

Comparative Study of Garuda (Khrut) Mythical Creature Visual Representation in Indonesian and Thai Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia and Thailand share a common mythical heritage, Garuda (Khrut), which serves both as a spiritual figure and a symbol of national identity. However, significant differences exist in the stylistic approaches, symbolic narratives, and functional placements of Garuda imagery, shaped by each nation's unique historical, religious, and socio-cultural contexts. This study explores how the visual language of Garuda in architecture contributes to contemporary expressions of national identity and environmental design in public spaces. The objectives of this research are: (1) to identify how mythological symbolism is applied in prominent public architecture in Indonesia and Thailand; (2) to examine the socio-cultural and historical influences that shape the stylistic variations of Garuda representations; and (3) to analyze the visual interpretation of Garuda imagery within architectural contexts in present-day Indonesia and Thailand. This study employs a comparative visual analysis method, investigating how Garuda is interpreted and integrated into architectural elements in both countries. Implementing comparative analysis, this study integrates a semiotic perspective using Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model (signifier, signified, and referent) to deepen the interpretation of Garuda's imagery within architectural contexts. Findings reveal a shared Southeast Asian architectural tradition in which Garuda or Khrut serves as a vehicle of cultural continuity, collective memory, and ideological reproduction. The study concludes that Garuda functions as an active architectural discourse mediating tradition, modernity, myth, governance, heritage, and identity. Through comparative and semiotic analysis, this research demonstrates the consistency of mythological symbolism in shaping public Southeast Asian architecture.

Keywords: Garuda (Khrut), mythological symbolism, Southeast Asian Architecture, Indonesia, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and Thailand share several cultural similarities, one of which is found in the mythical heritage of Garuda (Khrut), a legendary bird-like figure that serves both as a cultural icon and as a symbol of national identity (Syafrony & Suwanpratest, 2016). Despite this shared mythological heritage, the two nations have cultivated distinct stylistic interpretations, symbolic narratives, and cultural functions of Garuda imagery, shaped by their respective historical experiences, religious traditions, and socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, the study of Garuda's visual language, particularly in architectural ornamentation and public design, offers valuable insights into how mythological symbolism contributes to contemporary expressions of national identity and environmental aesthetics.

Etymologically, the term Garuda originates from the Sanskrit *Garuḍa*, while in Pāli it is rendered as *Garula* (Doniger, 1999). Across traditions, Garuda is portrayed as a majestic bird-like entity, frequently serving as the mount (*vahana*) of Vishnu in Hindu mythology and appearing in various forms within Buddhist cosmology, which shows the figure's adaptability across cultural and religious landscapes. The mythological origins of Garuda are rooted most prominently in the *Mahābhārata*. In the Āstika Parva of the Ādi Parva, Garuda's birth as the son of Vinata, his conflict with the serpent race, and his quest for *amṛta* (the nectar of immortality) are elaborated, thereby establishing his role as Vishnu's vehicle (Ganguli, 1966). Further elaborations appear in the Purāṇas, particularly the *Garuda Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where Garuda is characterized as a divine messenger, protector, and cosmic symbol (Bhattacharji, 2016). It can be concluded that Garuda's layered textual portrayals and a multifaceted significance, rendering it as a timeless icon through myth, religion, and national-symbolic imagination.

In East Asia, the Garuda myth spread through the transmission of Buddhism. In Japan, Garuda is known as Karura (迦楼羅), typically depicted with a human body combined with bird features. Within Buddhist iconography, Karura functions as a guardian deity believed to repel demons and evil spirits (Fukushima, 2005). A comparable

process of cultural adaptation can be observed in Mongolia, where a Garuda-like mythological bird called Khangarid appears in folklore. Revered as a symbol of power, protection, and bravery, Khangarid is prominently represented in the official emblem of Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia (Bawden, 2013).

Thailand presents a significant cultural adaptation of Garuda, known locally as Khrut (ครุฑ). In Thai cosmology, Garuda retains its identity as the mount (*vahana*) of Vishnu while simultaneously embodying ideals of divine kingship. During the reign of King Rama VI (1910–1925), Garuda was formally institutionalized as the official national emblem of Thailand (Phra Khrut Pha), which symbolizes royal authority and the sacred legitimacy of the monarchy (Peleggi, 2007). Similarly, in Indonesia, Garuda has been reinterpreted as Garuda Pancasila, the national emblem that encapsulates the philosophical foundation of the state. The motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"), which is inscribed on the ribbon held by Garuda Pancasila's claws, originates from the 14th-century Javanese poem "Kakawin Sutasoma" by Mpu Tantular (Zoetmulder, 1974). In essence, Garuda Pancasila functions both as a marker of sovereignty and also as a visual articulation of Indonesia's ideological principles and its pluralistic vision (Bourchier, 2019).

Syafrony and Suwanpratest (2016) have previously conducted research in "A Comparison of the Significances of Garuda in Society, Arts, and Architecture". The research examined a wide range of comprehensive aspects, including the Garuda, National Emblem common practices, The Institute of Kingship, Art and Performing Arts, and Architecture. Establishing a baseline for the architectural utilization of Garuda in Thailand. An overview of the primary distinctions in architectural expression is provided by the comparison approach, which depicts religious and commercial buildings. This investigation dives deeper into the specific structures and the way the application of design has evolved over time.

The comparative use of Garuda as a national emblem in both Indonesia and Thailand shows its unique role in bridging mythology with nationhood. While Indonesia emphasizes Garuda as a unifying figure within a pluralistic society,

Thailand places stronger emphasis on Garuda as a legitimizing symbol of monarchical power. By examining the architectural and spatial deployment of Garuda imagery in public spaces, this study will explore how mythological iconography continues to shape contemporary narratives of identity, authority, and cultural environment in Southeast Asia.

The study makes two main contributions. First, it compares how Garuda/Khrut is reinterpreted into distinct architectural symbols in Indonesia and Thailand, revealing divergent civic–national and sacred–royal trajectories of the same mythological figure. Second, it extends architectural semiotic research by applying Peirce's triadic model to explain how Garuda/Khrut functions as a dynamic architectural sign, demonstrating that mythological symbolism remains an adaptive medium through which architecture expresses cultural identity, authority, and continuity in contemporary Southeast Asia. Based on the descriptions above, the research questions are formulated below:

1. How is mythological symbolism applied in prominent public architecture in Indonesia and Thailand?
2. How do socio-cultural, religious, national identity, and historical factors influence Garuda representations?
3. What are the interpretations of Garuda imagery expressed within architectural contexts in present-day Indonesia and Thailand?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mythological Symbolism in Architecture

Mythological symbolism has long played a central role in the design of architecture, serving both as ornamentation and a medium through which societies articulate values, beliefs, and identity. Mythological figures such as Garuda embody cosmological principles and collective imagination, and when incorporated into architecture, they provide a visible and clear connection between myth, religion, and socio-political structures.

