

Comparing Encased Stupas in Thailand and Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

This article compares the design of encased stupas from the 15th to 19th centuries CE in Thailand along with examples from Myanmar in order to highlight the shared custom of encasement alongside the differences which developed over time. Archaeological evidence of stupa encasement is plentiful, particularly in Thailand, and shows variations in the design of space and patronage. In both these countries, the second or new donor sometimes left a gap between the original inner and new outer structure for patrons and pilgrims to move around the inner structure in veneration. This article compares examples alongside the customs and beliefs that underpin the function and meaning of the encasement. Archaeological evidence of encasement in Thailand is complemented by the presence of relics of the Buddha, kings, amulets, precious stones, and possibly consecration deposits reviewed through the chronology, epigraphy, architecture, art styles and reliquaries of five Buddhist stupas dating from the 15th to 19th centuries CE. These are compared with examples from the author's native country of Myanmar, where some encasements have a space between inner and outer stupas and relics have been recorded. While there are many similarities, in Myanmar the relic deposits from research to date have been found in many parts of the stupa, which is somewhat different from Thailand. Together, these comparative and contextual aspects contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationships in patronage traditions and also differences in encasement design between the neighboring countries of Myanmar and Thailand.

Keywords: encasement, design, architecture, reliquaries, stupa

INTRODUCTION

There are many encased Buddhist monuments in various parts of Thailand. Five distinctive examples located in central and northern Thailand are described in this article.

1. Phra Pathom stupa circa 3rd century BCE Nakhon Pathom province, west of Bangkok in central Thailand
2. Wat Pa Kaeo founded by King U Thong in the 14th century CE, southeast of Ayutthaya in central Thailand
3. Wat Phra Si Sanphet with eight miniature reliquary-type stupas dating in the 15th century CE, Phra Nakorn Si Ayutthaya district, Ayutthaya province in central Thailand
4. Wat Phra That Chae Haeng founded by Chao Phraya Kan Muang in the 14th century CE, outside Nan in northern Thailand
5. Wat Phra That Hariphunchai, 9th century CE, Lamphun province southeast of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand

As can be seen, the examples range from the Central Plain in the south to Ayutthaya and the hills of Lanna. With respect to time, they also vary from the late first millennium BCE to the 15th century CE. Although they all serve a common function, each has a distinctive design and history reflecting the combination of local materials, designs and varied stylistic influences.

These stupas, and many others, were periodically encased by new donors. These secondary donors enshrined the earlier structures, protecting and adding more images of the Buddha, jewelry, golden objects and gold leaf, and amulets. Denis Byrne suggested that the placing of gold leaf on Buddha images, stupas, temple doorways, and other sacred structures is one of the most common devotional and merit-making acts performed in Thailand. The perceived radiant and sacred power of these objects is seen to be simultaneously honoured and enhanced by gilding. In 1990, Byrne noted two encasements in which the original condition of the stucco skin on the inner stupa in the San Pa Tong area near Lampun in the northern Thailand had been retained. He suggests that they were not in need of repair at the time they

were encased. Moreover, he found that the inside of a fractured stupa kept at Wat Klang Muang, Lampun had the stucco surface of an earlier encased stupa visible in profile at the centre of the frame. Covering stupas with layers of brick, resurfacing them with stucco or cement, or sheathing them with copper are all variations of encasement seen in Thailand. Archaeological evidence of stupa encasement is plentiful in Thailand, as is true in India and Myanmar, where there are commonly gaps between the inner and outer stupas. Nonetheless, in both countries, variation is the norm, as some sites have no space between the two stupas. Thus, as described in this article, in Thailand, some of the encased stupas have a gallery path between inner and outer stupas, but some have no gap. Where a stupa has fractured, a small stupa has sometimes been exposed within the body of a larger one. In fact, in some places in Thailand, a series of stupas encasing each other like onion rings has been exposed (Byrne, 1995, pp. 266-279). Wat Maha That Chalieng (see Figure 1), which is one of the ruins of Si Satchanalai-Chaliang, Sukhothai province, Thailand, is an encased Buddhist temple. The finial of the inner stupa (see Figure 2) is visible from the outside, and there is a space between the finial of the inner stupa and the outer monument. Wat Athi Tinkaeo (see Figure 3), Chiang San is another similar encased stupa in Thailand. Here, there is a space around the finial, but not the main part of the stupa, which has no gap between of the inner and outer structures. While the reasons for this are somewhat ambiguous, it may be that the inner stupa was not seriously in need of repair before it was encased by the outer stupa.

Thus, although there are numerous encased stupas which have been the subject of archaeological research, only a few are visible. This is also the case with Buddha images that have been re-coated so that the inner layers are not visible, although there are some inscriptions regarding encasements in the form of stone inscriptions, royal chronicles, and local oral histories that provide some insight. In this article, the author has selected and described only five encased Buddhist stupas in Thailand with concrete archaeological and inscriptional evidence plus an exact history of the stupas.

Figure 1

Wat Maha That Chalieng, Sukhothai Province



Note. This figure of Wat Maha That Chalieng, Sukhothai Province shows the general elevation, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 2

The Finial of the Inner Stupa at Wat Maha That Chalieng, Sukhothai Province



Note. The finial of the inner stupa is seen within the outer stupa, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 3

Wat Athi Tinkaeo, Chiang San, Thailand



Note. The inner and outer stupas can be clearly seen from the outside, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

ENCASED STUPAS IN MYANMAR

Encased stupas and encased Buddha images have been found in the various parts of Myanmar. Most of these were found at Salin, Minbu, Lai Gaing, Seik Phyu, Taungdwingyi, Pauk, Myaing, Pakhangyi, Pakokku, Yesagyo, and Hti Lin in Magway region; Anein, Halin, and Shwebo in Sagaing region; Tamote, Sint Kaing, Myin Saing, Kyaukse, and Tagaung in Mandalay region; Srikshetra in Bago region; Mrauk U in Rakhine state; Mwe Daw Kaku, Shwe Intein, Alodawpauk in Shan state; Kaung Hmu Lon stupa, Putao in Kachin state; Pathein in Ayeyarwady region; and Shwedagon stupa in Yangon region. The encased Buddhist temples and images have been found in the vicinity of Kyaukse region. Some of them are the Moathtaw stupas, and others are simply encased stupas in these areas in Myanmar. Some encased monuments have inscriptional evidence, while while information about others comes only from the Myanmar chronicles, the traditional history of the nation's monuments and the traditions. Some of the encased monuments can be viewed from the outside because the encasing structures have been damaged by natural disasters (Myo Nyunt Aung, 2015). Most are double encased monuments, but a few of them comprise triple encasements (Aung Kyaing, 2017).

Encased monument, as used here, means an older smaller inner stupa or temple that has been

encased by a larger outer stupa or temple. It may mean a single stupa; however, in some cases, two or three small stupas or temples are encased by larger stupas or temples on the same plinth. Another type is the Moathtaw Zedis (stupas), encased and covered by secondary donors in later periods. All these types of encasement can be grouped together as encased monuments. Likewise, encased images refers to the older smaller inner Buddha images that are encased by later, larger, outer Buddha images donated by secondary donors in later periods (Aung Kyaing, 1984). Numerous encasements have been found in the Property Zone of Bagan. Most of these were encased between the 9th and 13th centuries CE (Hudson, 2004). Some encasements include a corridor, while others are solid structures. Most of the bases of the encased monuments are square, rectangular or circular in shape. Some of the encasements between inner and outer monuments have a space, while some have no space between the two structures (Pichard, 1992-2001).

