowers and sometimes money and also the performance of particular rituals, such as the circumambulation of a stupa. It is generally believed that the most meritorious action a layman can perform is to give money to the Sangha for the construction of a monastery. This concept has been long established. An



example is illustrated in the story of Visaka, a wealthy lay-follower living in the time of the Buddha, who funded the construction of a dwelling for monks and gave many gifts in accordance with a wish that she had made in her former life. The story was recounted by the Buddha to his disciples while, at the end, the notion of acts of merit was explained:

*"As from a heap of flowers one can make many a garland, even so many good deeds should be done by one born a mortal" ( The Dhammapada trans. by Narada Thera 1959 : 27).*

However, monastery building involves a great deal of labour and financial resources. It is clear that very few individuals have adequate means for such donations. Most people contribute smaller sums, sometimes as part of a Katina ceremony, which may be used for building, repairing or restoring a monastery fabric.

#### **2.4 Conservation Practice as Mentioned in the Mahavagga**

The problem of dealing with the repair or restoration of sacred structures and images must have existed since ancient times. The Chulakanti Pakorn, which is an amendment chapter of the Mahavagga, mentions the restoration of ruined stupas and Buddha images as follows:

*"In the case of the stupa that falls into a ruinous state, without anyone to look after it, is situated in an unsuitable place, or situated among sinful people, if any merit-seeking individual intervenes with it in any respect or dismantles and restores it into its normal condition, he will receive as great merit as in the case of the royal doctor, Jivaka-Komarabacca, who bled the bad blood from the Lord Buddha."<sup>19</sup>*

The explanation from the text is not clear especially when one considers what is allowed to be done on the fabric of a monument. But what is obvious is that restoration and acts of merit are strongly related and that architectural fabric was not considered as important as its symbolic representation. This concept is understandable, since Chulakanti was written when religious ideology was the only consideration when dealing with sacred monuments and images. Even in the early years of this century, when the archaeological value of a monument had been realized, Chulakanti was still used as a point of reference by the Sangha Council for judging applications for the restoration of monasteries throughout the country.

In 1914 the Council of the Elders (Mahathera Samakom) considered an application for

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<sup>19</sup> Author's translation from 'Phra Maha Sammana Vinitchai' which is a compilation of reports from the Council of Elders in 1914, headed by the Supreme Patriarch, Prince Vajirayanavaroros.



repairing an ubosot which involved the demolition of a group of sacred images. Prince Vajirayanavaroros, the Supreme Patriarch at that time, referred to the text of the Chulakanti Pakorn and reinterpreted it to signify the concept, for example:

"Anyone who, with bad intention, damages or destroys stupas or Buddha images, their wilful actions are interpreted as sinful. Examples of bad intentions were given such as digging for buried treasure, relics or amulets; demolition of sacred architecture in order to gain an empty piece of land for building their own dwellings or farming; or destroying monuments because of different belief, hatred or jealousy. On the contrary, actions done by people with good intentions are acceptable and considered to be acts of merit. Example of these include: the demolition of a ruined stupa and the rebuilding of a new one in the same place; the alteration of a ruined stupa in order to improve the structure; the demolition or dismantling of a stupa not of great beauty and rebuilding one which is more beautiful; the removal of a stupa that had been situated in an unsuitable place to a new place deemed more suitable".<sup>20</sup> The unsuitable places were referred to by the supreme patriarch as places where there would be no Buddhist to look after the structure. In the case that the whole structure of a stupa cannot be removed, dismantling of the old structure and using the old materials to build a new one is acceptable, even though the new structure is not the same in appearance as the original. These principles were applied to Buddha images as well.

It can be concluded from the opinions of the supreme patriarch and the Sangha Council that the 'objective' of any intervention was considered the most important factor. No matter what degree of intervention was involved, if it was done with a pure and moral mind (*kusala*), the deed was considered acceptable.

## 2.5 The Development of Early Legislation

The law relating to the care of religious monuments in Thailand did not exist until 1854. However, an awareness of the importance of sacred structures and images had long been recognized. The care of monuments in Thailand before the nineteenth century was largely dependent on the personal initiative of individual rulers. It stressed the protection of the religious institution rather than the cultural significance of the structure. It can be understood by studying the ancient law promulgated at the beginning of the Ayutthaya

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<sup>20</sup> Author's translation from 'Phra Maha Sammana Vinitchai', as above.



Kingdom (1350). The law included traditional Thai customs and was subsequently modified by assimilation with the Laws of Manu, the ancient Indian law and social ideology dating from the second to first centuries BC. The law provided the basic principles of Thai laws until the reign of king Rama V (1868-1910) when it was replaced by modern legislation.

One section of the ancient law dealt with corporal punishments for crimes that related to religious monuments and images. Here the various acts of offence and vandalism were mentioned: for example stealing Buddha images from a monastery; smelting gold from images or stupas; vandalizing stupas, viharas, images or sacred Bodhi trees. Those who committed these criminal acts were regarded as sinners who must be persecuted. The corporal punishments mentioned in the law were rather severe ranging from lashing to various kinds of torture with execution as the final penalty. The methods of punishment seem incongruous with the Buddhist concept of compassion and non-violence. However, the justification for the law was given as an idea for protecting the sacred representations of the religion itself.

The growing interest in safeguarding the national heritage as artistic and historical evidence started in the reign of King Rama IV. The idea was stated in a royal edict, issued in 1854, concerning the care of monasteries in the country. The problems of looting and treasure-hunting in a monastery were still continuing at this period no matter how harsh the corporal punishments were. Therefore, the purpose of the edict was to prevent the further damage to a monastery by keeping it under surveillance. If any damages caused by looters were found on the structure of ubosot, vihara, stupa, or Buddha images, the people who lived in the vicinity of the monastery were obliged to report these damages to the authority within one month. If they neglected to do so, they were obliged to restore the structure to its former state at their own expense. The purpose of this decree was stated at the end of the edict as follows:

*"The purpose of this [decree] is to encourage the people to look after the monastery that is close to their residences, not to let any one dig up, damage, or destroy the sacred place. Since the monasteries were built by our ancestors, using bricks, mortar, stones or other materials, large or small, even though in decay, they are still the elements which adorn our city."*

### **3 The Transition Period**

Around the year 1915, Prince Damrong, the president of the Royal Academic Council,



went to Chiya, an important historic city in the south of Thailand. During the trip, he found two bronze statues of Lokeshvara, a Mahayana deity. The statues were considered to be the master-pieces of Indian sculpture in The South-East Asia. It appeared that the Prince was riding past the enclosure of Wat Prathat on his elephant when he noticed two metal objects gleaming in a ditch ( Wales 1937 : 189 ). It is very likely that other have seen them but did not take any interest. The story illustrates the lack of interest in antiquity which prevailed at the period. However, the situation was about to change.

The influx of western influences during the reign of King Rama V not only transformed the characteristic of Thai art and architecture but also the attitude towards them. The interest in art and archaeology was started among the new generation of educated Thai. It was the first time that the national heritage was regarded as an object of art out of its religious context. However, the enthusiasm towards the conservation was confined the area of antiquity. Archaeological researches were started by individual initiative focusing on the ancient artifacts. This group of people consisted of members of the royal family, western educated Thai, and foreigners living in the country. Several excavations were carried out on various sites. These resulted in a better understanding of the history and the development of art and architecture. Art objects were collected from sites all over the country and the National Museum was established.

### **3.1 The Western Approach to Conservation in Thailand**

The systematic study of the archaeology and history of monuments in Thailand and elsewhere in South-East Asia began in the late nineteenth century. It is suggested that colonial conquest was the origin of the study of Indochina (Groslier 1970:155). Even though there had been relationships between the kingdoms in the area and the western world since the sixteenth century, the interest in art and archaeology was previously not developed. The Europeans' quest for knowledge in the field of human science during the nineteenth century was one contribution to the study. The Royal Geographic Society in London was one of many organizations who sponsored several explorers to distant lands. In 1858, Henri Mouhot, a French naturalist, made a journey to Thailand and, later Laos and Cambodia with encouragement from the Society. It was during this expedition that he visited the ruined city of Angkor. The studies about Indochina attracted a lot of attention from the west and several permanent research institutions were established as a result. The Ecole Francaise d' Extreme Orient was found by the French to carry out research and survey monuments and archaeological sites in French Indochina as well



as studies of the history and languages through ancient inscriptions.

The Ecole Francaise d' Extreme Orient played an important role in bringing Indochinese archaeology to light. The first inventory of Khmer monuments in Cambodia and Thailand was drawn up by Lunet de Lajonquiere in 1900. This inventory was used by the Thai authorities as one of the fundamental pieces of information for surveying monuments in the country. In 1907, the French successfully forced Thailand to surrender the provinces of Siemreap and Battambang in which Angkor and other principal Khmer monuments are situated. The Angkor Conservancy, an office responsible for the documentation and conservation of the monuments, was set up and conservation works were carried out. The method and philosophy used in the conservation of Angkor later became one of the popular approaches used in Thailand at a later date.

Even though Cambodia, as in Thailand and Laos, possessed Buddhist monuments which were very much in use, the works of the French in Indochina dealt entirely with ruined stone monuments. It is possible that the interest of the western nations in South-East Asian culture was triggered by a romantic approach to an ancient and unknown civilization. It is mentioned that " The basis of our concern with archaeology or, more generally, with Oriental studies is , quite simply, a curiosity about man " ( Groslier 1971 : 250 ). The zeal of the west in the study and conservation of historical heritage derived from the attitude towards colonialism that prevailed during the period. It was generally believed by the western countries that it was the duty of a civilized nation to safeguard world heritage from the negligence and ignorance of the native people. The idea was expressed in many writing by the leading figures both French and British. Sir Stamford Raffles writes with naive enthusiasm as follows:

*" [ We must collect] the scattered remains of the literature of these countries...The rays of intellectual now divided and lost will be concentrated into a focus from which they will be radiated with an added lustre, brightened and strengthened by our superior lights...If the time shall come when [ Britain's ] Empire shall have passed away, these monuments of her virtue will endure, when her triumphs shall have become an empty name...Let [ Britain ] be remembered...as the gale of spring, reviving the slumbering seeds of mind, and calling them to life from the winter of ignorance" ( Raffles cited in Groslier 1970:254).*

The ruined temples of Thailand and Cambodia were restored by the method of anastylosis. It is noticeable that the monuments that caught the attention of the west were constructed of stone. From a practical point of view, stone and its construction technique were more familiar to the west than other kinds of materials used by indigenous peoples. As the result, the stone monuments of Thailand and French



Indochina were intensively studied, recorded, and restored while other kinds of monuments were not given so much importance. Monasteries which can be considered as centres of traditional art and crafts were, at the beginning, disregarded by western scholars as unworthy to be studied. James Fergusson ( 1808-1886 ), an architectural historian who was the first in England to set about writing a world history of architecture, writes about monasteries in Burma as follows:

*" The travellers who have visited the country have been silent on the subject, principally because the monasteries are, in almost all instances, less magnificent than the pagodas to which they are attached, and are, with scarcely an exception, built of wood- a practice destructive of their architectural character, and also depriving them wholly of that monumental appearance of stability which is so essential to true architectural expression" (Fergusson 1899: 626).*

The early study of South-East Asian architecture shows the subjective interpretation of historians towards uncomprehensible art and culture. Fergusson, again, gives his opinions about the lavishly decorated monasteries in Burma and Thailand as the representing "...a building such as the West never saw, and, let us hope, never will see; for, however dazzling its splendour, such barbaric magnificence is worthy only of a half-civilized race" (Fergusson 1899: 628). It was more comprehensible for the west to study architecture as a object of art and research into its origin. Together with the idea of conserving the neglected remains of a past civilization, the ruined monuments and archaeological sites were the focus of attention rather than the living monasteries. Western archaeologists were able to impose their own methods of research and conservation approaches on the ruined monuments without creating much conflict with local people who still carried out the traditional way of caring for their living monasteries. There were however some restoration works that related to monasteries and their occupants; in these cases the western conservation approach had to give way to the traditional method of repair. The restoration of temples in Pagan in Burma was carried out by the Burmese Archaeological Survey. They were "...anticipated by the monks, whose zeal -comprehensive but somewhat over-possessive- led them to undertake lavish white washing or regilding operations, or in some cases to adopt the alternative solution of applying a fresh layer of brick or stucco" (Groslier 1971: 180).

### **3.2 The Nature of Repair**

The distinctive character of Buddhist monastic architecture in Thailand is lavish decoration of architectural elements. Gold leaves, mirror tiles and ceramic tiles are common materials used for exterior decoration. The materials are used as part of the intricately carved timber or stucco motifs. Tiles are cut into small pieces and arranged



into delicate low-relief patterns. It is inevitable that these detail decorations, which have a relatively shorter life-span, rapidly deteriorate in the intense heat and the heavy rain fall in the tropical climate. The nature of the deterioration of architectural surfaces involves the fading of the gold leaves, dull coloured glass, and the loosening or breaking of tiles on the relief patterns. Hard tropical timber is the main construction material for roof structure, windows, and doors, and other decorative elements such as ceiling and eave brackets. This timber suffers from the effects of weather as well as fungus and insects. It would be more efficient if problems could be detected earlier so preventive measures can be carried out. However, most of the Thai monasteries did not have a regular inspection programme. It always has been too late when the problems of deterioration become evident.

During the early part of this century, there were several major restoration works carried out in various monasteries under the patronage of King Rama V. The records of all the restoration works, which were always major interventions, illustrates the norm of practice. The restorations often involved replacement of materials of both decorative and structural elements that had deteriorated far beyond the point of repair.

In 1839, sixty-three years after the major restoration by King Rama III, Wat Po in Bangkok was in the state of disrepair. A detail proposal for the restoration was drawn up by the order of King Rama V. A proposal written by Prince Naris, the royal architect, mentions that most of the architecture in the monastery were in a dilapidated condition. In his report, Prince Naris suggested the demolition of several structures which were too decay to be repaired.<sup>21</sup> A number of structures pending demolition were stupas within the Buddhavas area. The stupas are components of the whole lay-out of the Buddhavas complex. The ubosot which is the centre of the complex is surrounded by double cloisters with a small vihara at each of the four cardinal points. Seventy-one small stupas are placed at close intervals outside and following the outline of the cloisters. At each corner of the cloister, a group of stupas were constructed. Each group consists of five stupas on the same pedestal, with the central stupa slightly larger than the others (figure 2).

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<sup>21</sup> Information on the restoration of Wat Phra Chetupon (Wat Po, Bangkok) was taken from documents of The Ministry of Engineering Service in the National Archive, Bangkok, dated between 1837-1839 as well as records of restoration works published by Wat Phra Chetupon (see bibliography).



The restoration proposal mentions that all of the four of grouped stupas were to be demolished and out of the seventy-one small stupas, only thirty two would be repaired while the rest would be demolished. The restoration programme was divided into several phases and would last for seventeen years. It was carried out until the end of the reign, when King Rama VI took on the task. However, the restoration records of the later period do not mention the demolition of the stupas. The plan must have been altered at a later date.

Nevertheless, other proposed schemes were carried out. The vihara that enshrined a reclining Buddha image, built in the reign of King Rama III, was in disrepair when the restoration programme took place. The roof of the building was repaired and the timber roof decorations were removed. The elements that were decayed beyond repair were replaced with new ones using the same design and material. The surfaces of the timber elements that were finished with gilding or mirror tiles were stripped off in order to be regilded or replaced with a new layer of tiles and gold leaves. Both exterior and interior walls were re-plastered and mural paintings inside the vihara repainted. Windows and doors, decorated with gold gilded patterns on lacquer surfaces, were in a deteriorated condition. All of windows and doors were planned to be repainted and regilded.

The proposal of the restoration signifies the two different approaches to the care of a living monument. While the traditional methods of repair were undertaken without concern for the archaeological value of the structure. It is mentioned in the proposal that the objective of repairs is not to make the old look new as if they had been just constructed but to repair the dilapidated elements so that they retain their use and durability. It also illustrates the attitude of an architect of the period towards monastic buildings. Prince Naris proposed the demolition of the stupas even though, as seen from an architectural point of view, they are part of the architectural elements that form the unified plan of the Buddhavas area. The proposal was made about sixty years after the vihara and the seventy-one small stupas were constructed. Therefore, it is possible that the structures were seen not as historical architecture but functional and contemporary ones.

During the reign of King Rama V, there was no legislation directly related to the care and conservation of historic monuments. Nevertheless, an interest in antiquity arose and was promoted by the king. The Archaeological Society (Borankadee Samosorn) was



established in 1907 under royal patronage. The role of the Society was to raise public awareness of the importance of national monument and antiquity. During this period, the king issued an edict protecting the ancient city of Ayutthaya as a national heritage site. In the reign of Rama VI, the care of national heritage became an activity of the royal government. In 1923, the king established a committee responsible for this task. Codes of practice were issued. The contents of the codes dealt mainly with the survey and selection of ancient artifacts and monuments by the committee, and the roles of the committee as an advisory body for local authorities in matters dealing with national heritage. Even though the king passed away two years after the committee was established and the committee was annexed to a new institute founded by the succeeding king; it was the first step to an organized body directly responsible for national heritage.

### **3.3 The Royal Academic Council**

The Royal Academic Council was established by King Rama VII in 1926. It was divided into three divisions, namely: Art and Craft, Literature, and Archaeology. The works of the Archaeology Division ranged from caring for archaeological sites and artifacts in the country to museum management. The conservation policies and the practical approach of the Council were set up by using western examples carried out by western archaeologists as they had always done in other countries in South-East Asia. National heritage was categorized into two groups. The first group comprised monuments and sites such as cities, important buildings both secular and religious, and ancient man-made structures such as reservoirs and bridges. The second group concerned immovable objects, for example stone inscriptions, Buddha images, and other artifacts. Criteria for determining the values of monuments and artifacts were established by the Council. Two factors which were considered important were their historical and artistic value. How these values could be established was explained by Prince Damrong Rajanuparb, the first president of the Council, in his lecture given in November 1930 which can be regarded as a most important landmark document in conservation in Thailand.

Monuments, sites and artifacts that could be related to a particular period or important events in Thai history were of historical value. The monuments or artifacts that showed distinguished craftsmanship or were the specimen of a particular style from the past were considered as having artistic value. This lecture was the only written document



describing the conservation approach of the council. At that time, however, there was no legislation issued by the government to support the Council in carrying out its conservation works. The pioneers in the conservation field undertook their projects within many constraints and experienced many difficulties. The early work of the Council was to make an inventory of important monuments and artifacts in the country. Since the Council was centralized, and this could not be avoided because of the limited number of staff, it asked for collaboration from local authorities to inform them of monuments and artifacts in their region. The inspectors were sent by the Council to inspect the condition of the monument and an inventory was made. One of the purposes of the inventory was to use it as a reference for judging which monuments should be given priority in conservation. Since there was not a large amount of government funding, the monuments had to be classified and work undertaken according to their condition and need.

Three degrees of intervention were set up, beginning with a programme to recognize the monuments. Though this process is similar to the listing of historic monuments, there was no legislation to support this process. The next step was to put a kind of structural support around the monument to prevent further deterioration. The work of this kind was carried out on both stone and brick buildings. Scaffolding for supporting the structure were built using timber, bricks, and, at a later date, reinforced concrete. The third degree of intervention was total restoration. It was mentioned in the lecture by the president of the Council that this method was tried at a stone Khmer temple in Lopburi and it was also being put into practice by L'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient at Angkor Thom in French Indo-China. The method used here was anastylosis which was an acceptable conservation technique for restoration of dry stone masonry. Though the ethic in restoration has always been arguable and the technique has never been satisfactory when used on brick and stucco buildings. The Council did not mention the method of intervention between the supporting of a structure and the total restoration nor did they object to anastylosis. But the Council realized there was a loss of historical value when restoration was undertaken. Prince Damrong Rajanuparb illustrated examples of several monastic buildings that were repaired or reconstructed not in keeping with their original style. The Council also asked a local authority to supervise the repair or restoration of any historic building in their area, so that there would be no change in the style and details of the original. In the case of monasteries, a local authority had a duty to explain these principles of conservation to the monks. If there



were any problems related to the restoration, the Council should be immediately informed in order that expert advice could be given or the Council could intervene in the restoration process when necessary to prevent damage to the monument.

An important task of the Council was to raise awareness of the value of cultural heritage among ordinary citizens. During this period, antique collection had become a fashion among the elite Thai as well as among foreign visitors and there were several reports to the Council about the looting of monuments by treasure hunters. Deserted monuments in remote parts of the country suffered the most.

The establishment of the Royal Academic Council was the first step to a more organized conservation practice based on western models. The council started from the initiation and devotion of the like-minded people who realized the necessity of systematic conservation. However, they had to overcome many obstacles such as the lack of qualified personnel and funding. It is mentioned in a letter from Professor George Coedes, a French archaeologist and advisor to the Council, written to Prince Damrong in 1929 that :

*" I have a sad feeling that...when I shall retire, nobody in Siam will be able to read a Sanskrit, Cambodian, or even old Thai inscriptions...The collaboration with Your Royal Highness in the creation of the Archaeological Service and of the Museum has been for me a source of immense satisfaction, but here again, owing to lack of funds and of staff I cannot see the realisation of what I deem most essential in that connection : I mean a full and detailed survey of the antiquities of Siam, and a numbering and cataloguing of the objects kept in the Museum "( Coedes's letter : National Archive)*

Until 1926, there was no legislation issued by the government directly concerned with the conservation of historic monuments. The first legislation related to the caring of national heritage was aimed at protecting artifacts which, at that time, were being widely excavated and smuggled out of the country. Important monuments were recognized and protected to a certain extent. However, the care of most of monasteries still very much depended upon their patrons and monks while the quality of the repaired work depended on employed local craftsmen.

#### **4 Conservation after 1932**

1932 saw Thailand enter another major period of change. On June 24 1932 a revolution broke out, bringing in a new era of constitutional government and ending the seven hundred year rule of the absolute monarchy. The political change had an indirect impact on the care of national heritage. The duty that had always been under the patronage



of the kings and royal family was transferred to the government. In 1933, the works of the Royal Academic Council in matters relating to national museums and the care of the historic monuments were transferred to a newly established body: the Department of Fine Arts. In 1934, the first legislation for the care of historic monuments and ancient artifacts was issued and historic monuments were listed for the first time. From then on there have been several amendments to the legislation and several restoration programmes have been carried out.

During this period, there were collaborative projects between Thai and French archaeologists in many parts of the country. The Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient made an agreement with the Thai authorities on the excavation of archaeological sites in 1937. According to the agreement the Ecole would send a French expert to Thailand to supervise the excavation and research. Thai authority had a priority in selecting the finds from the sites for the national collection while the French received according to the proportion of the money that they spent in the operation. The first site that was excavated by the Ecole was at Wat Pra-meru in Nakorn Pathom.

#### 4.1 French Restoration Works in Thailand

Restoration of historic monuments by the French and the Department of Fine Arts were carried out on stone temples in the north-east of the country. The restoration method that the French commonly used was anastylosis. It was also successfully used by the Netherlands Indies Archaeological Service in restoring the stone temples in Java which, at the time, was under Dutch occupation. The principle of this method was that "...whenever necessary, the whole building was taken to pieces, and reconstructed, stone by stone, exactly as it stood originally and reinforced by modern methods, as it never was before" (Le May 1954). Maurice Glaize, who was a conservator at the Angkor Conservancy from 1937 to 1945, applied the techniques of complete restoration to some of the large complexes of buildings at Angkor and it is the result of this restoration that we see today. The work of investigation and presentation was gradually extended to the whole of Cambodia. These interventions on the monuments created some controversy. George Coedes writes that :

*" The lovers of Romanticism have ever reproached the French archaeologists for denuding the ruins of the vegetation which obscured them, and for making them both accessible and comprehensible. Unfortunately, we were obliged to choose between clearing the ruins or having them devoured by forest " ( Coedes 1963 : 10 ).*

Bernard Philippe Groslier, a French specialist and the custodian of Angkor at the time,



described in his book the approach to restoration to increase the understanding of the monument as follows:

*" Some of the temple at Angkor had been known for sixty years, 'excavated' after a fashion, and frequently discussed in the literature; but when at last they were properly studied they were found to be raised on large understructures, to be surrounded by walls, ancillary buildings and entrance pavilions, and to be built on top of earlier settlements none of which had hitherto been suspected. In this field only the complete reconstruction of a building allows us to understand it completely; and we know that this is also the only way to save buildings. This, therefore, is the aim which lies before us, for we have a responsibility for the preservation of the building in our care " ( Groslier 1970 ).*

Coedes's and Groslier's opinions must reflect common practice for the French archaeologist at that time since anastylosis had been carried out on several Khmer monuments not only in Cambodia but also in Thai territory. The completeness of the restoration made a substantial visual impact. Foundations and walls of the monuments were strengthened and made to align. New stones were inserted to replaced the missing ones. By comparing the photographs recording the condition of monuments before and after the interventions, it is obvious that the approach involving complete restoration was carried out to a great extent (figure 3).

In 1964, the first restoration work using anastylosis was begun in Thailand at the sixth century Khmer sanctuary in Pimai, a small town in the north-eastern part of the country. It was the first collaborative project between the French and the Department of Fine Arts. Groslier planned the restoration process by using the method that had been successfully applied to several stone structures in Cambodia. The French method of anastylosis was carried out in Thailand without controversy at the beginning. It was used in restoring only stone architecture and was later accepted by the authorities as the only effective way of restoring stone monuments. Even though, the method is not applicable to brick and stucco building, the idea of complete restoration was put into practice on brick ruins as well.

#### **4.2 Restoration and Nationalism Movement**

The realization of the historical and archaeological values of historic monuments was not the only reason for conservation activities. Historical relics have been used to support the idea of national identity or the identity of political movements, since our culture is our identity. Cultural heritage can be seen in three essential components. First, the intellectual cultural heritage, which can be identified in the achievements of science, literature, art, and the concept of humanity. Secondly, material cultural heritage which



is a concrete statement of human creativity. Thirdly, the ideological tradition moulded by historical circumstances and events which spans many centuries (Herrmann 1989 : 33). It is obvious that the material culture with its tangible quality will be selected as the identification of a collective society. The need for material identity is particularly strong in a nation that has just gone through a stage of identity crisis, for instance, through major war, or being colonized. National monuments or whole cities were restored or reconstructed through out history in order to serve this function.

The reconstruction of Warsaw after the Second World War to its pre-war condition was not only because of the emotional meaning of historic buildings but also a spontaneous protest against the deliberate attempt to destroy the national image of the Poles by the Nazi Germans. Another example is the restoration of the monument of Zimbabwe illustrating the Africans' pride of their past glory and civilization. The monuments became a political issue when the native population used the monument to express the patriotism against the white dominated political structure of Rhodesia. In war-torn Cambodia the monument of Angkor complex is considered as an image of national identity. The silhouette of the central sanctuary at Angkor Wat is depicted in the national flag and the restoration of the Angkor complex is being carried out with the belief that restoring Angkor will also restore the hearts of Cambodians and united their devastated country.

Thailand has never been colonized or devastated by war. However, nationalism and patriotism were integrated into government policy to counter-balance the encroachment of western powers as well as communism which were considered dangerous to the stability of the nation. The new 'nationalist' movement after the 1932 revolution was carried on after the second World War and was supported by a succession of governments. One of the leading propagandist was Luang Vichit Vadhakarn who for a time held the position of director-general of the Department of Fine Arts. The idea of promoting nationalism through national heritage was put into practice which resulted in the repair and restoration of several major national monuments especially at the two former Thai capitals, Sukothai and Ayutthaya.