In many cultural traditions, mythological symbols embedded in architecture reinforce sacred legitimacy and authority. Architectural ornamentation becomes a way to project divine sanction onto rulers, institutions, and social systems. Figures like Garuda, which originate in mythological narratives and religious texts, are frequently reinterpreted in architectural contexts to serve as guardians, protectors, and legitimizers of power. Their placement on public buildings, temples, and monuments creates a sense of continuity between mythic time and the present, which links human governance with cosmic order (Sukatman & Fitriyah, 2024).

Syafrony and Suwanpratest (2016) clarified that Garuda was originally rooted in Thai society through Indian theory and the doctrine of divine kingship. An incarnation of God, Lord Vishnu, is the monarch. Garuda is then associated with the monarch as Lord Vishnu's vehicle. The Hindu Trimurti has been in existence since the Ayutthaya period, which stretched from the 14th to the 18th century. Since Ayutthaya's establishment, Hindu rituals, including the Hindu ceremony and giant swing, have been observed.

Traditional Thai architectural components, particularly religious structures, are characterized and defined by animal-based mythical creatures, including the *nāga*, swan, lion, chicken, crocodile, dragon, Garuda, etc. Some architectural elements serve decorative functions; others are structural or symbolic. While certain motifs operate as metaphors, Garuda is often represented in its recognizable and realistic form, directly symbolizing kingship and royal authority, (Nimlek, 2014). Garuda is a mythical character with an avian face and human limbs, while Kinaree has a human upper body and a bird lower body. Both are depicted as anthropomorphic figures that combine human and bird-like features. Nevertheless, their symbolic meanings are not exclusively rooted in religious expression but are also influenced by vernacular traditions, indigenous motifs, and a wide range of cultural beliefs. Mukhawilai (2010) described that although Garuda mounted by Narayana was absent after early in the Rattanakosin period, the meaning still remains. Importantly, Garuda mounted by Narayana represents royal authority and is associated with architecture initiated by the King.

Historically, Garuda is depicted in Rachaburi and Suphanburi as terracotta, reflecting Khmer-influenced architecture during the Dhavaravati period, which spanned from the 7th to the 11th century. It remains in the human morphology, absent a beak. Similarly, one of the earliest known Garuda statues was discovered in Kanchanaburi, a region influenced by Khmer culture. Further, Khmer-influenced architecture of the 11th–12th centuries in northeastern Thailand features Garuda on the lintel, mounted by Narayana. Moreover, in Lopburi, a 13th century bronze fragment was discovered that shows the influence of Bayon style in that area. In Thailand, Mahayana Buddhism played a significant role in incorporating Garuda as a Dharmapala, or protector of the Dharma. This religious symbolism is reflected in a significant 15th-century stupa at Wat Ratchaburana in Ayutthaya, where Garuda is portrayed as carrying the top of the structure. This symbolic role later evolved as Garuda was employed as a symbol of kingship and featured on the pediments of significant religious structures, including the ordination hall of the Grand Palace during the Rattanakosin period in the 18th century. Furthermore, the presence of Garuda imagery on temple pediments, exemplified by Wat Phra Singh in Chiang Mai, can be interpreted as a visual manifestation of the centralized political authority exercised by Siam over the northern kingdoms during the late nineteenth century (Leksukhum, 2021).

Theravada Buddhist cosmology provides an important context for understanding Garuda iconography. In this tradition, Garudas are described as a class of bird-like beings living in the Himmapan Forest at the foot of Mount Sumeru, which is regarded as the center of the universe (Sannato, 2021). This cosmological association has contributed to representations of Garudas carrying or supporting Mount Sumeru. Garudas are described as being under the control of Virulhaka, one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Pali literature also provides different classifications and descriptions of Garudas. In contrast, Sanskrit literature generally portrays Garuda as an eternal divine being, a rival of the *nāgas*, and the mount of Vishnu (Pengpongsa, 1978). Opaso explained the multiple interpretations of Garuda in Theravada Buddhism by comparing representations in the Sutta Pitaka,

Traibhumikatha Buddhist Cosmology, and the Great Jataka, which differ in their accounts of Garudas' origins, appearances, habitats, and roles (Opaso et al., 2023).

Architecture provides a spatial framework in which mythological symbolism functions as a visual narrative. Symbols like Garuda not only function as decoration, they communicate ideas about protection, unity, and sovereignty. When reproduced across large-scale structures such as palaces, state institutions, or monuments, these figures become part of a nation's visual identity. They offer a form of collective memory that reminds citizens of their shared mythological heritage, while at the same time legitimizing social and political frameworks (Purnomo & Kurniawan, 2025).

The adaptability of mythological symbols within architecture illustrates their timeless relevance. While rooted in ancient cosmologies, these figures can be recontextualized within modern nation-states, functioning as emblems of unity, authority, or cultural pride. The continued architectural use of Garuda imagery demonstrates how myth is not confined to religious or historical narratives but actively reshaped to resonate with contemporary audiences. This adaptability reflects the broader role of myth in architecture: to mediate between tradition and modernity, spirituality and politics, local identity and global recognition (Taylor & Littleton, 2016).

Mythological symbolism in architecture operates as a mediator between intangible belief systems and the tangible built-environment. Through scale, repetition, and public visibility, architectural ornamentation transforms myth into a lived experience. The presence of mythological figures in architectural design thus becomes a powerful means of encoding identity, preserving cultural memory, and legitimizing authority. By materializing myth in stone, metal, or monumental form, architecture ensures that these symbols remain active participants in shaping cultural and political imagination (Peleggi, 2002).

Socio-Cultural, Religious, and Identity Aspects of Garuda Mythology

Garuda, rooted in South Asian mythology, has evolved into one of the most timeless and adaptable symbols in the cultural and religious imagination of Asia. Beyond its mythological narrative, Garuda has taken on diverse socio-cultural, religious, and political meanings, making it a powerful emblem of identity across different regions. By examining the origins of Garuda in Hindu cosmology, its transregional adaptations, and its modern role in national symbolism, we can understand how this mythical figure continues to shape collective memory and cultural identity in contemporary societies.

In modern Southeast Asia, Garuda has been transformed into a central emblem of national identity, particularly in Indonesia and Thailand. In the latter, especially during the reign of King Rama VI (1910–1925), Garuda functions as a legitimizing symbol of monarchical power, embodying divine kingship and the sacred authority of the Thai monarchy (Reynolds, 2006). In contrast, Indonesia reinterpreted Garuda as Garuda Pancasila, a national emblem representing the philosophical foundation of the state. Inscribed with the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* [Unity in Diversity], derived from Mpu Tantular's 14th-century "Kakawin Sutasoma," the emblem reflects Indonesia's vision of pluralism and unity among diverse cultural and religious groups (Zoetmulder, 1974). While both nations employ Garuda as a national symbol, the differences in emphasis (royal legitimacy in Thailand and pluralistic sovereignty in Indonesia) illustrate how mythological imagery can be adapted to fit distinct socio-political and historical contexts.

