

COSMOLOGY IN ARCHITECTURE BUDDHIST LANNA

Chananchida Yuktirat

*Department of Craft Product Design, Faculty of fine and applied art, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University,
Bangkok, Thailand
E-Mail: Chananchida.yu@ssru.ac.th*

ABSTRACT

Three Planes of Existence is a Buddhist doctrine based on 5 precepts. The idea of such precepts is to do good deeds and avoid evil deeds. Trai Phum Pra Ruang or Three Planes of Existence is a literature work, dividing the world in to three different worlds. The ingenious idea behind this story was written by Pramahathamaraja Lithai or Praya Lithai, king of Sukothai dynasty. The purpose of this story was to preach his mother about Dharma. Even though the doctrine behind Three Planes of Existence is not about nirvana, it is a beautiful literature about different lands in different worlds/planes within the universe. The story reflects the consequences of doing evil deeds. It makes people afraid of doing evil deeds and trying to do good deeds. From the doctrine story of Three Planes of Existence, it enhances the craftsmen with more understanding of Dharma. In a way, they create their works to communicate the story by using symbols and patterns. The meaning of symbols and patterns are to convey the doctrine in artistic ways through architectures and paintings.

Three Planes of Existence in Lanna Buddhist Architecture illustrated the power of faith in Buddhism. The power of faith is conveyed through the architectures in Lanna style. The underlying Buddhist doctrine within the work is a valuable piece of art. In this study, we not only acknowledged the beauty of work but also received the knowledge about Buddhist doctrine from the Three Planes of Existence. We also acknowledged the talent of the craftsmen and the sophisticated of Lanna's ancestors. This study was also considered as a conservation of Lanna Buddhist Architecture.

INTRODUCTION

Cosmology or the Three Planes of Existence has been passed on and reflected on the belief of Buddhism through the Lanna Buddhist Architecture. The Buddhist Architecture illustrated the Buddhist doctrine in the Three Planes of Existence. It also concealed the doctrine about worlds/planes. The Three Planes of Existence or Trai Phum Pra Ruang is a well known scripture in Thai society. Trai Phum Pra Ruang is a foundation for the craftsmen in their paintings, sculptures, architectures, sophisticated arts and folk arts. Sometimes they would illustrate the story directly or use the symbolic of different planes to show their beliefs. (Niyada laosunton, 2000 : 11-12)

The purposes of this composition were

- 1) To have a Dharma scripture in the kingdom
- 2) To make Dharma flourish
- 3) To preach his mother about Dharma

Trai Phum Pra Ruang by Praya Lithai or Pramahathamaraja the first was completed on the 15th day of the 4th waxing moon on the year of the rooster, 1895 Buddhist era. (Akarat Udompon, 2010 : 12)

Universe in Tri Phumi, Three Planes of Existence or cosmology is the important idea used to explain the spiritual structure of human. It created the image of abstract and related to the nature form in ancient people mind. Universe in the beliefs of Buddhist means three worlds or Tri Phumi. It composed of Kamaphumi, Rupaphumi and Arupaphumi. The three worlds represented all sort of status of living creatures. The cosmology was also the foundation of ancient wisdom which showed the power of faith in Buddhism. (Chalongdet Kupanumas, 2014 : 17-18)

Buddhist Cosmology

Trai Phum Pra Ruang explains that the center of the universe is at Mount Meru, which is the highest mountain in the universe. It is also the core of the world, surrounded by other mountains called Mount Sundhaboriphan (ring shaped mountain encircle repeatedly 7 times). The space between the 7 mountains from Mount Meru to the universe's mountain wall is surrounded by Nateeseetundhon. The human land is scatted on four directions or on 4 planes, which are as follows:

1. The Northern Plane is called Utarakuroot.
2. The Western Plane is called Amorradohyarn.
3. The Eastern Plane is called Boorapaviteh.
4. The Southern Plane is called Chompoo Plane.