At Bagan, and the outlying areas of the Bagan Empire, encasing stupas, temples and Buddha images became a significant part of Buddhist practice or religious practice. There are many documents preserved through ink and stone inscriptions that relate to the encasements; records such as various Myanmar Chronicles, the History of the Pagodas and the Great Chronicle of Ceylon (Mahavamsa Text) demonstrate that this was a deliberate practice, not merely a way for a builder or a donor to preserve and conserve a damaged monument, but done with respect for the earlier sanctified buildings. The stupa encasement was not simply a phenomenon of renovating older or damaged stupas. It was, rather, an avenue for its donors, perceived as the protectors of Buddhism, to strengthen their spiritual power. Religious ideology and distribution of the encasements at Bagan have been analysed through epigraphic records. The different architectural typologies of the encasements, with highly skilled Myanmar artistic works and iconography of Buddha images and epigraphy, show the distribution and chronology, concept, and religious ideology of encasements at Bagan. The art and architecture of Bagan was adapted from India, Sri Lanka, Pyu, and Mon, and the multicultural background of Bagan is very important to understanding the practice of

encasement. Relevant areas and groups include Pyu regions and Mon regions with their prototypes in Sri Lanka and India. According to the author's analysis, the main religious ideology of the encasement is to protect the relics of the Buddha enshrined into the inner monument, a safeguarding action which Myanmar shared with other countries such as India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Soni, 1991).

Bagan covers an area of about 45 square kilometres along the eastern bank of the Ayeyarwady River. The total number of Bagan monuments was 4,446 in the Bagan period; however, many have been destroyed by natural disasters, vandalism, and age, so there are now 3,822 monuments of various sizes still standing in Bagan. Among the Buddhist monuments in Bagan, there are eighty-three encased Buddhist monuments at the Ancient City of Bagan.

Normally these encased monuments are not visible; however, when subjected to natural disasters or vandalism, the encased monuments can sometimes, unexpectedly, be observed from the outside. When the inner stupas or inner temples have been uncovered, it is possible to observe the original extraordinary artistic works of successive periods such as the stucco carvings, stone carvings, glazed decorations, mural paintings, brick masonry works, and the different architectural typologies with ornaments on the exterior of the inner monuments (Pichard, 1992-2001).

According to the architectural typologies of the encased monuments found in Myanmar, some of the inner stupas were built in the Pyu period (9th to 10th centuries CE), while the outer stupas were built in the Bagan period (11th to 13th centuries CE) and post Bagan periods, such as Pinya (14th century CE), Inwa (15th to 16th centuries CE), Nyaung Yan (17th century CE) and Konbaung (18th to 19th centuries CE) periods. In Myanmar, the earliest encased Buddhist monuments were found to be from the Pyu period, while some of encased Buddhist monuments date to the 17th and 18th centuries CE, and even the present day.

PHRA PATHOM STUPA

The Phra Pathom Stupa is situated at Mueang Nakhon Pathom district, Nakhon Pathom province in central Thailand, located about 60 km

to the west of Bangkok. It is traditionally recognized as being home to the earliest Buddhist stupa in Thailand, with the name, Phra Pathom chedi (see Figure 4), meaning 'Holy chedi of the beginning'. Due to sedimentation from the Chao Phraya River, the land in this area has progressed southward; so, while thought to have originally been on the coast, this is no longer the case. When the local river dried up, the city was abandoned and was eventually overgrown by forest, with its inhabitants moving to the nearby town of Nakhon Chai Si. During the 19th century CE, the city was again inhabited. While there are written citations about the structure dating back to 675 CE, its origins are possibly even older, and there have been numerous restorations. The Phra Pathom Stupa consists of a stupa with four viharas, one having a standing Sukhothai style image of the Buddha that is eight metres in height (Miksic, 2007, p. 295). Some accounts compare the form of the stupa to Sanchi, and attribute the stupa to the third century BCE Asoka, identifying it as part of his wider propagation across Asia. In the 19th century, King Mongkut, Rama IV, when he was a prince and a monk, went on pilgrimage to the stupa numerous times. At that time, it had fallen into decay, so he resolved to restore it. When he acceded to the throne, he therefore instructed that it be restored by building an enormous chedi as a protective cover over the existing one. The name Phra Pathom chedi is credited to Rama IV (Paul, 1988). An early 20th century mural painting completed during the sixth reign of the Bangkok period shows a gap between the inner and outer stupa, although this, plus the idea that a hole once existed allowing pilgrims to glimpse ('peep') through to venerate the inner stupa, are popular legends bolstered by another version of the stupa's history that dates back to when it was called Phra Thom chedi, a 'Great Sacred Stupa of Suvarnabhumi'. At that time, it was in a poor state of repair and overgrown by forest, with its encasement ordered by Mongkut after he ascended the throne in 1851. While the stupa certainly had been previously renovated, in 1854 CE, the restoration of the ruined stupa, popularly seen to be 'magically charged' by the relics it contained, was undertaken. Given that the new stupa was reportedly three times the size of the earlier one, the bricks and stucco of the restored stupa physically contacted with the fabric of the ruin, countering the modern murals depicting a

space between the two noted above (Byrne, 1995). After seventeen years, the chedi's reconstruction was completed in the reign of Rama V, in 1870. The original stupa (39 m in height) was traditionally modelled after the great stupa at Sanchi, while the present stupa, which is about 127 m in height, is one of the tallest stupas in the world, reflecting Sinhalese influence according to inscriptions (Paul, 1988). Soni noted that it is an example of encasement enveloping the original shrine with a space, fulfilling King Mongkut's wish to protect the relics (Soni, 1991). The author assumes that prior to King Rama IV restoring the stupa, Phra Pathom stupa at that time was surmounted by prang inspired by a Khmer prasat (see Figures 6 and 8). After King Rama IV's encasement, there was a gallery path (see Figure 7) between the older and encased outer stupas. Phra Pathom stupa (see Figure 8) was probably first built around the 4th century, in the Suwannabhumi period. It was likely encased for the first time during the Dvaravati period, around the 10th century, and for the second time in the 15th century before being encased a third time during the reign of King Rama IV, in the 19th century.

Figure 4

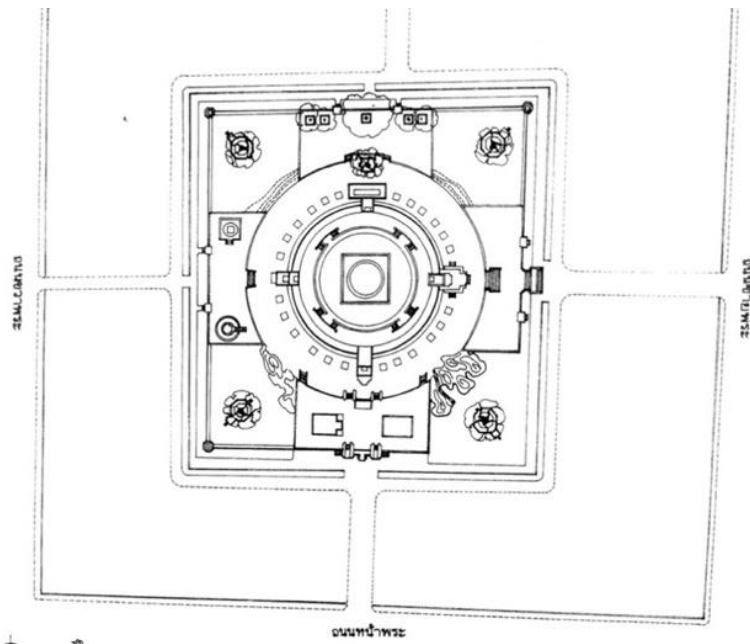
Phra Pathom Stupa, Nakhon Pathom Province



Note. The profile of the stupa is seen in this photograph, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 5

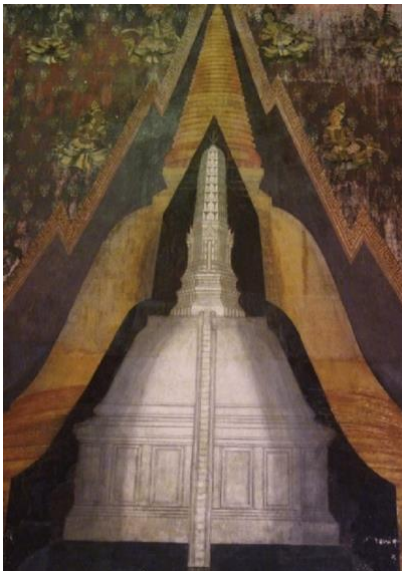
Plan of Phra Pathom Stupa



Note. The plan of the stupa is seen in this drawing. From Khati lae Sanyalak nai Kan-ong-bap-sathapattayakam khong Phra Pathom Chedi [The Design Concept and Symbolism of Phra Pathom Chedi] [Master's thesis, Silpakorn University], p. 87, by P. Sumran. Copyright 2004 by Peerapat Sumran.