Garuda's mythology shows the dynamic interplay between religion, culture, and identity. From its roots in Hindu cosmology to its transregional adaptations in Buddhist and local traditions, and finally to its institutionalization as a national emblem in Indonesia and Thailand, Garuda demonstrates how mythology can transcend time and geography. In each context, Garuda serves as a religious, socio-cultural marker and also as a powerful symbol of identity. This timeless adaptability reflects the continuing relevance of

myth in shaping how societies understand authority, unity, and collective belonging.

The works of Jean Boisselier focus on Garuda depictions in Khmer art and architecture and their influence on Thai art and architecture in general. In Thai/Khmer Hinduism, Garuda (son of Kasyapa and Vinata) is the natural enemy of the *nāgas* (serpents), vehicle of Vishnu, and symbol of victory and power of the sun. In Mahayana Buddhism, Garuda continues as the enemy of *nāgas* but also paradoxically protects certain *nāgas* beings who served or protected the Buddha. This dual role expanded Garuda's significance in Khmer iconography.

Pinaphang and Weerataweemat (2021), in their study of the Garuda emblem (*Phra Khrut Pha*), explored the meanings of Garuda motifs located on the gables of city halls in northeastern Thailand. Following the administrative centralization reforms introduced by King Rama V in 1892, the Garuda emblem became a visual marker of state authority and territorial governance. Before this period, the Garuda emblem had primarily functioned as a royal symbol, including its use as the royal seal of King Rama II and on official government documents. Later, during the reign of King Rama VI, Garuda was officially adopted as a national emblem and was also used in royal warrants granted to private businesses.

Applications of Garuda in both countries are compared in terms of four aspects, following Syafrony and Suwanpratest. Firstly, the national emblem of Indonesia, the Garuda Pancasila, is primarily symbolic of "Unity IN Diversity." This is a notable distinction. In the current depiction, the form was altered to resemble a bird, despite its origins in mythology. The numbers are significant for their association with country's date of independence. On the other hand, Thailand officially adopted Garuda in 1911 during the Rama VI era. Furthermore, Garuda is the king's vehicle and it is depicted on government official documents and letterheads.

Secondly, regarding its use as an emblem of the Institute of Kingship, Syafrony and Suwanpratest, demonstrate that both countries adhere to the same fundamental doctrine of the Vaisnavite sect and Hindu kingdom. The Garuda is prominently depicted in the royal seal, symbolizing the virtues and responsibilities of

leadership. Within Indonesia's Sultanate, the Garuda represents authority, protection, prosperity, and public welfare, reflecting the ruler's obligation to ensure the well-being of the people. Thailand's emphasis is on the legitimacy of the government and the authority of the monarch.

Thirdly, the research demonstrates that Indonesia's depiction of the Garuda image from the Mahabharata chapter is rooted in mythology, particularly in the realm of art and performing arts. Thailand features Garuda images in religious settings and on furniture, including gilded lacquer cabinets. In Indonesia, a primary motif of the journey of Lord Vishnu can be seen in relation to the performing arts, whereas in Thailand, Garuda is used to convey grandeur.

Finally, the architecture of Garuda is distinct: It is present in Buddhist temples in Indonesia, although its representation is founded on Hindu texts rather than Buddhist mythology. In Thailand, it is commonly present on religious and government buildings. Examples include its use in royal warrants and the *Tra Tang* symbol, which is bestowed as a prestigious distinction in the business community.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, a study by Banindro et al. (2024) highlights the continued use and adaptation of Hindu and Buddhist symbols in Islamic Javanese and Indonesian traditions.

A comparison of the Khmer's Boisselier (1956) and Javanese chronologies reveals that Garuda was not merely a religious icon but a highly adaptable cultural symbol that evolved in response to changing political, artistic, and religious contexts. While Khmer representations increasingly emphasized Garuda's role as a divine guardian, architectural motif, and royal protector, the Javanese tradition demonstrates a different trajectory of adaptation. According to Banindro et al. (2024), the arrival of Islam did not eliminate Hindu-Buddhist visual traditions; instead, these symbols were selectively transformed and incorporated into new cultural expressions. Consequently, Garuda persisted through symbolic representations in court *batik* traditions and royal iconography, preserving its connotations of authority, protection, and legitimacy. This continuity suggests that Garuda served as a bridge between pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural identities, reflecting the enduring capacity of local societies to reinterpret inherited symbols within new ideological frameworks.

Figure 1

Timeline Adapted From the Khmer Art Historical Chronology Proposed by Boisselier (1956) on Chronological Development

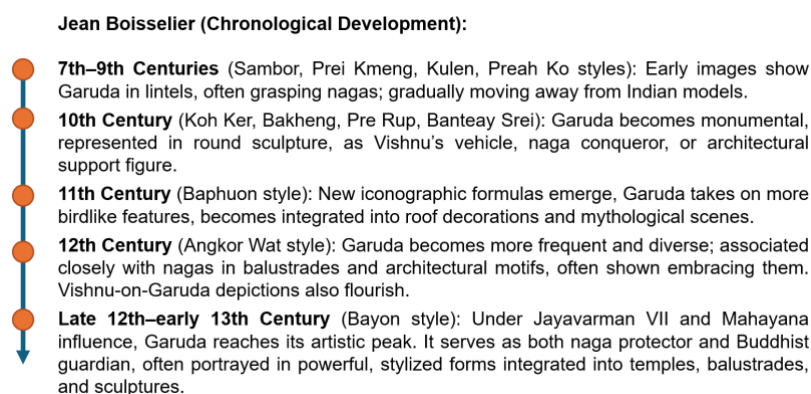


Figure 2

Proposed Transition of Garuda Visual Elements From Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic Traditions in Java



Note. The figure was compiled by the author based on studies of Garuda iconography, Javanese *batik* motifs, and Islamic visual adaptation, as proposed from “The transition of Hindu era Garuda visual element into Islamic era batik patterns in Java”, by B. S. Banindro, B. Sobandi, A. Pandanwangi, B. Mutmainah, and B. Hartono, 2024, *New Design Ideas*, 8(2), 467–489. (<https://doi.org/10.62476/ndi82467>). Copyright 2024 by B. S. Banindro, B. Sobandi, A. Pandanwangi, B. Mutmainah, and B. Hartono.

Contemporary Interpretation of Traditional Ornamentation in Architectural Contexts

Traditional ornamentation has long functioned as a medium for expressing cultural identity, religious values, and aesthetic principles in architecture. Beyond decoration, ornament embodies mythological, cosmological, and social meanings that preserve cultural memory within the built environment. As Panofsky (1955) argued, ornament operates as a symbolic system, while contemporary reinterpretations preserve these symbolic functions through adaptation to modern materials, technologies, and architectural practices (Dale et al., 2016). The role of ornament has shifted considerably over time. Modernism, particularly through Loos's *Ornament and Crime* (1908/1982), rejected ornament as unnecessary, promoting functionalism and minimalism. In contrast, postmodernism re-established ornament as a vehicle for cultural dialogue and symbolic expression (Jencks, 1984), encouraging the reinterpretation rather than the replication of traditional motifs (Venturi et al., 1977). In Thailand, this reappraisal influenced postmodern architecture through concepts such as historic preservation, historical allusion, contextual linkage, placemaking, double coding, eclectic composition, specific signification, and lifestyle

pattern as organization (Prasertsuk & Andrugsa, 2023).