In 1953, the Department of Fine Arts started a restoration project at Sukothai. The principal approach to the conservation was to protect and consolidate the ancient structures with minimum intervention. It is mentioned in the principles that new rendering



was not allowed since it would falsify the original structures. Ruined stupas where the original form could not be identified must be left as they were found and only the consolidation of the foundations was allowed. However, Piboon Songkram, the Prime Minister at the time, suggested rather obscure principles to the working committee of the Department as follows:

- " 1. Repair and restore [monuments] to the form and the style of the original period as much as possible.*
- 2. The restored monuments must be able to show their age. [ i.e. the monuments must look old and ancient even though they have been recently repaired to their original form].*
- 3. The conclusion is that the form [must be] the same as the original but looks old in the present context, but must not be dead" ( The Department of Fine Arts 1990 : 35 ).*

The principles were carried out by the Department at Sukothai, Ayutthaya and other historical sites in the country. Most of the ruined structures were consolidated and given a new coat of render which often resulted in a change of form and proportion. Stucco sculptures and reliefs which were the decorative elements of stupas and ubosot halls were repaired in a way which, according to an art expert, caused more damage to the elements than if they had been looted by treasure hunters ( Na Paknam 1987 : 48 ).

Some of the ruined structures were completely reconstructed. The vihara of Wat Mongkol Borpit in Ayutthaya stood in ruinous condition after the fall of the city (figure 4). When it was burnt down by the Burmese army, the roof fell on the gigantic Buddha image, damaging the head and the right arm. The image was repaired by King Rama V but the vihara was left as it was until the major restoration in 1955. It is an irony that this restoration project was a joint contribution between the Thai and the Burmese governments. There is no doubt that the restoration is a symbolic one and that the message that the two governments wanted to send across at that time was one of reconciliation.

The restorations of the period caused very strong criticism from many people especially from the academic sector. Most of the critics commented on the loss of archaeological evidence after the restoration, as well as the loss of aesthetic and architectural values as the result of the lack of understanding of history and style, and the poor workmanship. Some also lamented the irretrievable loss of the picturesque ruins and "...the atmosphere reminiscent of eerie power". The conflict between the Department and the academic sector has been a continued and unresolved problem which can be summarized as arising from a difference in conservation philosophy.



*The Case of the Phanom Rung Lintel*

One of the examples that nationalism can create an awareness of historical heritage among Thai citizen, is the case of Phanom Rung temple. The Khmer sanctuary, located in Burirum province, is some four hundred kilometres north-east of Bangkok. The stone monuments within the temple complex date from between the tenth to thirteenth centuries. Changes of political and religious influences and the shift of power after the end of the Khmer empire diminished the growth and importance of the area. The temple was abandoned and left in ruin amid the jungle. It was not until the nineteenth century that the temple was recorded by a French surveyor and appeared in his 'Inventaire Descriptif des Monuments du Cambodg'. In 1935 the temple was listed as a national monument. However, the first archaeological excavation by the Department of Fine Arts was not carried out until 1963, and the first attempt to restore the monument began eight years later. At that time the monument had suffered vandalism by looters who used dynamite to explode the structure in order to plunder the valuable sculptures and carved architectural elements. One of the most important architectural elements of the sanctuary complex is the carved lintel over the east entrance to the main sanctuary. The lintel was carved from a block of red sandstone which weighs more than one ton. The subject of the reliefs on the lintel is Vishnu, a principal Hindu god, reclining on a Naga, a seven headed serpent (figure 5).

It was during the early sixties that the lintel, which was collapsed from the main structure, was stolen from the site. It was smuggled out of the country, allegedly through one of the US military bases which were established in Thailand during the Vietnam war. In 1973, the lintel re-appeared again in the Art Institute of Chicago. One of the leading Thai historians, having seen the exhibition, urged the Thai government to contact the Institute for its return. The request from the government was refused and there was no other attempt to re-gain it. It was not until 1988 that the restoration of the Phanom Rung complex was completed. After the long and painstaking process of anastylosis which lasted for almost eleven years, the monument was restored to an almost complete state. The missing lintel became an issue again when the Thai government for the second time attempt to re-gain it in order that the restoration of the complex could be 'fully completed'. The campaign was supported by the Department of Fine Arts, Members of Parliament, academic and commercial sectors, and Thai citizens as a whole. Media campaigns and demonstrations against the US. government were carried out both in Thailand and the USA. The negotiations between the two governments came to the



conclusion that the lintel should be returned to Thailand. The incident has raised the awareness of historical heritage among the Thai. There are also more researches and articles about art and archaeology of the Khmer sanctuary published, more debates on the value of national heritage, and more tourists flock to see the monuments which has now gained the status of a National Historical Park.

The Phanom Rung lintel is not the only national treasure that has gone 'missing'. There are countless cases of plundering which have not captured the public's attention. Art objects and Buddha images are stolen from monasteries throughout the country. All of them eventually reach antique shops, private collectors, or are illegally exported. The matter that makes Phanom Rung different from other cases lies in the fact that the process of campaigning was linked with national pride. It was emphasised by the campaigners that the plunder happened with the aid of the American government who "...facilitated the robbery of cultural treasures in this region through the use of special rights and privileges and even of military equipment" ( a Campaign article in Matichon Newspaper 1988).

In Thailand, material culture has been used as an obvious device in promoting national identity. However, we must not forget that relics of the past is only one facet of the whole cultural context. Culture can also be defined as the act of developing the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic nature of man. It is also the familiarity and the appreciation of art, science, and humanity which can lead to enlightenment and refinement of an individual's mind. The conservation of historic monuments for the sake of national identity alone can undermine its real value. The appreciation of monuments as works of art and as products of creative and intellect minds must be taking in to account as another criterion in conservation.

### **4.3 From Restoration to Heritage Management**

International conservation activity nowadays covers much more ground than the first movement in the nineteenth century. The objective in conservation also has changed, from the concern with archaeological and artistic values to the more complex social and economic issues. The current conservation trend considers historic monuments as entities in the whole cultural context. The idea of the monument as a relic of history has been used to fulfil a number of modern functions. Monuments with historical significance are considered by modern planners as "...a product, selected according to the criteria



of consumer demand and managed through the intervention in the market" ( Ashworth 1994 : 16 ). The concept has transformed the past and history to a commodity that needs to be managed and utilized in order to gain the best outcome. The resources for the heritage industry are not only the surviving historical relics but also historical events, personalities, memories, mythologies, and literary association ( Ashworth 1994 : 16 ).

History and culture have been used to support the idea of national identity. However, when history becomes a commodity, this use of the past became discriminatory. Particular aspects of history are selected, emphasised, and manipulated to satisfy the heritage consumers. Various museums and cultural theme parks have been created with heritage consumers in mind. They are places where particular periods of the past are reinvented and interpreted according to present attitudes towards history. In such cases, the authenticity of the past depends on the consumers' judgement. Therefore, the past is in danger of being restored according to what people would like to see rather than what actually existed.

#### **4.4 Tourism and Historic Monuments**

Historic monuments and sites are only a part of tourists' experiences. Visiting a historic site includes a rather wider experience than the monument itself. Encountering the local life, food, entertainment, shopping for souvenirs together form the whole tourists' activity. The emphasis given to historic monuments by each tourist is different depending on individual motivation. Curiosity about the past is the primary urge. Historical sites and monuments were presented and interpreted in order to inform the enquiring mind as well as the need to escape from the normal day to day present. People also seek aesthetic enjoyment from relics of the past. Romantic or exotic scenery provide a backdrop for people's imagination.

Heritage as a consumer product has always been designed to fit the consumer's need. The reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia is the classic example of an extreme approach to the interpretation of the past; as well as in England the reconstruction of the 'authentic' interior of several country houses. This kind of interpretation always brings problems relating to authenticity and the balance between values sacrificed during the restoration and the outcome of the intervention. It is generally agreed that the display of historical sites usually means damage and sometimes destruction. The reconstruction is equated to a modern piece of 'quasi-



heritage' which has been described as "...impressive may be for the public but a monumental dodo from an academic point of view" ( Hewison 1987 ).

Important tourist destinations suffer more than the loss of archaeological or architectural value. New facilities that form the basis of the tourism industry have to be developed. At present, when competition within the tourism market is high, tourism product has to be developed to suit the consumers as much as possible. It is suggested that the successful product of tourism is "...an interpretation of the local historical experience in so far it can be related to, and incorporated in, the historical experience of the visitor" and the success of foreign heritage tourism industry depends on "...the resale in a different guise of the consumers' own heritage in an unexpected context within the destination country" ( Ashworth 1994: 24 ). For developing countries in the east, the heritage consumers are western tourists who expect to experience the exotic culture in a familiar, comfortable atmosphere as they would experience it in their home countries. The development of tourist facilities is not only confined to hotels, shops, or restaurants but also includes transportation systems and other additional touristic activities that can be totally alien to the indigenous people.

Tourism has been one of Thailand's major industries since the beginning of the seventies. The nature of tourism includes weekend, domestic holiday, and an increasing numbers of foreign tourists. However, tourism does not provide enough funds for conservation of the heritage since the main economic benefit has gone to the accommodation, catering, transport, and retailing businesses. The wear and tear on the fabric of monuments, as well as the disruption of indigenous culture, sometimes cannot be compensated by the economic gains that come from opening up monuments to the public. Though this fact is obvious, the support of the heritage industry by the government is extensive and has become part of its policy. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has become another major fund provider for historic monuments, especially the prominent ones. Important monasteries such as Wat Po in Bangkok receive a large proportion of grant aid towards the restoration of the monastic fabric. The Authority has a major role in the National Historical Park projects. It also sponsors several cultural programmes such as annual religious festivals organized by local authorities over the country.



#### **4.5 Historical Parks**

The government policy towards national heritage can be seen in one major conservation scheme : the National Historical Park. In 1977 the scheme was first approved for monetary support in the Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981). The project expanded the conservation activity from individual monuments to complexes of monuments and their surrounding sites. The scheme was first carried out at Sukothai and later was implemented on eight other major sites. The aim of the project is to specify the boundary of the historical area, restore and conserve the monuments within the area, and develop the surrounding landscape. Most of the areas designated as historical parks are either large monumental complexes such as Phanom Rung or ancient cities such as Ayutthaya and Sukothai.

During the fifteenth century Sukothai was the centre of political, commercial, and religious vitality in the kingdom. A hundred and twenty-six ancient sites, most of them monasteries, are situated within the walls of the city and in the area beyond. Its architecture illustrates the inventiveness of Thai style that derived from the Khmer as well as Singhalese architecture. The glory of Sukothai's creative genius is its sculpture which is considered by most art historians as the apex of Thai artistic creation. Thousands of Buddha images were cast from bronze. Even though few examples remain, stone inscriptions of the thirteenth century describe the city as filled with images and many of which were made of gold. The ancient city of Sukothai possesses a very advanced city plan. Archaeological evidence shows an ancient road connected Sukothai with other major cities in the north of the kingdom, and show as well there was an advanced irrigation system. The city was left in ruin at the beginning of the sixteenth century after a hundred years of being a vassal state of Ayutthaya. The modern Thai population discover the glory of Sukothai Kingdom through several stone inscriptions, the historical remains, and the artifacts of the period. It is not surprising that the ancient city was used as the symbol for the glory of the past and its restoration was among the first schemes that the Thai government carried out (figure 6).

It is mentioned in the master plan that the Sukothai Historical Park project is aimed "...not only at restoring the ancient structures but also calls for the development of the city as it was at the height of Sukothai civilization" (The Department of Fine Arts 1982 : 7). The plan included the landscape development which intended to create "...an atmosphere that closely resembles the one described in the stone inscription" ( The



Department of Fine Art 1982 : 51 ), as well as the relocation of about two hundreds families living in the walled city, and a major tourist development programme which meant many new facilities were introduced to accommodate the growing number of tourists. Tourism is an important criterion in laying out the master plan of the Historical Park. The economic development of the area is the sole result of the tourist industry. One of the objectives is to increase the earnings of the population living in the vicinity by promoting various activities, particularly for the purpose of tourism. The master plan also mentions the revival of ancient festivals and ceremonies that were practised in the ancient kingdom. The Department of Fine Arts and the Tourist Authority of Thailand have co-organized these activities annually, and consequently the number of visitors during the festival period has greatly increased.

The government policy of creating a new kind of tourist attraction is emphasised in the master plan that says the '...improvements and developments will enhance the city's atmosphere and attract more tourists' and that the restoration of Sukothai can help alter the image of Thailand as 'the land of pleasures with worldly enjoyment' to 'a land of ancient civilization' (the Department of Fine Arts 1982 : 42).

When history and past relics are treated as commodities, we are faced with the danger of cultural deterioration. Culture and civilization are the creation of profound upheavals of spirit, the succession of man's creativity. Art and architecture are the physical outcome of this process. When history becomes a commodity, it forces people to relate to their own history in a different way. Instead of living in the present which is the continuity of the past that will evolve into the future, people are detached and become as if spectators of their own culture. Modern attitudes towards the past have changed. People take the recreated past as a resort from the real present. It provides the ground for nostalgic experiences. It has been suggested that :

*" A past seen as open to manipulate not only undermines supposed historical varieties but implied a fragile present and portends a shaky future ( Lowenthal 1990 ).*

The created distance between the present and the past makes the past seem 'dead' and signifies that the past can only survive when it is reconstructed and conserved.

## **Conclusion**

The conservation of historic monuments in Thailand has developed and changed through time. Nowadays, the conservation activity encompasses a wider definition and involves



not only archaeological aspects but also social and economic factors. Amid the rapid change of Thai society, people often look back to their heritage and realize how important it is as a basis for their identity. Safeguarding national heritage, therefore, becomes a duty of modern man and a part of government policy. In 1986, the National Cultural Policy was established by the Office of the Prime Minister. One of its objective is:

*"...to promote the preservation of Thai culture in all aspects by encouraging research on Thai culture, restoring and developing Thai culture in order to be used as an important tool in dealing with problems in the everyday course of living,...such as problems in social, economic, and political development as well as national defence" (Department of Fine Arts 1992 : 33).*

From this policy, it seems that the government considers the culture as an entity that can be selected and produced in order to serve various needs. Cultural heritage can be created to serve specific contemporary purposes.

It must be emphasised that the realization of the value of Buddhist heritage should not be the result of these needs alone. Buddhist monastic architecture, even in ruin, is the creation of the mind's pure intention that is directed towards the devotion to the Lord Buddha. The care of Buddhist monastery in the past illustrated the combination of this devotion and architectural creativity. The safeguarding of Buddhist heritage, therefore, should stem from the consciousness of being a Buddhist, the comprehension of the meaning of the architecture and appreciation of its value, as well as recognizing the duty of a Buddhist towards the architecture that is regarded as a representation of the belief. The devotion and the realization of these values, together with the modern knowledge and appropriate technology could be the foundation for the future of the Buddhist heritage. It can be conserved as well as developed, or re-created, and thus maintain its position at the core of Thai culture.



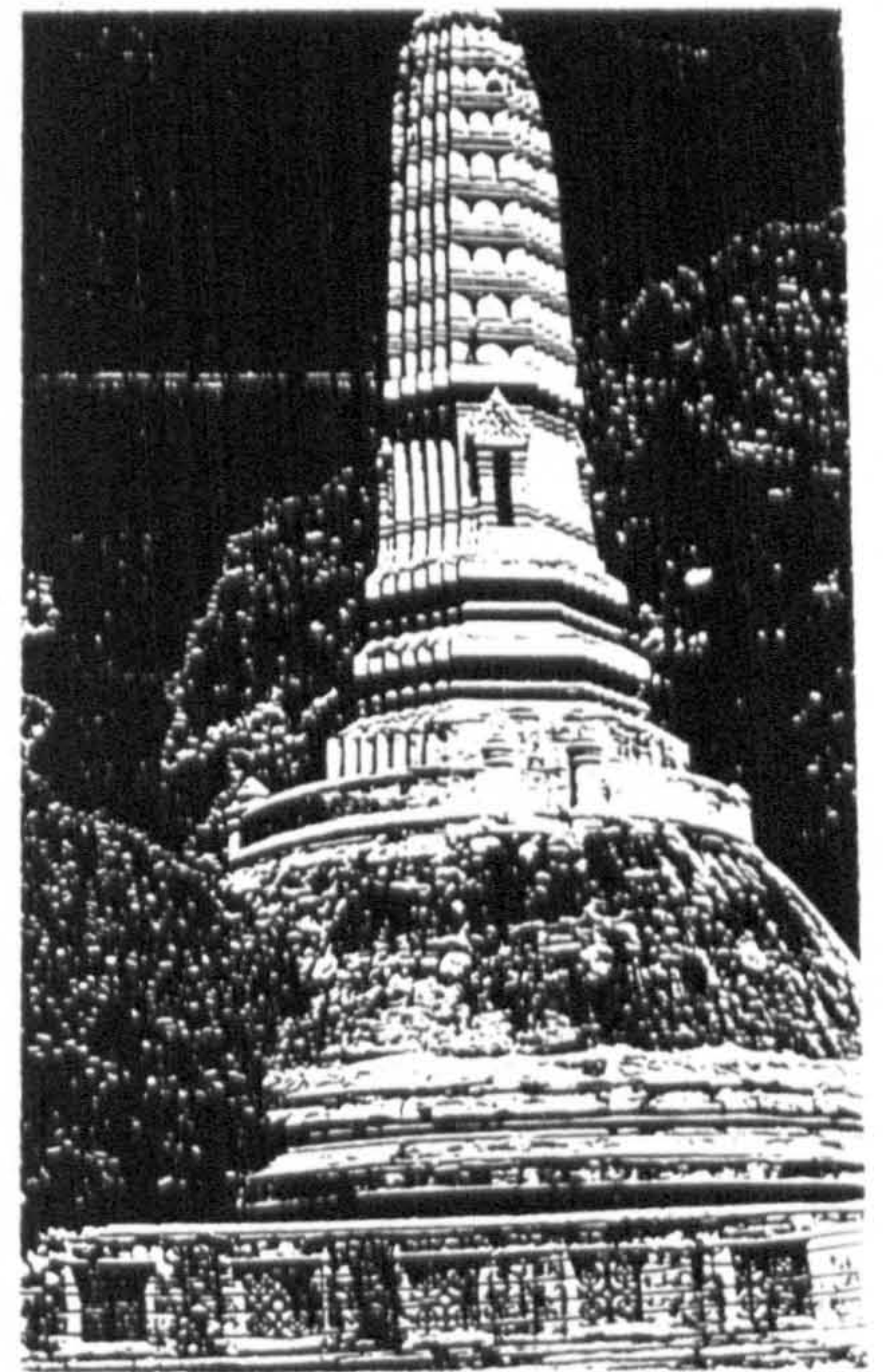
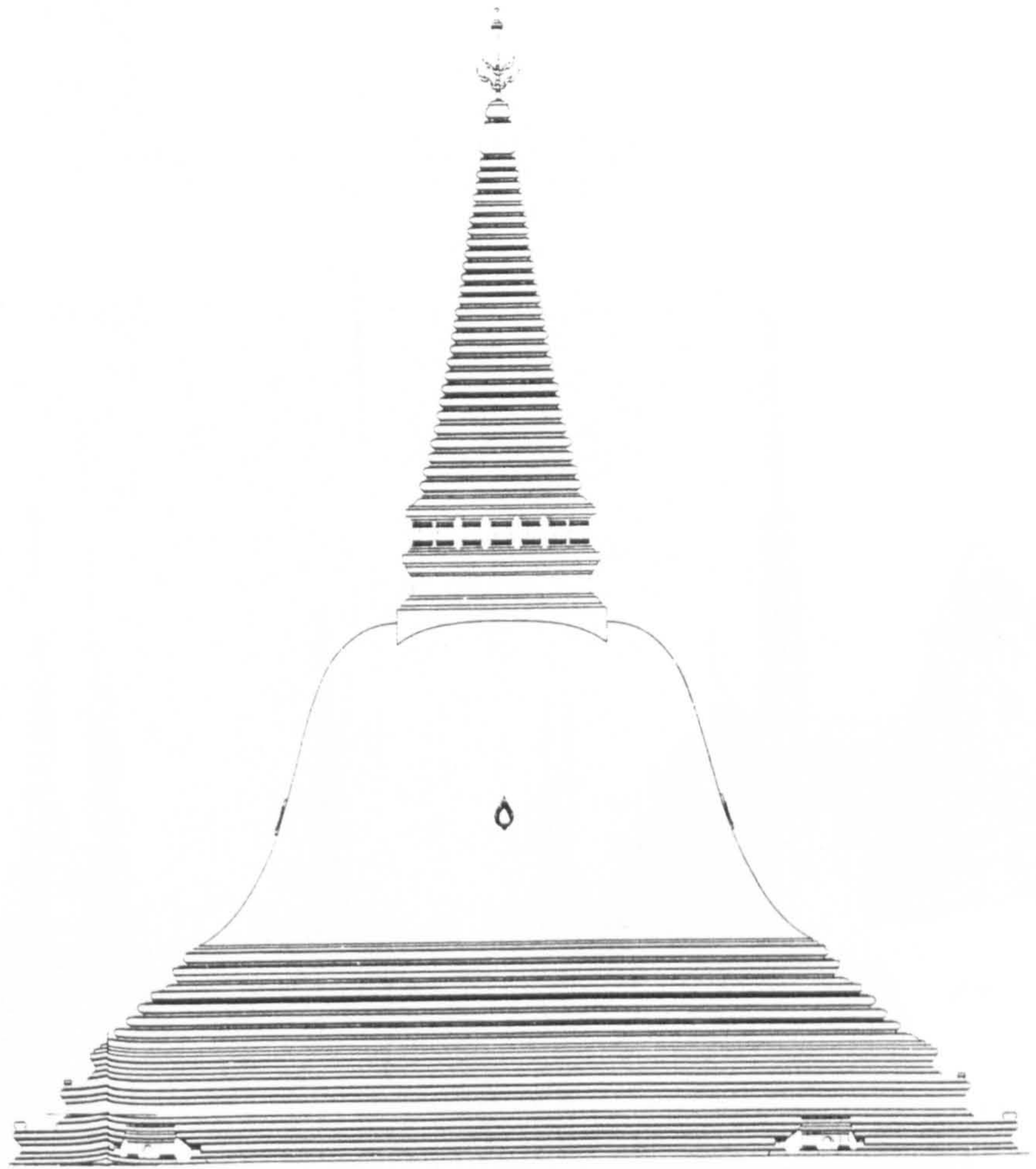


Figure 1 The stupa at Nakorn Pathom and the model of the old structure  
Source : Jumsai : 1982; Kalayanamitra : 1982



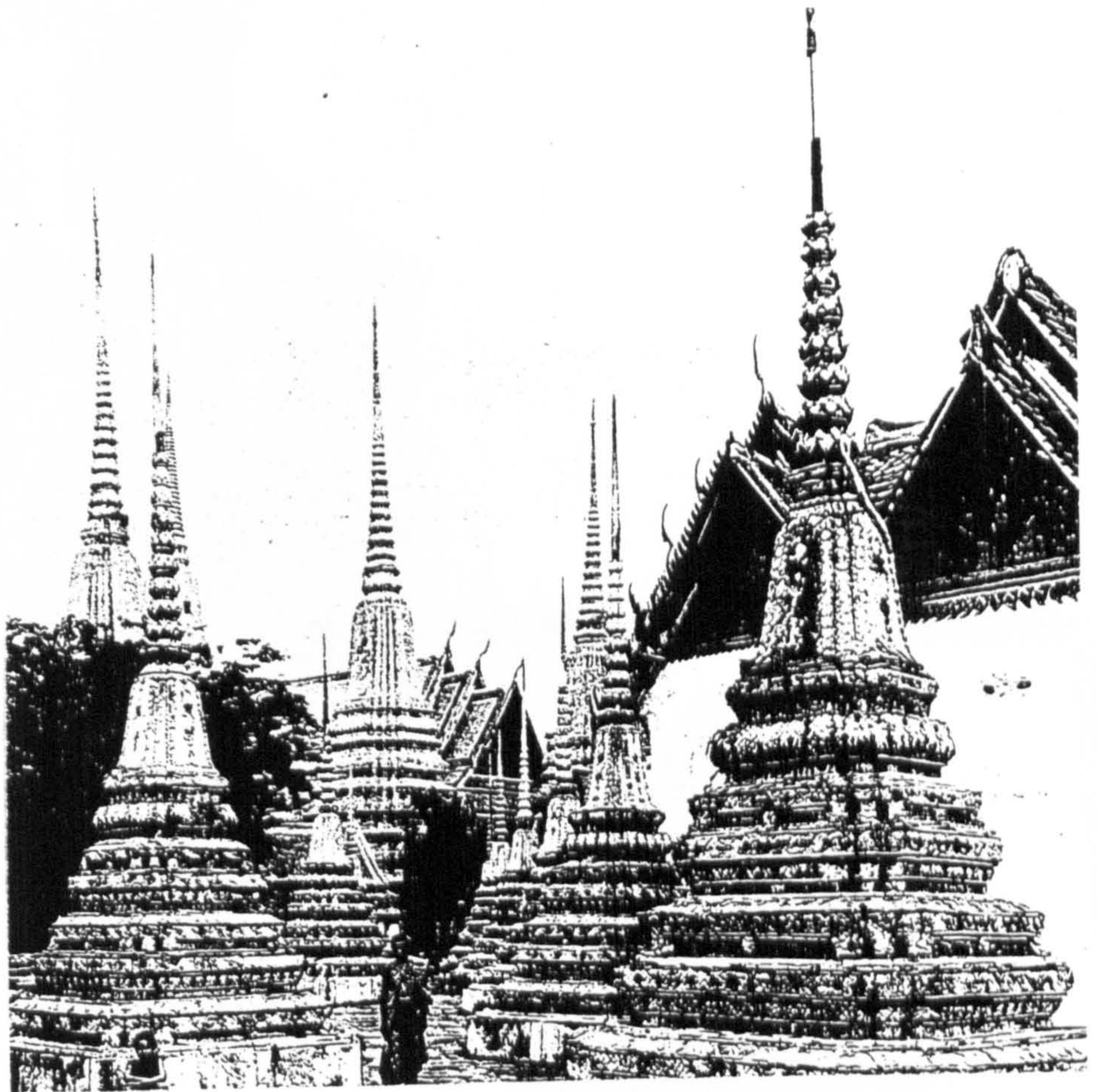


Figure 2 Group of stupas at Wat Po, Bangkok





Figure 3 The stone sanctuary at Phimai, before and after restoration  
Source : Groslier : 1970; Van Beek : 1991



