

# The Design Inspired by Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV at Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn

Taechit Cheuypoung

**Abstract**—The research will focus on creating pattern designs that are inspired by the pagodas, Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV, that are located in the temple, Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn. Different aspects of the temple were studied, including the history, architecture, significance of the temple, and techniques used to decorate the pagodas, Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV. Moreover, composition of arts and the form of pattern designs which all led to the outcome of four Thai application pattern.

The four patterns combine Thai traditional design with international scheme, however, maintaining the distinctiveness of the glaze mosaic tiles of each Phra Maha Chedi. The patterns consist of rounded and notched petal flowers, leaves and vine, and various square shapes, and original colors which are updated for modernity. These elements are then grouped and combined with new techniques, resulting in pattern designs with modern aspects and simultaneously reflecting the charm and the aesthetic of Thai craftsmanship which are eternally embedded in the designs.

**Keywords**—Chedi, Pagoda, Pattern, Wat .

## I. METHOD AND REASON

THE temple, Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn or commonly known as Wat Pho is one of the important temples of Thailand. Regarded as a royal temple and an official temple during the reigns of King Rama I-IV, it was also comparable to Thailand's first 'open university' due to educational inscriptions found around the temple. In March, 2008, the temple received the recognition, Memory of the World of Asia Pacific region from UNESCO, and on June 16th, 2001, the recognition is also given to 1,440 stone inscriptions of Wat Pho [1].

Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn has the most pagodas in its complex [2]. Of these 99 pagodas, the four Phra Maha Chedi are of importance and were granted the royal monastery status during the reigns of King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke (Rama I), King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (Rama II), King Nangklaor (Rama III), and King Mongkut (Rama IV).

In terms of tourism, Wat Pho was ranked 24th on list of the most popular tourist spot in the world of the year 2006. At the time, there were as much as 8,155,000 tourists visiting the site [3].

Though there is no evidence of when the temple first established, but the oldest structures existed since the

Mr.Taechit Cheuypoung was with the Suansunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand (phone: +66 2160 1382; fax: +66 2160 1393; e-mail: taechit.cheuypoung@gmail.com).

Ayutthaya period. Later, during the Thonburi period, which was in the reign of King Rama I, it first received the royal monastery status. Originally named 'Wat Photaram' or 'Wat Pho,' it received many renovations and expansions of halls, cloisters, and temple constructions in 1788. When the renovations were completed around 1801, it was renamed to 'Wat Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram.'

In the reign of King Rama III, it went through another major restoration and have texts inscribed onto plaques around various pavilions of the temple. By the time of the reign of King Rama IV, the temple was renamed to "Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram Rajwaramahaviharn." The Kings of the Chakri Dynasty has taken into account the importance of the temple, and made it a ritual to continually restore the structure in every reign.

Historical, literary, and medical texts that were inscribed provided much education, hence, deemed as a university for the time. The name Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimolmangklaram appeared at the time of King Rama IV, or around 1868 AD, "the royal name is bestowed upon the temple, but it is only used in the palace, the citizens still call it Wat Pho across the nation... The altered name is not widely held, seems like it will not win." [4].

Additionally, there are also a lot of structures in the temple complex, such as the western area near the Chao Phraya River, where Phutta Saiyat Vihear, Sala Kan Prian pavilion (which was initially Wat Pho temple hall), Phra Mondop scripture hall, and Phra Maha Chedi are situated. The temple complex area was greatly expanded from the initial site. The renovation took Trailokya fundamentals into consideration; the temple symbolizes the sacred mountain of Mount Meru, while the pagodas represented the four main continents.

Undeniably, the four pagodas, Phra Maha Chedi are exquisite and attractive. They are situated next to the temple and surrounded by white porcelain walls. The gate design is Chinese style with Thai influence and at each gate stands a pair of Chinese guardian statues. The base is square with indentations at the corners, creating a 12-angled shape and the pagodas are decorated all around with color-glazed tiles [5].

King Rama I once requested that Phra Si SanphetYadayan Buddha image from Wat Phra Si Sanphet located in Ayutthaya, to be restructured and reformed. However, the clergy had advised that doing so may be inauspicious and bring misfortune. Thus, the King had a pagoda built to cover and support the Buddha instead and named it as Phra Si Sanphet Yadayan as well. The pagoda is covered with green