Figure 6

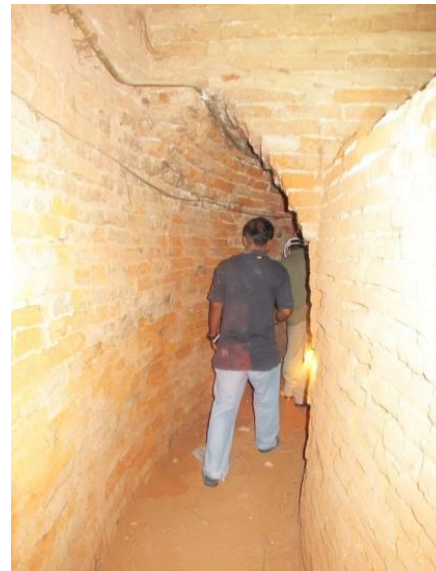
Mural Painting of Phra Pathom Stupa in the Early 20 Century CE



Note. This painting shows the inner structure of the stupa. From Facts and Fiction: [The Myth of Suvaṇṇabhūmi Through the Thai and Burmese Looking Glass]. TRaNS: Trans –Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia, 6 (2) (July), p. 176, by N. Revire. Copyright 2018 by Nicolas Revire.

Figure 7

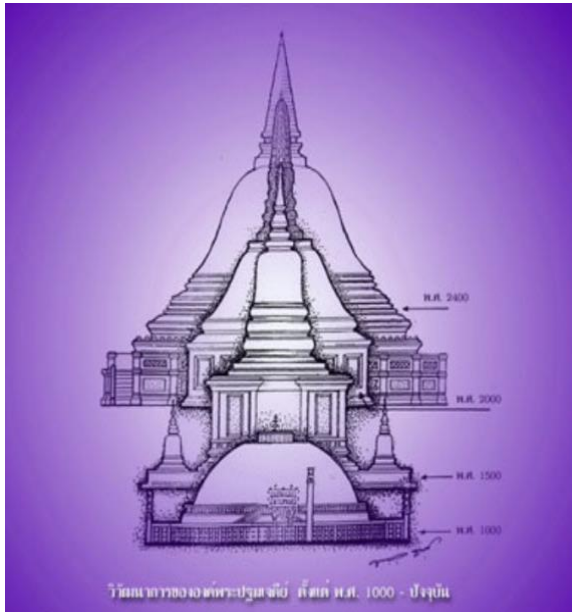
A Gallery Path Between the Older and Encased Outer Etupas at Phra Pathom Stupa



Note. The photograph shows the inner corridor. From Phāp phāinai 'ong phra pathom čhēdī pen bun tā čhing čhing [Inner corridor of Phra Pathom Stupa], by Thaihitz, 2019, July 18 (<https://thaihitz.com>). Copyright 2019 by Thaihitz.

Figure 8

Drawing of Phra Pathom Stupa



Note. The drawing depicts the inner layers of the stupa. From Phāp phāinai 'ong phra pathom čhēdī pen bun tā čhing čhing [Inner corridor of Phra Pathom Stupa], by Thaihitz, 2019, July 18 (<https://thaihitz.com>). Copyright 2019 by Thaihitz.

Figure 9

Outer Moathtaw Stupa (No. 194) at Bagan



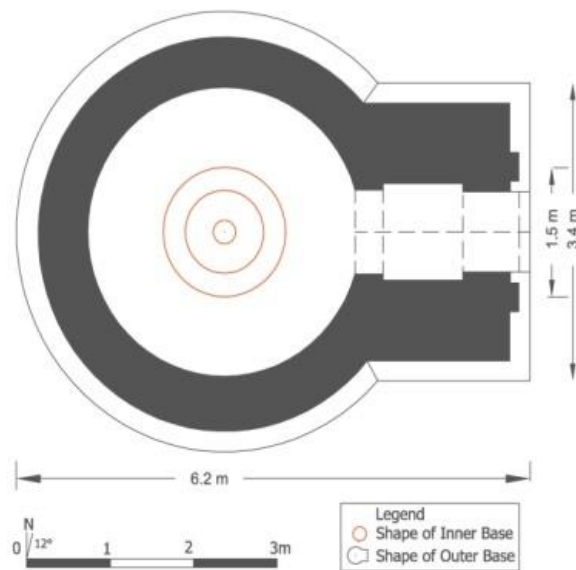
Note. The outer Sinhalese typed stupa can be viewed from north side.

Figure 10

Inner Moathtaw Stupa (No. 194) at Bagan



Note. The gilded inner stupa which may have been built by King Asoka, is seen inside the outer stupa. In contrast to the Phra Pathom Stupa, in Bagan, there are three so-called 'moathtaw stupas' (see Figures 9, 10 & 11) that are also attributed to Asoka as part of his construction of eighty-four thousand stupas (Geiger, 1912). Like Phra Pathom, some of these offer clear evidence of leaving a space between the two stupas, but the ones in Bagan are much smaller. Monument No. 194 illustrates this type of design, with a small gilded stupa inside a larger one, creating a space like a corridor between inner and outer stupas that recalls the Phra Phathom stupa. In Myanmar, some moathtaw stupas have a ritual space between the two stupas, while others have none; these multiple traditions are echoed in epigraphy and historical evidence of patronage by successive Myanmar kings from the Bagan to Yadanabon periods (Cooler, 2002).

Figure 11*Plan of Moathtaw Stupa (No.194) at Bagan*

Note. The plan of the stupa, facing to the east, is seen in this image.

WAT PA KAEO

Wat Pa Kao (see Figure 12) is situated to the southeast of Ayutthaya, north from Bangkok. According to legend, this temple was originally constructed by King U Thong (1350-69 CE), who founded Ayutthaya (Cushman, 2006, pp. 9-10). According to the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya, the King arranged for the interment of the remains of two princes known as Chao Keo and Chao Thai. After cremation of their remains, the king constructed a temple named Wat Pa Kao, and a stupa and an assembly hall were built in their memory. During the reign of King Naresuan (1590-1605 CE) a big stupa was built in this temple to commemorate the King's auspicious victory over the Burmese crown prince in a battle that had included elephants. The stupa was called Phra Chedi Chaya Mongkhon, similar to the current name of the temple (Cushman, 2006, p. 31). It been previously called Wat Pa Kao, Wat Chao Phraya Thai. After King Naresuan had encased and enlarged the temple and the principal chedi, the chedi was presumably given its new name, Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon - The Great Temple of Auspicious Victory.

Wat Pa Kao (see Figure 12) is located in a part of the ancient city known as Ayodhya. It is believed that this was the site of the ancient city of Dvaravati before King U Thong founded Ayutthaya in 1351. In earlier times, the site had been surrounded by a large moat. Traces of an ancient canal located to the east and west of the temple run parallel to Khlong Khao San, also towards the Pa Sak River. Traces of a seeming ancient reservoir have also been found at the southwestern side of the monastery. It is believed that Wat Pa Kao was built on a former Khmer temple complex. According to the account regarding the Khmer temple, there is the large moat which represented, for the Khmer, the oceans that surround the world.

The temple was the residence of Buddhist monks who were ordained and trained in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and who mainly practiced meditation. It was famous as the monastery of the Supreme Patriarch (Vandenberg, 2016).