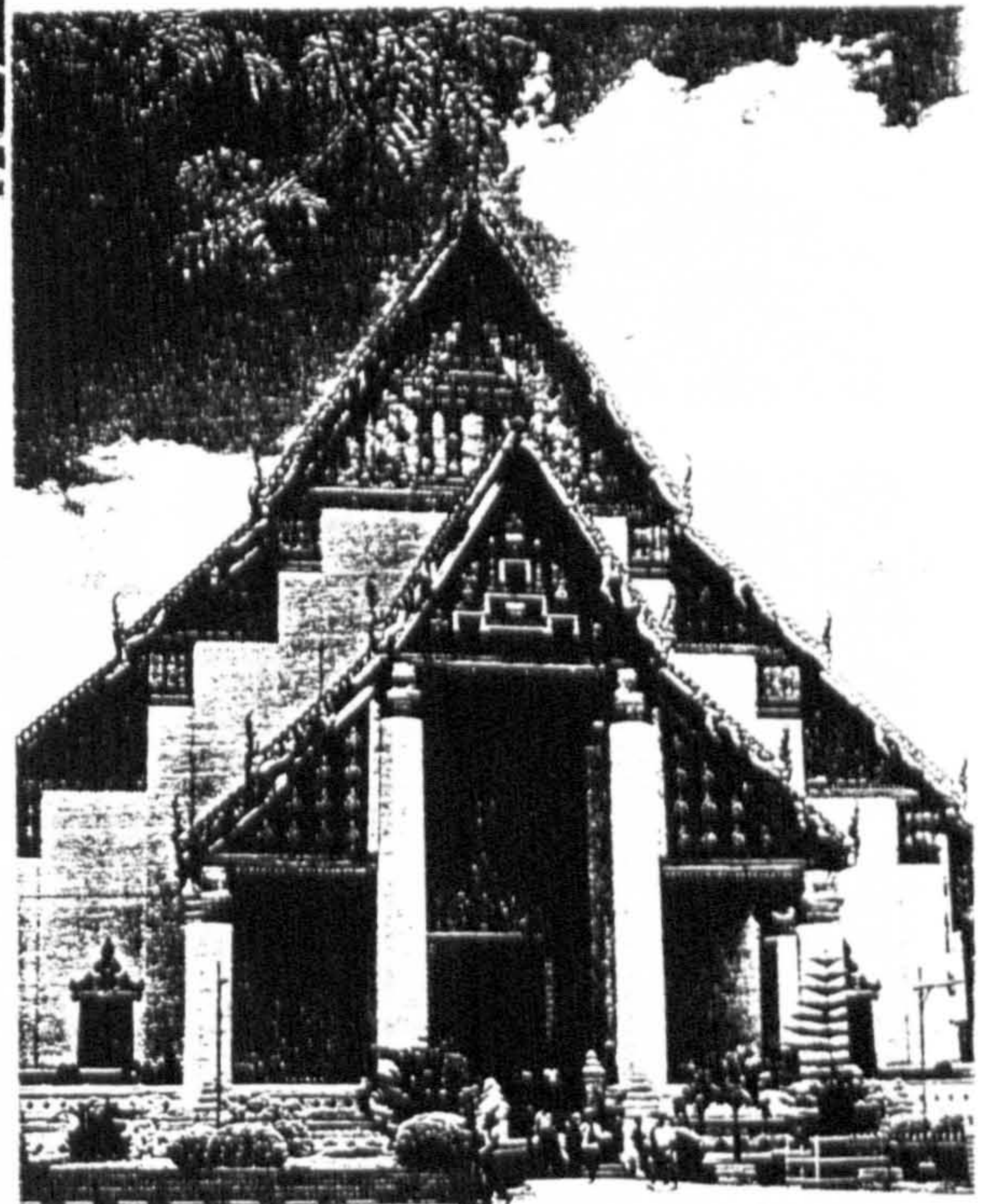


Figure 4 Buddha image in the ruined vihara of Wat Mongkalabopit, Ayutthaya in 1900, and the view of the restored vihara at present time





Figure 5 Phnom Rung sanctuary and two fragments of the lost lintel (above)  
Source : The Department of Fine Arts



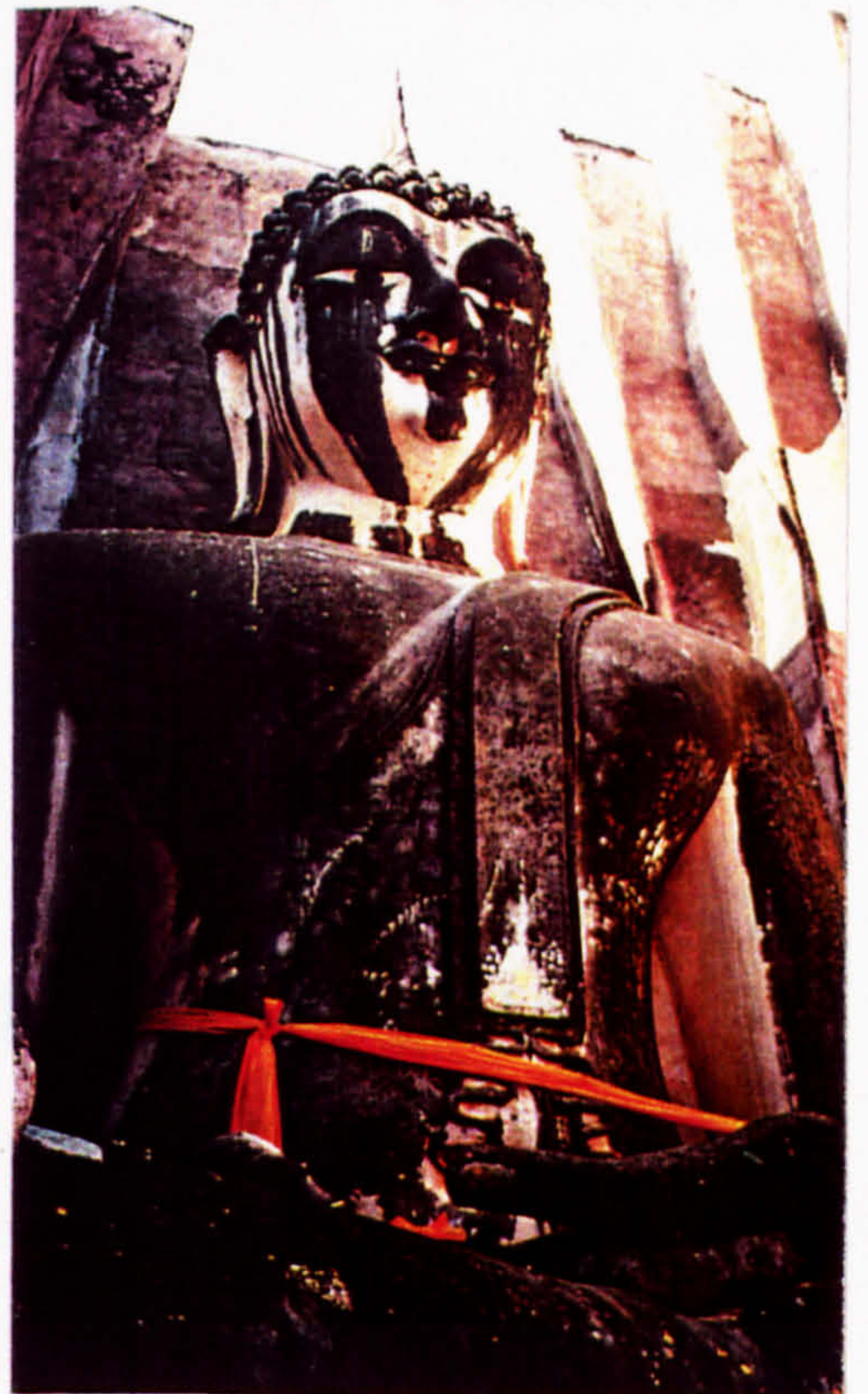


Figure 6 Sukothai Historical Park, aerial view and two restored images



**CHAPTER 5**  
**PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO**  
**CONSERVATION**



# *Philosophical Approach to Conservation*

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### **1 Introduction**

The Venice Charter of 1964 emphasises that the aim of the conservation process is to preserve and reveal the authenticity, including the archaeological and historical value, of the monument. Such values, however, are always debatable, since historic value can refer to the historic fabric of the monument as well as the historical association between the monument and the society. In the former aspect, physical elements will be preserved or restored with respect to the original materials, techniques, and nature of the monument as an authentic document. In the latter case, the historical value may be represented by a living spirit and the continuity of the symbolic association, while the authenticity of architectural fabric is not taken into account.

In the case of Thailand, where Buddhist monasteries have been built, restored or rebuilt as acts of piety, it is obvious that the spiritual aspect of the monument is of great importance and may be considered to overshadow archaeological, historic, and architectural values. In this chapter, we will look at how this philosophical approach to conservation has developed by exploring the attitudes of the Thai Buddhists towards their built environment. Understanding this will lead to a determination of spiritual values such as identity and authenticity of historical monuments.

### **2 Conservation Philosophy**

Philosophical approaches to the care of cultural heritage throughout history can be classified into three main categories. The first approach is derived from the fundamental needs of man. Mankind has a recognized instinct to conserve. We do not like changes to our environment, except for some occasional break. This is because we have to establish familiarity in order to orientate ourselves comfortably towards the world. The built environment is comprised of elements that can indicate our 'place', help us to understand our roles and our relationship with society as a whole. Thus the care of the built environment has become one of man's social responsibility. It must be looked after, not only for our own use, but also for further generations.

In every society historic monuments have been looked after as a result of this need.



They are preserved as long as they continue to have use-value. Buddhist monasteries in Thailand are repeatedly repaired, restored, and rebuilt as long as the monasteries are still in use and the Buddhist communities intact. This approach to conservation normally involves restoration, renewal, and changes to the architectural fabric in order to keep the building functioning.

Function is not the only reason for conserving. The intrinsic merit of the architecture is also significant. Wooden temples in Japan are repaired from a sense of respect towards the great ancestor, founder, or priests ( Larsen 1990 : 18 ). A work of art made with high workmanship is preserved for posterity because of respect for the master craftsman who executed the work. In the case of religious architecture, it is the symbolic quality of the architecture that needs to be conserved. In medieval Europe ancient buildings underwent a process of renovation and restoration. For instance, the nave of a Norman church might often be replaced by a Gothic-style structure considered to be lighter and more modern. There is little or no evidence of interest in antiquities among medieval builders or ecclesiastics, or historians. Most of the surviving chronicles are not concerned with the artistic merit of architecture. The twelfth century annals emphasis upon the latest improvement of church design, its lightness and loftiness, and show no regard for the age of the structure ( Briggs 1952:10 ). The prestige of a building was determined by its historical associations. For instance, a site that has an association with a saint provided an ideal place for a church. The old consecrated church was used as a site for the new, larger, and more 'fashionable' religious building. It can be concluded that the main objective for rebuilding churches was the genuine enthusiasm of the people and the clergy to construct a larger, finer, and more richly decorated buildings to the glory of God.

In England, the dissolution of the monastery in the sixteenth century, the civil war in the seventeenth century, and the Catholic-oriented revival of the nineteenth century brought about many changes in church fabric. Church interiors were changed according to the changes of liturgy. For instance, during the civil war, the Parliamentarians saw the Church and the Monarchy as joint enemies and were eager to purge the parish churches of what they considered as the surviving relics of popery. The interiors of churches were changed according to the changes in services. The communion table enclosed with rails at the east end of the chancel was often removed into the body of the church where the congregation could gather round. This was an attempt to make the receiving of holy



communion a commemorative service rather than the sacrament of the Mass. The pulpit and sermon became the focus of the church service, while fonts were frequently removed or defaced since they were associated with popish rites, or decorated with carvings of saints.

## **2.1 Restoration Movement**

The second type of approach to ancient monuments came with the awakening of interest in the remains of the past. For example, in 1620 Stonehenge was surveyed by Inigo Jones, after centuries of neglect. In Italy, interest in ancient Roman remains led to intensive studies of the monuments, and works of art from the late fifteenth century onwards. The architecture became a model for the new style. It is mentioned that ancient sculptures, triumphal arches, memorial columns, and other monuments were preserved, protected as well as restored and completed in order to give them new functions and new life as part of contemporary society (Jokilehto 1986:3). The eighteenth century has been called the age of taste and romanticism. With the evolution of nationalism and romanticism in European countries in the eighteenth century, the desire to protect and restore national monuments as the concrete evidence of a nation's history became a wide-spread movement. Romanticism shaped various approaches towards the treatment of historic buildings, for instance the romantic revival of the past and stylistic restoration. Medieval buildings were restored with a completeness and harmony of style as stated objective. The past was 'corrected' according to the conception of the period.

One of the major factors that caused permanent damage to religious buildings is, without doubt, the nineteenth century waves of restoration, repairing, and alteration. Medieval buildings and artifacts in England that had survived the Reformation and the Civil War were threatened by the restoration movement of eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries.

The restoration or complete rebuilding of many medieval churches is widely criticized by modern conservationists. Drastic intervention without respect to the old architectural fabric resulted in the loss of architectural value and integrity. However, one thing that should be realized is that many medieval churches were at that time in a state of disrepair. Even such an exception building as Westminster Abbey became neglected as may be seen from evidence of 1760 when "...the neglect suffered by the fabric was



unbelievable...the condition of the monuments was filthy in the extreme...The close of this period witnessed the loss of many precious things among them the Renaissance organ case, the classical altar-piece, the grates round the tomb of Queen Elizabeth and a vast quantity of metal-works, sold at so much a pound!" ( Briggs 1952 : 169 ).

The restoration movement was also accentuated by the revival or 'purification' of the Church of England. The year 1833 saw the beginning of the Oxford Movement which encourage the high church ritual and practices. The Cambridge Camden Society was established in 1839 to promote the study of ecclesiastical architecture and antiquities, and the restoration of architectural remains. The relationship between the religious revival and the architectural restoration is best illustrated by the Society. Changes in the liturgy undoubtedly affected the appearance of churches, both externally and internally. The chancel, which during the eighteenth century had lost its importance and was almost eliminated, was brought back into use as the part of the church where services took place.

The Cambridge Camden Society published a journal called "The Ecclesiologist" and also other advisory pamphlets. The aim of its publications was primarily concerned with 'dignified and decent form of worship'. But later their interests included architecture and style. A decade after its establishment, the Society was strongly criticized by both architectural and theological figures for its revival Catholic practice and the preference for Gothic style which the Society considered as the only holy and moral style for church building. However, one notion worth mentioning is that the Society pleaded for honesty of the materials used in repairing a church, since, as it stated, "...in God's house, everything should be real" ( Briggs 1952 : 163 ).

The well-intentioned and over-zealous attitude of architects and benefactors of the period cannot be overlooked, since they were genuinely motivated by religious devotion. They saw it as their mission to remove what was regarded as inappropriate additions of past centuries and to make churches worthy of the new standards of worship. In their enthusiasm and devotion, restorers used the form and design of medieval churches as a source of inspiration. Victorian architects were not only over-zealous and over-confidence but also offended by the decayed state of the fabric of many churches and cathedrals. It is suggested that they deliberately refaced and recarved true Gothic features to make them conform to the smooth finishes and crisp outlines with confidence



as if the architects had mastered in Gothic architecture just as any medieval mason (Fawcett 1976).

## **2.2 Anti-restoration**

It was the loss of a large number of historic buildings especially the ones of the medieval period that prompted the interest and recognition of their historical and archaeological values. Joan Evans writes that :

*" Archaeology, like fire-weed, grows best on ravaged land. So long as the fabric of medieval England remained united men were hardly conscious of nostalgia for the past "* ( Evans 1956 : 1 ).

John Ruskin, one of the pioneers of the anti-restoration movement, wrote that restoration "...generally a well-intentioned work, but unfortunately, in nine cases out of ten, it defeats its own purpose". Restoration for Ruskin meant "...total destruction : a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed " ( Ruskin 1890 : 353 ). Ancient monuments, according to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, should be protected instead of restored. It is mentioned that:

*"...to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and to show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine, to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone age, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying "* (Morris's Manifesto of the SPAB : 1877).

In theory, the idea expressed by the SPAB is justifiable. However, in practice, one cannot envisage how it can be carried out on a building where major repair is necessary, especially in the case of buildings that are still in use. We can say that the Manifesto tends to be a strong statement of ideas but that, when applied to real work, some compromises are bound to happen. Edward A Freeman, historian and the Secretary of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society in the mid nineteenth century comments on the idea of restoration that the method is necessary when "...any reason either of stability or decency requires it; if any portion of the fabric is dangerous, it must be rebuilt; if any important portion is mutilated, it must be supplied " ( Freeman cited in Denslagen 1994 : 64 ). In the case of old buildings which are no longer in use, restoration should not be carried out and the principles of the SPAB can be applied.

The idea of the restoration of a living monument, especially if it were a religious building, was supported by the French architects, J.B. Lassus and Eugene Viollet-le-Duc. Viollet-le-Duc accepted that, in principle, restoration should not take place but only in the case



of a ruin without use.<sup>22</sup> For monuments that are still in use, especially a church, restoration is a justified act. It is mentioned that :

*"...a church...was built by a creed where constancy is one of the fundamental principles. In this case, the artist must not only endeavour to shore up, consolidate and replace; by prudent restorations, he must also make every possible effort to restore the richness and splendour stripped from the church. In this way, the total aspect and the details of interesting the monument can be preserved intact for posterity by the artist to whom the building has been entrusted "* (Lassen and Viollet-le-Duc cited in Denstagen 1994 : 95).

### **2.3 Modern Conservation Approach**

After the second World War, conservation activity gained a wider range of meaning and practice. Many countries in Europe suffered great loss of their cultural heritage. Therefore, restoration and reconstruction were necessary. Conservation activity also became an integral component of social and economic planning and was linked with the positive renewal of fabric and uses of buildings, places, and communities. Past, present, and future of historic buildings and sites are entwined. Conservation activity has changed from romantic attempts, to preserve a building in its original condition, to allowing changes in order to retain the integrity of the building as well as serve present requirements.

During this period, specialized international organizations were established with tasks related to the propagation of an understanding and awareness of cultural heritage, as well as the promotion of educational and training programmes. These organizations included such intergovernmental bodies as UNESCO and ICCROM and non-governmental ones such as ICOMOS.

There have been attempts to set up guidelines in conserving historic monuments in Thailand. Inevitably, the legislation and the codes of practice are based on western models. In 1960, Thailand signed the International Convention of the Protection of Cultural Property. It was the first time that Thai authority had to comply with international principles and practices. If we look at the development of legislation before the international intervention, we can see that Thai laws and recommendations were dealing mainly with movable art objects while the degree of intervention on monuments was rarely mentioned. The Department of Fine Arts realized the important of historical,

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<sup>22</sup> However, contradictory to the principle he had held, Viollet-le-Duc restored the ruins of the castle of Pierrefonds between 1857-1870 and of the fortress of Carcassonne between 1852-1879 to their medieval state.



archaeological, and aesthetic values and saw the advantages of the western approach to conservation. Therefore, the Venice Charter was adopted as a guideline for conservation. However, when the guidelines had to be interpreted practice, the Department found they were difficult to comply with.

Even though the Charter mentions in the beginning that each member country should use it only as a guideline and apply the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions, the Charter, in some respects, does not leave a chance for this flexibility to evolve. It is widely accepted that the Charter was written on the intellectual framework of western culture and could be applied effectively and rationally only on a particular kind of architecture. The Charter, therefore, cannot be straightforwardly imposed on countries that possess different architectural traditions. It needs quite a few adaptations which can be totally opposed to some of the articles within the Charter itself.

There are also some important aspects of architectural practice that are not mentioned in the Charter. These aspects can be crucial to the architectural tradition of some countries. For example in India, where traditional craftsmanship still very much exists and plays an important part in the continuity of building traditions, the Charter proved to be inadequate when applied in the context of that country (Menon 1994 : 37-44).

Another aspect that can cause conflict if the Charter is applied, is the material and construction methods used on architecture. It is almost impossible to conserve a timber monument such as a Buddhist vihara without the replacement of a missing or decayed part. As the Charter states, the missing parts must be 'distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic value' ( article 12 ). The missing or decayed parts of Buddhist monastic architecture always need the replacement of equally high artistic value. Decorative elements which are important parts of the architectural surfaces are made from relatively non-durable material such as gold-gilded timber, mirror or mother of pearl inlaid on natural wood. All of these works were executed by highly skilled craftsmen and contributed to the integrity of the architecture.

### **3 Values of Cultural Heritage**

The degree of intervention on a historic building often creates controversies. Guidelines and principles in conservation such as international charters and manifestos of various conservation movements can generate inconclusive debates. A philosophical approach



to conservation is based on the value given to the monument and site, since the aim of conservation is "...the upkeep and maintenance of historic buildings and areas that merit care either due to their cultural significance or due to their social and economic values" (Jokilehto 1992 : 109). It is obvious that we want to conserve what we value. Therefore, if the values of a historic monument are agreed upon, planning for its conservation should not create much argument. However, as in many cases that depend on a subjective judgement, the assessment of value is influenced by cultural assumptions and cultural interpretations which make it more complicated to judge. Values of historic buildings as defined by Sir Bernard Feilden are those:

*"...that gives us a sense of wonder and makes us want to know more about people and culture that produced it. It has architectural, aesthetic, historic, documentary, archaeological, economic, social and even political and spiritual or symbolic values; but the first impact is always emotional, for it is a symbol of our cultural identity and continuity"* (Feilden 1989 : 1).

There are two main categories involved in the value of cultural heritage : the transcendent or spiritual value, and the material and financial values. The Management Guideline for World Cultural Heritage Sites divides the values into two groups. The first one is cultural value which consists of identity, artistic, technical, and rarity values. The other is contemporary socio-economic values which include economic, functional, educational, social, and political values. The values of a historic monument are multifaceted. They have both positive and negative effects on the monument. Emphasis on the economic value of a monument can bring about loss of the emotional value. It is important for professional dealing with historic monuments to have a clear understanding about these values in order that the successful conservation plan can be formulated. It is important that existing values are retained and that the positive value from the intervention is comparable to or outweighs the loss of the old one.

The values of cultural heritage are subjectively given, therefore, the cultural background of each society has the direct influence over this determination. A value can be defined in term of one's beliefs about the desirable as against those that are undesirable. Values are social and cultural products. The values that an individual gives to historic buildings depends very much on his attitude towards the past, since historic buildings can be regarded as the relic of the past, the link between the reality of the present and the imaginary long gone period. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the value of the past as perceived by people of different social and cultural backgrounds.



#### 4 Different Attitudes towards Built Environment

The idea of restoring a religious building to its original splendour as an act of worship can be paralleled with the eastern concept of repairing and restoration. However, attitude towards the architectural fabric between the east and the west are very much different. In the east, once a building is consecrated, the fabric of that building become sacred along with its interior and exterior space. Even if the style has changed over time as the result of repairing or restoration, the architecture is still considered as a part of the sacred realm. The restoration is seen as the continuity of the religious life as well as style and craftsmanship. In the west, by contrast, the emphasis is on the physical representation of sacred architecture. The preference of a particular style of architecture as the appropriate style of the house of God led to the destruction of the building features that are in the styles of other periods.

The attitudes towards religious buildings of the medieval man in Europe and present-day observers in the east are similar. Both are based on the mentality of 'traditional civilization'. It is suggested that the different between the east and the west occurred when western thought and actions deviated from their 'traditional civilization'.

*"...no ground for the radical opposition between East and West so long that there were traditional civilizations in the West as well as in the East; the opposition only takes on significance with the appearance of the specifically modern West, since it is much more an opposition of two mentalities than of two more or less clearly defined geographical entities. During certain periods, among which the nearest to our times is the medieval period, the Western mentality, in its more important features, was far more akin to the Oriental mentality as it has remained up to the present day than what it has itself become in modern time" (Guenon 1975 : 17 ).*

In civilizations with a traditional character, religions occupy the principle position to which everything else can be referred. Christianity was the backbone of medieval thought and action. Metaphysical doctrine constituted the essential. Everything else was linked to it as consequences of the absolute reality. Revolutionary scientific discoveries in the Renaissance period as well as the interest in humanity shifted the emphasis from God from man-centred orientation. Scientists had defined the basic laws of physics and the importance of mathematics as keys to understanding the universe.

Newly invented science and technology also changed the attitudes towards the world. Machinery such as the windmill, pump, pulley, clock, and optical lenses enabled man to gain access into another facet of the natural world. The ancients conceived the universe as an 'intellectual organism' while man was regarded as an entity within this organism.



The knowledge of science and technology changed the attitude of man towards the universe, since man could observe, measure, learn the laws of motion, and gain knowledge of how the universe works. The cosmos became one great system of cause and effect. Accordingly, there was no necessity to base their beliefs on the purpose or meanings of a transcendent character. Eliade writes that the modern discoveries of physics and chemistry, and the subsequent transformation of the world by industrial society, is the 'desacralization' of the cosmos by scientific thought (Eliade 1961 : 51).

Guinon defines those traditional sciences which are the application of the metaphysical doctrine as 'sacred science', and the modern sciences as 'profane science' which have risen out of the material or sensible reality. He also compares this division of science to other forms of art. He states that :

*" What is true of all the sciences in this respect is equally true of every art, in as much as an art can possess a genuinely symbolical value which enable it to serve as a support for meditation, and also because its rules, like the law which it is the object of science to understand, are in their turn reflections and applications of the fundamental principles; and thus it is that in every normal civilization there are 'traditional arts', which are no less lost to the modern West than the traditional sciences" ( Guenon 1957 : 49 ).*

## **5 The Functions of the Past**

Amid the technological advances and the development of knowledge for the well-being of humanity in the future, men still look back to the past. Men have always been searching for the thing that they have lost or been deprived of, so it is understandable that modern man, losing his foothold in the chaotic world, unable to identify themselves with the environment, looks back to his roots in order to make sense out of the senseless life. Searching for the past is not a modern phenomenon. In every period of history and in every aspect of human life, the past has been used as a model for the future, a guide, as well as an imaginary place for escape from the unpleasant reality. This can be seen in the revival of architectural style, the Art and Crafts movement against industrialization, the emerging of the theme museum, and the heritage industry.

Past, present, and future are entwined. It is suggested that the world that man lives in transcends the limitations of the immediate human environment, since the world comprises not only present but past as well as future. The loss of any of these dimensions is the detachment from a part of reality ( Mumford 1963 : 12 ). Human experiences of their present and their activities that result in their future are related indirectly to their experiences, perceptions, and management of their past.



*"...In order to live and to think, to design, to build, and to develop, we wrestle with the past; we will to overcome the culturally built world that we unavoidably inhabit" ( Mugerauer 1994 : 14 ).*

The sense of identity and the characteristics of human beings are formed by the experience of the past. It is stated that the past is integral to our sense of identity. An ability to recall and identify with one's past gives one's existence meaning, purpose, and value ( Lowenthal 1990 : 41 ). The realization of our existence is the condition of man for living in this world. Men realize their existence and feel 'at home' with their environment by interpreting symbols and understand their meanings by using their recollections.

In Victorian England, where several streams of thinking about conservation emerged, there was a realization of a new meaning of the past. At that time, industrialization and the invention of new technologies had changed the cultural and physical landscape at a dramatic pace. The juxtaposition of the new industrial and commercial buildings with the old townscape and medieval ruins was commonplace in most English towns. The Victorians had to cope with the changes not only to their built environment but also to their social and cultural values. Therefore, the past and history were seen as a device to provide the sense of place and identity. It has been suggested that :

*" The exploration of the histories of artifacts, buildings, families, and communities helped individuals...deal with the dominion of change by deepening their sense of place and orientation and fabricating a sense of historic continuity" ( Dellheim 1982 : 57 ).*

### **5.1 Eastern Historical Concept**

There is a link between the concept of time and historical consciousness. It is suggested that the east did not grasp the concept of time quantitatively, for instance they rarely wrote historical books with accurate dates ( Nakamura 1971 : 81 ). Eastern history is not the product of historical science but rather the work of art or religious document. The writing of Buddhist Books of Ordination is cited as an example of nonhistorical thinking. The new *patimok* rules were written after the death of the Buddha in order to meet changing social conditions. These rules were added as the supplement to the *patimok* but were claimed to have the authority of the Buddha's own teaching. It is concluded that historical evidence was ignored because :

*" Their concern for the proper observance of the precepts and of the rites preceded and was strong than their regard for historical accuracy" ( Nakamura 1971 : 146 ).*

No matter how the past was recorded, it has been used to serve various purposes. It is suggested that there are two uses of the past by the Thai people: the past as sanction



and as destiny ( Tambiah 1977 : 528 ). The past in the former case is used as the 'legitimator of the present'. Tambiah suggests that in this case the past is seen as living present. We can see several examples throughout history. History has been used by ancient kings and modern governments to justify their activities and strengthen their power.