color tiles, placed at the center of three other pagodas, and dedicated to King Rama I. By the time King Rama III reigned, the pagoda was maintained and two more pagodas were built on each side. The pagodas were arranged in line from north to south. The appearances are also square-based with notches at the corners, with the size and height identical to Phra Si Sanphet Yadayan pagoda. The only difference of each pagoda is the tile colors that are used for decoration. The north pagoda, namely "Phra Maha Chedi Dilok Dhammakornitarn," is covered in white-colored tiles and was dedicated to King Rama II. The third pagoda located to the south is named "Phra Maha Chedi Muni Batborikharn," and is covered in yellow tiles; dedicated to King Rama III. Once King Rama IV succeeded the reign, he had the design of the fourth pagoda modelled after Phra Chedi Sri Suriyothai pagoda of Suan Luang Sobsawan temple in Ayutthaya. The pagoda can be differentiated by having two arched doorway entrances [6], and detailed with navy-blue tiles. This pagoda, "Phra Maha Chedi Song Phra Sri Suriyothai," was respectively dedicated to King Rama IV.

Soon after, King Rama IV had remarked, "For future reigns, let there be no more pagodas in Wat Chetupon Vimolmangklararm, since the four Kings are all present unlike rulers of other lands." [7]. Hence, building more pagodas dedicated to Thai Kings had ceased. Nevertheless, the architecture, decorative embellishment and the vivid colors still kept their beauty and forever amazing impression to those who had seen them.

The researcher wanted to emphasize the significance of Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV which led to modernized production of designs that kept with the originality. The results were worthwhile since the information collected and examined brought about more knowledge and development of patterns. It also met the request for those who favour traditional artefacts with contemporary features.

## II. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

To study the architecture, designs, and colors of Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV. 2) To analyze and evaluate these information on Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV. 3) Using the information for inspiration to create new, modernized designs and patterns.

## III. PROCEDURE

The researcher used pure research method for collecting academic data on the construction, designs, and colors of Phra Maha Chedi of Rama I-IV. A qualitative research included assembling data from documents and field researches at Wat Phra Chetupon Vimolmangklararm Rajwaramahaviharn and the National Library of Thailand. The researcher also conducted interviews of knowledgeable personnel on the subject. The information collected was analyzed qualitatively since it cannot be put into numbers and statistics, and then assessed logically. The research did not have controlled variables in the natural settings. Furthermore, the results were

used for a more descriptive study. The hierarchy of the research can be seen in the following image.

### Research Framework

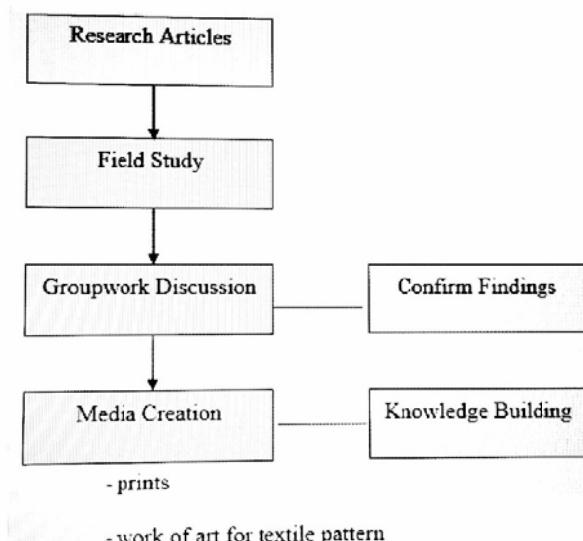


Fig. 1 Framework

## IV. RESULTS

Four resulting designs are created with the inspiration of Phra Maha Chedi of Rama I-IV, and can be seen as follows.