Contemporary architecture further reinterprets traditional ornament through abstraction, material innovation, and digital fabrication technologies such as parametric design and CNC carving (Oxman, 2017). Similar transformations are evident in Islamic architectural ornament, where traditional motifs are reimagined using modern materials while retaining their cultural significance (Necipoğlu & Bailey, 2005). In postcolonial societies, architectural expression can also serve as a marker of cultural identity, negotiating between global modernity and local traditions (King, 2004). Across Southeast Asia, mythological motifs continue to shape civic and institutional architecture as expressions of regional identity and cultural continuity (Nas, 2011).

From a semiotic perspective, ornament functions as a system of signs in which visual forms (representamen) communicate meanings (interpretants) grounded in cultural and historical referents (objects). Through continual reinterpretation, traditional motifs remain living signs that connect heritage with contemporary architectural expression, demonstrating the enduring adaptability of cultural symbolism. The literature review provides us with valuable insights into the field where symbolism and architecture intersect. The complete matrix of all previous studies used for the literature review is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1*Matrix of Previous Study on Symbolism and Architecture*

Author(s)	Focus / Theme	Key Findings	Research Gaps / Limitations
(Sukatman & Fitriyah, 2024)	Mythological symbolism in architecture as legitimizing power	Garuda and other mythological symbols serve as mediators between cosmological belief systems and socio-political authority, legitimizing rulers and institutions.	Limited focus on contemporary reinterpretations; primarily historical in scope.
(Purnomo & Kurniawan, 2025)	Mythological figures as collective memory in nation-building	Symbols like Garuda reinforce unity, sovereignty, and national identity through architecture.	Insufficient comparative analysis across national contexts; emphasis on symbolic function rather than stylistic variation.
(Taylor & Littleton, 2016)	Adaptability of mythological symbols	Mythological imagery can be recontextualized for modern nation-states, blending tradition with modernity and global recognition.	Lack of detailed study on material/visual reinterpretations in contemporary architecture.
(Peleggi, 2002)	Myth materialized in built form	Mythological ornamentation shapes lived cultural and political imagination through repetition and monumental visibility.	Narrow scope; limited exploration of comparative and transnational applications.
(Zoetmulder, 1974)	Garuda as national emblem in Indonesia	Garuda Pancasila symbolizes pluralism and unity in Indonesia, reflecting socio-political values.	Emphasis on emblematic function rather than architectural integration.
(Reynolds, 2006)	Garuda in Thailand	Functions as legitimizing symbol of monarchical power and divine kingship.	Focused on royal symbolism; lacks engagement with modern architectural reinterpretations.
(Panofsky, 1955)	Ornament as symbolic system	Ornament conveys cosmological and mythological meaning, embedding collective identity in architecture.	Classical perspective; does not address globalized or digital reinterpretations.
(Loos & Tietenberg, 1962)	Modernist critique of ornament	Rejected ornament as superfluous, influencing 20th-century architectural practices.	Overly rigid framework, disregards symbolic and cultural values of ornament.
(Venturi et al., 1977)	Postmodern reappraisal of ornament	Reintroduced ornament as cultural dialogue, symbolic revival, and reinterpretation in architecture.	Limited application to Southeast Asian contexts.

Table 1 (Continued)

Author(s)	Focus / Theme	Key Findings	Research Gaps / Limitations
(Dale et al., 2016)	Contemporary reinterpretations with technology	Digital tools (parametric design, CNC carving) enable traditional motifs to adapt to modern construction and aesthetics.	Insufficient link between technological reinterpretation and mythological symbols like Garuda.
Necipoğlu, G., & Bailey, J. (Ed.). (2005)	Islamic ornamental reinterpretations	Demonstrates cultural heritage integrated with modern materials and techniques.	Focused on Islamic motifs; lacks connection to Southeast Asian mythological figures.
(Nas, 2011)	Architecture, identity, and postcolonial negotiation	Ornament and symbolism negotiate between universal modernism and local traditions, serving as identity markers in postcolonial contexts.	Comparative analysis across Southeast Asia remains underdeveloped, especially regarding Garuda.
(Syafrohy & Suwanpratest, 2016)	Comparative study of Garuda symbolism in society, arts, performance, and architecture in Indonesia and Thailand	Garuda functions as a shared cultural symbol rooted in Hindu traditions but develops distinct meanings in each country. In Indonesia, Garuda symbolizes virtue, national identity, bravery, loyalty, and protection, whereas in Thailand it is strongly associated with kingship, sacred authority, and royal legitimacy. Similarities are also found in artistic expressions, architectural ornamentation, and state symbolism.	Limited discussion of contemporary reinterpretations and cultural transformation of Garuda beyond traditional and national contexts. Lacks analysis of how Garuda symbolism evolves through religious transitions, modern design practices, and cross-cultural adaptation in Southeast Asia.

The literature demonstrates that mythological symbolism in architecture serves as a bridge between cosmological belief systems and socio-political authority, with figures like Garuda embodying cultural identity and legitimizing power (Peleggi, 2002). While studies acknowledge the symbolic role of ornamentation and its reinterpretation within contemporary contexts (Oxman, 2017), existing research remains fragmented and focusing largely on historical narratives or isolated national cases. Limited attention has been given to how mythological symbolism, particularly Garuda, is applied within prominent public architecture, how socio-cultural and historical factors shape its

stylistic variations, and how its visual forms are reinterpreted and semiotically perceived as carriers of layered meanings in present-day Indonesia and Thailand. Addressing these gaps is crucial for understanding the preservation of cultural memory and the dynamic role of mythological imagery in shaping architectural identity within modern Southeast Asian contexts. Previous comparative studies have focused on the social, artistic, and political significance of Garuda in Indonesia and Thailand, but have not examined how Garuda imagery was transformed, adapted, and recontextualized across changing religious traditions and architectural settings.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative comparative case study design to examine the visual interpretation of Garuda in public architecture across Indonesia and Thailand. By employing a comparative visual analysis, the study seeks to identify stylistic variations, symbolic meanings, and architectural placements of Garuda imagery, while situating them within the socio-cultural and historical contexts of each nation. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how mythological symbolism is embedded and reinterpreted in contemporary architectural identity.

The data were collected through a combination of field observations, document and archival analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Fieldwork was conducted in selected cities such as Jakarta and Bali in Indonesia, as well as Bangkok and Nakhon Pathom in Thailand, where Garuda figures are prominently displayed in public and monumental architecture. Cases were selected through purposive sampling based on: (1) prominence of Garuda representation; (2) national, royal, or religious significance; (3) accessibility for field observation; and (4) representativeness of different historical periods.