When the king of Ayutthaya adopted the God-king concept, historical traditions based on Buddhism and Brahmanism as well as architecture were revived and adopted. King Prasatthong was a usurper of the throne. During his reign several art and architectural works were produced that were based on the revival of ancient tradition in order to legitimize the king's position as a God-king as well as a Dhammaraja. The king built several Buddha images decorated with imperial costume. It is suggested that the king wanted to revive the Mahayana Buddhist concept of a 'Chakravarti' or Buddhist emperor which was the continuous tradition practised by the later kings until Bangkok period (Vallibhotama 1981 : 44). He also built a summer palace which was planned after the model of Hindu-Khmer architecture. The planning represented the Sumeru Mountain which is the centre of the universe according to Hindu concepts. Again, the king had himself created the universe where he was represented as the God in the same way as the ancient Khmer king before him.

We can see that the revival of the past in history is also the revival of ideologies in order to create a new tradition as well as art and architecture. However, at present, the use of the past as the legitimator of the present is not only by the continuity of ideologies but also the use of the relics of the past. The reason for using the past to serve the present has also changed. The political power of kings and the state are not as important as economic reasons.

## **5.2 Western Concepts of Time and History**

Time for an archaic man could be divided into two types, the historical time which man experiences in every day life and the sacred time which is represented by myth and rituals. The difference between the two is the quality of the experience. While man experiences the changes of individual and chronological time, sacred time cannot be measured because it transcends the profanity of the human condition and has no duration (Eliade 1961 : 58). The division of time into sacred and profane is the fundamental concept of every religion. Man found that, apart from the simple rhythms



of nature and the human body, there is also the far greater rhythm of the universe that is regulated by a transcendental power.

In the west where the Christian faith is dominant, the concept of time and the value of the past, present, and future derived from two significant world orders: the Greek and the Hebrew. For the ancient Greek, time is regarded as the 'highest principle of order'. For ancient Greek philosophers, time gave unity and rhythm to the chaotic and formlessness of nature that was regulated entirely by sensation and appetite ( Dillstone 1955 : 80 ). Time was also seen as the 'moving likeness of eternity' which was created by the Supreme Power as explained as follows:

*" When the father who had begotten the world saw it set in motion and alive, he rejoiced and being well pleased he took thought to make it yet more like its pattern. So, as the pattern is the Living Being that is for ever existent, he sought to make this universe also like it, so far as might be, in that respect. Now the nature of that Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing. But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and at the same time that he ordered the Heaven, he made, of eternity that abides in unity, and everlasting likeness moving according to number that to which we have given the name Time" ( Timaeus cited in Dillstone 1955 : 80 ).*

Time was also like with motion. Aristotle defines time as 'number of movement in respect of the before and after'.

In the Hebrew tradition, time is not only continuous rhythm but punctuated with significant moments. A moment in time is seen as 'victory of order over chaos', of the emergence of a cosmos out of a primal formlessness, of the imposition of form upon material which is without form and space. Particular moments of time possess particular quality of experiences either good or bad. The important events in time are represented by important events such as festivals and rituals. The idea of significant events as the markers of time leads to an interest in the past in its relationship to the present. This is because events can repeatedly happen again. Man has responsibility to keep in mind the great events of the past, to recall, celebrate, and look for its recurrence ( Dillstone 1955 : 86 ). According to this idea, history become an important symbol of time. It signifies that time is not a monotonous continuity but rather a context where outstanding events happen and through which meaning of life is identified.

The metaphysical doctrine constitutes the principle to which other subject matters can be referred. It forms the world-view of the west towards its past, present, and future. The significance of history and of values given to the past, therefore, are different from



the eastern ones which refer to another set of doctrines.

### **5.3 Eastern Concept of Time**

There are two divisions of time according to Buddhism: historical time and cosmic time. Both of them are superimposed. As in many archaic societies the symbolism of cosmic time was represented by myth. The myth of time in ancient India predated Buddhism and can be attributed to the religious approach to the subject of time. It is explained in the Indian myth of time that cosmic time comprises cycles. There are periods of creation and destruction of the universe within these cycles. The unit of measurement of the smallest cycle is the 'yuga' or the 'age'. Each is preceded by a 'dawn' and followed by a 'dusk'. There are four yugas that comprise one complete cycle, a 'mahayuga'. Each of the yugas is different in duration as well as the life span of the human being in the yuga. At the end of a mahayuga, there is a dissolution or 'pralaya' after which another yuga starts again. The creation, destruction, and re-creation go on to the thousandth cycle where, at the end of the cycle, a great dissolution, 'mahapralaya', occurs. The cycle of re-creation is repeated again. As the present Dalai Lama suggests, Buddhists do not believe in one Big Bang, they believe in many Big Bangs (Lopez 1995 : 14).

In Buddhism, time is reversible. The enlightenment of the Buddha is the indication of breaking out of samsara or out of the wheel of existence. It is interpreted that in this way, the Buddha was transcendent both cosmic space and cyclic time (Eliade 1961 : 78). The idea of reversible time can be seen in Thai history. In the year 1638, King Prasatthong of Ayutthaya (reign 1629-1659) abolished the Siamese Lesser Era (the Chulasakaraj). Because that year was the year 1000 which, according to the Buddhist legend of time, coincided with the beginning of the Kaliyuga, an inauspicious and evil age. Every Buddhist citizen of Ayutthaya knew of the disastrous events that were bound to happen according to what had been written in the scriptures. The king, as the protector of the kingdom, and his subject, organized major religious rituals both Brahmanistic and Buddhist to abolish the old era and start the new one. The change of era not only raised the morale of the people but also fortified the power and the symbol of the king as Dhammaraja and as a God-king who transcended the cycle of time.

The concept of cyclical or reversible time is often referred to as an explanation of the difference between eastern and western ideology. Western linear perception of time emphasises the temporal qualities of objects and events. In the case of historic



buildings, the fabric of the architecture is seen as important. By contrast, the eastern concept of cyclical time venerates the conception of the place rather than the material object that is built on it ( Menon 1994 : 39 ). This assumption is developed not only from the concept of reversible time but also the use of the concept of time in explaining the other characteristics of objects and events.

## **6 Concept of Time and the Impermanence of Existence**

It can be argued that we live in historical time and make our judgment on the nature of the existing world by our historical experience. But the experience that form our world-view is based on our cultural and religious history. The concept of cosmic time is the fundamental principle for the Buddhist world-view towards the existence of all composite things as well as their change and their continuity.

When we come to consider cosmic time again, we will find that the duration of the cosmic time can be measured. However, when considered in terms of historical time, it is vast and relatively incalculable. The length of cosmic time, according to Indian mythology, is explained as follows:

*" The 12,000 years of one mahayuga has been counted as 'divine years' of 360 years each, which gives a total of 4,320,000 years for a single cosmic cycle. A thousand of such mahayugas constitute one kalpa ( or "form" ); 14 kalpas make up one manvantara...One kalpa is equal to one day in the life of Brahma, and other kalpa to one night. A hundred of these 'years' of Brahma, say 311 thousand billion human years, make up the life the god. But even this considerable length of Brahma's life does not exhaust the whole of Time, for the gods are not eternal, and the cosmic creations and destruction go on without end" ( Eliade 1961 : 65 ).*

From this explanation, it can be concluded that this world is illusory and lacks reality because of its limited duration when compared to cosmic time. The object that we believe to exist in fact is an illusion or *maya* in the sense that it will not exist in the next ten thousand years.

The non-existence of form or the regarding of form as illusion is the principle of Buddhist philosophy. A characteristic of existence is 'anicca' or impermanence. Impermanency of things that have become or arisen, the meaning is that these things never persist in the same way, but that they are vanishing and dissolving from moment to moment (Visuddhimagga cited in Ling 1973 : 111). Form and perception of form are regarded as having illusory quality. It is explained in a scripture that :

*" Form should be seen as a mass of foam, because easily crushed; feeling as a water bubble, because pleasurable only for a moment; perception as a mirage, because delusive;*



*volitions as like the trunk of the plantain tree , because without substance; consciousness as a mock show, because deceptive" (Buddhist scripture trans by Conze 1959 : 188-189).*

All form of life, according to the Buddha, possesses three common characteristics : impermanence, suffering, and an absence of soul. The law of change applies to all compounded things, including man-made objects and ideas. Change occurs "...from a granite cathedral to a china vase, from a code of laws to an empire, all things rise to their zenith, and then, however slowly, decay towards the inevitable end" ( Humphreys 1990 : 81 ).

Since everything in the universe, including the gods, is in a state of flux, resistance to the cosmic flux and craving for permanence where permanence could not be found, leads to the inevitability of sorrow or suffering. This principle of Buddhism forms an important part of a Buddhist's character and his view towards the nature of the world.

Architecture, the same as for any other existence, is impermanent, especially when they are built of less permanent material such as timber. The decay of the material is normally seen as part of the natural process of a life cycle. Therefore, the repairing of a building often involves the replacement of deteriorated parts with new ones.

## **7 Identity and Continuity of Existence**

It has been stated that the objective of western conservation is emphasis on the fabric of architecture while in the east the spirit of the place is considered to be more important. How did this claim become apparent and is the conservation of architectural spirit justified? To answer this we must go back to the metaphysical doctrine which forms the basis of the Buddhist world-view.

In one respect, Buddhism is a 'theory of existence'. Buddhism discourages the concept of the individual and regards the boundaries between one so-called 'individual' and others as artificial ( Ling 1973 : 120 ). The nature of the 'individual' is continuously changing with the passage of time, but possesses an illusory unity through the continuity of the body. This concept is illustrated in Milindapanha, a Pali text recording the conversation between a Bactrian king, Milinda, and Nagasena, a Buddhist monk. A question was asked by the king to which the explanation for the continuity of identity was given by Nagasena:

*" A man was born does he remain the same being or become another"*

*" He neither remains the same or becomes another, your Majesty"*



Then Nagasena compared the identity of an individual as the flame of a lamp. The flame that burns at the beginning of the night is not the same as the one at the end. However, it is the same lamp that gives light all through the night. Similarly, the continuity of phenomena is kept up. " One comes into existence, another passes away and the sequence runs continuously without self-conscious existence, neither the same nor yet another" (Milindapanha trans. by De Bary 1960 : 108-109). At every instant the old man vanishes, and a new man, caused by the first, comes into being. Even though this analogy is meant to explain the identity of a person, the rebirth and the continuous link of the karma, it can also illustrate the continuously changing substance while the identity of the form still retained.

The identity of an object comprises not the physical appearance which is regarded as impermanent but the spirit or the essence of it. The care of ancient monuments in eastern countries indicates this belief. In China where Confucianism remains unshakable, the focus is on the genius loci, the spirit of the place, rather than on the details of the architecture (Wai 1989 : 3-8). In the case of sacred architecture where a building is the representation of a god's dwelling, the existence of the deity is far more important than the fabric of the architecture. It is mentioned that in Tibetan monasteries where every sacred room built to house a different deity, underwent the process of demolition and re-construction most of the time. If there is a sign indicates that the deity has left the dwelling place, for instance if cracks appeared on the walls, the structure was demolished and re-built again on the same site ( Khosla 1975 : 81 ). The Shinto tradition of rebuilding shrine complexes at regular intervals still prevails in Japan. This special custom comes from the desire of the Japanese periodically to revitalize the deity. The reconstruction of a shrine is, in a sense, parallel to the agricultural cycle of growth from seed to harvest to renewal in the following spring ( Ito cited in Larsen 1988 : 16 ).

The characteristics of existence according to Buddhism form a basis for Buddhist world-view that, in turn, constitutes the character of Thai Buddhists and their culture. As we have seen in the previous chapter that Buddhist monasteries are subjected to extensive and continuous repair. The undurable nature of building materials has been accepted as a part of the life of a building. Everything, mental and physical, has a beginning and an end, that arises and passes away. The contemplation of the way of things are, of the law of nature, together with the act of devotion to the Lord Buddha result in the attitude towards the monastic architecture which emphasises on restoration rather than



preservation of architectural fabric and its archaeological, historical, or authentic values. In the present situation, there are a number of factors that make the traditional way of caring for monuments acceptable only to a certain extent. While the Buddhists attitude towards monastic architecture still prevails, there are problems related to the technical aspects of conservation such as the lack of traditional craftsmen, the introduction of new building materials and construction method, and the change within monasteries on the basis of economic development. These problems lead to the loss of original historic fabric. The need for conservation of historical value which had never been realized became an important criterion in caring for monuments.

### **8 Concept of Authenticity**

The most controversial aspect of conservation philosophy is the determination of authenticity of a historic fabric or place. This problem is unavoidable since a building or place must undergo a process of repairing which leads to changes of material or structure. Throughout the history of conservation philosophy, we can see the change of attitude towards the integrity of historic fabric and what is considered to be the main criterion for judging the authenticity of historic buildings. The authenticity of a fabric has been interpreted into different definitions and these vary according to the propagators.

The criterion for authenticity is, in a way, justified by the notion of what the past should be, as conceived by the people of that particular period. The notion of the past can be selective, since human beings have a tendency to choose and remember particular elements of the past that are relevant to them and reassure their present and future. Certain periods, styles, or relics are considered to be better interpretations of the past than others. It is suggested that when Victorian architects restored medieval churches they reaffirmed ties with the past and made their churches more authentic by improving them. The fact that modern materials were used to replace the original ones did not falsify the medieval buildings but "...it lent them the higher truth than their builders had realized" ( Lowenthal 1992 : 88 ). Authenticity cannot be defined and is always difficult to achieve. It is a quality that is determined by the need of human to certify the origins, purposes, and creators of our past inheritance.

Authenticity, it is suggested, can be the outcome of three fidelities: to original objects and materials, to original contexts, and to original aims ( Lowenthal 1992 : 82 ). However, if one aspect of authenticity is achieved, the others tend to be rendered less effective.



In spite of contradiction, authenticity is essential and must be respected in every conservation activity. We will examine the concept of authenticity within the three types of fidelity, particularly in relation to architecture and its conservation.

### **8.1 Material Authenticity**

It is obvious that in repairing historic monuments, the same kind of material must be used. The original materials should be preserved by sound maintenance, so that their uses can be prolonged as much as possible. In the case of wooden architecture, such as Thai monasteries, the survival of the original materials is a rare chance. The time span for wooden structure is relatively short. The structural and decorative elements have always been replaced through time. The repairing by replacing a part of the structure is common in countries of timber tradition. In Japan, the attempt to retain the authenticity of a timber structure goes as far as the idea that the replaced timber should not only be of the same wood but also possess the same structural and aesthetic quality. The Japanese sometimes try to obtain new timber with the same natural defects as the old and decayed one ( Larsen n.d:chapter 3, p.8).

Lowenthal writes about the case of the ship of Theseus to illustrate the dilemma concerning material authenticity. The old ship was restored to sea-worthiness where each board was replaced by a new one until the entire ship was refurbished. At the same time, each of the old boards from the original ship was put into a new frame. Then, which of the boats can be considered original? It is suggested that, in this case, authenticity consists in 'identity' as a boat rather than a collection of old planks and that each new plank became a part of the old ship while the old ones were "...parts of a new ship just coming in to being. Serving as parts of Theseus's original ship was only a temporary phase in the old planks' life time career" ( Lowenthal 1992 : 82-83 ).

In this case, object identity received stronger consideration than material authenticity. But how far can this consideration go, and could it be justified in every case? Should material authenticity be sacrificed for other better causes? In Bergen, Norway, a row of eighteenth century houses were burnt down. The Norwegian conservators decided to rebuild them in order to retain the integrity of the whole context. But instead of timber, concrete was used for the structure of the house and was covered with timber weather-boards. The authenticity of material and structure has gone completely. The argument for the concrete structure is that it is fire-safe. The intervention is justified because



"...safely handing down the monument to the next generation is the main goal. Hopefully, even Ruskin would have agreed with this" ( Tschudi-Madsen 1985 : 21 ).

Object identity cannot always overcome the authenticity of material, particularly in the case where the material plays a special role in the architectural fabric. In Thai monastic architecture, a *cho-fa*, a roof decoration, forms a finial to the roof structure. Its form and meaning are derived not only from the functional necessity of wooden structure but also from fundamental religious beliefs. Cho-fa is made from a large piece of hard wood which is sculpted into a delicate abstract form symbolizing a Naga, a mythical serpent. The sculpted wood is then coated with layers of lacquer from natural resin, to form a protective coat and a base for gold-gilding. Cho-fa is considered to be the most important decorative element in the whole building. A religious ritual as well as secular celebrations are carried out when the principle cho-fa is installed into its place. Traditional craftsmen took pride in the making of the cho-fa, since it needs skills and experiences to achieve a beautiful and well-proportioned element.

Cho-fa is one of the elements that is prone to deterioration unnoticed, since its location is not easily accessible. When the damage becomes apparent, it is always too late to repair it. It becomes almost an acceptable way of repairing nowadays that the damaged element is replaced by a new one made from modern materials such as concrete or fibreglass. Since the moulding process is easy to execute, in conjunction with the soaring price of timber, the use of cho-fa made from new materials is economically advantageous. However, to sacrifice the authenticity of material for the sake of economic only is not justifiable. The loss is not only in the authenticity but also the demeaning of the original craftsmanship, the development of the timber tradition, and the symbolic representation of the element. In this case, form and financial benefit cannot overrule the material authenticity.

## **8.2 Authenticity of the Aims**

In art, the aims refer to the aims of the artists who created the original work of art. In the case of historic monuments it can be the design intentions. It is mentioned in the Guidelines of World Cultural Heritage Sites that in the case of architecture constructed with vulnerable materials, the same types of materials and traditional skills should be used for the restoration of the decayed parts. This is because "...the preservation of the design intentions and details is just as important as the preservation of original material"



(Feilden & Jokilehto 1993 : 71).

At the end of 1988 , a major restoration was carried out on the four main stupas of Wat Po. During the intervention, valuable art objects, Buddhist scriptures, and Buddha images were found encased in two of the stupas. The finds were recorded by the Department of Fine Arts who considered that they should be kept in a safe place and displayed to the public. Since Wat Po is one of the important royal monasteries, the report of the finding was sent to the king whom the Department also asked for advice on how the finds should be treated.

It is an ancient tradition that objects of symbolic value are installed within a stupa. The scriptures (the Tri pitaka), found at Wat Po were inscribed on sheets of gold. They are a representation of the Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha. Therefore, the stupas were intended to be not only a Thatu Chetiya but also a Dhamma Chetiya. The advice from the king illustrates the importance of conserving the original intention of the structure. The Department was advised to keep all the finds in the monastery museum. Replicas of the art objects and the scriptures would be made and reinstated in the stupas in order that the restored stupas would retain their original symbolic function as both Thatu Chetiya and Dhamma Chetiya.

The deterioration of materials as a result of natural environmental processes can deprive a building of its original intention. An intention of a Buddhist temple is the transference of the heavenly world to the earth. The Buddhavas is the model of cosmology where an ubosot and a vihara represent the sacred realms where man and the transcendental power of the Buddha can meet. This concept is clearly represented in the planning and the highly ornate character of the buildings in the Buddhavas area. The gables and pediments of an ubosot and vihara are decorated with reliefs, covered in paint, gilding, or mirror tiles. Window shutters and doors may be carved in relief and finished with gold leaf, or inset with mother of pearl. The effect of the transcendental realm is achieved by natural light reflected on the glittering surfaces as well as the high contrast of colours and textures under the tropical sky. When we look at a Buddhist temple, we not only appreciate its space, form, and proportion but also the decorative elements that constitute the texture and colour of the architectural fabric. Flaking gold, dull coloured glass, when the damage to the materials has gone beyond the point that they are no longer a part of the 'patina of age', the replacement with the same materials and equally



high workmanship can be considered justified.

## **9 Aesthetic In Architecture**

Buddhist principles, which regard life as suffering and emphasise the detachment of life from the delights of senses in order to extinct desire, may seem pessimistic and gloomy to some people. However, when we experience Buddhist art and architecture, we find that they express these characters. Aesthetic quality of things were considered important by the Buddha. A conversation between the Buddha and Ananda, his disciple, is mentioned in Samyutta Nikaya:

*" Ananda said to the Exalted One, The half of the holy life, Lord, is friendship with the lovely, association with the lovely, intimacy with the lovely." Said the Exalted One, 'Say not so, Ananda; it is the whole, not the half of the holy life. of a monk who has friendship, companionship, intimacy with the lovely, this is to be expected, that he will develop the aryan Eightfold Path, make much of it " (Samyutta Nikaya ).*

The 'lovely' can be referred to in various aspects, such as the appreciation of art, of colour and form as well as poetry. Canonical Pali books such as the Dhammapada and Thera Gatha consist of verses explaining the beauty of nature. It can be said that for Buddhists, the appreciation of the aesthetic is as important as the spiritual quest. This appreciation does not indicate an attachment to the pleasure of perishable form, but the realization of abstract beauty as an expression of the Reality which one seeks in Enlightenment. It has been suggested that:

*" The fool regards the outward form as attractive in itself; the Buddhist controls the desires of the senses while using the food provided by them to achieve the beauty which those form enshrine. As the individual pupil learns through the senses to eschew the form in favour of the life within, so the teacher uses the beauty of the world to teach the world to Enlightenment " ( Humphreys 1990 : 206 ).*

Thus, Buddhist architecture must not only symbolize the Buddhist universe but also possess aesthetic quality that enable man to realize the Truth and the Middle Way where attachment to passions and the senses is at one end and self-mortification, which is equally unworthy, at the other.

Aesthetics in monastic architecture can be achieved through the recognition of the value of the historic building as well as through good design either through the adaptation of an old structure or a new creation. There are many examples in various monasteries through out the country where the historic fabrics has been destroyed in favour of new functions or new structures of inferior quality, both in term of the aesthetic and symbolic value. It is very important for responsible bodies to realize the necessity of quality design and craftsmanship and they must not let economic concerns overrule the



importance of aesthetic consideration.

### **10 Ethics in conservation of Sacred Images**

Buddha images are one of the most important elements in a Buddhist monastery. Even though a monastery may have one or two principal images enshrined in the ubosot or vihara, hundreds of lesser images can be found in a monastic complex. Images are architectural components as well as sacred deities to be venerated. Buddha images constitute a major part of Thai sculpture. They are also an art-form that is sought after by antique collectors and Buddhists alike. Despite Thailand being a Buddhist country, it is unfortunate that many Buddha images are damaged as a result of looting and vandalism. Monasteries in remote areas, especially the ruined ones, are susceptible to treasure hunters. Small images are stolen while the larger ones or the immovable stucco reliefs have their heads or hands removed. It is always a deplorable sight for ordinary Buddhists to see sacred and much venerated images in this condition.

Questions arise to whether one should restore damaged images to their original form. The general Buddhist population tend to favour restoration. An image of the Buddha is consecrated material representing the Lord Buddha. Even in a dilapidated state, it still retains its full sacred potency. However, Buddhists still want to see the image in a flawless condition that they consider appropriate for being a symbol of the Buddha.

Buddha images, similar to architecture, have been developed through time and reflect the particular style of different period. Even though, the images of every periods convey the same characteristic of Maha Purusa (the Great Person), they are different in details such as the proportion of the body, details of faces, hands, and robes. Difference in material and technique for constructing images can also signify the period and the School of art in which they belong. For historians and archaeologists, Buddha images are important evidence that can explain the history of the site as well as the development or influences over that particular period. It is inevitable that restoration of these images has been opposed by most academics who see restoration as the destruction of historical evidence.

Buddha images, as other art-forms, represent the spirit of the period. Traditional artists do not imitate previous styles, they create different interpretations of the 'Great Person' using their own imagination within their social and cultural context. Coomaraswamy



writes that the practice of traditional art, is not a secular activity but a metaphysical rite.

*" The artist is first of all required to remove himself from human to celestial levels of appreciation; at this level and in a state of unification, no longer having in view anything external to himself, he sees and realizes, that is to say becomes, what he is afterwards to represent in wrought material " (Coomaraswamy 1977 : 165).*

Restoration of a Buddha image which was the creation of the spirit of a particular artist, is, therefore, a new interpretation by a contemporary and cannot be a re-creation of the original. As John Ruskin states in 'Seven Lamps of Architecture' that:

*" It is impossible, as impossible to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture...that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and it is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts " ( Ruskin 1890 : 354 ).*

From 1956 onwards, several major images in ruined monasteries of Sukothai were restored by local craftsmen under the supervision of the Department of Fine Arts. Some were successfully restored and now are accepted as important pieces of art and a part of the historic fabric. The general Buddhist population does not only consider images as historical evidence but also appreciates and experiences them as objects that are capable of providing aesthetic pleasure as well as symbolizing the spirit of the Buddha. Examples at Sukothai illustrate a successful story of image-restoration. However, there are countless cases of less fortunate situations where images were restored by unskilled craftsmen and have lost both historical and aesthetic worth. As long as there is not an artist who can appreciate the integrity of the work and understand its symbolic and spiritual qualities, it is better to conserve the work as found, and apply preventive measures to safeguard it from further deterioration.

## **11 Conclusion**

*" All things are preceded by mind, governed by mind and are the creation of the mind " (The Dhammapada ).*

Buddhism teaches that things are created by 'mind' rather than by the mind perceiving existing things. Buddhist perception is concerned with interpreting the value of a thing rather than describing it as fact. This ideology results in the difference between Buddhist and western art which often depicts the realistic and the materialistic. Buddha image is the best example of the Buddhist art. An artist creates an image to be a representation of a super-human and supernatural iconography. The image is not a portrait but a symbol of 'the Great Person' in a human form, while western artists, such as Greeks, use the artistic idea of human form to express the characteristic of their gods. Images of the Buddha were made because there was a need to represent the Buddha, not because



there was a demand for 'art' (Coomaraswamy 1977 : 164).

Buddhist ideology also expresses an attitude towards that 'place', where the spiritual experience occurs is more important than the material representation of the place. However, as explained in the previous chapter, the spirit of the place is felt both through physical reality of the architecture and the spiritual quality of the place. It is necessary to maintain the balance between the material and the spiritual elements, since they depend upon each other as two sides of the same coin.

Even though traditional restoration is based on Buddhist ideology, we cannot justify the act of restoration without regarding historical value of buildings and images as evidence of past civilizations. Traditional restoration and development of styles through the restoring and re-building, is no longer possible in the present situation. There were little changes in material, building technology and architectural style from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Traditional construction techniques were practised until the introduction of modern technology; due to these changes, in the past three decades, we have seen the loss of many historical structures. Thus, before any intervention in conservation is undertaken a monument should undergo evaluation of both its cultural and socio-economic value. These values that determine the spirit of the place and the essence of the art object should be considered the most important to maintain.