Wat Pa Kao is situated outside the city to the east. Although it housed a forest-dwelling order during the reign of King U Thong, its architectural layout (see Figure 13) corresponds to that of a town-dwelling order, like Wat Maha That. It is divided into Buddhavas, or public areas, and Sanghavas, or private areas for

monasteries. The Buddhavas was enclosed with wall and the bell-shaped stupa was the principal architectural feature of the compound, enclosed by a gallery enclosure and aligned with an ordination hall and a vihara on the east-west axis. The temple was likely surrounded by moats to the north, east, and south. The current bell-shaped stupa with Sinhalese inspiration was renovated and encased by King Naresuan (1590-1605 CE) in the second period of Ayutthaya architecture, and it covers the former one constructed by King U Thong. During the second period, an ordination hall was often located to the front or east of the stupa and a vihara was situated and faced to the rear or the west. The Sinhalese style, with the bell-shaped stupa, arrived in Ayutthaya via Sukhothai during the reign of King Borommatrailokkanat (1448-1488 CE), who shifted the capital to Pitsanulok, the former late-Sukhothai capital. To the northeast of the temple, there are ruins of an assembly hall oriented north-south that house a huge recumbent Buddha statue built during the reign of King Naresuan. There are also remains of two big square pavilions to the east of the stupa housing large Buddha statues, probably originally constructed with curved pyramidal roofs (Krairiksh, 1992).

Wat Pa Kaeo is one of the landmarks of the ancient city of Ayutthaya, and it is very high and visible to all. It is a not solid stupa; it has a shrine room (see Figure 14) and a secret cavity (see Figure 15) beneath the stupa in this chedi. There are smaller stupas at the corners around the bell-shaped principal chedi, which is built on a square base. The reliquary chamber where the relics are enshrined is visible inside the dome. The author assumes that the shrine room and secret cavity may have been built during the reign of the King U Thong. A second octagonal pedestal above the base was built to accommodate the bell-shaped dome. A rectangular gallery, which is enclosed by an outer wall, surrounds the main chedi. There are over twenty satellite chedis of various sizes around the monastic structures which enshrine the ashes of former sponsors of this temple. Stairs are located on the eastern side of its chedi, towards the first terrace, and continue inwards to the dome (Vandenberg, 2016).

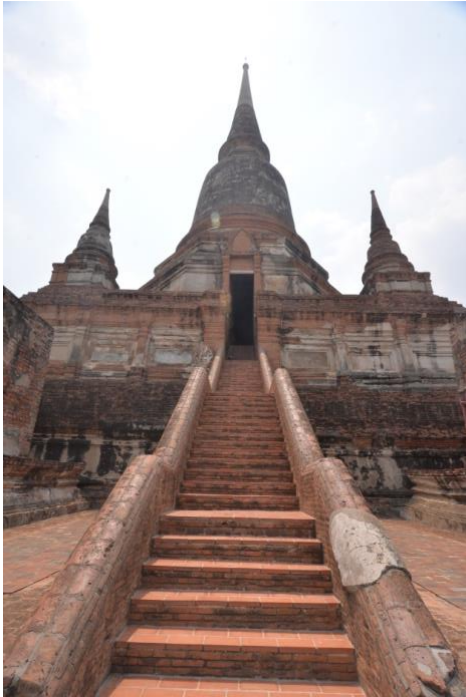
The site plan of the wat (see Figure 13) is very similar to other large temples of the Ayutthaya period, including a stupa at the center flanked by

an ordination hall to the east and an assembly hall to the west. Satellite stupas, monasteries, and smaller assembly halls surround the principal buildings. This stupa is 60 m in height, with a huge square base. Clarence Aasen has suggested that this temple demonstrates similarities to the Myanmar style (Aasen, 1998).

Another significant Myanmar stupa is at Makkhaya, near Kyaukse. A stone inscription dated 1325 CE at the Shwezigon stupa (see Figure 16) records that King Uzana enlarged and encased a previous small stupa (Mahtaw stupa) to make the structure larger and more elaborate, attaining 53.50 metres in diameter (Moe, 2008). According to the stone inscriptions, King Uzana encased and enlarged a number of stupas during his reign, regularly recording the diameters of the outer stupas. In Shwezigon stupa at Makkhaya, for example, archaeological evidence confirms that there is no space between inner and outer stupas. The Nan Oo stupa (see Figure 17) stone inscription, dated 1329 CE, also mentions that King Uzana enlarged and encased a previous small stupa, reaching 47.09 metres in diameter, named Nan Oo stupa at Myinsaing around Mandalay region (Nan Oo Stupa Stone Inscription, 2007). The original stone inscription was transliterated and translated by Dr. Maung Maung Lay (Retired Professor of the Department of Myanmar, University of Mandalay) and party in 2010. He was interviewed by the author on 20 October 2021. Another interview also took place with U Aung Kyaing, former Deputy Director General of the DANM, Mandalay, on 15 July 2007, during which he noted that the inner stupa had been clearly visible from a treasure hole on the northwest side of the upper part before restoration. The absence of space between the inner and outer stupas was confirmed during its repair in 2004; neither a shrine room nor a secret cavity have, to date, been found in these stupas. Both are solid stupas. While Wat Pa Kaeo is not solid, these three stupas are classified as encased. The bases of Shwezigon and Nan Oo stupas are square in shape with four corner stupas; the base of Wat Pa Kaeo is also square with four corner stupas. In this case, the design without, a gap, is seen both at Makkyaya and Nan Oo stupas in Central Myanmar. But exceptionally, a shrine room and secret cavity have been found at Wat Pa Kaeo in Central Thailand.

Figure 12

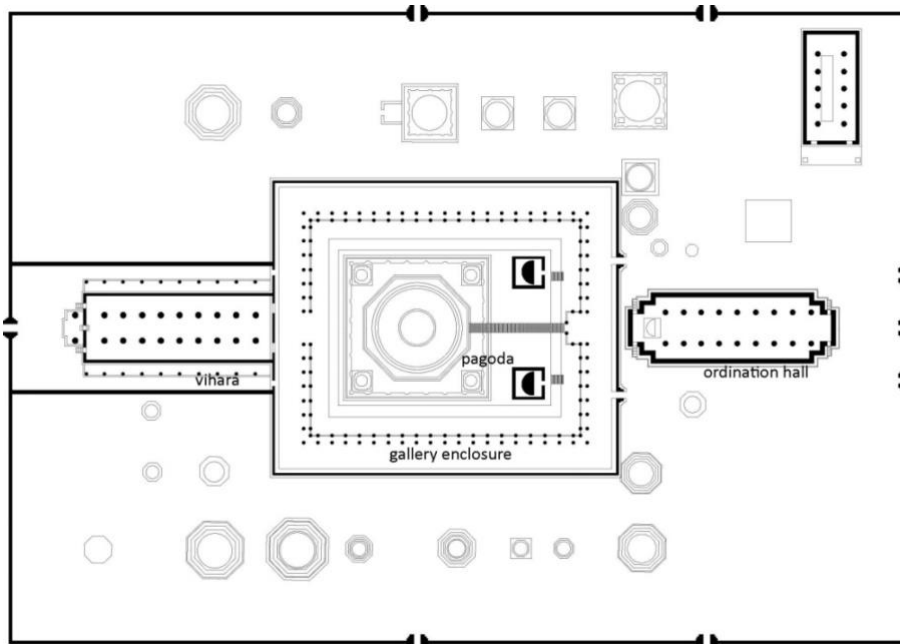
Wat Pa Kaeo (Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon)



Note. The stupa with a staircase is seen in this photograph, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 13

Plan of Wat Pa Kaeo (Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon)



Note. The temple plan is seen in this photograph. From “Ayutthaya and Burma,” by C. Chaturawong, T. Weerakoon, & P. Yasi, 2018, NAJUA: Architecture, Design and Built Environment, 33, p. A-37 (<https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/NAJUA-Arch/article/view/130437>). Copyright 2018 by Chotima Chaturawong, Tawan Weerakoon, & Pongpon Yasi.