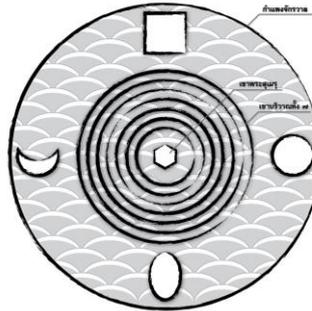


Figure 1: Cosmology model in Trai Phum Pra Ruang

Cosmology in Architecture Buddhist Lanna

In this study 5 temples were investigated. There were Phra Singh Temple (Chiang Mai), Ton Kain Temple (Chiang Mai), Phrathat Lampang Luang Temple (Lampang), Lai Hin Luang Temple (Lampang) and Pong Sanook Temple (Lampang). The empirical data were collected in order to find patterns of Buddhist cosmology in architecture. The data were positioning of the object, size of the area, pattern and size of objects (doors and windows), lighting, color, shading and reflection, position of principle Buddha image in a temple and painting or design inside the Ubosot. Those elements were the reflection of the beliefs in Buddhism according to Three Planes of Existence especially inside the Ubosot. The decorations as the component of Buddhist Architecture were to give structural shape, aesthetic and concealed the belief within the northern society of Thailand. (Tik Sanbun, 2010 : 45)

The other components were part of the imaginarity fulfillment. All the details were related and creative which made a distinct interior design more perfect. According to the diagram of Three Planes of Existence and the layout of the important temples in Lanna, showed the differences between Theravada sect located in the central and southern part of Thailand and Mahiyankarat sect which was originated in Lanna . Mahiyankarat sect or Weng Jang Jarng believed that the former existence of Lord Buddha was white elephant. Thus the elephant can be seen in Buddhist Architecture. In Theravada sect or the Sri Lankan lineage, Chedi or Ubosot will be located in the center as it represented Mount Meru. The surrounding cloister of Chedi or Ubosot represented Mount Sundhaboriphan. There is also a single base Chedi represented 4 planes. The principle Buddha image faced to the east. The position of Chompoo plane was at the south. According to the belief that India was Chompoo plane (Land of Buddha), so the people who wanted to meet Buddha had to sail to the south. This was different from the people in Lanna , who used Viharn as the center. The underlying meaning was to image that Viharn was Himmaman Forest. The patterns and symbols were related to Himmaman Forest. Inside the Viharn, there was Mulagandhakuti. The Mulagandhakuti was a Chedi over the statue of Buddha and represented Buddha. (Somkit Jiratasnakul, 2003 : 206) These designs implied that when people passed Samsara, they would enter to Himmaman Forest and meet Buddha.



Figure 2: Buddhism in Lanna architect



Figure 3: Pavilion at Ton Kain Temple

The Viharn inside Ton Kain Temple (Chiang Mai) had Yodchat which represented Mount Meru. There were also many Chedi which represented the stars or other universe. Chedi also represented 4 planes around Mount Meru. Fine sand was a representative of Nateeseetundhon. The cloister or glass cloister was a representative of universe's boundary.

From our investigation at Ton Kain temple, we found out that pavilion was used as a representative of Chompoo plane on the south western. Thus when Lanna people travelled to India, they needed to pass to the eastern before encircling to the south.

Before entering into Viharn, you must reflect virtue, concentration and discernment or wisdom. The doctrine underlying were Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truth. The Eightfold Path was represented by eight angles. The Four Noble Truth was represented by a square pillar on the side. The round pillar in the middle represented Paramattung (Everything combined into meditation). This implied that the person who wanted to meet Lord Buddha must have virtue. Most of the Viharn faced to the east. The design made the light reflect to the principle Buddha statue in the morning.

When we entered Viharn (center of the universe), there was Himmapan Forest symbol. The component of pattern and symbol gave the detail of Himmapan Forest. There were three groups of them which were animals, plants, and cloud. Inside Phra Singh Temple, the pattern of Viharn was comparable to the local Lanna people wearing Raja pattern shirts. The pattern was delicate and decorated with Ava glass. Most of

the colors used were blue and red. These colors represented King Rama V who patronized the reconstruction of Phra Singh Temple.

Inside Viharn, it was very simple. There was no decoration. The color inside was white. However pillars and roof were painted in maroon color. Lanna people mixed cinnabar with lacquer varnish to create a unique reddish brown color. This color not only represented the king but also created a reflection. This design created the atmosphere for meditation and was called Samanusati. Inside Viharn, there was a big principle Buddha statue in the attitude of subduing Mara. This represented the idea that Lord Buddha was supreme over the universe (idea from Ayutthaya). The smaller size of Buddha statues meant that apart from the Buddha, there were other monks as well.