**CHAPTER 6**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR**  
**THE PRACTICAL APPROACH**



# *Recommendations for the Practical Approach*

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### **1 Introduction**

The conservation of cultural heritage in Thailand faces not just the philosophical difference between eastern and western approaches, but the practical side of the activity also needs some adjustment in order to achieve successful results. When the need for conserving the national heritage was recognized and conservation policy was established on western models, problems concerning practical aspects such as organization and conservation methodology became apparent. Today the nature of conservation activity ranges from the professional and technical interest concerning materials, methods, and craftsmanship to its response to political issues and to society as a whole. Problems concerning these aspects are addressed, and recommendations are proposed in this chapter. The recommendations are an attempt at a symbiosis of eastern tradition and the western practice which, hopefully, can provide a promising solution suitable for the Thai context as well as respecting the universal values of the cultural heritage.

### **2 Organizations**

#### **2.1 The administration of the Department of Fine Arts**

At present, the Department of Fine Arts is the only organization which has direct responsibility over historic monuments in Thailand. It has an administrative role as well as carrying out the practical side of conservation. The Department is not only responsible for the care of historic monuments but also promotes other branches of traditional art and craft. It also administers the National Museums all over the country. When the government decided that culture, tradition, and historic monuments could be combined into one entity, the so called 'national heritage', the Department had to take on government policy in promoting and safeguarding the heritage. The effectiveness of the organization has diminished because the range of duties has grown while the staff remain the same. Safeguarding of historic monuments is only one duty in the whole area of heritage management.

The Archaeology Division and the Architectural Division are the two offices in the Department that have direct responsibility for caring for historic monuments and sites. Even though the Archaeology Division has nine small sub-divisions scattered throughout



the country, these subdivisions are not self-sufficient enough to carry out the work by themselves effectively. Ideally, each sub-division should consist of personnel of various disciplines, such as architects, archaeologists, engineers, historians, and technicians who can take on responsibility for the whole conservation process. However, at present, most of the sub-divisions comprise only archaeologists and a few technicians, which does not enable the sub-division to carry out the work effectively. The lack of architects in the sub-divisions also prevents them from taking on the repairing of living monasteries. The decision-making is done by the central office in the capital, while the sub-divisions act as agents to supervise the works within their responsible areas.

Conservation works in many countries are done under the supervision of local government. In Thailand, local governments do not have any role in caring for the historic monuments in their region. The Department of Fine Arts tries to involve other regional governmental bodies in the care of historic monuments. However, this involvement is restricted to the high level administrators such as the governor of the province and the head of the district. Their roles are also confined to the issuing of policies. They sit in committees which consist of other officers from the Department of Fine Arts. In terms of administration, local governments are under the Ministry of Interior Affairs while the Department of Fine Arts is under the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the possibility of having local government involvement in the conservation duty within its region is not possible in terms of administration. The idea of decentralization of the Department of Fine Arts is more practicable through its existing sub-divisions.

The Department categorizes the historic monuments in its care into two groups. The first one is called 'dead monuments' which are monuments that are no longer in use and conserved as archaeological remains. These include ruined monasteries as well as ancient cities. The other category is the 'living monuments' which are monuments that have either been continuously serving original functions or have taken on new ones. Most Buddhist monasteries are included in this category. The responsibility for these monuments is divided between two divisions within the Department of Fine Arts. While the Archaeology Division looks after the 'dead' ones, the 'living' ones are cared by the Architecture Division.

There are always conflicts between the two Divisions, since each of them works independently and carries out their works using different philosophical approaches. It



can be said that there are no agreed principles or codes of practice that can be used as a common approach towards the care of monuments and sites. Several conservation concepts and practices have been tried out, but often without a clear understanding of the value of the monuments. The categorization of the monuments into 'dead and 'living' also does not help, because a large number of monuments cannot be strictly classified as one or the other; as in the case of many ancient monasteries where there often are juxtapositions of ruined structures and complete and functioning ones.

Apart from the difference in the philosophical approach, both Divisions have little collaboration in practice. Both have a duty to survey and record historic buildings prior to conservation but neither has been able to carry out this task effectively due to the lack of personnel. The Archaeology Division consists mainly of archaeologists while the Architecture Division employs only architects. Since the care of ancient monuments, either 'living' or 'dead', is a multi-disciplinary task, it is strongly advised that the collaboration between the two Divisions should be created. This may be possible by combining the Divisions and reorganizing them in to a more unified body, sharing the personnel who have the cross section of knowledge and experiences as well as facilities and equipments.

## **2.2 The Department of Religious Affairs**

The Krom Dharmmakarn or Department of Church Administration was an early organization established in the reign of King Trilok (1448-1488). It had responsibility for Sangha Affairs and was empowered to supervise the behaviour of monks throughout the country. Attached to the Department was a special ecclesiastical court whose responsibility was to judge any serious crime committed by monks. This system remained in force until the early Bangkok period.

Rama I, the first king of the Bangkok period, issued a series of law on Sangha activities in order to tighten control over the Sangha. These laws laid down guidelines for the protection of religion from deterioration and determined the responsibilities of civil and ecclesiastical officials, and penalties for monks and laymen who damaged the faith and the prestige of the Sangha. Krom Darmmakarn was promoted to ministerial status in the late nineteenth century when Rama V modernized his administrative system. The Department was responsible for not only religious affairs but also education in the country. There have been several reorganizations within the ministry since the revolution



in 1932 which brought about an end to absolute monarchy and replaced it with the western institution of constitutional government. Krom Dharmmakarn was changed to the Department of Religious Affairs under the governmental body of the Ministry of Education.

At present the Department is directly responsible for controlling and supervising the Sangha. It also acts as the secretariat office for the Council of the Elders (Mahathera Samakom). After the revolution, the change of administrative structures brought about the shift of power over the Sangha from the king to the central government. The Department that used to act as the agency of the king on Sangha affairs now acts as the link between the government and the administrative body of the Sangha.

The Department of Religious Affairs is divided into seven divisions. It is the Division of Ecclesiastical Properties that has a responsibility for managing the Sangha's and individual monastery properties as well as making decisions on and controlling the economic transactions of these properties. The Sangha Act 1962 divided the ecclesiastical properties into two types: the central Sangha's property which belongs to the Sangha as a whole, and individual monastery property which is owned and managed by each monastery itself. It is property of the former category that is the responsibility of the department. One important expenditure from the revenues generated by the properties is for promoting Buddhism and supporting the Sangha, for instance, the subsidy given to the Sangha universities, and funding a printing house for printing of religious literature.

### **2.3 The Sangha and Monastery Committee**

The Sangha Act 1962 gave an abbot the power to administer his monastic property within the approval of the Department of Religious Affairs and Council of the Elders. A monastery, according to the Sangha Act, has a complete legal status. One of the roles of an abbot, apart from ecclesiastical and pastoral works, is to care for and maintain his monastic fabric and its land to his best ability. The Sangha Act gives the abbot authority to administer his own monastic affairs and supervise the monks and novices in his monastery. It can be said that the condition of a monastery and the well-being of the Sangha rely mainly on the ability of the abbot.

At present, the funding for the care of monastery fabric comes mainly from donations.



This is not only in the case of smaller and more remote monasteries: royal monasteries and monasteries of regional importance are heavily dependent on donations from devotees. Government funding is rare and often inadequate. Therefore, the major and fundamental responsibility for an abbot is to find patrons to support his monastery.

The days when the kings were the sole supporters of the Sangha have long gone. Even though royal monasteries still enjoy some privileges from being under the royal patronage, the support they get in terms of financial aid is still not enough. Monasteries generally rely on the generosity of several patrons or organizations whose connections were made through the abbot or senior monks in each monastery. A "popular " or well-respected monk always attracts followers who, with their desire to make merit, bring various kinds of donations such as money, man-power, food and gifts. The money and gifts donated to an individual monk are considered to belong to the whole monastic community. Contrary to the Vinaya rules and incompatible with Buddhist orthodoxy, in that monks should not have personal possessions, some money from donations is kept as the monks' own property. However, this money is usually used in developing monasteries and their surrounded communities rather than on personal matters.

Most of the donated money is spent on restoring monastery fabric and constructing new buildings or other necessary facilities. There are a number of monks who regard the development of mind and material as equally important. These "development monks" contribute the money for or initiate development projects which they think will benefit the community such as building schools, bridges, and roads as well as new dwellings, ubosots, or viharas for the Sangha.

In large monasteries where there is a large number of monks, the administration of the Sangha is organized in a similar manner to a governmental administrative system. At Wat Po, monks are divided into four main groups (Kana) according to the location of their dwellings. Each group is governed by a senior monk who answers to the abbot. Within the group, there are several sub-groups each of which is supervised by a monk of less seniority. These sub-groups are twice divided down to the final units which are individual dwellings of each monk. It is within the power of the abbot to choose the responsible senior monks who subsequently choose their respective subsidiaries.

The division of monks into groups is not only for easy administration but also for the



effectiveness in caring for the Sanghavas. The system was introduced by king Rama V in 1907 as an attempt to combat the unhygienic conditions in the monastery. During that year several monks and novices suffered from plague and other contagious diseases. The re-organization of the monastery was ordered by the king with the intention to appoint responsible bodies to look after the monastery fabric and its surroundings. A decree issued that year mentions the duty of each monk to care for his own dwelling and the surrounding area. The division of the Sangha has prevailed until present day even though the sanitation problem no longer exists. The levels of administration which are the result of the division are still used and the responsibility of a monk for his own dwelling unit is still strictly followed.

In the case of large monasteries such as Wat Po, the duty of care for other monastery fabric apart from the dwelling rests directly on the abbot and his deputy. There can be several deputy abbots who are responsible for different appointed tasks. There is always one of them who is appointed to look after the whole monastery fabric. The complication of repairing and restoration in a large monastery make the work of the abbot and his deputy more involved than carrying out a day to day repair. The monks have to work in collaboration with governmental bodies such as the Fine Arts Department and the Department of Religious Affairs as well as the construction contractors who carry out the works. In smaller monasteries, the work of the abbots is not less, though there are smaller number of monks and novices under their care and the monasteries might be smaller in size. The abbot still has a duty to administer the monastic affairs in every aspect in the same way as his counterparts in the greater monasteries.

#### *Monastic Committee*

In leaving secular life to enter the Sangha community, a monk has to renounce his wealth and private property. In order to live the life of a world renouncer, Theravadin monks rely entirely on the lay people. It is mentioned in Vinaya that monks were forbidden to accept a gift of money, gold or silver, or to engage in trading. Because "...money symbolized the whole range of material values" (Wijayarattana 1990: 88). During the time of the Buddha, monks were able to appoint themselves a lay-helper to provide for them according to their needs especially in the matter of money. Many lay-followers who wanted to provide a gift of money to the Sangha, deposited the money with the lay-helper. The monks could accept things prepared by the helper with the money that the lay-followers had entrusted him. This tradition has continued through the



history of every Buddhist country.

The development of the economy in Thailand during the reign of King Rama V had a great effect on monasteries in several ways. The Sangha found new roles as an important land owner and manager of properties and various business. At this period, problems regarding the monastic land and the revenue always arose, since the Sangha was not in a position to deal with financial matters. Therefore, in order to regulate the use of the land and to administer the properties to the best advantage, a lay-follower is appointed to look after the matters related to monastic property and its revenue. It is also a normal practice that a committee is formed to take on this task. A monastic committee usually comprises the abbot, acting as the chairman, one or more junior monks and lay-people. It is suggested that the establishment of a monastic committee provides a partial solution to some of the problems inherent in the Sangha community. It allows the lay-member to handle the financial affairs of the monastery while the Sangha should stay aloof (Bunnag 1973 : 129). Under the Sangha Act 1962, a monastic committee or the appointed lay-man has a duty to keep records of the monastic assets as well as the revenue generated from the properties.

The Sangha in Thailand is administrated by an ecclesiastic council, The Mahathera Samakom or Council of Elders, which is chaired by the Supreme Patriarch.<sup>23</sup> The Council serves as the sole executive and administrative body of the Sangha with the Director General of the Department of Religious Affairs as the Secretary General to the Council of Elders (Sangha Act 1962). The Act also mentions that the organization and management of monastic land for commercial use must be approved by the Council as well as the Department of Religious Affairs.

Even though the Department and the Council do not have direct responsibility for the care of historic monuments within a monastery, their decision on the management and the use of monastic land can cause conflict with the monument and site as well as the conservation policy of the Department of Fine Arts. It is often the case that the commercial use of land belonging to a historic monastery is pursued by the Department of Religious Affairs without concern about for loss of aesthetic, historic, and

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<sup>23</sup> The king appoints a selected monk, a 'Thera' or 'Elder', who is highly qualified to be the 'Somdet Phrasangharaj', the Supreme Patriarch, head of the Sangha. He is given absolute authority to issue patriarchal commands.



archaeological values which may follow. By law, land belonging to abandoned monasteries is looked after by the Department of Religious Affairs and is often rented out to the private sector. If there is an ancient structure on the land, this activity can cause damage to the historic fabric as well as underground archaeological remains.

It is, therefore, necessary that the Department of Religious Affairs and the Council of Elders are informed about the value of the cultural heritage in their care. A close working relationship between the Department, the Sangha, and the Department of Fine Arts must be created, not only in terms of personal or informal contacts; it should be also supported by legislation. There should be new legislation related to the care of monasteries that can control the jurisdiction of abbots in matters related to changing and caring for their monastic fabric, so that the changes and development that can affect the historic fabric and its environs can be controlled or supervised by expert bodies.

#### **2.4 Advisory Bodies and National Amenity Societies**

At present, the general public sees historic monuments as a government responsibility and cannot envisage becoming involved in the safeguarding process. Conservation activity has been, by legislation and practice, the sole responsibility of the government since the beginning of the conservation movement. Therefore, the government organizations are in a better position in terms of experience. The government officers also find that the work that needs special knowledge and skill cannot be left to general public to deal with, since one of the problems that causes damage to historic buildings is the intervention by people who lack special knowledge about historic monuments.

However, interest in historic buildings and conservation among scholars has been growing. Even though Thailand does not have a special institute or courses that concentrate on the field of conservation, architects and historians have a general understanding of the heritage in term of its values and its contribution to the built environment as a whole. The approach to conservation of the scholars is different and is often contradictory to the government's. The conservation of the national heritage needs a balance between the two. The Department of Fine Arts tries to involve the academic sector in their planning process as members of the Committee for Monuments Conservation. But these experts only participate in large scale projects such as the Historical Park schemes, or important national monuments. Small monuments and sites



which constitute the majority of the heritage are left to the mercy of the Department's officers who are often over-loaded with work, while many experts outside the organization are available to contribute their expertise but do not have a chance to be involved.

At present, there are groups of active scholars who have found their roles as critics of the Department of Fine Arts, and regularly get their message across through publication either in specialized magazines or newspapers. There are, as well, local people who realize the value of cultural heritage and the contribution that the heritage gives to their community. These concerned citizens are a strong local force who can create an impact on the conservation of their local heritage. One of the examples that illustrates the influence of the local people is the campaign against a cable car system in Chiang Mai. In 1985 a private company with the support of the Tourist Authority of Thailand proposed to build a cable car system going up to a monastery on top of Doi Suthep, a small mountain on the outskirts of the city. The monastery, situated by an important stupa, has been one of the pilgrimage centres in the north of Thailand as well as a prominent tourist attraction. Strong and widespread protest came from all quarters. Three major objections were used against the project: firstly, the whole mountain is regarded as a sacred ground; secondly, the building of the cable-car would be an the encroachment upon the reserved watershed area; and finally, the visual pollution which would be bound to create on the mountain, which is the backdrop of the whole city. After two years of hard campaigning, the project was abandoned. Out of the struggle came the revelation that people still care about the environment and cultural heritage, if they are well informed about the problems and what they can do to solve them.

The gathering of experts and people who are concerned about conservation can not only create an awareness among the general public but provide the responsible bodies such as the Department of Fine Arts and the Tourist Authority of Thailand with constructive criticism which will help the government authorities to improve their work in the future.

Voluntary bodies are widely established in many European countries. For instance, in England, the voluntary bodies can be divided into two categories: those whose aim is practical conservation, and those whose concern is to persuade the government or local councils on matters related to conservation. The vast majority of such bodies have only local interest, but a number of them operate at national or regional level. Some of them



concentrate on a particular period or types of building and archaeological conservation, while some deal with the whole aspect of conservation activity. A number of these national bodies have a statutory right to be consulted by local planning authorities on proposals involving the demolition of listed buildings. Some of these bodies, for instance the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, also provide technical advice, organize courses on building conservation, and issue publications.

In Thailand, a private organization that has the possibility to have a more active and constructive involvement in conservation is the Association of Siamese Architects. The Association was founded in 1934 to be the representative of Thai architects for developing and promoting the architectural profession. When architectural conservation became an issue of concern in the past decade, the Association took on a role as a catalyst to raise a public awareness on the issue. The Committee on Art and Architectural Conservation was set up within the Association. Its activities include: publication on conservation aspects in the Association's monthly journal, the conducting of conferences and cultural tours, and the recognition programme whereby well-conserved buildings are selected by the Committee and awards are given annually.

The establishment of voluntary bodies at regional level should also be encouraged. There is also the possibility that they can be evolved from the local architectural associations, since the main objective of these associations is to promote their local distinctiveness through conservation activity. A voluntary body can contribute constructively and effectively only when it is recognized by the government organizations. If it is well reinforced by legislation, public involvement will be more fruitful.

### **2.5 An Ecclesiastical Advisory Body**

One of the supporting voluntary bodies that is worth considering is a special group which represents various interests related to conservation. For instance, in England, there are bodies whose interest is in ecclesiastic buildings. The Council for the Care of Churches is a permanent advisory commission of the Church of England General Synod which is the central co-ordinating body for Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches. The primary role of the CCC is to give advice on various statutory committees on the aspects dealing with ecclesiastic architecture, planning, and the conservation of works of art in the place of worship. It also acts as a liaison between



the church and other ecclesiastical and secular bodies working in the field of conservation over matters of mutual interest. The CCC also has duties under the faculty jurisdiction which give it an opportunity to advise in most cases of proposed total or partial demolition of the monument.

The advisory body at the regional level is the Diocesan Advisory Committee which provides advice to parishes and incumbents in relation to church buildings, their contents, and their land. According to the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure, a DAC consists of a chairman appointed by the bishop, all the archdeacons in the diocese and at least twelve other members who between them possess "...knowledge of the history, development and use of church buildings, knowledge of the liturgy and worship of the Church of England, knowledge of architecture, archaeology, art and history, and experience in the care of historic buildings and their content " ( EJM 1993 : Paras 93).

The establishment of an advisory body for the care of monasteries in Thailand should be seriously considered, since the living monastery needs special knowledge and attention that the Sangha or the Department of Fine Arts alone cannot sufficiently provide. In 1952, when the Department of Fine Arts was under the Ministry of Culture, the committee for the Development of Monasteries was established. Its members consisted of the Minister of Culture, the Director General of the Department of Fine Arts, the Department of Sangha Affairs, and their deputies. The work of the Committee mainly consisted in co-ordinating the government departments and allocation of government funds for monasteries. Sub-committees were appointed in order to deal with restoration work in particular monasteries. From the documents available, only a few and important monasteries carried out their restoration programme under the advisory committees. After the re-arranging of the ministerial organizations in 1960, the Minister of Culture was abolished. The Department of Fine Arts was put under the Ministry of Education and the Committee for the Development of Monasteries was finally dissolved.

At present, the only advisory committee the Department of Fine Arts appointed is the National Committee for the Care of Monuments which gives advice directly to the Department at the national level. There are, however, several temporary committees that are established for particular conservation projects. Each of these committees answers to the Department and so does not have a statutory right to act on their own.



An independent committee should be established in order to function as an advisory body, especially for the care of monasteries. The problems concerning the conservation of living monasteries are rather different from other kinds of historic monuments. The conservation activity does not confine itself only to the fabric of the architecture but also the belief of the people as well as the changing role of monastery and the Sangha. Therefore, the members of the advisory committee should consist of both religious and secular representatives. It has been a tradition in the past that the Sangha had a role in giving advice to the kings in matters related to religion and monastery both philosophical and practical approaches. In the early part of this century, the Council of the Elders still gave advice as well as judging the applications for the restoration of monastic fabric and Buddha images.<sup>24</sup>

The nature of the problems and the approach to the care of monasteries at present are far more complicated and different from what they were in the past. Economic and social changes as well as the consideration of historic values have influence on conservation planning. Government policy on monastic conservation can very much emphasise only the physical side of the matter, while the spiritual one is disregarded. The involvement of the Sangha should be able to provide the recommendations from the religious point of view. Apart from members of the Sangha, the committee should consist of professionals in the conservation field such as architects, archaeologists, art historians, and a representative from the Department of Fine Arts.

### **3 Planning and Legislation**

#### **3.1 The System of listing**

Ancient monuments and sites are the first category to be protected by Thai legislation. The first legislation that mentioned the necessity and procedure of listing was passed in 1934, one year after the founding of the Department of Fine Arts. The main content of the legislation is the defining of 'ancient monument' and the authority designated to the Director-General of the Department in caring for the listed buildings. The majority of the listed monuments are religious buildings and edifices.

Religious architecture in the country can be divided into two groups according to their

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<sup>24</sup> From 'Phra Maha Sammana Vinitchai', the compilation of reports of the Council when Prince Vajirayanavaroros was the Supreme Patriarch (see Chapter 4, page 127).



use: ruined and abandoned monasteries, and monasteries that still function. The former can be clearly categorized as ancient monuments and are subject to the Ancient Monument Acts. These properties are the property of the Buddhist Sangha and are looked after by the Department of Religious Affairs. The land surrounding an abandoned monastery in urban areas is managed by the Department in order to generate a revenue which is used to support the Sangha affairs. This activity has been started long before the modern conservation movement began to regard the importance of the surrounding environment as well as the architectural value. Early listing did not specify the listed area. It covered only the structure and, in most cases, only above ground monuments. Even though the new use of the surrounding land did not cause direct damage to historic monument, the change to the environment causes many indirect problems. The use of land for residential and commercial purposes prompts the building of modern structures which are usually juxtaposed unsatisfactorily to the historic monuments. The aesthetic value of the surrounding area is not the only loss. The new development within the area also destroys the remains of archaeological evidence which can be vital to an understanding of the monument's history.

In the rural areas, the problems of the commercial use of monastic land is not common. However, the abandoned monasteries are often re-occupied by monks who re-establish a new monastery or a retreat on the historic foundation. These new establishments are legally rectified by the Department of Religious Affairs and come under its responsibility. The re-occupation can, in a way, benefit the monument, since the monks can take on the duty of the guardians. However, it is always the case that the monastery is gradually expanded and the listed monument is disturbed as the result.

The listing aims to conserve the monument whose "...age, architectural styles and historical evidence can be of value to art, history, and archaeology" ( Monument Act 1961 ). In the majority of monasteries, only the Buddhavas area is listed, since it is the heart of the monastery where important architecture are concentrated. Its boundary can also be clearly specified either by low walls or cloister. Other buildings outside the Buddhavas area are individually listed, while the Sanghavas area of most monasteries are not listed and are not subject to any planning control.

Sanghavas in large monasteries, in particular royal monasteries, are planned according to the administration of the Sangha. They also possess distinctive architectural



characteristics and are of historical value. Sanghavas consist not only of residential buildings but also other structures related to the Sangha such as one or more libraries for the scriptures, and a bell tower. These structures have a unique character and were usually built with high craftsmanship comparable to the structures in Buddhavas area. The dwellings of the Sangha are a rare example of domestic architecture that still survives in modern day context. While most contemporary domestic buildings were demolished as the result of urbanization or financial and social demands, the dwellings in a monastery had withstood this tide of change until recently.

The architecture in a Sanghavas area, though still intact, often suffered unsympathetic alteration through DIY repairing and inappropriate use of modern materials, and lost its authenticity and architectural value at an alarming rate. The way of life of the modern day Sangha also contributes to the physical change of their dwellings. New fixtures such as air-conditioning have become common in some urban monasteries. The traditional architecture that based its design on natural ventilation had to be altered to accommodate the new requirements. Windows and doors had to be changed. The report of restoration and construction in the Sanghavas area of Wat Po between 1979 - 1989 indicates the intensive restoration which includes total demolition and rebuilding 'in the same style'. The structure of the new buildings has changed from timber or brick and stucco to reinforced concrete, while the old lime render was replaced by terrazzo. Detail alterations such as standard joinery, or security bars on windows destroy the integrity of the architecture. These alterations are considered as minor and can be found even on the buildings in the listed area.

### **3.2 Planning Control**

Special planning permission is required for any alteration, repair or demolition. According to the legislation every planning application must be submitted to the Department of Fine Arts for the approval by the Director General. The Department will send their officers to inspect the monument and process the application. The procedure and the working system of the Department are very much centralized. The listed monuments and archaeological sites in the country are more than five thousand. Therefore, decision making that is controlled by central administration does not enable effective and speedy procedure. In the case of living monuments, the intention of listing and controlling alterations is not to conserve the monument in a particular period or style, or preserve the way of life deprived of modern comfort and ignoring all changes. There



must be a reasonable compromise between the historic fabric and the uses which can ensure the future of the building. Some of the owners of listed buildings in Thailand found that listing and its implication are a burden rather than an advantage. While they are controlled by the legislation, they do not receive any financial support from the Department of Fine Arts. Some even assume that once the building is listed, it is the property of the government and will be looked after by the government organization. As a result of this misunderstanding, listed monuments in some monasteries are neglected. The funding proved not to be the problem in many urban monasteries, since the buildings in the listed area are neglected, while intensive construction activity is carried out in the Sanghavas which is an unlisted area.

The length of time required for the approval of the application also discourages the owners to comply with the legislation. In theory minor repairs such as replacing of broken or defective materials in the same style and appearance would not need planning application. But because of the complexity of the procedure, many major repairs were carried out by the owners without any permission.

A section of the legislation gives penalties for the offence of destroying or decreasing the value of a listed monument. However, in the case of monasteries, works that have been carried out without consent were done with the approval of the Sangha or the abbot of the monastery. It is always the case that the authority does not want to take any legal action against the Sangha or an individual monk.

It is also recommended that the government should encourage the care of listed building by giving the owners some incentives in term of financial as well as professional help.

For instance:

- Historic buildings should be exempt from building and property tax.
- In the case of repair, the government will help the owners find the source of funding from financial institutions at a low interest rate.
- The government will provide experts in conservation to assist the owners to repair the building at no cost.
- Expense on annual maintenance as well as repairing can be deducted from the annual income tax.



### **3.3 Conservation and Economic Development**

Even though the importance of cultural heritage in Thailand has been recognized and the conservation activity has been included in the national development plan, there are still many obstacles that do not enable the work to be carried out effectively. One of the problems, typical among developing countries, is that conservation must be judged alongside other development plans such as public health, education, and economy which are considered to be the priority by the government and the public as a whole. It is widely accepted in the western world that conservation can be effectively integrated into a development plan. However, in Thailand, the understanding of the balance between conservation and development is, unfortunately, rare outside the limited circle of the humanistically educated. The reconciling of conservation and development has happened in certain respects for instance, conservation and tourist industry. Nevertheless, for many, conservation is still considered a hindrance to the development of a city and the well being of the population.

An economic system develops on the principle of demand and supply. If the majority of the consumers demand only the newest and most effective product at the lowest possible prices for living, the producers will always try to minimize the economic cost of production at the expense of cultural conservation that appears to them uneconomical. Drastic development is inevitable in the case of developing countries such as Thailand; conservation, therefore, must be seen as a criterion in the development planning of the country.