Figure 14

The Shrine Room Beneath the Stupa at Wat Pa Kaeo



Note. The photograph shows the inner shrine room. From Ruang ni mi chue wa: Wat Yai Chaiyamongkhon [The Story of Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon] [Video], by TNN24, 2018, January 20 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARI6suLmaLk>). Copyright 2018 by TNN24.

Figure 15

The Secret Cavity Beneath the Stupa at Wat Pa Kaeo



Note. The photograph shows the lower cavity. From Ruang ni mi chue wa: Wat Yai Chaiyamongkhon [The Story of Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon] [Video], by TNN24, 2018, January 20 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARI6suLmaLk>). Copyright 2018 by TNN24.

Figure 16

Shwezigon Stupa at Makkhaya Near Kyaukse, Mandalay Region



Note. The stupa with three square terraces and staircases.

Figure 17

Nan Oo Stupa at Myinsaing, Mandalay Region



Note. The stupa with three square terraces and staircases.

WAT PHRA SI SANPHET

Wat Phra Si Sanphet (see Figure 18) is located in Pratu Chai subdistrict, Phra Nakorn Si Ayutthaya district, Ayutthaya province. This temple is not only a significant historical site, but is also considered to be a spiritual center as it was a royal monastery for a long time. Situated within the royal Palace grounds, Wat Phra Si Sanphet was exclusively used by members of the royal family. Because there are no monks living there, when the Wat is used for royal ceremonies, the presiding monks have to be invited. The monastic buildings (see Figure 19) are aligned on an east-west oriented axis, while the main buildings comprise three stupas (Krairiksh, 1992, pp. 11-26) with their mandapas, the prasat, and the royal vihara or chapel presiding over all. The three stupas are built on a high platform with the later-constructed mandapas (square structures with a spire) situated at the eastern side of each stupa. The elevated platform is surrounded by a walled gallery, running from the west side of the royal chapel towards the eastern portico of the prasat, a cruciform structure. On both sides of the royal chapel are minor vihara, aligned north to south (Krairiksh, 1992, pp. 11-26). On the north side stands the Vihara Phra Lokanat (the Vihara of the Protector of the World) with the Vihara Phra Palelai (the Vihara of the Parileyyaka Buddha) on the south. A parallel north-south alignment is formed by the ordination hall (Vihara Phra Palelai) and the Sala Chom Thong (east of Vihara Phra Lokanat). The bell tower is located nearly in the axis, in front of the royal chapel (Vandenberg, 2016).

In 1492 CE, the first chedi on the eastern side was constructed by King Ramathibodi II (1491-1529 CE) (Cushman, 2006, pp. 18-19) to enshrine the ashes of his father, King Borommtrailokanat (1448-1463 CE). The second chedi, which is presently the middle one, was constructed at the same time as the first to enshrine the ashes of his elder brother, King Borommara III (1463-1488 CE). The two chedis are lined up on an east-west oriented axis. After eight years, a royal vihara was constructed in the same alignment with the chedis. After 40 years, the third (western) chedi was constructed by King Boromracha IV (1529-1533 CE) (Cushman, 2006, p. 20) to enshrine the

remains of his father, King Ramathibodi II. All three bell-shaped chedis were constructed on a rectangular platform and were built in the Sukhothai style derived from the Srivijayan stupa, characterized by superimposed pedestals. The stupika on the roof of the porch may have derived from Khmer architecture. The porches each have a niche in which standing Buddha images were placed on three sides. The porch on the eastern side gave access to the small sacred chamber in the interior of the chedi in which consecrated objects, the King's ashes, were contained (Krairiksh, 1992, pp. 11-26). The chedis of Wat Phra Si Sanphet demonstrate the beginning of a new architectural style, influenced by Sukhothai art, that abandons the prang-styled construction of the Early Ayutthaya period. The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya mention that King Borommakot ordered the complete renovation of Wat Phra Si Sanphet in 1742. Krairiksh (1992) suggests that the earlier structures were demolished and reconstructed again by three Sinhalese with three mandapa, laid out along an east-west axis following a symmetrically designed master plan in early 1740s. No Siamese construction from the past survived a long time in its original form. Krairiksh suggests that, according to the Kaempfer's plan in 1690, there are three large buildings separated by two chedis and one prang. These chedis appear to have been the multi-storeyed prasat type, not the bell-shaped Sinhalese type we see today. According to the Royal Autograph version, the renovation took place between 1742-1744 (Krairiksh, 1992, pp. 11-26). When the eastern chedi was encased, the older one may have been the multi-storyed prasat type.

The first chedi (the eastern chedi) was excavated by the Fine Arts Department, Thailand in 1932. During the excavations, a stupika comprising the eight smaller stupas, was discovered. The outermost stupa had disintegrated, while the other seven (see Figure 20) are now displayed at the Chao Sam Phraya Museum. The stone stupika, when opened, revealed the seven layers of the miniature stupas, which were made of tin alloy, iron, gilt bronze, silver, gold, and crystal, likely to have contained the relics of the deceased king (Vandenberg, 2016).

Archaeological excavations were conducted to protect the buried objects from illegal excavation. The excavations uncovered a square cavity

beneath a smaller stupa in the eastern chedi, showing that the eastern chedi is one of the encasements at Wat Phra Si Sanphet. Although the excavation report does not mention any space between inner and outer stupas, the author assumes there was none. The cavity's walls were lined with metallic plates made of a tin alloy painted over with figures of disciples holding lotuses in their folded hands in attitudes of adoration believed to date to the construction of the chedi. Most of these paintings were badly damaged. In the cavity itself were a number of votive tablets of various sizes of Buddha images made of bronze, tin alloy, gold, silver, crystal and precious stones. All these objects were heaped around the stone miniature stupa within which the artefacts were discovered (Vandenberg, 2016). The sizes of the miniature stupas diminish to the innermost stupa. These records indicate that there was an elaborate concept of the eight encased miniature stupas in this stupa, as well as the eastern encased chedi, during the Ayutthaya period, illustrating both the protection of the relics of the Buddha and ashes of kings beneath an encased stupa at the Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya province. The plan of the Wat Phra Si Sanphet (see Figure 19) shows nineteen buildings with numbers and the names of the buildings, as follows:

1. The eastern stupa containing the relics of King Borommatrailokanart
2. The middle stupa containing the relics of King Borommachathirat III
3. The western stupa containing the relics of King Ramathibodi II
4. The image hall of Phra Si Sanphet
5. The brick pedestal for Phra Si Sanphet
6. The image house of Phralokkanart
7. The vestibule for enshrinement of a reclining Buddha image
8. The vestibule for enshrinement of a walking Buddha image
9. A stupa containing royal relics
10. The vestibule for enshrinement of a standing Buddha image
11. The vestibule for enshrinement of a seated Buddha image
12. A pavilion for the Buddha footprint
13. A porch for assembly of the royal relics

14. The image house of Phra-Parileyya
15. The ordination hall
16. The Chom Thong Pavilion
17. A bell tower
18. The guard hall of Phramongkhonborpit
19. Guard place

Some archaeological excavations in India and Sri Lanka have uncovered relic caskets such as a large round stone box with a green marble relic-casket inside recovered in Dharmarajika stupa, a copper relic casket found in Nandangarth stupa, a soapstone relic casket found in a stupa at Vaisali, and gold, and seven crystal and ivory relic caskets found in Amaravati stupa (Mitra, 1971). Relic caskets (see Figure 22) have also been found in Ruwanweli Dagaba (see Figure 21). All of them were found at the centre and bottom of the stupas in these countries, clearly to protect the relics and ashes from natural disasters and vandalism. Scenes from the life of the Buddha were painted on the walls of the chamber, and the sacred relics were solemnly sealed inside the chamber in Ruwanweli Dagaba, Sri Lanka (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1981, pp. 13-16). The paintings illustrating the disciples holding the lotus flowers can be seen in the cavity at the Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya.