The hall characteristic of Viharn was a closed system. In general, the structure was the same with multi-tiered roof and lower eaves than usual. There were two patterns of Kong Khew (arches beneath the gable which meet to suggest a stylized eyebrow). The patterns were man and woman patterns. On top of the door, there was a Naga-tun symbol. The reason why there was a Naga-Tun symbol on top of the door was for the protection. The belief of Naga was from the story of Lord Buddha. Since then the word Naga was part of ordination ceremony.

The pattern of stilt was Air Naga pattern. The pattern was derived form of Naga with wing. The balustrade of stairway was in Makara Naga pattern. They believed that Makara or dragon represented enchantment or time. When things released from the mouth of Makara, it represented nirvana. So it can be concluded that Naga was free from time or samsara.

It was to imply that once you entered the Himmapha Forest, you had to pass through three layers. The first layer was plants and floral. The second one was different kinds of animals, and the third layer consisted of four mountains which were represented by 4 different animals (cow, horse, elephant and lion). Next it would be water which was represented by lotus. Further above, it would be the sky level which meant the roof. Craftsman would use Mak pattern.

CONCLUSION

The study of Three Planes of Existence in Lanna Buddhist Architecture was done at five temples. There were Phra Singh Temple (Chiang Mai), Ton Kain Temple (Chiang Mai), Phrathat Lampang Luang Temple (Lampang), Lai Hin Luang Temple (Lampang) and Pong Sanook Temple (Lampang). All 5 temples have similar components and temple layout. The components and temple layout was based on Three Planes of Existence. They emphasized on Chom Poo Plane which is the center of the universe. Patterns, components and details of Viharn decorations were similar. The difference between each temple was only the delicacy of the craftsmen. Phra Singh temple, Ton Kain temple and Phrathat Lampang Luang temple were more delicate since they were constructed and designed by the royal craftsmen. While Lai Hin Luang temple and Pong Sanook temple were constructed and designed by the peasant craftsmen, resulting in less delicacy work. But they conveyed the doctrine and imaginary story of Three Planes of Existence in a straight forward and easy understanding way.

Three Planes of Existence associated to Lanna Buddhist Architecture attracted people who want to enter Buddhist Plane. Thus the purpose was to learn and appreciate the beauty of Buddhism in Lanna Architecture.

SUGGESTION

The study explores the history, mythology and to expand the influence of the Sukhothai kingdom through faith in Buddhism. Causing the Trai Phum Pra Ruang And from the influence of faith affecting the layout and decor, as well as the story through the Buddha Lanna architecture. Shows how to create an atmosphere outside. And building Since the choice of direction The building layout A focus on details and still slightly conservative faith. Mind is an anchor to hold on to the good. So it should be to educate the people. the general public the tourist To demonstrate the importance of the Apocalypse Prarewg worlds. Buddhist and Lanna architecture to more accurately focus on beauty alone.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper would not have been possible without the contribution, the supporting, the kindness help and the encouragement of Associate Professor Dr.Luedech Girdwichai, The Chancellor of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Assistant Professor Dr.Witthaya Mekhum, The Vice President.

REFERENCES

- Akarat Udompon. (2010). Trai Phum Pra Ruang. Bangkok : Rung-reang-san-kanpim Publishing.
- Jaruphan Supprung. (2012). The Relationship between the Palaces and the Buddhist Temples in Rattanakosin Period: Study on Wat Rajadhipas Vihara. Journal of World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, Issue 68 August 2012, 1763-1766
- Niyada laosunton. (2000). The study to Trai Phum Pra Ruang. Bangkok : Meakunphang Publishing.
- Pisanu Sup. (2007). The puzzle of despising. Bangkok : Amarin Printing & Publishing Public Co., Ltd.
- Somkit Jiratasnakul.(2003). The meaning of the symbols and motto "arch - the" Thailand. Bangkok: Amarin Printing & Publishing Public Co., Ltd.
- Vitune Liaorungreang. (2000). The development of architecture in the province of Chiang Mai. Bangkok: Chiang Mai University.
- Wachare Wacharasin. (2005). Wat Phra chetuphon excellent results. Wonderful in jambudvipa. Bangkok : Matichon Publishing.