### **3.4 Conservation and Urban Planning**

It is also necessary for the government to have a clear understanding of the value of the heritage. It must be realized that historic monuments cannot be conserved out of their own context. The values of the monuments depend also on their environment. A monument is only one entity in the whole cultural context. If the context has been exploited by the development, the continuity of the values of that monument would be reduced. Problems caused by misuse of land or intrusions of new buildings, unsympathetic in style, scale, or material do not have a direct effect on historic monuments. However, the indirect 'visual pollution' can bring about the loss of value of the place.

Historic areas have been designated in some of the historic cities in Thailand, such as



Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya, Phuket, and Bangkok. The control of land use and limits on building height are implemented within the area. However, there are some loop-holes within the law that allow developers to interpret it in favour of the development rather than conservation. Some developers saw historic areas as an asset for their new development project, but were not concerned about the effect on the areas as the result of their development. One case that can illustrate the problem is the high-rise residential condominium built on the bank of the Chao Praya River, opposite the conservation area of the old city of Bangkok. The site of the condominium is not designated as a controlled area. But in term of visual impact, it is almost adjacent to the old city and only separated by the river. The superb visibility of the royal palace and the Rattanakosin island was used as a selling point and appeared in the advertising of the condominium project. However, viewing from the opposite side, the juxtaposition of the condominium towers and the sky line of the royal palace is a very disturbing sight. It also caused controversies and doubts about the effectiveness of the planning law and how it was implemented. There are examples showing the breach of the planning law and several of them were allowed by the authorities. These illustrate that the law is not the expression of the present political will and cannot be effectively implemented. It can also be made to be ineffective when the authorities find that a particular piece of legislation is inconvenient or politically problematic and try to overturn or find a way around it.

#### **4 Financial Support**

Funding for conservation and development of a monastery comes from several sources such as :

- revenue from monastic land and commercial activity
- donations from lay-community
- government funding. In the case of monasteries of national importance with exceptional historical value, the funding may come from the central government as well as the Tourist Authority of Thailand as a support for tourist industry.
- the Department of Religious Affairs provides funds for the development of monasteries, such as construction of new buildings and other facilities.

Normally, prominent monasteries have always had an amount of money to spend on the monastic fabric. Since monastic revenue comes from several sources and the abbot together with the monastic committee have authority in deciding on what the money should be spent, a large proportion is spent on new construction or unnecessary alterations.



## **5 The Conservation Process**

### **5.1 Inspection of Historic Fabric**

Religious architecture, either Buddhist or Christian, is sacred and built for worship according to the religious ideology. It requires a system of control which combines a sympathetic and knowledgeable appreciation of the needs of the religious community as well as concern for the architectural and aesthetic values of the historic building. In England, the system of safeguarding religious architecture has been developed on this basis. There is a special system of control which results in the high standard of care and maintenance. One of the procedures that can ensure effective repair and prevent the causes of deterioration is regular inspection of the architectural fabric by expert persons. It may be said that the Church of England has given a lead to other guardians of historic buildings by pioneering the system of regular inspection.

The need for regular inspection of a church has been mentioned in the canon law since the seventeenth century. Dean and Chapter, archdeacon, and others who hold ecclesiastical visitations have a duty to survey the churches of his or their own jurisdiction and to direct the repairing of the fabric and the ornament of that church. The inspection of a church was done by the clergy for centuries. However, there are some weaknesses in this system. One of the problems was that the clergy did not have the skill in inspection as professionals did, since they were trained in a different discipline; one could not expect them to be efficient as architects. So it was essential that they be provided with professional advice on the subject of the fabric of the church.

The Church Assembly Commission was appointed in June 1951 to advise the Church Assembly on the problems concerning the repair of churches and to make proposals for regular inspection. In the report of the Commission, few opinions concerning the regular inspection of churches by architects were given. All of the experts in the Commission agreed that professional experience was necessary in order to detect the decay of the fabric at the early stage and prevent the need for major renewal. The comment from the SPAB is cited in the report

*"...of the importance of obtaining regular inspection of churches there is no doubt. It is the cumulative effect of neglect of ordinary maintenance which produces the great majority of appeals for the hundreds if not thousands of pounds required for major repairs" (Church Assembly Commission 1952).*

The inspection of a church by an architect was likened to the routine examination of a patient by a doctor. It is agreed that looking at the visible parts of the building is



sufficient. By using trained eyes, the architect may discover something that leads him to 'operate' on the building. The Commission showed unanimous agreement on regular inspection. However, two questions relating to practical details of the operation were risen: how often should a church be inspected, and the number of architects who could supervise the inspection of ancient buildings seemed at the time to be far too small to make the inspection practicable.

The Council for the Care of Churches gave their opinion on the period of inspection by an architect that it should be done at least every five years. Although they perceived that more frequent inspections than a quinquennial was ideal, the cost of the inspection was considered too high and impractical. It was suggested by the CCC that it is essential, however, that everything possible should be done to make the rural dean's and archdeacon's inspections more effective as a means of detecting defects of the building between the visits of the professional and towards getting the work he recommends carried out.

It was agreed that quinquennial inspection should be made compulsory. Even though most of the incumbents were willing to co-operate, there was also a minority who either because of their indifference to the importance of the architecture or their negligence needed to be made aware of the dangers of neglect, since among this minority some might have responsibility for churches of great architectural and historical interest.

In 1952, the Church Assembly Commission looked at several possible ways to carry out the inspection. Various scales of organization responsible for the work were suggested ranging from national inspection to private practitioners. The idea of a national inspectorate was dismissed since, according to the Commission, "...national inspectors would almost certainly be fully engaged in inspecting and would lose the experience that comes from actually putting up or repairing buildings" (Church Assembly Commission 1952). The possibility of Diocesan inspectors was widely supported by the Commission. It was suggested that each diocese should have a diocesan architect who would be in practice and would make his own arrangement for staff training. Up to this time, there had been a few existing diocesan schemes that proved to be successful, such as at Salisbury where the scheme is voluntary.

However, the proposal for diocesan architects was rejected by the Commission on the



basis that there might be "...danger of a corollary more serious from the artistic point of view, namely that the design of all new work will fall into the hands of a diocesan inspectors". The CCC's comment on this matter includes the suggestion to employ a full-time expert for inspection and for the subsequent repair works with the condition that the architect would not take private commissions for the design of the new work. The idea was not favoured by the Commission since it was not considered practical and the full time inspector would, again, lead to the "...artistic danger of a loss of the skill that comes from actual work on building".

The Commission proposed in their recommendations that each parish should make its own arrangements for inspection with some suitable private practitioner after consultation with its DAC. This proposal was supported by the RIBA who realized that special qualification of the suitable architect was required and the Institute could provide the names of the experienced architects in each diocese. Several questions arose after this suggestion. The Commission realized that, at the time, there were few architects who possessed the qualified experience and were competent enough to deal with 'this class of work'. However, it suggested that there were enough experienced architects to form an advisory panel for groups of dioceses which would operate along with the DACs and the RIBA.

The RIBA saw the system of appointing church architects as a way to maintain the continuity of ancient building experience, since the danger of losing experience in conservation is due to the shortage of this kind of work which always discouraged the younger generation from maintaining their interest in this field. The RIBA's comment, quoted in the Church Commission Report, indicates that:

*"...if arrangement can be made for this urgent work to be put in hand, the opportunity will be provided for handing on to future generations the experience of past years".*

A church architect plays an important role in the development and conservation of a parish church. Apart from the quinquennial inspection, their responsibility for the church also includes giving advice on any subsequent repairs and alterations. The Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 mentions that the architects should also be able to advise parishes on the preparation of faculty applications, draw up clear and concise details of the work, and inspect the progress of the work to its completion.

In practice, the level of communication between church architects and their clients is



varied. It is necessary that the architect and the church should maintain a close contact and develop a good relationship. Architects have to understand the needs, the problems, and the attitudes of their churches and communities while, at the same time, they develop the knowledge of the fabric of the churches that they look after. Therefore it is preferable, if possible, for a church to maintain its chosen architect until his or her retirement. The longer the architect has the church in his care, the greater his specialized knowledge of the particular building and its problems. There was evidence that a considerable amount of work was carried out by churches without the knowledge of their inspecting architects. A close relationship between architects and their churches can lessen this problem. It is the church which is responsible for the appointing of its architect. Nevertheless, the DAC is also consulted. Each DAC keeps a list of qualified architects registered with the diocese. According to the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure, the essential qualifications for a suitable architect are appropriate experience in care and conservation of historic monuments, personal links with the parish, and proper sensitivity to the historic architectural and liturgical context of the church.

Regular inspection by an expert and maintenance programmes for a monastery do not exist in Thailand, even though this preventive measure is important. William Morris's statement, 'staving off decay by daily care', is the best policy in caring for historic buildings. What a historic monastery needs is a sustained programme for continuous care and responsibility in order that major intervention can be prevented. Lessons from English experience illustrate similar problems concerning the lack of qualified persons that could carry out the inspection when the system was introduced. However, the problem was gradually solved through collaboration between the Church and the professional bodies.

Historic monasteries are a national heritage; therefore the task of safeguarding them cannot be left to the Sangha alone. A regular maintenance programme should be carried out by monasteries with the help of professionals from the Department of Fine Arts as well as other conservation bodies in term of advice. Funding from government or from monastic revenue should be set aside for a preventive maintenance programme. The inspection and maintenance should be made compulsory through the jurisdiction of the Sangha Council.



## **5.2 Preservation by Record**

Cultural heritage is a fragile and irreplaceable resource. Every possible effort must be made to preserve and protect it from any destruction. However, in the case that the loss of the monument is unavoidable, the monument or site should be recorded. In England, English Heritage may, according to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 :

*"...undertake or assist in, or defray or contribute towards the cost of an archaeological investigation of any land which they consider may contain an ancient monument or anything else of archaeological or historical interest "*

It is mentioned that the objective of this 'preservation by record' is an archive of what was found as well as a publication of the research ( Wainwright 1989 : 169 ). Though mainly the recordings are done on archaeological sites, a similar ideology could be applied to historic structures where change and the loss of original components are inevitable.

In Thailand, the impermanence of the building materials, and the encroachment of modern development contribute to the rapid change of the fabric of monastic architecture. Living monasteries are also successively transformed through the period of history due to the traditional practice of restoration. If we are to study the architectural style or construction method of a particular period, it could only be possible by studying monasteries of the period that are abandoned or left in ruins. Traditional builders did not have the tradition of keeping or recording their works. Architectural drawings of important royal monasteries are very rare and the records available are relatively recent. Most of the early records of the monasteries of the Bangkok period are in the form of photographs which do not provide sufficient information about details, materials, construction techniques, or dimensions.

If we will accept that conservation of a Buddhist monastery is the act of piety and the restoration of living buildings can be practised as a method of conservation, the record of the original building is of great importance. However, it does not mean that once the original building is recorded, it can be demolished or totally restored. Any intervention must respect the original materials, styles, and construction method. If this ethics of repair is strictly followed, the building itself can carry its own record.

It is mentioned in the Regulations for Monument Conservation 1985, which the



Department of Fine Arts used as a code of practice in carrying out a conservation project, that recording of the original and current states of a monument is the essential process in any conservation work and must be done before the actual intervention. The record should be in the form of documentation, with detail photographs and drawings (see Appendix I). In many countries the recording of historic monuments and sites is done by expert organizations. This enables the monuments to be thoroughly recorded by using the best possible methods and technology. In Thailand, the task of recording is the responsibility of the Department of Fine Arts. The Department has a unit in the Archaeology Division which is responsible for surveying historic monuments. However, their documentation does not cover many important aspects such as the construction methods, materials, or architectural details. If it had been done according to the code of practice, by experienced staffs, it would have been a valuable document not only for reference use by the conservation team but also a historical document in the future. Unfortunately, this part of the conservation process is often overlooked or marginally done due to the lack of time, personnel, or simply disregarding its importance.

## **6 Personnel and Training**

### **6.1 The Conservation Architect**

Historic conservation in Thailand is a new discipline and the conservation architect is as yet a new profession. At present, there is no special training for conservation architects in Thai architectural schools. Traditional architecture and some basic conservation courses are offered at the Faculty of Architecture in two of the state owned universities. Though these courses provide fundamental knowledge of the subjects, students find that they are more or less irrelevant to their architectural career, unless they join the Department of Fine Arts after graduation. Architects who work in the private sector have little or no work with historic buildings. Under the present economic situation, architects in Thailand find that contemporary architectural works, such as modern office buildings or large scale development, are more financially rewarding than the governmental work.

Economics is not the only reason that discourages architects from working with government organizations. It is suggested that several government officers find the system an obstacle to their work. One of the officer writes that :

*" The moral of these academics lies not in money but in the prestige they receive and in their recognition by the administrators. They expect that they can be creative in their work and be allowed to propose new ideas without being prevented from doing so by dark forces of any kind " ( Srisuchart 1989 : 2 ).*



Within the Department of Fine Arts, the personnel are divided into administrative and non-administrative sections. The latter includes architects, archaeologists, and historians. The former is considered to have more power, since they are the ones who lay out the policy while the latter are being asked to follow along the line set for them. The lack of interest in governmental work causes personnel problems within the Department.

If formal conservation training is established, it is certain that the job market for the trained conservation architects would be very small. Therefore, the training of the architect and the availability of conservation work for the graduands must be planned together. It is undeniable that the works under the responsibility of the Department of Fine Arts are too much for the Department to handle, particularly in the case of living monasteries where the repairing and constructing of new buildings is continuously carried out by unskilled builders without the consent of the Department. If parts of the work are entrusted to private conservation architects, the outcome must be more satisfactory than the present situation. In order to make this recommendation possible, we need to change the legislation which now gives the Department of Fine Arts the sole authority to carry out the conservation works.

In the past, the Department of Fine Arts carried out on site conservation works by themselves. This means that the Department had total control over the management of the projects, budget, and the workmen. When conservation works increased in number, it was not possible to continue working this system. At present, a conservation project, after being planned by the Department, is given to a qualified building contractor to carry out the work under the supervision of the Department. There are several drawbacks to this system. Firstly, there are not many contractors who have suitable qualifications for working on historic monuments. There have been compromises between the Department and the contractors. Even though their qualifications do not reach the acceptable standard, the contractors are often accepted for the jobs. The Department specifies that the contracting firm must employ at least a qualified conservation architect and an archaeologist in order to supervise the work on site as well as collaborate with the Department on matters related to conservation planning. In practice, however, this has not been realized, since both the contractors and the Department do not have enough qualified personnel to carry out the job. Often, the conservation works were done without proper supervision which led to the loss of the historic and aesthetic values



of the monuments. The training of conservation architects, therefore, is an important step that can change the nature of conservation practice in Thailand. The trained architects will enable the decentralization of the Department as well as the distribution of the work to private sectors.

The qualifications of a conservation architect according to Sir Bernard Feilden are as follows:

- *[ He or She ] must have a knowledge and understanding of early building technology and must be able to identify the original fabric and later additions, and interpret his findings.*
- *must co-ordinate the work of other disciplines that might be involved in an historic building project.*
- *is the generalist in the whole conservation process.*
- *must have good knowledge of all periods of architecture as well as modern practice.*
- *must be able to preserve the artistic and historical value of the old structure and understand problems caused on the old structure. ( Feilden 1989 : 13 ).*

From international experience, training of conservation architects is mostly at post-graduate level. The one year intensive programme aims to give participants a wide view of the conservation field. The training of conservation architects cannot emphasise only on the technical aspects of the conservation. The socio-cultural context of the monuments and sites must also be included. There should be a balance of lectures on theories and the practical conservation skills.

The most important of all, conservation architects must not have only technical and theoretical knowledge of building but also the appreciation of architecture as a work of art and must have an educated ability to understand the intellectual and emotional significance of the architecture. They must as well be sensitive to the religious value of monastic architecture. Relevant knowledge and training programmes are important; however, humanity and the ability to appreciate cultural and historical heritage is also necessary for conservation architects, and, as a matter of fact, for every discipline which deals with the fragile heritage.

## **6.2 The Craftsman**

### ***Foreign Influences and Continuity of style***

The influence of foreign architecture on traditional Thai style is not only a twentieth century phenomenon. Thai builders had always adapted foreign architectural elements into Thai culture and used materials available. Khmer Hindu temples gave their form to the Thai 'prang', a style of stupa, where the stone 'sikhara' of the Khmer temple was



transformed into a more slender and taller construction. This was possible because bricks and stucco were used instead of stone. It is suggested that Thai culture is not the culture of stone building. Unlike Khmer kings who built their temples with forced labour, Thai kings, being Dharma Raja, did not believe in tyrannical policy<sup>25</sup>. Brick and stucco, therefore, were the suitable materials for constructing their monasteries. The Hindu-Khmer elements were assimilated to the Buddhist architecture creating a distinctive character that later became a chapter in Thai architectural history. The transformation of foreign influence was not restricted only to the physical appearance of buildings but also affected their meaning. This is the most important condition in the adaptation of foreign culture into the traditional one. The design and planning of the Khmer architecture reflect Hindu ideology. Their temples represent the centre of the universe where the sikhara depicts Mount Sumeru the dwelling place of the god, Shiva. When the form was used in Buddhist architecture, the Hindu concept was transformed into that of Theravada Buddhism. It represented Tri Bhumi or the Three Worlds, the division of the universe and planes of existence according to the Buddhist tradition.

Western influence has affected Thai architecture since the seventeenth century. King Narai ( 1656-1688 ) restored the town of Lopburi with the assistance of French and Italian architects. Their work can be seen in the structures of the royal palace and fortresses. The French ambassador of the period described the audience hall as having imported French mirrors on the walls and the ceiling was sectioned into four geometrical squares beautifully decorated with gold floral motifs. The adaptation of the western style on religious buildings is limited to the decorative elements such as pointed arch openings and mural paintings of figures dressed in European clothing depicted in the painting with Buddhist subject matters.

#### ***The Diminishing Role of Craftsmen as the Result of Westernization***

The modernization of the country in the early twentieth century brought about a new taste in art and architecture. Artists, engineers, and architects from Europe were employed by the royal government to design and decorate several new buildings. The

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<sup>25</sup> Louis Finot suggests that when the Khmer Empire succumbed to the Thai King, the Khmer population perhaps looked on it as a deliverance. This is because not only they had to supply the labour for constructing these monuments but also to provide the services and supplies for the maintenance of the innumerable sanctuaries. Theravada Buddhism, which is the religious of the Thai conqueror, was a gentle, economical religion ( Finot cited in Coedes 1975 : 107 ).



fashion started from the court where King Rama V had new buildings in his palaces built in Neo-Classical style. The period also saw the introduction of new building materials and construction technology. The Ananda Samakom Throne Hall is an example. It was designed by an Italian architect in Italian Renaissance fashion completed with a large central dome and decorated with imported Carrara marble. It did not take very long for members of the royal family and the aristocracy to follow the fashion. A number of residences built in this period were influenced by western architecture. Since the social life of this group of Thai citizens was increasingly oriented towards the west, architectural requirements reflected this change. Office spaces were needed for the newly established governmental organizations, for instance: office buildings for the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, and several commercial buildings along the newly constructed roads. The new style of architecture was considered to be the only appropriate form for the new functions.

Western style did not restrict itself only to the public buildings and residences but also had influence over religious architecture. Even though most of monastic architecture still retained the traditional planning of the Ayutthaya period, there were several diversions which indicated the western influences that had never appeared before.

Wat Rajabophit was built in 1869 by King Rama V as the monastery of his reign. The architecture and planning indicate the mixture of traditional and western style. It has the Ayutthaya style of planning where the ubosot hall, the round stupa, and the Vihara form an east-west axis with the stupa positioned in the middle of the complex. However, the stupa is surrounded by a round cloister which is the first example of its kind. The exterior of the ubosot is in traditional Thai style and lavishly adorned by coloured tiles, gilded stucco moulding, and coloured glass. However, the interior bears no resemblance to typical Thai architecture, since it has a vaulted ceiling in gothic style rendered in brown with gold leaf on the ribs.

At the same time, there were attempts to create a traditional architecture of the period that reflected the transition of ideas in design. Prince Naris, a brother of King Rama V, was one of the country's prominent architects and artists. One of his works that illustrates the successful attempt to create a traditional architecture for the nineteenth century is at Wat Benjamabophit. The construction of the temple began in 1899. The ubosot was built on a cruciform plan enclosed with galleries that extended from two sides



of the ubosot. Though the planning bears a similarity to the vihara of the Sukothai period, the proportion, the decorative details, and the materials are of Bangkok style. The building was clad with Carrara marble while the windows were glazed with stained glass made by Florentine artists to the designs sent from Bangkok.

It is noticeable that foreign influences can be assimilated into Thai architecture because it is applied on a stable foundation. This foundation is Buddhism which forms the core of Thai art and architecture. Over the period in history, Buddhism had been the only unchanged and unshaken entity. Buddhist ideology was far stronger than any transient influences.

### *The Discontinuity*

The modern period is the first time in Thai architectural history that public buildings without a religious connection are required and are widely constructed. The introduction of industrial materials and new construction processes contribute to the uniformity of style all over the country. When reinforced concrete became widely used, we saw the roles of the traditional carpenter diminish. Master craftsmen had to give way to architects and modern builders whose design and construction techniques were based on the west. Technology transformed building crafts into an industry which needed special machineries and skills unknown to local craftsmen. Soon traditional builders found that they no longer had any participation in the mainstream building industry.

Monastic work that used to be the only intensive architectural project and a ground for training skilled craftsmen was diminished. Thai kings, from Rama V onwards, did not build major monasteries that can be identified with their particular reign but undertook the restoration and maintenance of the existing monasteries instead. Most of the traditional builders were restricted to domestic architecture or repair works. Some were forced to learn new building skills and abandon the traditional crafts while some resorted to creating other minor arts.

Local distinctiveness of traditional architecture, at one time, was not seen as an important quality even by the Department of Fine Arts. In 1940, the Department was responsible for designing a 'standard ubosot' that would be used in constructing ubosots and viharas all over the country. The designs are of three types and differ in size. The architectural style is a copy and adaptation of the styles of the past. The structure and



decorative elements are of concrete which is used to lessen the cost and time of construction. Therefore, the details, decorations and the building as a whole possess a machine-made appearance. The designs mechanically called design A, B, and C, inevitably, lack the spirit found in traditional or local architecture that were the works of local craftsmen. In 1961, the Department of Fine Arts organized a lecture given to an assembly of senior monks from all over the country. It is mentioned in the lecture that the objective of using the standard designs is to create a building that can inspire spiritual devotion among the Buddhists. The constructions of the standard designed ubosot and vihara have been widely carried out. The introduction of the styles can be compared to the introduction of the latest fashion which is different from what the local people had seen. In no time, local architecture was replaced by the standard designs, with the department of Fine Arts acting as advocate.

Traditional builders and the knowledge of building crafts are dwindling. The long and continuous line of building tradition is interrupted. The disconnection was accentuated by the establishment of architectural schools which based their teaching on the model of the west. The teaching emphasises the western design theories. Architects who graduated from the schools, together with western educated clients, have been the leaders of the latest trends in architecture.

There have been attempts to teach traditional architecture in modern architectural schools. However, the nature of the traditional art cannot be effectively conveyed within the modern educational system. The training of craftsmen in the past was a long and painstaking process. As in Medieval Europe, apprenticeship was a norm of practice with emphasis on the close relationship between students and the master. The fact that the traditional architectural textbook is virtually non-existent makes it more difficult for modern day architects to study and gain a correct understanding of the architecture. The lack of understanding can cause serious damage to the architecture. There are countless examples of how ancient monuments had lost their architectural and aesthetic values after being repaired, as the result of this ignorance.

The majority of buildings in traditional style built at present cannot be considered as a genuine creation, since they tend to be poor copies of the old masters. Without the real understanding of the original spirit, they are just body without soul. The broken tie between modern and traditional architecture is created when the new architecture



deviates from the Buddhist foundation. The diversion is not only in terms of function but also the ideology. Especially when the designers cannot relate their design to the Buddhist belief, there is no possibility that the designers can represent the same spirit as their traditional forbears.

### ***The Nature of Buddhist Art and Its Creators***

The idea behind the creation of western art is different from the eastern one. It is suggested that realistic representation of nature is not the aim of Asian artists since:

*" His store of memory pictures, his power of visualization and his imagination were of his purpose finer means: for he desired to suggest the Idea behind sensuous appearance, not to give the detail of the seeming reality, that was in truth but Maya, illusion..." (Coomaraswamy cited in Le May 1954 : 22 ).*

Buddhist art as well as Buddhist architecture is symbolic. The art object is not reminiscent of its own physical form but represents its transcendental meaning. When an artist creates an image of the Buddha, he tries to create things over and beyond and above himself. The work of art is created from the artist's own consciousness and is not a copy of its natural form or the work of the artists before him. This consciousness is formed on the religious foundation. It is also the basis of his life, engrained in his thought, and reflected in his work. Buddhist art and architecture in the past, sometimes were created by the monks themselves.

It can be concluded that the aim of the Buddhist artist is to create the work that is purely for religious edification and not as a conscious work of art. Le May contrasts this objective for creation with the western one that:

*" Western artist was chosen to adorn the churches of Italy, France, Germany, and England mainly because he was a expert painter or sculptor and not because of he was a man of ardent spiritual feeling who happened to be a skilled artist" (Le May 1954 : 23).*

The basic understanding and knowledge required by traditional artists are different from the modern ones that based on western ideas. It is this difference that does not enable the modern artists or architects who have been trained according to the western model to carry out the genuine Buddhist art or architecture. The skills in building design and understanding of construction technique alone are not adequate if the spiritual understanding is not achieved.

### ***The Training of Craftsmen***

*" Without craftspersons, the historic architect is nothing...Without them we will have eaten the seed corn of the future - a course of action that would result in cultural famine " (Feilden).*



The modern building industry has become more dependent on the techniques of mechanization and this has reduced man to a sub-ordinate role. The need for a high standard of workmanship has declined. One of the problems in recent years is that even though the interest in conservation has grown, the skilled craftsmen are in short supply. Therefore, the training for these craftsmen is an immediate need, if any conservation project would be carried out successfully.

All artists and craftsmen would like to create their works in the best possible way, especially when their work is part of historic monuments that would remain for posterity. However, an unreasonable time constraint, which is often the case in most of the government conservation projects, does not enable the craftsmen to carry out their work to the highest standard. Often authentic materials are replaced by the modern ones which are easier to handle and require less skill and time to do the work. It has been proved that these new materials are not necessarily better than the original ones. They are not only incompatible with the original but also lead to loss of knowledge of the authentic material and their use. For instance, the art of gilding which is an important method used in decorative art and architectural elements. It is believed that the technique of gilding in Thailand has prevailed since the Sukothai period. Until the first half of this century, the techniques used by ancient craftsmen were practised, transferred, and the style was developed through generations. The craftsmen not only had to possess a high drawing skill and creativity in designing the decorative patterns but also had to master the complicated technique of lacquering and gilding.

Traditional techniques require natural materials. Lacquer used in Thailand comes from the resin of the tropical Loe tree found in the South-East Asia. It has a superb durability suitable for application to architectural elements. The layers of lacquer function as a protective coat, protecting the timber from the extreme tropical environment as well as forming a good base for gilding. Natural lacquer is difficult to work with. It has to be strained several times and mixed with other natural materials to an exact proportion. It has to be applied on the timber surface several times. Each coat has to be completely dry before the next one can be applied on top. Modern craftsmen, with time constraints, tend to cut the process short and use modern materials such as synthetic paint instead of the natural lacquer. The laborious process is reduced but the durability of the material cannot be compared with the authentic one. The most important objection is that the quality of the art work is lost.