Contrasting examples are seen in Myanmar stupas; one such example is the Shwe Kon Cha temple stone inscription (see Figures 23 & 24) dated 1141 CE at Bagan. This describes how the grandson of King Kyansittha donated and enshrined gold, silver, copper, stone Buddha images and other rare material Buddha images in this temple. It also records the placement and enshrinement of the relics of the Buddha in the two golden patho (miniature stupas), two silver patho, four sandalwood patho, two ivory patho, two cinnabar patho, five orpiment patho, and five stone patho, together with three golden umbrellas and nine white umbrellas inside the reliquary (Nyein Maung, 1972, Vol-1, pp. 143-151). This highlights how relic encasement was used to protect the security of the relics in a manner like a stupa encasement with Buddha images made of different raw materials and sizes enshrined in the relic chambers of some temples at Bagan that resemble the various substances enshrined at Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya, Thailand.

This custom is also seen in the Anantathuya Couple stone inscription (see Figure 26) located at the Minnanthu Lemyethna temple (see Figure 25), dating to 1223 CE at Bagan, where it recorded that donors enshrined the relics of the Buddha encased by eight layers of relic caskets made of various materials such as sandalwood, glass, red sandalwood, gold, silver, gold with jewellery, ivory, and copper (Myat Kyaw, 2009). The relic caskets were put in the stone patho (miniature stupa) (Nyein Maung, 1972, Vol-1, pp. 151-163). As with the Shwe Kon Cha, the Anantathuya Couple stone inscription shows the continuous practice of encasement to protect the relics of the Buddha since the Bagan era. The relics of the Buddha are enshrined and encased by the multiple layers of reliquaries and miniature stupas made of the various substances in the Bagan stupas comparable to the archaeological evidence at Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya of eight encased miniature stupas. The sizes of the miniature stupas and reliquaries found at Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya, Thailand, diminish to the innermost stupa and reliquary. In comparing these with the sizes of the miniature stupas and reliquaries found at Bagan, Myanmar, a similar pattern of diminishing to the innermost stupa and reliquary is seen from the author's field observations and documentary research.

Figure 18

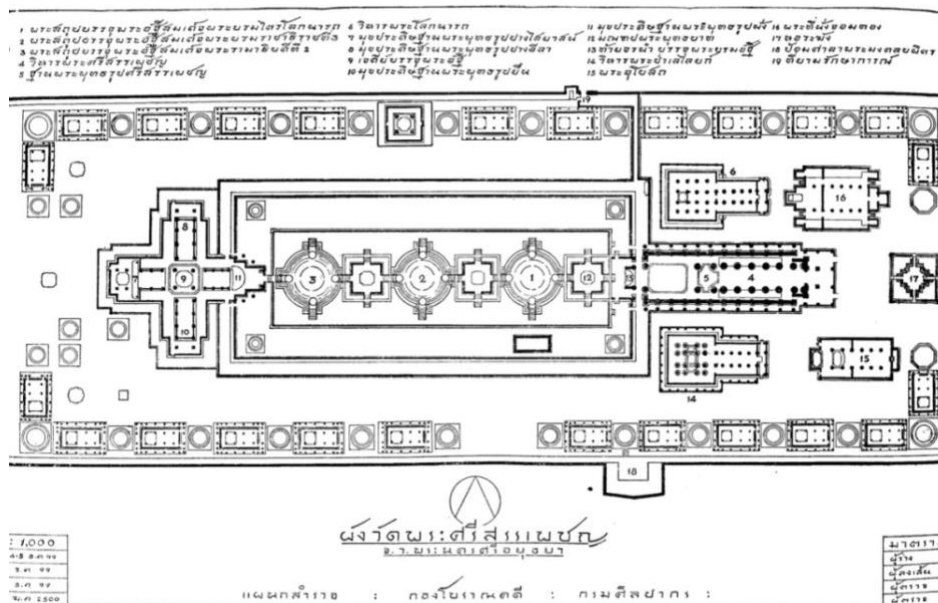
Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya



Note. The eastern stupa, middle stupa, and western stupa built on a rectangular platform at Wat Phra Si Sanphet are seen in this photograph, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 19

Plan of Wat Phra Si Sanphet



Note. The plan of the temple is seen in this drawing. From Phraratchawang lae Wat Boran nai Changwat Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya [Palaces and Temples in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya]. Fine Arts Department. Copyright 1968 by Fine Arts Department.

Figure 20

Reliquary-Type Stupas Found at the Eastern Stupa, Wat Phra Si Sanphet



Note. The seven reliquary-type stupas are seen in this photograph. From History of Ayutthaya: Temples & Ruins, Wat Phra Si Sanphet (https://www.ayutthayahistory.com/Temples_Ruins_PhraSisanphet.html). Copyright 2016 by Tricky Vandenberg.

Figure 21

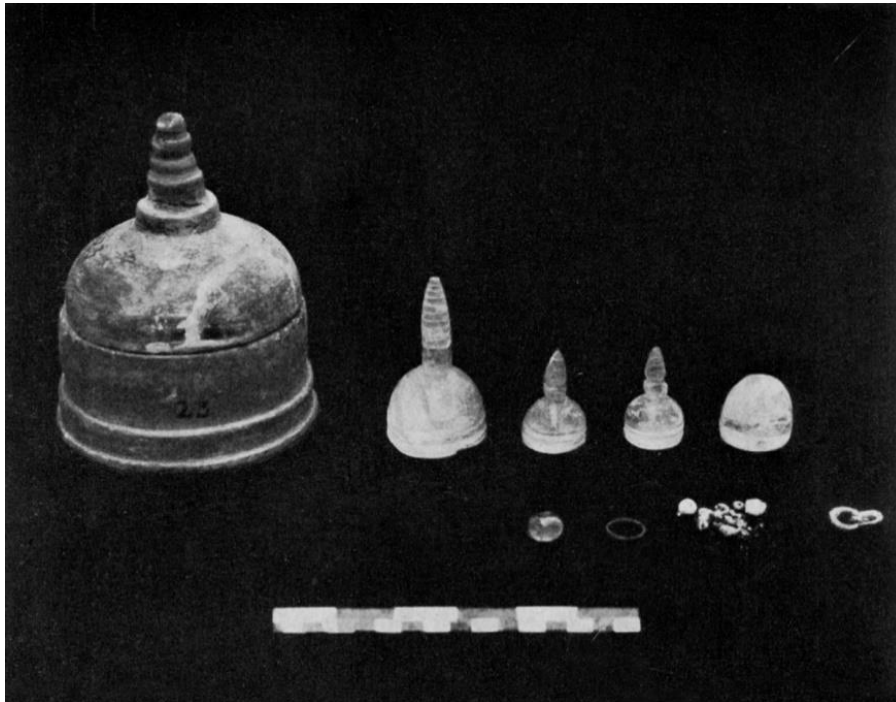
Ruwanwelisaya Dagaba, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka



Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen in this photograph. From Ruwanweliseya dagoba buddhist, huge stupa in anuradhapura, sri lanka [Photograph], by D. Rukhlenko, 2022, 123RF (https://www.123rf.com/photo_141398802_ruwanweliseya-dagoba-buddhist-huge-stupa-in-anuradhapura-sri-lanka.html?vti=ltkf05lj8deebro9uv-1-2). Copyright 2022 by Dmitry Rukhlenko.

Figure 22

Reliquaries Found at Ruwanwelisaya Dagaba, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka



Note. The reliquaries are seen in this photograph. From Ancient City of Anuradhapura. The Archaeological Department, Government Press, p. 20, by W. B. M. Fernando. Copyright 1965 by W. B. Marcus Fernando.

Figure 23

Shwe Kon Cha Temple at Taungbi village, Bagan.



Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen here.