Observations focus on spatial placement, scale, and stylistic features of Garuda imagery, supported by photographic documentation and visual mapping to capture the relationship between the symbols and their architectural environments. Archival research complements these observations by examining historical records, architectural plans, government publications, museum archives, and cultural policy documents that trace the evolution of Garuda symbolism and its institutionalization. In addition, semi-structured interviews with architects, cultural historians, government officials, and heritage experts provide interpretive insights into how Garuda is perceived, recontextualized, and integrated into national and cultural identity.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study relies on triangulation at multiple levels. Data triangulation is achieved by combining observations, archival materials, and interview accounts, while methodological triangulation

integrates visual analysis, archival research, and field-based inquiry. Theoretical triangulation is also applied by drawing from architectural semiotics, cultural studies, and heritage discourse, allowing the findings to be examined through multiple analytical lenses.

The collected data are analyzed using comparative visual analysis and thematic coding:

- **Visual Analysis:** Examining stylistic elements (form, material, placement) and symbolic narratives of Garuda imagery.
- **Thematic Coding:** Identifying recurring themes from interviews and archival materials related to socio-cultural, religious, and political influences.
- **Cross-Case Comparison:** Synthesizing findings between Indonesia and Thailand to highlight convergences, divergences, and cultural adaptations.

Ethical considerations are central to the research process, especially related to the data collection techniques and the position of Garuda as religious and national symbol. The framework of the research is provided in Figure 3.

The proposed framework integrates a literature review, field investigation, and comparative thematic analysis to examine the evolution and contemporary representation of Garuda (Indonesia) and Khrut (Thailand) in architectural environments. The framework first investigates the mythological, cultural, and symbolic foundations of Garuda/Khrut through existing scholarship, emphasizing their roles in religious beliefs, political legitimacy, and cultural identity. Empirical data are then collected through qualitative field research to document current visual manifestations in architectural ornamentation and public buildings. By comparing the visual forms, symbolic meanings, and architectural functions observed in both countries, the study identifies patterns of continuity and transformation across different historical and cultural contexts. The final interpretative stage evaluates how Garuda/Khrut imagery has been adapted to contemporary architectural settings while retaining its traditional significance, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of cultural resilience, cross-cultural exchange, and the evolving role of mythological symbols in Southeast Asian architecture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Garuda imagery in architecture across Indonesia and Thailand demonstrates how mythological symbolism remains relevant within contemporary cultural, political, and architectural landscapes. Through open, axial, and selective coding (see Table 2), four major thematic dimensions emerge: mythological continuity, visual adaptability, symbolic registers (sacred-royal vs. civic-national), and modern recontextualization. The selected case studies illustrate how Garuda functions as a cultural signifier across different historical periods, while also highlighting key differences between

Indonesia and Thailand in their architectural applications.

The findings of this research reaffirm and extend the claims made in the literature about the central role of mythological symbolism in architecture. Prior studies have argued that mythological figures such as Garuda embody cosmological principles and function as timeless cultural mediators when embedded into built forms (Peleggi, 2002; Reynolds, 2006). Our coding analysis, however, reveals that while both Indonesia and Thailand share this mythological foundation, they diverge significantly in how Garuda is visualized, institutionalized, and recontextualized within contemporary architecture.

Figure 3

Research Framework of Garuda/Khrut Visual Representation

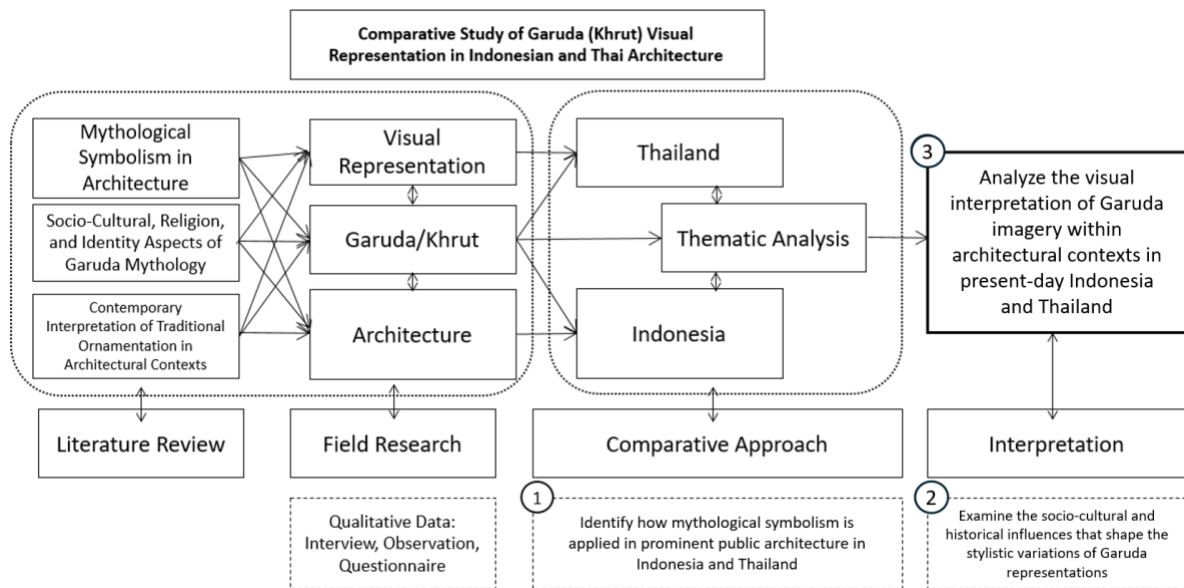


Table 2*Qualitative Coding of Research Data*

Initial Categories	Emerging Themes	Central Theme
Mythological roots (Hindu, Buddhist, local adaptations)	Mythological Symbolism → reinterpretations across Hindu, Buddhist, Javanese, Thai traditions	Cultural-Religious Continuity → Garuda as mediator between myth, religion, and society
Garuda vs. Nāga (serpent conflict) in reliefs (Candi Sukuh, Candi Kidal, Thai temples)	Narrative Functions → protection, cosmic balance, liberation, sacred kingship	Myth as Narrative Identity → Garuda reinforces cosmological and political legitimacy
Depiction styles: full bird (Indonesia), hybrid bird-man (Thailand), Karura (Japan), Khangarid (Mongolia)	Stylistic Variations → localized iconography, hybrid vs. full-bird symbolism	Visual Adaptability → Garuda imagery transforms to fit cultural context
Indonesia: Garuda Pancasila, GWK Monument, IKN Palace, Pancasila Building	Civic-National Use → pluralism, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, state ideology	Secular-National Symbolism → Garuda as emblem of national unity and state power
Thailand: Grand Palace, Bangkok Post Office, temples, banks, malls with royal warrants	Sacred-Royal Use → monarchy, divine kingship, royal legitimacy, religious protection	Sacred-Royal Symbolism → Garuda as divine emblem tied to monarchy and Buddhism
Western influence (European heraldry, Bald Eagle similarities)	External Influences → hybridization with global heraldic traditions	Hybrid Identity Formation → negotiation between local heritage and global aesthetics
Contemporary reinterpretations via digital tech (IKN design, tourism monuments, corporate logos)	Modern Recontextualization → Garuda in urban landscapes, tourism, commercial use	Dynamic Modernity → Garuda bridges tradition and modern design practices
Academic debates (ornament vs. minimalism, symbolism in architecture)	Theoretical Discourses → relevance of ornament, symbolism, cultural signifiers	Symbolism as Architectural Discourse → Garuda as part of broader debate on tradition vs. modernity