In a highly competitive world seeking material rewards, there is little opportunity for expenditure of time or painstaking care that are needed both in training and putting this education into practice. It is necessary for the owner of historic buildings and the government bodies who carry out the repair works to understand the nature of art and crafts practice as well as appreciate its high workmanship. An important aspect of conservation is to ensure that traditional building methods are correctly evaluated, carried out, and not devalued by modern construction or the use of incompatible materials.

### ***The Recognition of the Craftsman***

It is unfortunate that Thai craftsmen are not as highly recognized as other professions within the building work, even though their work is one of the most important aspects of conservation. We must understand that not only buildings but the traditional skills and workmanship that created them need to be conserved and revived. Since the number of highly skilled craftsmen is decreasing, it is advisable for the Department of Fine Arts to take seriously the task of maintaining the tradition and encouraging its development in future. Similar to historic buildings, traditional art and crafts should be formally recognized. In Japan where traditional crafts have been cherished and practised to a very high standard, craftsmen with good knowledge of special aspects of traditional buildings are recognized by law. The Japanese government in 1975 included a new chapter in the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties providing for 'protection of traditional techniques for conservation of cultural properties'. Individuals and many associations of craftsmen are acknowledged for their superior skills ( Larsen n.d :chapter 6 p.2).

Research on regional building and building techniques must be done in order to identify the types of building crafts as well as showing what the problems are. Skilled craftsmen should be recognized and encouraged by the Department of Fine Arts to have an active roles in training apprentices. It is also recommended that the Department make a list of skilled craftsmen in each region. The Department mentions in its building contract that the private contractors can only employ highly skilled craftsmen to work on historic monuments. But it is also the case that the craftsmen employed often do not possess a high standard of workmanship. The listing of registered craftsmen could be used as a guide for identifying suitable persons and eliminate the problem of sub-standard workmanship.



If the list is available to the public, the craftsmen can be employed by the private sector to work on new buildings. The introduction of traditional techniques, such as traditional lime plastering, into contemporary building should also be encouraged, since it is another way to ensure that the techniques are practised and continued in a modern spirit.

### ***The Role of Monasteries In the Training of Craftsmen***

Prominent Buddhist monasteries, like cathedrals in England, could well provide an ideal base for regional crafts centres. The need for repairs and maintenance within the monasteries is sizable and requires constant attention from skilled craftsmen. There are fourteen cathedrals in England where craftsmen are employed as resident staff of the cathedrals, for instance at York and Canterbury. The cathedral workshop provides craftsmen for working on the major aspects of repair, such as stonemason and glaziers. The lesson learned from Canterbury shows that the cathedral workshop was established because of the need to ensure that there would always be adequate craftsmen to maintain the fabric of the building in the future. The cathedral realized after some years of carrying out major repair to the fabric, that they could not expect to find a body of skilled craftsmen should the need arise and took active steps to encourage the training of apprentices. A mason's yard was provided and skilled masons were trained. It is also out of necessity that a stained glass workshop was established by the cathedral. Badly decayed glass were treated in the studio with the help of experts from Europe and within England. A stained glass Advisory Committee also was appointed (Cormack 1978 : 144-145). In order to operate the workshop and ensure the continuity of the repair work, funding is needed. Canterbury cathedral established a Cathedral Appeal Trust Fund for the conservation of the fabric as well as the training of apprentices in the stained glass workshop and the mason's yard.

The idea of a monastery as a place for training craftsmen is not uncommon in the Thai context. Apart from royal residences, monasteries were the only places where artists and master builders were able to display their creations while the transmission of the skills was done on site. Monasteries were the centres of local craftsmen. Distinctive local style and the use of materials has been developed through local monastic architecture. For instance, decorative plasterwork, found in the monasteries of Petchburi province, is famous for its free-handed spontaneity, and the fluidity of the patterns as well as the use of the lime mixture that gives much strength when dried. In the late Ayutthaya Period, Petchburi craftsmen were divided into groups according to their



distinctive styles. The groups were formed in relation to monasteries and were known by the name of the monastery to which they were attached. In a large monastery such as Wat Po, conservation and repair work are continuously carried out. Most of these projects last for several years. Wat Po itself employs a small group of craftsmen that consists of a master and a few apprentices for working on the gilding of the images and decorative plasterwork. The monastery provides a space for the men to use as their workshop within the monastic precinct. It is worth-while to explore further the development of this kind of arrangement between monasteries and craftsmen, and also to investigate the possibility of setting up a permanent workshop as well as collaboration between monasteries and the Department of Fine Arts in the role of training.

### **6.3 Public Awareness**

Although there is a growing number of professionals with specialized training in conservation, it is not enough to ensure the survival of our cultural heritage. The conservation of the heritage requires an understanding, a support and the participation of very large circles of the society. Conservation efforts have existed for many decades; nevertheless, the destruction and devaluation of the cultural heritage still continues. One of the reasons is the lack of proper information and education among the general population. Awareness of the value of the heritage is a necessary measure for the conservation of the cultural property. In the conclusions of the Conference of Athens in 1931, which formed the first International Charter for the Protection of Monuments, particular attention was given to the education of both specialists and general public. It is mentioned that "...the matter of the preservation of monuments and works of art derives from the respect and attachment of the people themselves". The awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage should be developed from an early age. It is essential that teaching at the school level includes sufficient information about the value of the heritage.

Museums also play a vital role in providing the public knowledge and appreciation of the nation's past. A historic monastery is a valuable source of local history as well as a collection of art and crafts. Most of the monasteries in Thailand own many art objects such as Buddha images, cabinets used for keeping sacred scriptures which are usually highly decorated, wooden pulpits from which monks give their sermons. These pulpits are examples of superb wood carving techniques. Apart from these, there are other art objects which are related to the Sangha or were given as offerings to the Buddha. Many



monasteries provide a space for displaying their art collections, but there are also a large number of art objects that are kept in their original contexts; still in use as in the cases of pulpits, images, and scriptures; or simply neglected because of the lack of interest or understanding of their values. It is, therefore, necessary for the concerned bodies such as the department of Fine Arts, to provide the Sangha with expert advice on the value and importance of the art and crafts as well as of proper care and maintenance.

An inventory of art objects in a monastery is possession should be initiated. A good inventory will not only provide the record for historical study of the objects but will also make the valuable items more readily identifiable and hence more secure. The Sangha Acts of 1962 mentions that monasteries have a duty to keep a record of their properties and revenues; however, this does not include the moveable art objects. It is the fact that the Sangha and monastic committees do not have enough knowledge in the field of art and crafts. If the inventory of moveable art objects should be made compulsory through the Sangha Act, the Sangha should be provided with help from the government and private sectors. In England, the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies organized teams of volunteers to visit individual churches to compile full and systematic inventories of the art objects. In the Thai context where the voluntary body as such has yet to be established, similar expertise can be gained from academic sectors such as universities and private researchers.

#### **6.4 The Education of the Sangha**

The Sangha as the user and the owner of the monastery have been responsible for the care of the monastic fabric. To ensure that their monasteries are properly maintained, it is desirable that they should have a basic knowledge of how to look after their monastic fabric. The Sangha who own listed monuments have extra responsibility since they have to understand the legislation and its implication as well as be highly aware of the values of the historic building.

The formal education for the Sangha in Thailand has been long established and developed through time. Traditionally, the education emphasized the study of Dhamma and ecclesiastical matters. However, contemporary monks found that, amid the changes of modern society, if they did not familiarize themselves with the new circumstances, the Sangha would be alienated from the lay-society. Traditional Dhamma study and their system of knowledge were felt to be useless for daily life. Secular education was added



to the curriculum of both monk and novice at the secondary and university levels. It should be acceptable that the study of Buddhist architecture and its basic maintenance can be added as a part of the secular education. The Department of Fine Arts and architectural schools are able to provide personnel and materials for the course.

The Sangha should also be presented with a concise and practical guide to their principal duties in the care of the fabric. The guidebook should tell the Sangha the necessary care of the building and environment as well as means to detect the signs of deterioration in architecture.

## **7 Conclusion**

In conservation, there are always conflicts between conserving the historical, architectural and aesthetic value of monuments, and economic and practical considerations. In the case of Thai monasteries, the two main considerations are likely to be historical and aesthetic value on one side, and sustaining the role of the monastery within modern society on the other. Balance between the two could be achieved through collaboration between ecclesiastical and secular sectors. Involvement through discussion, exchange of ideas, knowledge and expertise for the care of historic buildings should be encouraged at every level, since problems in conservation of Buddhist monasteries arise from a lack of understanding of the real value of monastic architecture, both in terms of its architectural and historical value and its own intrinsic value that derives from the belief and rituals. The following recommendations are drawn up in order to achieve a synthesis where both values can be met.

### ***Organizations***

- The Department of Fine Arts should consider the de-centralization of the organization which would help lessen the workload of the central office, enabling them to perform the necessary roles of supervisor and planner. This de-centralization could be undertaken through the improving and strengthening the existing sub-divisions so that each sub-division could function as a self-contained unit comprising multi-disciplinary personnel appropriate for carrying out conservation activities.

- At the central level, it is strongly advised that co-operation should be achieved by combining the Archaeology Division and the Architecture Division of the



Department of Fine Arts; re-organizing them into a more unified body. They should share their personnel who have cross-section knowledge and experiences. Co-operative would also mean that the equipments and the facilities would be shared, reducing the waste of duplication.

- The Sangha has always maintained an important position in the care of monastic architecture and the managing of the monastic properties. A close working-relationship between the Sangha, The Department of Religious Affairs, and the Department of Fine Arts should be established and regulated by legislation.

- An independent committee should be formed in order to function as an advisory body, specializing in cases concerning monastic architecture. This committee should consist of the representatives from the Sangha, the Department of Fine Arts, the Department of Religious Affairs, and experts related to particular fields of conservation.

- A similar advisory committee should be established on a regional level, which should include the local Sangha and representatives from the sub-divisions of the Department of Fine Arts.

- To promote public involvement in and awareness of conservation, the establishment of voluntary groups should be encouraged to act as advisory bodies. They should be active on both national and regional levels. There is a possibility these groups could grow out of national and local architectural associations as well as from museum and historical voluntary groups.

- These voluntary bodies should be recognized by government organizations involved in national heritage. Voluntary involvement and contribution in the process of conserving historic monument should be recognised and reinforced by legislation.

### ***Planning and legislation***

- The scope of listing and documentation of monastic architecture should cover not only the Buddhavas area but also the Sanghavas as well as the surrounding open space and landscape that characterized the whole monastery complex. The



physical plan of the monastery, the arrangement of buildings and spaces, must be studied and evaluated in order to identify the important religious concepts involved and the significant architectural elements. On the basis of such research, the area or range for listing and documentation should be effectively determined. (see chapter 3 for the meaning and essence of the architecture and planning)

- In planning for the change and development of a monastery and its lands, the emphasis should be on the religious significance of the place. No change should be in conflict with the sacred quality of monastic architecture. On the other hand, new activities or functions should be able to enhance the visitors' experience and understanding of the place (see chapter 2 for Buddhists' concept of development, and chapter 3 for the meaning of the 'place').

- There should be a new legislation related to the care of monasteries that can control the jurisdiction of abbots in matters related to the change and care of their monasteries in order that the changes and development that can affect historic fabric and its environs can be controlled or supervised by expert bodies.

- Strict control must be applied to the repair and maintenance of, and to any changes within historic monasteries. The Sangha, as owner and user of historic monuments should be informed of their responsibility and the implication of the listing.

- The Sangha Council (Maha Thera Samakom) should have a part in controlling and implementing the legislation that arises from the listing process. Should a penalty need to be enforced upon the Sangha, it should be enacted through the ecclesiastical system rather than the secular system.

- It is a duty of the government, as a policy maker, to insist that conservation of cultural heritage receive the same necessary attention and financial support as the compulsory treatment and disposal of waste material from a factory, or the advertising expense necessary to sale a product.

- There must be a political will at local as well as national level to preserve what is agreed as valuable and relevant from the past for the needs of modern society.



Once conservation laws have been established, strict enforcement as well as public vigilance and pressure will always be necessary.

- There must be a re-analysing of and amendments applied to existing planning laws regarding conservation areas.

### ***Financial support***

- It is recommended that there should be a collaboration between government organizations who distribute funds and the Department of Fine Arts in order that money given to monasteries can be proportionately set aside for the approved conservation projects.
- There should be an agreement between government organizations and monasteries that conservation of or alteration to the fabric, using part or all of the governments funding, must be carried out under the supervision of the Department of Fine Arts, and subject to conservation regulations.
- Through either the monastic committee or lay-community private trust funds for the conservation of monasteries should be established in order to help monasteries where both private and government funding is not available.

### ***Conservation process***

- Before planning or intervention, the value of any historic monument must be assessed. For an historic monastery, architectural and historical value as well as its own intrinsic value that derives from its beliefs and rituals must be emphasised (see chapter 3 and 5 for the meaning of Buddhist architecture and values given by the Buddhists to cultural heritage).
- Value assessment can be used to determine appropriate degrees of intervention and the philosophical approach suitable for repair and conservation (see chapter 5 for matters related to authenticity and values of the of the architecture).
- The Sangha and monastic committee should be responsible for basic maintenance tasks within their own monastery. Detailed maintenance routines should be set up by the Department of Fine Arts as a guideline for monasteries.



- It should be required by law that listed monasteries must be regularly inspected by qualified professionals, either from the Department of Fine Arts or private practitioners, in order that the cause of decay to historic monuments can be early diagnosed and observed.
- A part of government funding or monastic revenue should be set aside for the maintenance programmes.
- The condition of historic buildings and sites must be recorded during the inspection. The record should be in both descriptive and illustrative format. A recording should also be required before carrying out any form of intervention. It should be included as an important part of the working process. Some of the total conservation cost should be allocated for the recording and surveying.
- An inventory of the art objects belonging to a particular monastery should be carried out and the record should be kept by the monastery and the Department of Fine Arts. The Department should provide a monastery with professional advice in drawing up this inventory.
- An organization responsible for recording historic monuments should be established by the government so that the recording and documentation can be performed by specialized professionals.

### ***Personal training***

- The nature of conservation practice in Thailand, which has been the sole responsibility of the Department of Fine Arts, should be transformed by distributing the work to specialized personnel outside the organization. Conservation procedure and legislation, therefore, needs to be changed to enable the involvement of professionals from other sectors.
- A professional course for training conservation architects should be established on a post-graduate level.
- There should be a collaboration between the Department of Fine Arts and academic sector in organizing training programmes for the personnel in the



Department as well as for university students studying conservation.

- Training courses should be provided for every level of personnel who are involved in conservation activity, for instance building contractors, conservation technicians, archaeologists, and conservators.

- Craftsmen with highly specialized skill should be recognized and given equal status with other professionals in the field of conservation.

- Research should be carried out into the work of traditional craftsmen and building craft of each region and examples of work by highly skill craftsmen should be collected and documented.

- The Department of Fine Arts should compile a list of skilled craftsmen in each region to be used as a guide for identifying suitable personnel for a conservation work, eliminating the problem of employing sub-standard workmen.

-Centres for training craftsmen should be established in every region. There is possibility for using a historic monastery as a place for training where the repair works within the monastery can be undertaken. An historic monastery should be encouraged to allow the setting up of a permanent workshop within its precinct; further co-operation between the monastery and the Department of Fine Arts should be encouraged in the role of training craftsmen.

- The Sangha should be informed of the value of monastic art and architecture. A course on monastic architecture could be included in their educational curriculum, and short courses be organized. A leaflet prepared by the Department of Fine Arts giving simple guidance in the care of monasteries should be presented to the Sangha and monastic committee.

To summarise, the task of the professionals in conservation is to understand and be able to identify the value of the heritage we wish to conserve, as well as to ensure that the heritage continues to be integrated with the modern way of living. In the case of religious architecture where the religious function and the modern day requirements tend to grow apart, it is necessary to reach a balance between the two. The



recommendations will provide a framework for both, the development of the conservation process as well as the control for change within historic monasteries. The change to the fabric and function should emphasise the religious ideology, so as to conserve and enhance the spirit of the sacred place thus maintaining the continuity of the rich tradition in modern society.



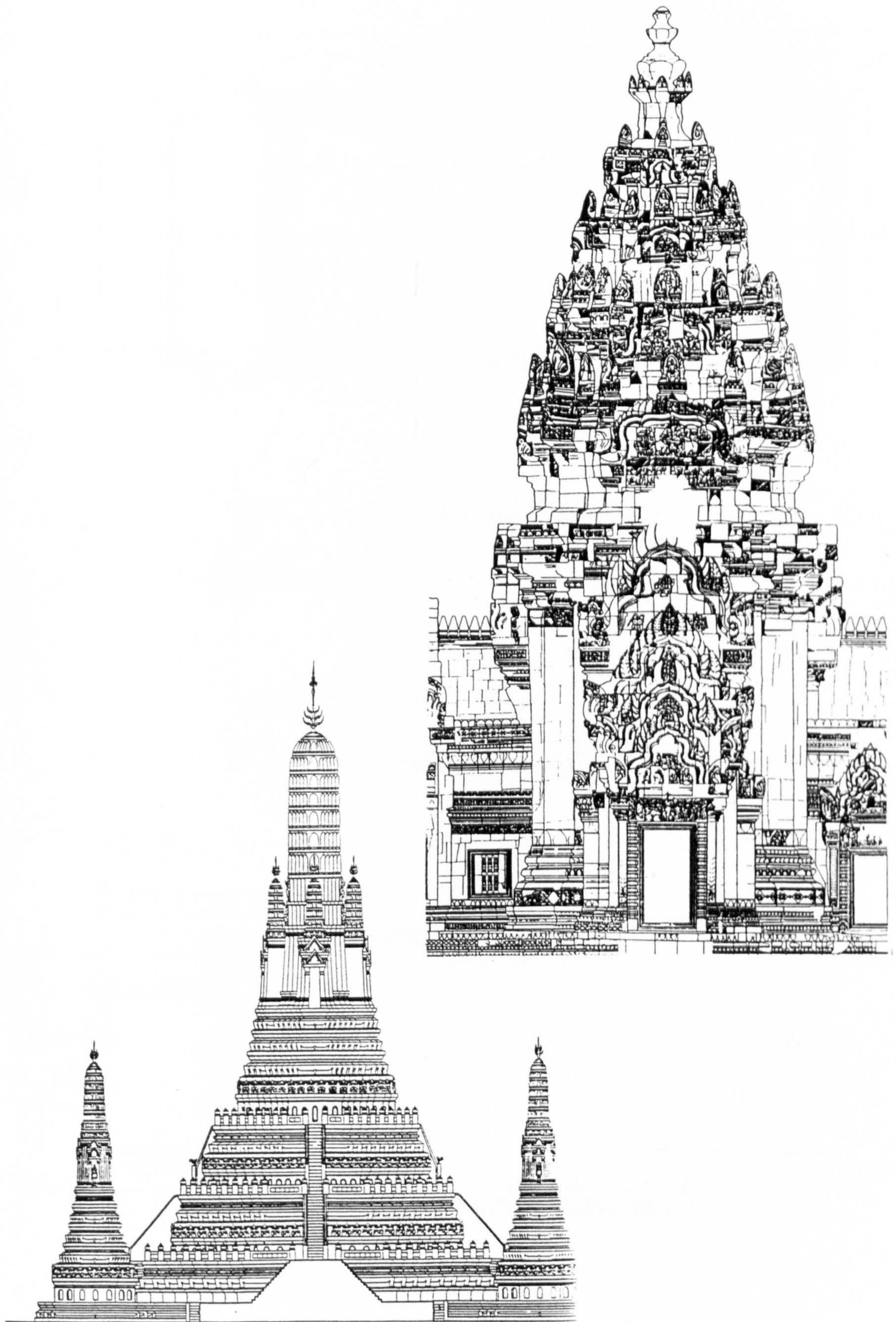


Figure 1 Khmer 'Sikara', Phanom Rung, Burirum and Thai 'prang', Wat Arun, Bangkok  
Source : The Department of Fine Arts; Jumsai : 1982



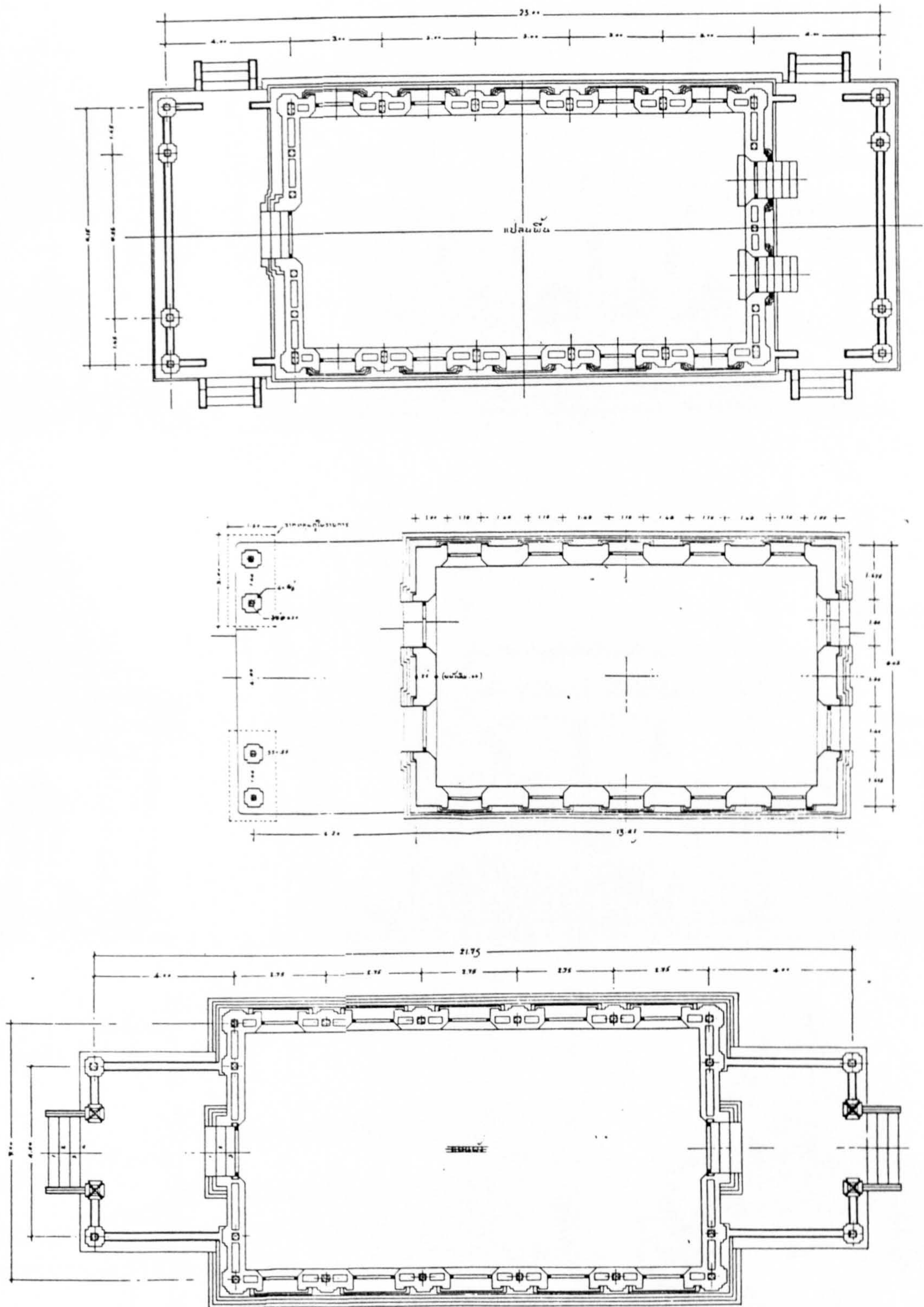


Figure 2 Standard designs for ubosot and vihara (plans)  
 Source : The Department of Fine Arts



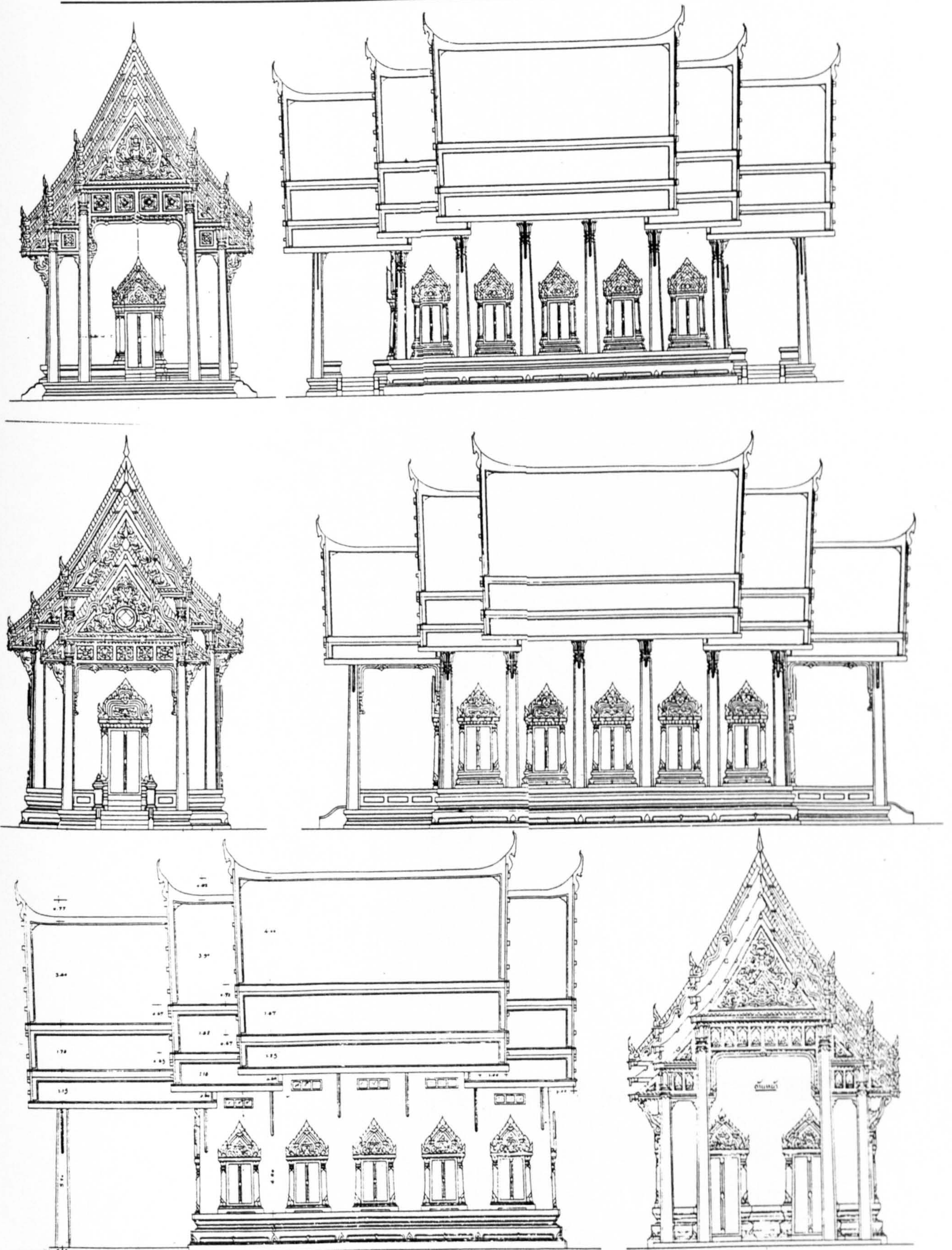


Figure 3 Standard designs for ubosot and vihara (elevations)  
Source : The Department of Fine Arts



**BIBLIOGRAPHY  
AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS**



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**Glossary of Terms**

- Abhidhamma** : The 'higher doctrine', the 'beyond Dhamma', is the analytical texts of the teaching of the Buddha. It is highly philosophical and contains an entire system of mind training.
- Amittabha** : The 'Infinite Light Buddha', one of five transcendental Buddhas in Mahayana Buddhism. Amittabha is the Buddha of the western paradise and usually depicted in meditation.
- Anatta** : without self. One of the three 'Signs of Being'.
- Anicca** : impermanent, change. One of the three 'Signs of Being'.
- Bhikku** : A Buddhist monk of the Theravada School.
- Bodhi** : Wisdom, Enlightenment, Awakening.
- Bodhisattva** : A person who wishes to win full enlightenment, or to become a Buddha. The ideal of the Mahayana School. One whose life is dedicated to service of mankind.
- Bodhi Tree** : The Buddhist sacred tree. The tree beneath which the Buddha meditated and attained Enlightenment.
- Brahma** : The 'creator' in the Hindu Trinity of principal gods.
- Brahman** : A devotee of Brahmanism prior to the creation of Hinduism. After that point, the term describes a member of the highest rank in the Hindu caste system. In Thailand, the Brahmans have been responsible for conducting ceremonies of state and rites for the royal family.
- Brahmanism** : The religious of India out of which Hinduism and Buddhism grew.
- Chakravartin** : A 'Universal Monarch' and one of the two forms it is said Buddha could have assumed in his last birth to lead mankind. Instead, he chose to be a Teacher and by that means to bring salvation to mankind.
- Chedi** : Thai word for stupa
- Dhamma** : The doctrine formulated and preached by the Buddha; the scripture; the truth. Dhamma also means : 1) The one ultimate Reality 2) an ultimately real event 3) righteousness virtue (as reflected in life) 4) object of the sixth sense-organ, ie. of mind 5) property 6) mental state 7) thing 8) quality.
- Dukka** : Unsatisfactory; suffering; pain. One of the three 'Signs of Being'.
- Five Precepts** : A self-vow to abstain from the principal forms of immorality.
- Gupta** : The name of a dynasty in northern India during 302-470 AD. Also a name for the School of art in India during the fourth to the sixth centuries.
- Hinayana** : The earliest School of Buddhism. The Theravada is the most well-known and the only surviving sect of the Hinayana School.
- Indra** : A god. The highest among 33 gods dwelling on Mount Sumeru. He is devoted to protecting the Buddha.
- Jataka** : Stories of the previous lives of the Buddha, approximately 550 in number with the last ten being the most important.
- Karma** : Action, in the sense of action and reaction. The law of moral compensation.
- Katina** : The ceremony of presenting monastic robes to the monks, held annually at the end of the rainy season.
- Khmer** : An ancient race in Cambodia, whose empire flourished during the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries.
- Kuti** : A dwelling or a meditation cell used by Buddhist monks.
- Mahayana** : The Northern School of Buddhism, found in Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, and Japan.
- Mara** : Powerful force of evil, temptation and death.