Figure 24

Stone Inscription From Shwe Kon Cha Temple at Taungbi Village, Bagan



Note. The stone inscription with an inscribed house is seen here.

Figure 25*Lemyethna Temple at Minnanthu Village, Bagan*

Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen here.

Figure 26*Anantathuya Couple Stone Inscription From Lemyethna Temple at Minnanthu Village, Bagan*

Note. The stone inscription with an inscribed house is seen here.

WAT PHRA THAT CHAE HAENG

Wat Phra That Chae Haeng (see Figure 27) is situated on the southeast of Nan. Located on a low hill to the south and east of the city, it is considered the most sacred shrine of Nan province and the center of the local veneration. It is situated about 750 m from the Nan River and 180 km to the east of Chiang Mai. The wat has two emerald colored stained-glass decorations laid on a pedestal in both sides of the structure, and, inside, a beautiful altar with three large sculptures of the seated Buddha, with the largest being in the center. The wall behind is black with sparkling golden lotus flowers. It was founded in 1357 CE by Chao Phraya Kan Muang. There is a square pavilion located inside the inner enclosure that is distinctive to Wat Phra That Chae Haeng (Amranand & Warren, 2000).

According to an official record at the court of Nan written in 1894 CE, the first stupa was constructed on a hill, and seven relics of the Buddha with twenty gold and twenty silver amulets were enshrined in the stupa to cover a pit. During a period of 489, the stupa was twice reduced to ruins similar to an anthill. In 1421 CE, the new governor constructed a 12 m high stupa and encased the remains of the first stupa. After eight years, the second stupa was encased by a structure (20 m in diameter, 34 m in height) erected by a new governor. However, the stupa's encasement was not always a response to ruin, with major restorations undertaken in 1429, 1560, 1611, 1629, 1795 and 1820; it was also re-surfaced with gold leaf in 1625 CE. In 1611, the dismantling and reconstruction of the top half of the stupa, which stood more than 46 m, was undertaken. The chronicle says that, in 1615, it was gilded, consuming about 2 kilograms of gold leaf (Byrne, 1995, pp. 266-281). This stupa is currently covered with copper sheets, also a substitute for gold. Minor stupa restorations often entail the application of a fresh skin of stucco or cement. The chronicle also indicates that relics of the Buddha, and gold and silver amulets were enshrined inside the first stupa and upon multiple encasements, highlighting the role of patronage in protecting the enshrined relics of the Buddha and amulets. Despite the detailed records of dates and the relics deposited, however, there are no records detailing whether a space was left between the inner and outer structures.

In contrast, the records of the Shwedagon stupa (see Figure 28) in Myanmar describe multiple encasements layer by layer without any space in between (Soni, 1991). In this regard, the encasements are similar to Wat Phra That Chae Haeng in Thailand. The history of Shwedagon stupa also records that the sacred hairs brought by the two brothers, Taphussa and Bhallika from Okkala (Yangon), are enshrined in the relic chamber. When the relics were examined before being placed in the vault, the casket was miraculously found to contain the original number of eight hairs of the Buddha, although tradition said that some had been lost on the journey back from India to Yangon. A series of golden, silver, tin, copper, lead, marble and iron pagodas with multiple layers of the encasements have been

built over the relic chamber. Finally, the whole series of smaller pagodas was encased by an 8.23 m high brick stupa by King Okkalapa. In 1364 CE, King Byinnya-U of Hanthawaddy built a 20.12 m high stupa that was further enlarged and gilded by several subsequent Myanmar Kings. The present stupa is 99.36 m in height with a square plinth (Aung Thaw, 1972). There have been multiple encasements and several restorations, plus a re-gilding of the entire structure, like Wat Phra That Chae Haeng in Thailand. The evidence of size and height suggests that, like the Shwedagon, Wat Phra That Chae Haeng may have had no space between successive encasements.

Figure 27

Wat Phra That Chae Haeng, Nan Province in Northern Thailand



Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen here, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 28*Shwedagon Stupa, Yangon, Myanmar*

Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen here.

WAT PHRA THAT HARIPHUNCHAI

Wat Phra That Hariphunchai (see Figure 29), a very large Buddhist temple with a number of monuments dating from various periods, is located near Mae Kuang river in the centre of Lamphun in northern Thailand, about 28 km to southeast of Chiang Mai. Lamphun is one of the oldest cities in Thailand and the Hariphunchai king is said to have built a stupa there in the 9th century CE and enshrined a hair of the Buddha. Wat Phra That Hariphunchai, in a Lanna style, was built on the earlier Mon stupa (Gray & Ridout, 1995, p. 244).

The present complex (see Figure 30) was constructed by Hariphunchai King Athitayarai in 1044 CE. The most inner stupa was encased and enlarged in 1443 CE, and comprises repousse Buddha statues on bell-shaped stupa dating from the early Lanna classic period (Stratton, 2004, p. 60). The Suwanna stupa, with a height of 46 m

and located in the northwest of the compound, was built in 1418 CE. In 1443 CE, this temple was enlarged by King Tilokaraja of Lanna Kingdom, Chiang Mai (Gray & Ridout, 1995, p. 244). There are numerous Lanna style structures that were built in the middle of the 15th century CE. There is also a Lanna Buddha image of the 15th century CE housed in wihan. A library with a staircase featuring naga images, built in 19th century CE, can also be found here (Amranand & Warren, 2000). These records confirm the continued patronage of the main stupa, one of the most prominent encased stupas in Lamphun.

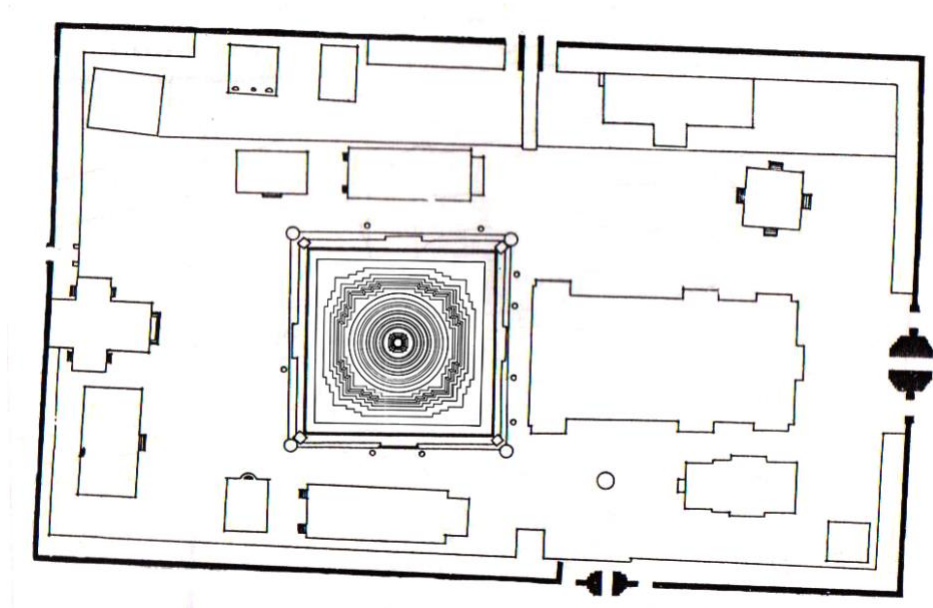
The design is the masterpiece of King Tilokaraja of Chiang Mai, who combined the Bagan style and Sinhalese bell-shaped architecture to create a unique Lanna style. The shape of the outer base is square with three projections on each corner, and the shape of the inner base may have been circular. Bagan style design consists of square terraces with two or three projections and numerous cornices, while Sinhalese style features the bell-shaped dome and square

crowning block, with projections between the finial and its bell-shaped dome.