Table 3

Sample of Khrut/Garuda Figures in Indonesia and Thailand

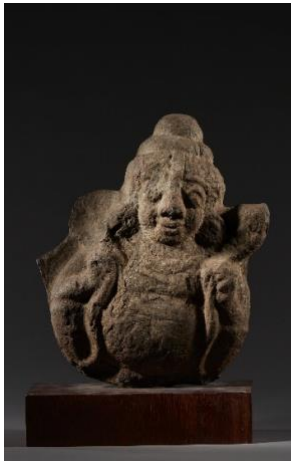
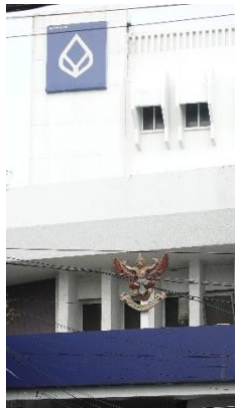
Figure	Indonesia	Thailand	Description / Notes
Figure 4		 	Left: Garuda relief at Candi Sukuh, showing Garuda grasping serpents as a protector figure. Right (top): 13th Century Bronze Fragment for Decoration in Lopburi National Museum. Right (bottom): Sculpture of Garuda with two persons leaning on lotuses on the left and right sides at the Phra Pathom Chedi, Nakhon Pathom National Museum (according to Prof. M.C. Supataradit Diskul).
Figure 5		 	Left: Garuda emblem on the Pancasila Building, Jakarta, symbolizing civic-national identity. Right: Grand Postal Building - Bangkok, currently TCDC (restored in 2017).

Table 3 (Continued)

Figure	Indonesia	Thailand	Description / Notes
Figure 6		 	Left: Garuda statue at the Bank BPD Bali. Right: Khrut at Bangkok Bank. In both Thailand and Indonesia, the Garuda/Khrut symbol is frequently displayed in public spaces, but its meaning and authority differ.
Figure 7		 	Left: In Indonesia, artists often play an active role in building design, as seen in the development of the new capital and its palace (<i>IKN - Ibu Kota Nusantara</i>). Right: In contrast, Thailand demonstrates a more consistent expression, where Khmer-Buddhist and royal traditions are strongly embedded in the design of its Grand Palace.

Mythological Continuity and Cultural Adaptation

At its root, Garuda is a mythological figure drawn from Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. The open coding reveals that its earliest representations emphasize Garuda's enmity with the serpents (*Nāgas*), which is present in textual traditions such as the *Mahābhārata* that are also carved in the reliefs of Javanese temples, including Candi Sukuh and Candi Kidal (see Table 3). These depictions foreground Garuda as a liberator and

cosmic protector, embodying loyalty, sacrifice, and divine power.

In Thailand, Khrut also retains the motif of battling serpents, yet it is reinterpreted primarily as a cosmic guardian protecting the Dharma and legitimizing sacred kingship. This difference suggests a cultural adaptation of the same mythological narrative into distinct socio-political frameworks.

Emerging themes (refer to Table 2) connects these mythological elements to a broader category of cultural-religious continuity. The myth functions both as a story and a living framework

through which architectural ornamentation sustains cultural memory. Therefore, the findings indicate that Garuda functions as a mediator between cosmological belief systems and the tangible built environment, providing a bridge between spiritual heritage and contemporary identity formation.

The literature emphasizes that mythological symbols preserve collective memory by linking mythic time with the present (Stengs, 2009). The findings support this view, particularly in the Indonesian case, where temple reliefs such as those at Candi Sukuh and Candi Kidal localized the Indian Garuda–Nāga narrative into a Javanese cosmological framework. These carvings reinforced Garuda’s role as a protector and liberator, embedding cosmological struggles into sacred spaces. In Thailand, the persistence of Khrut imagery in temples and royal art demonstrates a similar continuity, but one that is specifically aligned with the protection of the Buddhist order and the legitimacy of monarchy. In line with Peleggi’s (2002) argument that myth is materialized through architectural forms, Garuda/Khrut operates as a cultural device through which societies visualize power, legitimize governance, and express enduring cultural values. The continuity of Garuda imagery across Indonesia and Thailand therefore suggests the existence of a shared regional tradition, where architecture becomes a medium for translating mythological cosmology into visible expressions of political authority and cultural identity.

Visual Adaptability and Stylistic Variations

Garuda’s representation demonstrates high adaptability across cultures, reflecting a capacity for localized reinterpretation. In Indonesia, Garuda is most often visualized as a majestic eagle-like bird, especially in national and civic contexts. In contrast, Thai depictions of Khrut emphasize hybridity, showing a half-human, half-bird figure richly ornamented in Thai stylistic traditions. These variations are deeply tied to cultural aesthetics and religious frameworks.

Other regional adaptations (such as Karura in Japan and Khangarid in Mongolia) reinforce this

visual flexibility, with each culture reshaping Garuda to align with local cosmologies and symbolic systems. Such stylistic variations affirm Littleton’s (2002) observation that mythological figures become “culturally plastic,” capable of being reshaped across space and time.

Initial categories then emerging relate to a broader theme of visual adaptability, with a central theme positioning Garuda as a symbol that thrives precisely because of its ability to take on new visual and symbolic forms without losing its mythological essence.

As Littleton (2002) suggest, mythological figures thrive because of their cultural plasticity. This adaptability is evident in the divergent depictions of Garuda across regions: eagle-like in Indonesia, hybrid bird-man in Thailand, Karura in Japan, and Khangarid in Mongolia. Our results reinforce this adaptability as a core strength of mythological symbolism, allowing it to survive and remain meaningful across time, geography, and stylistic reinterpretations.

When applied to architecture, this adaptability aligns with Panofsky’s (1955) assertion that ornament functions as a symbolic system, embedding multiple layers of meaning beyond decoration. In Indonesia, Garuda’s abstraction into state symbols like Garuda Pancasila or its monumental reinterpretation in the Garuda Wisnu Kencana statue demonstrates how traditional motifs are given new life. In Thailand, its stylization with red skin, golden adornments, and royal insignias reflects the incorporation of myth into a national artistic idiom. Both suggest that the persistence of Garuda imagery in architecture is not about replication but about reinterpretation, ensuring relevance for changing audiences.

The utilization of Garuda emblems for a particular purpose can be seen in the *Tra Tang*, a symbol that indicates royal patronage and distinction granted to businesses or products. Stores bearing this royal warrant are of collective significance. This can be seen in the efforts to preserve the Seng-Chong shop in Bangkok’s old town. Currently threatened by the construction of a metro line, the shop is to be relocated. Meanwhile, the metro station will remain true to the community by incorporating the shop sign onto the station’s façade. The shop’s significance is not directly attributable to Garuda. Rather, it is

affirmed by the latter, despite its absence from the vicinity.