Naga	: A divine serpent in Buddhist mythology.
Nirvana	: Nibbana (in Pali). The state of total extinction entered after one has achieved Enlightenment. The ultimate goal of all Buddhist endeavour the extinction of craving and separate selfhood, a life which had gone beyond death.
Pali	: An ancient Indian language derived from Sanskrit and serving Theravada Buddhism as the language of the scriptures and sermons.
Parinibbana	: The state of liberation from suffering after abandoning the body.
Patimokka	: The Disciplinary Code.
Pitaka	: Basket ( of Scriptures ) see Tri Pitaka
Prang	: A form of stupa in Thailand derived its form from the 'sikara' of Khmer architecture. In Hindu mythology, it represents the thirty-three levels of heaven, the summit occupied by Indra. In Buddhism, it is seen as the thirty-three stages of perfection of mind.
Samsara	: The world of birth and death; rebirth.
Sangha	: The Buddhist monastic Order.
stupa	: A monument originally built to enshrine the relics of the Buddha or to mark an important site in Buddhism. A synonym of 'chedi' in Thailand.
Sumeru	: Sacred mountain at the centre of the world, dwelling of the gods.
Sutra	: A texts which claim to have been spoken by the Buddha.
Tathagata	: A title of the Buddha. 'He who has thus come', ie. as the other Buddhas have come.
Tivitisa	: The heaven of thirty-three levels where the gods dwell.
Theravada	:The doctrine or the teaching of the Thera, the 'Elders' of the Sangha of the Southern School of Buddhism.
Tri Bhumi	: The Three World : 1) the world of sense-desire; 2) the world of form, or fine matter; 3) the formless world.
Tri pitaka	: Literally means 'three baskets', a term which describes the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism. It consists of Vinaya ( the discipline), Sutta ( the Discourse ), and Abhidhamma ( the Analytic Doctrine ).
Triple Gems	: The Buddhist Trinity comprises of the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha.
Ubosot	: Bot ( in Thai ), A hall where the Pattimokka is recited. The congregation and ordination hall of a monastery.
Ubosotha	: Monastic ceremony taking place every half month, at which the patimokka is recited.
Vihara	: Viharn ( in Thai ), One of the principal buildings of a Buddhist monastery. It is used as a worship or assembly hall by monks and laity.
Vinaya	: One of the three Pitaka of the Pali Canon. The rule of the Sangha.
Vishnu	: One of the trinity of principal Hindu gods. Vishnu is the preserver.
Votive tablets	: Clay or metal tablets imprinted with a figure of the Buddha. Traditionally, they were buried under stupa or hidden in caves.
Wat	: Thai word means both 'temple' and 'monastery' and describing the complex of buildings that constitutes the whole monastic precinct.



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## **APPENDICES**



## **Appendix I**

### **Regulation for Monument Conservation, The Fine Arts Department 1985.**

The Fine Arts Department is the government authority responsible for the control, maintenance and protection of monuments as historical evidence and treasure of the nation. It is also responsible for the restoration of monuments in accordance with artistic, historical, and archaeological methods and principles and to assess their importance in an economic, social, and cultural context.

The followed regulations given in section 10 and 11 of the Bill of Monuments, Antiques, and Museums of 1961 which stipulates:

Section 1. These regulations are called 'Regulations for Monument Conservation 1985.'

Section 2. These regulations shall be effected since the day they are declared.

Section 3. In these regulations:

1 " Conservation " refers to the act of keeping and maintaining a monument in order to retain its values. This comprises protection, maintenance, preservation, restoration, and repair.

a) " Preservation " refers to the act of keeping the monument in its original state and preventing it from further damage.

b) " Restoration " refers to the act of putting back to a former state.

c) " Repair " refers to the act of repairing and improving a monument to its original state. However, the original and the newly constructed part should be in harmony with each other and be detectable from each other.

2. " Monument " refers to immovable property whose age, architectural styles and historical evidence can be of value to arts, history, or archaeology. This includes all antiques attached to the monuments and site.

3. " Committee " refers to a group of persons appointed for considering, controlling, keeping, and preserving the monuments.

4. Before starting any actual conservation work, following activities must be carried out :

4.1 It is essential to survey the original state and the present state of a monument



with special emphasis on the records of construction and preservation with the reference to the architectural styles, the use of materials, and the degree of deterioration. This should be done in the form of documentation with detailed photographs, diagrams, and drawing which can be used as a reference for the conservation project. Such records may also serve as important historical documents in the future.

4.2 The planning of a conservation project must be based on the evaluation of the monument's values, such as, its historical, archaeological, architectural, and aesthetic values. The conservation planning should aim primarily at preserving the most significant value. However, the lesser values must be also taken in ti account.

4.3 If a monument has been repaired or restored in the past, the restored parts should be evaluated. If it has lessen the values of the monument, it should be removed and the original element be reinstated.

5. Any conservation project must take in to account the landscape and the surrounding of the monument. Anything that may diminish their values should be appropriately improved.

6. If monument has been altered in the past, detailed information on the alterations must be carefully examined, for examples, the number of the alterations, the period of each alterations, and any errors or defects as the results of the alterations. The conservation to be taken need not conform to a particular style. An appropriate style that will enhance the values of the monument should be selected and used as the basis for the conservation. However, there must be records of such alterations or methods of conservation in the form of documents, drawing, or models.

7. For the monuments of the highest significance and values, only stabilization and preservation works should be carried out.

8. Any new techniques and methods of stabilization must be carefully studied and tested before they can be used on a historic monument. This is to ensure that will not damage and reduce the values of the monument.

9. The intervention for the stability of a monument should be done only when it is



necessary. The new structure must be sympathetic and in harmony with the original.

10. When it is necessary to reconstruct the missing parts of a monument in order to retain the architectural value and to enable the progress of the conservation process, the new parts should be designed to be distinct from those of the original through the use of different materials, colour, or texture. However, they should be harmonized with the original.

11. The conservation of valuable paintings, sculptures, and antique art objects which are attached to or placed within a monument should only be dealt with by means of preservation or stabilization in order to retain their original values as much as possible. This is except consecrated objects which have been continuously worshipped. The repair or restoration must be approved by the committee before the work is carried out.

12. The conservation of ruined monuments can be done by the reassembling of the original fragments to the original form, or partial reconstruction using the original material. The missing parts which are necessary for the reconstruction can be made.

13. Archaeological sites should be preserved in the condition after their excavations. Necessary measures must be taken to prevent further damage without diminishing their values.

14. Historic monuments that are consecrated places and familiar to the local people must be restored without any alteration, since it may diminish their values or the devotion that the people give to the monuments.

15. Certain precaution must be taken against vandalism and robbery. Invaluable antiquities, which include sculptures, paintings, art objects or parts thereof, must be kept in a safe place while their replicas are installed in their original places. However, this is an extreme measure which should be taken only when there is no alternative.

16. The conservation of historic buildings which are still in used includes the alteration and additional to the original structure. The addition may not necessarily be made identical with the original building but must be sympathetic and in harmony with the original ones and must not diminish the values of the originals.



17. Maintenance measures must be established for all monuments whether listed or unlisted, so that they will always be in good condition.

18. In the case of dilapidated structure that may cause danger, the initial stabilization must be done before any intervention takes place in order to prevent further damage.

19. There should be a collaboration between government organizations, private sector, and specialists in the relevant fields for the benefits of the conservation of the national heritage.

20. The records of all interventions concerning conservation or excavation must be kept in the form of research papers with illustrations which may either be drawings or photographs. The records must include every practical step in details. For instance, the clearing and the planing of the site, the stabilization of various parts, etc. These records must be kept in the National Archive.

21. The Director-General of the Fine Arts Department has the duty to enforce the above-mentioned regulations.

Declared on August 19, 1985.



## **Appendix II**

### **Twelve Principles of Buddhism**

In 1945, a brief summary of Buddhism was compiled by Christmas Humphreys, the founder of the Buddhist Society, London which is the oldest Buddhist organization in Europe. The 'Twelve Principles of Buddhism' was approved by leading Buddhists in China, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand and form a step towards the foundation of a World Buddhism.

1 Self-salvation is for any man the immediate task. If a man lay wounded by a poisoned arrow he would not delay extraction by demanding details of the man who shot it, or the length and make of the arrow. There will be time for ever-increasing understanding of the Teaching during the treading of the Way. Meanwhile, begin now by facing life, as it is, learning always by direct and personal experience.

2 The first fact of existence is the law of change or impermanence. All that exists, from a mole to a mountain, from a thought to an empire, passes through the same cycle of existence - i.e. birth, growth, decay and death. Life alone is continuous, ever seeking self-expression in new forms. 'Life is a bridge; therefore build no house on it.' Life is a process of flow, and he who clings to any form, however splendid, will suffer by resisting the flow.

3 The law of change applies equally to the 'soul'. There is no principle in an individual which is immortal and unchanging. Only the 'Namelessness', the ultimate Reality, is beyond change, and all forms of life, including man, are manifestations of this Reality. No one owns the life which flows in him any more than the electric light bulb owns the current which gives it light.

4 The universe is the expression of law. All effects have causes, and man's soul or character is the sum total of his previous thoughts and acts. Karma, meaning action-reaction, governs all existence, and man is the sole creator of his circumstances and his reaction to them, his future condition, and his final destiny. By right thought and action he can gradually purify his inner nature, and so by self-realization attain in time liberation from rebirth. The process covers great periods of time, involving life after life on earth, but ultimately every form of life will reach enlightenment.



5 Life is one and indivisible, though its ever-changing forms are innumerable and perishable. There is, in truth, no death, though every form must die. From an understanding of life's unity arises compassion, a sense of identity with the life in other forms. Compassion is described as 'the Law of laws - eternal harmony', and he who breaks this harmony of life will suffer accordingly and delay his own Enlightenment.

6 Life being One, the interest of the part should be those of the whole. In his ignorance man thinks he can successfully strive for his own interests, and this wrongly-directed energy of selfishness produces suffering. He learns from his suffering to reduce and finally eliminate its cause. The Buddha taught four Noble Truths : (a) The omnipresence of suffering; (b) its cause, wrongly directed desire; (c) its cure, the removal of the cause; and (d) the Noble Eightfold Path of self-development which leads to the end of suffering.

7 The Eightfold Path consists in Right (or perfect) Views or preliminary understanding, Right Aims or Motive, Right Speech, Right Acts, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Concentration or mind-development, and, finally, Right Samadhi, leading to full Enlightenment. As Buddhism is a way of living, not merely a theory of life, the treading of this Path is essential to self-deliverance. 'Cease to do evil, learn to do good, cleanse your own heart: this is the Teaching of the Buddhas.'

8 Reality is indescribable, and a God with attributes is not the final Reality. But the Buddha, a human being, became the All-Enlightened One, and the purpose of life is the attainment of Enlightenment. This state of consciousness, Nivarna, the extinction of the limitations of self-hood, is attainable on earth. All men and all other forms of life contain the potentiality of Enlightenment, and the process therefore consists in becoming what you are. 'Look within: thou art Buddha.'

9 From potential to actual Enlightenment there lies the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path 'from desire to peace', a process of self development between the 'opposites', avoiding all extremes. The Buddha trod this Way to the end, and the only faith required in Buddhism is the reasonable belief that where a Guide has trodden it is worth our while to tread. The Way must be trodden by the whole man, not merely the best of him, and heart and mind must be developed equally. The Buddha was the All-Compassionate as well as the All-Enlightened One.



10 Buddhism lays great stress on the need of inward concentration and meditation, which leads in time to the development of the inner spiritual faculties. The subjective life is as important as the daily round, and periods of quietude for inner activity are essential for a balanced life. The buddhist should at all times be 'mindful and self-possessed', refraining from mental and emotional attitude to circumstances, which he knows to be his own creation, helps him to keep his reaction to it always under control.

11 The Buddha said: 'Work out your own salvation with diligence'. Buddhism knows no authority for truth save the intuition of the individual, and that is authority for himself alone. Each man suffers the consequences of his own acts, and learns thereby, while helping his fellow men to the same deliverance; nor will prayer to the Buddha or to any God prevent an effect from following its cause. Buddhist monks are teachers and exemplars, and in no sense intermediates between Reality and the individual. The utmost tolerance is practised towards all other religions and philosophies, for no man has the right to interfere in his neighbour's journey to the Goal.

12 Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor 'escapist', nor does it deny the existence of God or soul, though it places its own meaning on these terms. It is, on the contrary, a system of thought, a religion, a spiritual science and a way of life, which is reasonable, practical and all-embracing. For over two thousand years it has satisfied the spiritual needs of nearly one-third of mankind. It appeals to the West because it has no dogmas, satisfies the reason and the heart alike, insists on self-reliance coupled with tolerance for other points of view, embraces science, religion, philosophy, psychology, ethics and art, and points to man alone as the creator of his present life and sole designer of his destiny.



## Appendix III

### The Indianization of South-East Asia

The area of South-East Asia before the first century was inhabited by prehistoric indigenous population. Throughout the first century, new people arrived in the peninsular. They were Indian merchants seeking new products and markets. With them they brought indigenous religions of India, Hinduism and Buddhism, and also their civilization and culture. The development of the religions and social life of India spread over a large region in the south-central portion of the Asian continent corresponding to what is now Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, southern part of Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. These areas were sometimes grouped by historians as 'Greater India'.

The approach from India to these lands was made from more than one direction, but mainly by sea. The Indian sailed east across the bay of Bengal to arrive at the nearest land in the south-eastern Asian peninsular where they established half-way points to serve as supply ports, sources of new products and markets for their goods. Some crossed the narrow neck of the peninsular via rivers to the bay of Ban Don, in the south of present day Thailand and sailed north to Champa, now Vietnam. The others may have taken the longer sea route through the Straits of Malacca and eventually reached the Island of Java.

The most important Indianized state in ancient Indo-China was the Funan Empire, the Chinese transcription of the Khmer 'phnom', meaning mountain. The origin of the empire and its people is little known about. The stories from Chinese chronicles tell us of an Indian prince called Kaundinya who travelled to the shore of Indo-China and found the people there governed by a queen who was named 'Willow Leaf'. The prince was shocked to find all these people quite naked and proceeded first to drape them in some suitable clothing, and finally to marry the queen and become their king (Le May 1954:?).

This is the semi-legendary story of the foundation of what was afterwards to become the great Indianized kingdom of Funan. It arose in the first century AD. and flourished until the sixth century when internal conflicts began to weaken it. The early history of Funan is entirely based on the Chinese chronicles translated by Paul Pelliot. From the first century, Funan kings and Chinese emperors had exchanged several ambassadors. It was about the end of the fourth century that there occurred an event which formed a landmark of the highest importance in the history of Funan and in the whole subsequent



development of Indian cultural expansion. This was the coming of one of the greatest reformers, an Indian Brahman, whose name was also Kaundinya. In the words of the Chinese historian :

*" Kaundinya, a Brahman from India, heard a supernatural voice calling to him: 'You must go and reign in Funan'. Kaundinya rejoiced in his heart and reached P'an-P'an, which is in the south. The people of Funan heard of him; the whole kingdom was stirred with joy; they came to him and chose him king. He changed all the rules according to the methods of India "* (Wales 1937 : ?).

Chinese chronicles speak of Funan in the last quarter in the fifth century, when the empire was at the height of its power. They indicate that there was transformation in the customs of the country, which is quite clear that Funan was a fully organized Indian state, civilized not only through the medium of the second Kaundinya, but also by the stream of colonists of the priest and warrior castes who accompanied and followed him and still kept up a communication with their home land.

### **The beginning of Khmer Empire**

During the same period, there was also another Indianized state known by the name given to it by Chinese sources as Chenla. It was situated in the middle of the Mekhong basin. About AD. 550, Chinese chronicles were written about the overthrow of Funan by Chenla, the primitive vassal state of people of Khmer origin.

the progressive expansion of Chenla brought about almost a total conquest of Funan at the beginning of the eighth century. In this period, Chinese records report that Chenla was divided into two parts, Chenla of the sea which was bounded by the ocean and covered with lakes (ie. the Great Lake and the lower reach of the Meakong) and Chenla of the Land to the north, which was filled with mountains and valleys (ie. Laos and the west Vietnam).

The eighth century of Khmer history is rather unclear. The only certain evidence is that it is the period of unrest and confusion and towards the end, of foreign invasions. The disturbances which troubled the region were connected with events in the Malay archipelago. At the end of the seventh century, Malay kingdom of Srivijaya had emerged and in the beginning of the eighth century it began to spread its domain over the peninsular. At the same time in Java, another new kingdom resurrected the imperial title 'King of the Mountain', and indicated its intention to dominate over the universe. The expansion of the Malayan kingdom and the rise of the ambitious dynasty in Java had



effects on the coast of Indo-China, where numerous evidences of maritime raids from the south were recorded in inscriptions.

The king from the southern kingdom had control over the Khmer in the eighth century. It was not until the early ninth century that the Khmer kingdom united under the rule of a Khmer king named Jayavarman II. He was connected with the Khmer dynasty of the eighth century, and probably fled to the southern island at the time of disturbances or else was forced to retreat there during one of the wartime raids. His return from Java took place around 800 AD., and his formal reign began about 802 AD.

To the west the new country of united Chenla, or Khmer Kingdom, was the basin of Menam. This region must have been long inhabited, because the remains of prehistoric settlements were found in many areas. In the sixth to eleventh centuries the area was inhabited by the Mons of the Kingdom of Davaravati. Although not much trace of the history of the country could be found, the excavation of ruins and sites at Nakorn Pathom and Sri Deva, which are supposed to be the remains of the sixth century or even earlier town, do prove the origin and existence of Davaravati.

The Khmer Kingdom expanded westwards and in the eleventh century during the reign of the great Angkorian king, Suryavarman I (1002-1050), Davaravati succumbed to the superior strength of the Khmer. The kingdom also expanded to the east where was situated the kingdom of Campa (present-day Vietnam). The empire became bigger at the expense of the neighbouring kingdoms and through a succession of Khmer warrior kings.

Throughout the course of Khmer history extending over some nine centuries, the capital of Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom and many monuments were built on the forced labour of the Khmers themselves and the people they enslaved. The social organization of the Khmer Empire at the height of its power was described by Tcheon-Ta-Kouan, a Chinese traveller who came to the kingdom in the thirteenth century, that the Khmers were resolved into two social strata, consisting of a high caste ruling class on one hand, and the aborigines of the country on the other. Such a state recalls that which existed in India when that country was becoming populated by the Indo-Aryans. But between these two extremes of human strata there must have been a large and very vital community corresponding to a middle class from whom were recruited, among others,



the artists, craftsmen, designers, the master masons and the numerous skilled personnel who would be an essential factor in the production of such superb examples of architecture and the art.

### **The Beginning of the Thai Kingdom**

The coming of the Thai and the cultural influences they brought with them are still unclear. There are several theories concerning the origin and the movement of the Thai race before the forming of the first Thai kingdom in the thirteenth century. The Thai are a Mongoloid race with a tonal speech akin to Chinese, though much influenced later by Sanskrit. Their original habitat is believed to have been in southern China but what region they occupied before they came to the present day Thailand is not clearly established.

It is certain that at the time of the rise of the T'ang dynasty in China (AD. 618-906), the province of Yunnan in southern China was divided into six Thai principalities. A Thai prince who reigned from AD. 792-748 made himself master of the whole Yunnan and set up a kingdom called Nan-Chao, or 'the Southern Lord', by the Chinese. It seems that the Thai first made their appearance in present-day Thailand at a time when the Kingdom of Nan-Chao was invaded by the Chinese from the north. A group of the Thai established their kingdom around Chien-rai, in the northern part of present-day Thailand and in upper Laos. Some of them wandered southwards into Sukothai and Menam Basin, which was Mon territory but held under the rule of the Khmer Empire.

In 1238, the Thai of Sukothai declared independence and drove out the Khmer governor. Sukothai kings carried the war further and expanded the territory to the edge of the Mekhong river and later the war was carried into the eastern provinces of the Khmer Empire itself, which was at the time ruled by Jayavarman III. Angkor Thom was taken and devastated for the first time by the Thai in 1296. The Khmer fought several wars with Sukothai and later with Ayutthaya, another Thai Kingdom that was formed in Menam Basin after the fall of Sukothai. It was not until the seventeenth century that the Khmer completely lost all political control over the north-eastern part of present-day Thailand.



## Appendix IV

### Chronology of Art and Architecture in Thailand

The division of art and architecture in Thailand into periods can be as follows:

Pre-historic	up to the first century AD.
Indianized Period	the first to the sixth centuries AD.
Dvaravati	the sixth to the eleventh centuries AD.
Srivijaya	the eighth to the thirteenth centuries AD.
Lop Buri	the seventh to the thirteenth centuries AD.
Sukothai	the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries AD.
Ayutthaya	1350-1767
Thonburi	1767-1782
Bangkok (Rattanakosin)	1782 to present time

#### Dvaravati Art

The Dvaravati Kingdom was situated in the central part of present-day Thailand. Its capital is believed to be around the old town of Nakorn Pathom. Theravada Buddhism was predominant in the beginning of the kingdom. Later on Mahayana Buddhism was introduced. The art of this period reveals influences from Indian Gupta and Post-Gupta styles (the fourth to the sixth centuries), though the works of later period express indigenous character as well as Khmer influences. These influences can be seen in Buddha images and bas-reliefs used as architectural ornaments. Religious monuments found in ancient Dvaravati towns are set on square, round, or octagonal foundations made of laterite. A brick platform was built up on the foundation and stucco was smoothed over its walls which were then decorated with stucco motifs. On top of the base, a stupa was built. However, because of nondurable nature of the material, little survive except the foundation.

#### Srivijaya Art

The capital of Srivijaya Kingdom was originally believed to be near present-day town of Palembang on the island of Sumatra. However, since a large number of artifacts and archaeological remains have been discovered at Chaiya in southern Thailand, some scholars have come to believe that the capital may have been at Chaiya. Other theories suggest that over the five centuries of its existence, its capital may have been moved many times for economic or strategic reasons (Van Beek 1991 : 73). Mahayana Buddhism was practised during this period. Many bronze figures of Mahayana deities as well as Buddha Images were found. All of them mark the high craftsmanship and



artistic development, especially in bronze casting. In term of architecture, little survives from this period. The Mahadhatu stupa at Chaiya is the best known example, even though it has been restored several times. The structure was built on a square foundation and has a wide porch projected from four sides. It has four square tiered roof decorated with small model stupas at the corners and is crowned with a large stupa as the finial.

### **Lop Buri Art**

In this period, Khmer culture penetrated into what is now the north-eastern and central parts of Thailand, and the town of Lop Buri was probably a stronghold of the Khmer in that area. The art and architecture of this period was heavily influenced by the Schools of Khmer art which either created by Khmer artists or created by local artists as original works or as copies of Khmer models. In this period Buddhism of Mahayana and Theravada as well as Hinduism were practised. Their ideologies were represented in the art and architecture both in planning and iconography.

Phanom Rung Temple is one of the examples that can illustrate the style of the period. The temple was built on top of a hill and was dated between the tenth to the twelfth centuries. The complex is approached by a long processional path leading from the east to the monument. There is an elevated platform connecting the path which ended at the foot of the hill with the main staircase. The platform is surrounded by stone balustrades carved into the form of Naga or seven-headed serpent. According to Hindu mythology,, Naga represented the bridge connecting the human world to the god-dwelling. This concept id clearly interpreted into the planform and the decorative elements at Phanom Rung. On top of the hill is situated the main sanctuary. It is surrounded by two concentric galleries. Only the stone base of the outer gallery remains. Its superstructure was probably built of timber with tile roof which had long perished. The inner gallery is of sandstone with corbelled roof structure. Four portal are situated at the four cardinal points with the main entrance at the eastern one. The main sanctuary is square in plan connected with small porches on three sides with a large anti-chamber on the east. This anti-chamber, as in similar Hindu temples of the same period, was employed as a hall where priests sat and chanted while their leader performed the rites in the main sanctuary where the principle image was kept. The sanctuary was crowned by a superimposed roof. Each storey was decorated with carved pediments, sculptures, and bas-relief inspired by Hindu mythology.