In contrast, the design of the encasement is very similar to Sutaungpyi temple (No.289) (see Figure 31) at Bagan, Myanmar. The outer base at Sutaungpyi temple is square with two projections, while the inner base may have been circular. The original inner stupa of Wat Phra That Hariphunchai was built in the 9th century CE, while the outer stupa was built in 1443 CE. The architectural typologies in the Bagan period indicate that the inner stupa of Sutaungpyi temple may date to the 9th century CE, while outer stupa was built in the 13th century CE (Pichard, 1993, Vol-2, p. 47) with no space between them because both, including joints, are visible from the outside. Another two encasements in the San Pa Tong area and at Wat Klang Muang, Lampun area, Thailand have no gap between the two stupas, with the inner stupas visible from the outside (Byrne, 1995, pp. 266-279). In addition, Sinhalese-encased stupas of this era in Sri Lanka mostly have no space between the two stupas. In Wat Phra That Hariphunchai, in part based on Sri Lankan customs, there likewise appears to have had no space between the inner and outer stupas.

Figure 30

Plan of Wat Phra That Hariphunchai



Note. The plan of the wat is seen here. From Karn thaythod Khati chakkawan phan ngan sinlapakam nai phutthasatsana [Part 2, Conveying the Concept of the Universe through Works of Art in Buddhism]. The Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture, Chiang Mai University. Copyright 2014 by Lanna Thai Studies.

Figure 29

Wat Phra That Hariphunchai, Lamphun Province in Northern Thailand



Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen here, by K. Kirdsiri. Copyright 2022 by Krengkrai Kirdsiri.

Figure 31*Sutaungpyi Temple (No.289) at Bagan*

Note. The elevation of the stupa is seen here.

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted a range of encased stupas and their history as recorded by various authors. For instance, Soni noted that Phra Pathom stupa is an example of encasement enveloping the original shrine with a space, fulfilling King Mongkut's wish to protect the relics (Soni, 1991). According to the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya, Wat Pa Kaeo was built by King U Thong (1350-69 CE), and, later, encased and enlarged by King Naresuan (1590-1605 CE). The Nan Chronicle mentions that Wat Phra That Chae Haeng has had numerous encasements by successive governors (Byrne, 1995, pp. 226-281). The history of Wat Phra That Hariphunchai indicates that a hair of the Buddha was enshrined inside the original stupa, and that it may have been encased in 1443 CE by King Tilokaraja of the Lanna Kingdom, Chiang Mai (Gray & Ridout, 1995). Archaeological excavations by the Fine Arts Department in 1932 documented an encased stupa beneath the eastern chedi at Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Ayutthaya, as well as eight miniature stupas (Vandenberg, 2016). In many cases, descriptions of relics likened them to the seeds (bija) of the whole 'garden' of religious

culture. The rarest of these relics should be ashes, bones and teeth, or tiny gem-like balls or pellets. In Indic languages, they are called dhatu or sarira (Skilling, 2018, p. 4). As the examples given here underline, relics of the Buddha are considered the most sacred for Buddhist worship, determining patterns of patronage as the relic generated circuits of material and spiritual exchange.

Among the 84,000 relic stupas donated by the King Asoka (Bo Kay, 1981, pp. 220-222), the Moathtaw stupas in Myanmar are the ones most frequently encased and enlarged by successive Myanmar kings in the different periods. Over the centuries, relics of the Buddha have been placed in stupas at important temples throughout Thailand. In fact, relics of the Buddha in Thailand have been excavated from nine major historic sites of the Dvaravati, Sukhothai, Lanna, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods. Some of them are now kept in the Ratchaburi National Museum in Ratchaburi, the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum in Sukhothai, the Chiang Mai National Museum, the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum in Ayutthaya, and the National Museum in Bangkok. Among these are seven fragments of the Buddha's bones the size of a

cabbage seed or broken rice grain that were enshrined in a round gold casket dating to the Dvaravati Period (8th-9th centuries CE), and two round pieces of the Buddha's bones. Colored off-white and brown, they were kept in a triple-layer covered round casket in a gem-studded gold miniature stupa dating to the Ayutthaya Period (15th century CE), and are now among the exhibitions in the various national museums of Thailand. Another is a gem-studded gold miniature stupa found at Wat Ratchaburana, Ayutthaya, and the Lord Buddha's relics in a glass miniature stupa found at Sri Suriyothai Pagoda, Ayutthaya (Svasti, 2016). As in all Buddhist countries, the relics of the Buddha found in Thailand were mostly put inside relic caskets made of different layers which diminish till to the innermost casket, and they are enshrined in the stupas. Sometimes they are put inside miniature stupas, which are made of the different materials. The relics of the Buddha found in India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar were also enshrined in stupas in similar reliquaries made of different materials that diminish in size to the innermost layer.

However, the existing evidence suggests differences in the recording of consecration deposits and relics between Myanmar and Thailand, with the prevalence of relics from different parts of the stupas also found in a study of relic containers at the Bagan Archaeological Museum (Theint Theint Aung, 2022). Pichard also suggests that the three superposed relic chambers dating 13th century CE were found at monument No.319 at Bagan with different levels of the stupa in 1984 before repair. A number of small Buddha images were found in the relic chambers in this stupa (Pichard, 1993, p. 95, Vol-2). In this matter, there is a strong archaeological evidence from monument No.319 regarding the relic chambers and prevalence of the relics which were found with different levels of the stupas at Bagan. In Myanmar, most of the encased monuments have no space between inner and outer monuments, though a few of them have a space or corridor between the two. According to the designed form and space, as seen in the many examples presented in this study, some of the stupas in Thailand have no space between two stupas, while others have space or a corridor between the two structures. Thus, variation is the norm in both Myanmar and Thailand, with

designs reflecting the wishes and actions of donors and architects, and other tangible and intangible elements.

In contrasting the stupa encasements found in Thailand and Myanmar, one commonality seems to be the motivation; the purpose of encasement was not merely restoring or protecting damaged older stupas. Instead, it provided an avenue for donors, perceived as the protectors of Buddhism, to strengthen their spiritual power. Encasement was a deliberate practice used for already sanctified buildings. The commonalities of stupa encasement in both countries can thus be understood as one of long evolution in religious practices and traditions.

According to the written references in Thailand, encasements of different periods used materials like brick, stone, stucco, and gold, and miniature stupas made of stone, iron, tin alloy, gold, silver, gilt bronze and crystal. Thai records describe the shapes and measurements of the enshrined relics in the reliquaries. These show how, in Thailand, chedis enshrine the relics of the Buddha, the ashes of kings and royal families, numerous amulets of gold, silver and other materials, votive tablets, all sizes of Buddha images made of various substances, miniature stupas, and reliquaries made of different materials (Byrne, 1995, pp. 226-281). The relics of the Buddha with the reliquaries have mostly been discovered at the centre of the stupas, on the floors or platforms in India and Sri Lanka, as possibly consecrated deposits (Revire, 2015, p. 183). However, the majority of recorded relics in caskets found at relic chambers at Bagan were discovered in various different parts of the Buddhist monuments, including finials, sikharas, bell-shaped and hemispherical domes, and Buddha images (Aung Kyaing, 1984; Pichard, 1992-2001, Vol-1-8). In Thailand, the relics of the Buddha in the inner chambers included votive tablets, some gold and silver amulets, and small images enshrined as consecrated deposits at the time of stupa construction (Byrne, 1995, pp. 226-281). In summary, this article has touched upon the varied customs of relic enshrinements, and has documented the development of encasement through five monuments in Thailand, drawing on the chronology, epigraphic records, architecture, art style, and reliquaries. Overall, the examples profile the varied designs of encasement at Buddhist monuments dating from 15th to 19th

centuries CE in Thailand, and they are compared to Myanmar examples. These demonstrate a different record in relic deposits, and, in some cases, provision of a devotional space between the inner and outer stupas. The contrast needs further research and, in the case of Myanmar, excavation to verify and better compare with Thai records. However, while sharing religious traditions, based on present evidence, there are both differences in the recorded evidence of consecration deposits and relic deposits and the presence or absence of a space between inner and outer stupas with encasement despite the long-term continued links with Myanmar over many centuries.

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