The case of Grand Postal can be used as an illustration of stylistic adaptation. It was constructed in 1940 in the Art Deco style. The center of the structure is occupied by a porch adorned with a pair of Garuda sculptures. Typically, Garuda sculptures are positioned on or above government buildings in Thailand as visual markers of their official status and state authority. Their design illustrates the adaptability of traditional Thai symbolism to an Art Deco aesthetic. The form is simplified into pure lines and masses while maintaining its fundamental character through the visual expression of strength. The ornaments of the primary gates also exhibit art deco design, in addition to the

style of the top Garuda. In conclusion, the government building design incorporates the symbolic Garuda, even though the era and style may differ.

Beyond stylistic transformation, Garuda's visual adaptability should be understood as an active architectural sign that connects contemporary institutions with collective memory, cosmological beliefs, and historical heritage. Its continued presence in royal warrants, governmental buildings, and modern civic architecture demonstrates how mythological symbolism remains relevant in legitimizing authority, sustaining cultural continuity, and expressing collective identity across changing social and architectural contexts.

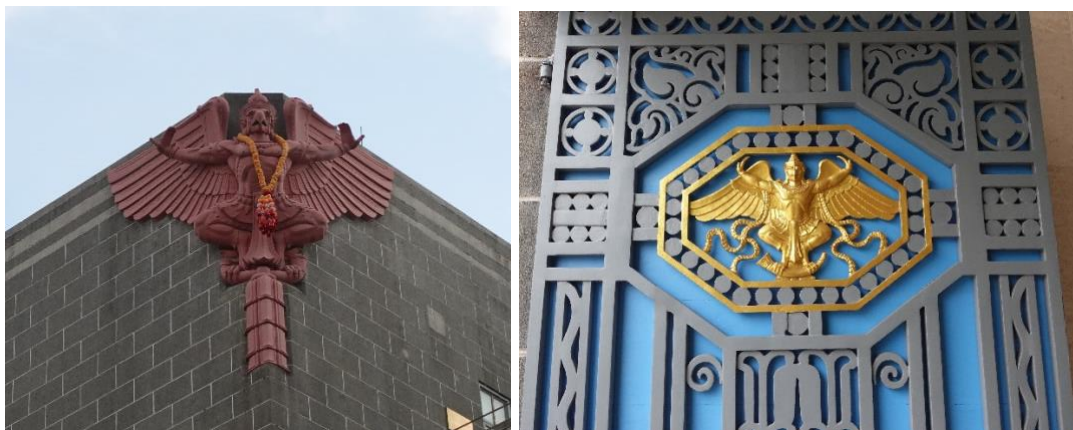
Figure 8

Seng-Chong Shop Sign at Train Station (Left); Seng-Chong New Location with Garuda Emblems (Right)



Figure 9

Art Deco Garuda Sculptures at the Grand Postal Building



Secular-National versus Sacred-Royal Symbolism

Perhaps the most striking difference revealed by the analysis lies in the symbolic register in which Garuda operates. In Indonesia, Garuda has been secularized and nationalized. As Garuda Pancasila, it embodies *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"), serving as a civic emblem that binds together the nation's plural identities. Its architectural presence is evident in the Pancasila Building, the Garuda Wisnu Kencana Monument, and the design of the new IKN Palace, all of which reinterpret Garuda to signify statehood, pluralism, and visionary progress.

In contrast, Thailand has retained Garuda (Khrut) as a sacred emblem tied to the monarchy. Since King Rama VI institutionalized it as the national emblem, its architectural presence on royal palaces, temples, ministries, military headquarters, and even commercial companies with royal warrants has reinforced its identity as a sacred-royal symbol. Unlike in Indonesia, where Garuda is encountered as a civic-national icon, in Thailand its presence remains tied to the divine legitimacy of the monarchy and the protection of Buddhism.

This contrast underscores Anderson's (2006) notion of "imagined communities," wherein similar symbols are mobilized to produce distinct narratives of belonging. Initially symbolic registers identify as a category, which then emerges as a central theme that emphasizes the dichotomy between profane civic symbolism in Indonesia and sacred royal symbolism in Thailand.

The most striking divergence between Indonesia and Thailand resonates with the literature's observation that mythological ornamentation often legitimizes power (Peleggi, 2002; Reynolds, 2006). In Thailand, Garuda's presence on palaces, military buildings, and temples embodies divine kingship and reinforces the sacred authority of the monarchy. Its controlled use in banks and malls with royal warrants shows its function as a living sacred emblem tied to state power and religion. In contrast, in Indonesia, Garuda has been secularized into a civic-national emblem. As Garuda Pancasila, it anchors public architecture and civic identity by embodying *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Indonesia's

ideological principle of "Unity in Diversity" (Zoetmulder, 1974).

This contrast illustrates how similar mythological symbols are mobilized differently: one toward sacred-royal legitimacy and the other toward civic-national unity. The findings therefore confirm Anderson's (2006) claim that shared symbols can create "imagined communities" but also demonstrate that such symbols are flexible enough to accommodate divergent political narratives.

Beyond their differing symbolic orientations, both Garuda and Khrut function as instruments of ideological reproduction embedded within the built environment. In Indonesia, Garuda reinforces narratives of national unity, civic identity, and state ideology through its association with Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. In Thailand, Khrut reproduces monarchical-religious values by continuously reaffirming the sacred authority of the monarchy and its connection to Buddhist cosmology. Although expressed through different political frameworks, both symbols operate as visual mechanisms through which architecture communicates, sustains, and legitimizes dominant cultural and ideological systems across generations.

Hybrid Influences and Modern Recontextualization

Another significant theme emerging from the data is the influence of global design traditions in shaping Garuda's modern forms. Indonesia's Garuda Pancasila, for instance, bears resemblance to European heraldic eagles such as Poland's White Eagle. While initially influenced by Western heraldic conventions, it was reinterpreted through Soekarno's direction and localized with Indonesian philosophical content, particularly the five principles of Pancasila. This hybridization illustrates how global and local elements intersect in creating national symbols.

Moreover, both Indonesia and Thailand have adapted Garuda into contemporary contexts beyond state institutions. In Indonesia, Garuda imagery is used in tourism branding (Garuda Indonesia airline), monumental projects (GWK in

Bali), and digital architectural motifs. In Thailand, its regulated use in commercial enterprises, especially banks and malls with royal warrants, demonstrates how sacred symbolism extends into economic prestige.

Initially, this phenomenon was identified as modern recontextualization, then refined into the category of dynamic modernity. This highlights how Garuda functions as a historical/mythological figure and serves as a living symbol that is continually reinterpreted for new social, political, and economic purposes.

The findings also situate Garuda within broader architectural debates on ornamentation. Modernist critiques, such as that of Loos & Tietenberg (1962), viewed ornament as regressive, whereas postmodern thinkers like Jencks (1984) and Venturi et al. (1977) reintroduced ornament as a site of cultural dialogue. Garuda's architectural presence across Southeast Asia demonstrates the validity of the postmodern reappraisal. Its recontextualization into the Nusantara Presidential Palace design (IKN) or monumental tourist icons like Garuda Wisnu Kencana illustrates how mythological motifs continue to be reimagined through modern technologies and discourses of national identity.