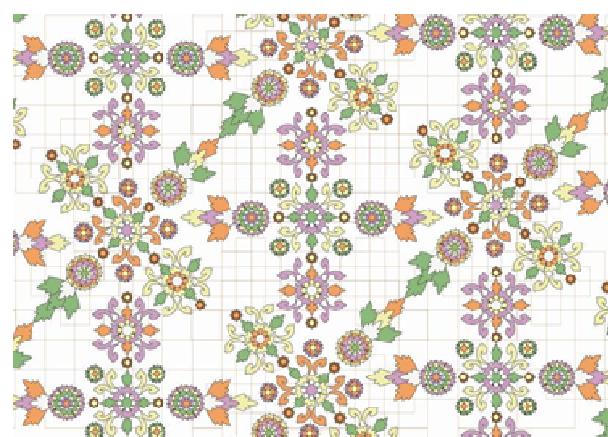


Fig. 2 Design1

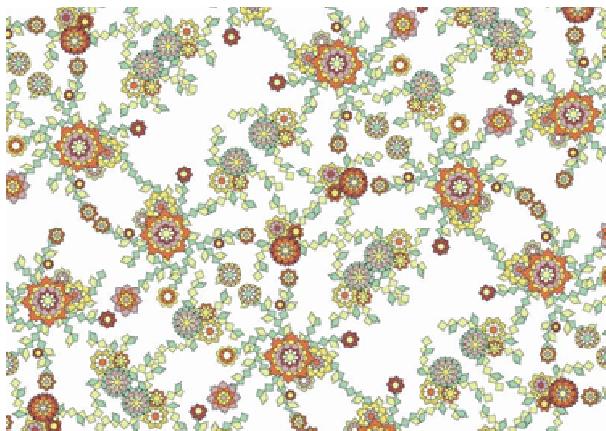


Fig. 3 Design2

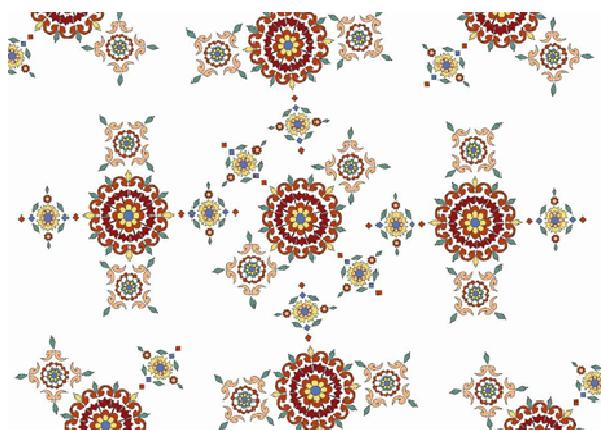


Fig. 4 Design3

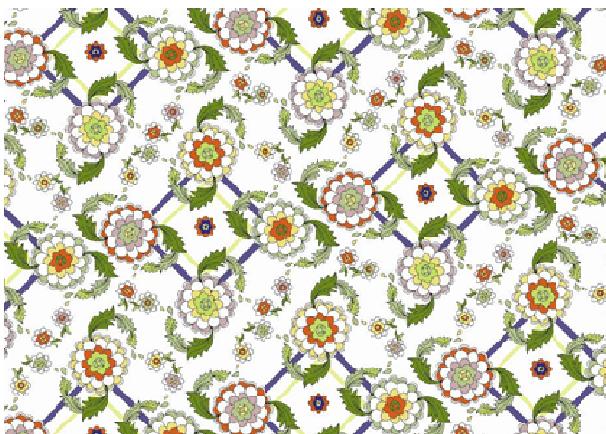


Fig. 5 Design4

## V.DISCUSSION

From this research that has modern designs based on Phra Maha Chedi of Rama I-IV, the researcher has learnt a lot about their history, significance, architecture, and designing techniques. Their artistic aspects and how the designs came to be can also be evaluated. The researcher used Thai designs in combination with international scheme to produce the resulting work. The designs kept with Phra Maha Chedi uniqueness of the mosaic tiles designs using rounded and

notched petal flowers, leaves and vine, and various square shapes, and original colors. Conversely, the researcher also updated the designs to have a more modern feel. The features of the mosaic patterns on the pagodas were rearranged and the proportions adjusted, as well as having been mixed and created new, interesting patterns.

## VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The researcher chose to design patterns with Phra Maha Chedi of King Rama I-IV as references, since the architecture created a great inspiration. The researcher wanted modern application to the work of art without sacrificing the originality. However, in this type of study, the researcher can only select a part of the pagoda or some portions that draw attention, such as the shape of the structure. Different parts can encourage various designs in different media, for example, in fashion and garment designs. Moreover, the researcher can alter the artwork to have more details, section into more combinations, or even mix the designs together so they can be applied to many other specialties. This can lead to more expansion of the subject and produce more results with alluring details in the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express sincere thanks to Suan Sunanadha Rajabhat University for funding this research project.

## REFERENCES

- [1] www.siamrath.co.th/UIFont/NewsDetail.aspx?cid=70&nid=10887
- [2] Kaw Pai Nai Boon: Serm Mongkol Kao Wat [Proceed for Good Karma: Gain Luck from Nine Temples], 2005, Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture.
- [3] Global Market Information Database, Tourists Attractions – Worlds, 10 April 2008.
- [4] PhotjananukromSamanyanam Thai: Wat, Wang, Sapan, Pom [Thai Common Noun Dictionary: Temple, Palace, Bridge, Fortress], p.86-87, The Royal Institute website.
- [5] Du Khong Dee Tee Wat Pho [See the Charms of Wat Pho], 21 January 2005, Manager Online.
- [6] Wat Suthat, 17 December 2002, Manager Online.
- [7] Historical Annals Volume 15, Historical Annals Part 25-27, 1964, Business Organization of the Teachers Council of Thailand.