This resonates with the observations of Dale et al. (2016) and Oxman (2017) that contemporary architecture increasingly reinterprets traditional ornament through digital tools and contextual design. Garuda's survival in modern contexts, whether in Indonesia's nation-building projects or Thailand's royal-institutional structures, exemplifies how traditional symbolism can adapt to the aesthetics and material practices of twenty-first-century architecture.

Symbolism as Architectural Discourse

The findings also reveal how Garuda participates in broader architectural debates about ornamentation and symbolism. Modernist architects, such as Adolf Loos (1908/1982), dismissed ornament as regressive, while postmodern thinkers like Jencks (1984) and Venturi et al. (1977) have argued for its symbolic richness. Garuda's continued use in architecture

demonstrates the timeless relevance of ornament as a carrier of cultural identity.

In Indonesia, the Garuda emblem anchors civic and state buildings as a materialization of ideology, reinforcing narratives of unity and independence. In Thailand, Garuda remains embedded in palatial and religious architecture, where its role as a protector and legitimizer sustains the monarchy's sacred aura. This reflects Kusuma's (2019) observation that architectural symbolism operates as a "lived experience," encoding belief systems into public space.

Thus, Garuda's architectural presence challenges modernist assumptions of ornament's irrelevance, instead affirming that mythological symbols are vital to how societies express continuity, legitimacy, and identity through the built environment. Furthermore, Garuda demonstrates how architectural symbolism serves as a long-term medium for cultural continuity amidst changing historical, political, and social contexts. While institutions, regimes, and architectural styles evolve over time, the persistent presence of Garuda enables cultural values, collective memories, and inherited belief systems to remain visible and meaningful within the built environment. In this sense, architectural symbols function not only as representations of identity but also as mechanisms through which societies preserve and transmit cultural narratives across generations.

Semiotic Comparative Interpretation of Garuda Imagery in Architecture

Applying Peirce's triadic model (refer to Table 4), Garuda imagery can be understood as a semiotic construct composed of representamen (signifier), object (referent), and interpretant (signified), through which its mythological, cultural, and political meanings evolve as symbolic systems embedded in architecture. In Indonesia, Garuda's signifiers appear in national emblems, reliefs, and monumental sculptures, where their referent aligns with the state ideology of Pancasila and signifies civic unity, pluralism, and modernization. In Thailand, by contrast, Khrut's visual forms signify divine authority and protection,

referencing the monarchy and Buddhist cosmology as their primary referents. The interpretant (how audiences decode these symbols) thus shifts from divine guardianship in Thai temples to civic nationalism in Indonesian public buildings.

Viewed semiotically, the findings indicate that Garuda functions as a multilayered sign across both contexts: Its signifiers differ in form, yet the interpretive process links each to broader ideological and cosmological systems. Garuda embodies both the mythological signified (power, protection, and cosmic order) and its referents, either the Thai monarchy or the Indonesian state. As an architectural ornament, it mediates between sacredness and secular identity, between myth and modernity. The comparative analysis reveals that while Indonesia and Thailand share a common mythological foundation, they diverge in application and meaning: Indonesia secularizes and nationalizes Garuda into a civic emblem of pluralism, whereas Thailand sacralizes it as a royal emblem of divine legitimacy. Both approaches illustrate Garuda’s adaptability and its timeless symbolic capacity to bridge tradition and modernity.

Methodologically, this confirms that mythological symbols function as dynamic mediators capable

of shifting registers according to socio-political and cultural needs, showing that Garuda operates not merely as ornament but as a flexible cultural discourse embodied in architectural form. Moreover, the persistence of Garuda/Khrut across different architectural and political contexts demonstrates its role as a vehicle of cultural continuity and reflects a shared Southeast Asian architectural tradition in which mythological symbols are continuously reinterpreted to sustain identity, authority, and collective memory across generations.

The theoretical implication of this study is the extension of architectural semiotic theory through the demonstration that mythological symbols function as dynamic architectural signs whose meanings are continually negotiated within changing cultural and political contexts. The comparative analysis shows that a shared mythological figure can develop distinct ideological trajectories while preserving its core symbolic identity. Consequently, Garuda exemplifies how architecture functions as a cultural discourse that bridges tradition and modernity, sacred and secular domains, and local identity within an increasingly globalized world.

Table 4
Semiotic Structure of Garuda (Khrut) Imagery in Indonesian and Thai Architecture

Context	Signifier (Representamen)	Signified (Interpretant)	Referent (Object)
Indonesia	Garuda Pancasila emblem, Garuda Wisnu Kencana statue, Pancasila Building ornament	Unity, pluralism, civic nationalism, modernization, cultural continuity, South East Asia (SEA) Architectural Tradition	Pancasila ideology, national sovereignty, state identity
Thailand	Khrut statues on royal palaces, temples, ministries, banks with royal warrants	Divine protection, sacred legitimacy, royal authority, state continuity, SEA architectural tradition	Monarchy, Buddhist cosmology, divine kingship

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate that mythological symbolism is applied in prominent public architecture in both Indonesia and Thailand through the incorporation of Garuda or Khrut imagery as a visual medium connecting architecture with cultural values, authority, and collective identity. In Indonesia, Garuda appears in civic and national landmarks such as the Pancasila Building, Garuda Wisnu Kencana Monument, and the Nusantara Presidential Palace, where it symbolizes national unity, state ideology, and cultural continuity. In Thailand, Khrut is prominently displayed in royal palaces, temples, ministries, military buildings, and institutions holding royal warrants, where it functions as a symbol of sacred authority and royal legitimacy. In both contexts, Garuda or Khrut transcends its decorative role and becomes an integral architectural sign embedded within public space.

The study further reveals that socio-cultural, religious, national, and historical factors significantly influence the representation of Garuda in each country. Although both derive from a shared Hindu Buddhist mythological foundation, Indonesia has reinterpreted Garuda through the lenses of nationalism, pluralism, and state building, resulting in a more secularized and civic oriented representation. Conversely, Thailand has maintained stronger links to Buddhist cosmology, divine kingship, and monarchical traditions, preserving Khrut as a sacred-royal symbol. Historical processes of cultural adaptation, political development, and institutional continuity have therefore shaped distinct visual forms and symbolic functions while retaining a common mythological origin.

The semiotic interpretation demonstrates that Garuda or Khrut functions as a multilayered architectural sign whose meanings extend beyond mythology into contemporary ideological and cultural discourse. In Indonesia, Garuda signifies unity, pluralism, modernization, and national sovereignty, while in Thailand it signifies divine protection, sacred legitimacy, royal authority, and state continuity. Despite these differences, both representations reflect a shared Southeast Asian architectural tradition in which mythological symbols serve as vehicles of

cultural continuity, collective memory, and ideological reproduction. Consequently, the findings indicate that Garuda or Khrut operates both as an architectural ornament and as a dynamic mediator between tradition and modernity.

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