

การออกแบบสถาปัตยกรรม: อุโบสถฐานโค้งท้องสำเภาในจังหวัดนครราชสีมา ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: CURVE OF THE BOTTOM BASE SHIP-SHAPED UBOSOT IN NAKHON RATCHASIMA

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยการออกแบบสถาปัตยกรรม: อุโบสถฐานโค้งท้องสำเภาในจังหวัดนครราชสีมา มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาแนวความคิดในการออกแบบและศึกษารูปแบบทางสถาปัตยกรรม อุโบสถฐานโค้งท้องสำเภาในจังหวัดนครราชสีมา โดยศึกษาแนวความคิดในการออกแบบอุโบสถสมัยอยุธยาตอนปลายถึงรัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น และสำรวจอุโบสถฐานโค้งท้องสำเภาในจังหวัดนครราชสีมา ซึ่งมีอายุอาคารระหว่างสมัยอยุธยาตอนปลายถึงรัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น พบอุโบสถที่มีสภาพสมบูรณ์สามารถเก็บข้อมูลด้วยการสำรวจจริงวัด จำนวน 2 หลัง คือ พระอุโบสถวัดบึง (พระอารามหลวง) อำเภอเมือง และอุโบสถวัดหน้าพระธาตุ อำเภอปักธงชัย พบว่า แนวความคิดในการออกแบบอุโบสถฐานโค้งท้องสำเภา เป็นการเชื่อมโยงนามธรรมไปสู่รูปธรรมได้อย่างงดงาม โดยนำหลักธรรมในพระพุทธศาสนาเรื่อง เวสสันดรชาดกซึ่งเป็นพระชาติที่ยิ่งด้วยมหาทานบารมี จากการเทศน์มหาชาติกัณฑ์กุมารซึ่งกล่าวถึงการสละบุตรธิดาอันเป็นประดุจแก้วตาดวงใจของบิดา ทำให้พุทธศาสนิกชนได้รับรู้ถึงความสำคัญของการสร้างบารมี เป็นอริยทรัพย์ดุจดังสำเภาแก้วที่พาข้ามห้วงแห่งวัฏสงสาร รูปธรรมของอุโบสถฐานโค้งท้องสำเภาจึงบ่งบอกถึงพุทธทศนาว่าที่จะนำพาสรรพสัตว์ทั้งหลายฝ่ากระแสคลื่นลมของกิเลสข้ามถึงฝั่งพระนิพพานซึ่งเป็นที่ปรารถนาของพุทธศาสนิกชน รูปแบบพระอุโบสถวัดบึง ได้รับอิทธิพลของอยุธยาตอนปลาย สมัยพระนารายณ์มหาราชผู้สถาปนาเมืองนครราชสีมา ส่วนอุโบสถวัดหน้าพระธาตุได้รับอิทธิพลของรัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น ได้ลดทอนการประดับตกแต่งคล้ายสถาปัตยกรรมแบบพระราชนิยมในสมัยรัชกาลที่ 3

คำสำคัญ: อุโบสถ ฐานโค้งท้องสำเภา พุทธทศนา

Abstract

This research aims to explore the design concept and examine the fundamentals of architectural curve design of the bottom base ship-shaped Ubosot (ordination hall) in Nakhon Ratchasima province, Thailand. According to the survey, two ship-shaped ordination halls are discovered. The first one is Phra Ubosot Wat Bueng (royal temple) located in Mueang District, constructed upon the foundation of Nakhon

Ratchasima city in the reign of King Narai the Great. The second one is Ubosot Wat Na Phrathat, situated in Pak Thong Chai District founded in early Rattanakosin era. The design concept of the ship-shaped Ubosot beautifully represents the relation patterns between abstract and concrete concepts, which identified the Buddhist doctrine from the story of Vessantara Jataka. He was a prince who made the greatest virtue by giving up his beloved children in charity, with the aim of taking all creatures to cross the ocean of suffering of cyclic existence toward nirvana, and the vehicle that carries those creatures by ship. The abstract symbol of the ship-shaped Ubosot represents the Buddhist ship that takes all creatures across the treacherous sea of evils toward nirvana, the ultimate spiritual goal of Buddhism. The ship-shaped Ubosot of Wat Bueng symbolized the architecture of King Narai in late Ayutthaya Kingdom, which was the origin of Nakhon Ratchasima province. Another temple at Wat Na Phrathat represented early Rattanakosin Kingdom art styles in the reign of King Rama III.

Keywords: ubosot, ship-shaped, Buddhist ship

Introduction

Nakhon Ratchasima, or more commonly known by the locals as Korat is an ancient settlement of prehistoric period. Most prehistoric sites of the Bronze Age in Ban Prasat, Than Prasat Sub-district, Non Sung District, the Iron Age in Noen Ulok, Ban Nong Na Tum, Phon Songkhram Sub-district, Non Sung District, and the historic sites in the ancient city of Sema, Sema Sub-district, Sung Noen District were situated in Nakhon Ratchasima.

In the 19th Buddhist century, the influence of Khmer Kingdom grew weaker as Lao people moved to settle down in lower Isan area and brought with them Lao art and culture. In the 20th and 21st Buddhist century, Lao architecture had widely taken place of Khmer architecture as Phrathat or Chedi dominated over Khmer-style Prang. During Ayutthaya era, Nakhon Ratchasima was a key regional center of Ayutthaya power. King Borommatrailokkanat (B.E. 1991 – 2031) changed the administration regime, both in the central and regional. According to Phanurat (1998), Nakhon Ratchasima was first mentioned during the reign of King Borommatrailokkanat, particularly the law on the Crown Prosecutor of Regional Civil Farm and Military Farm enacted in B.E. 1998. Nakhon Ratchasima was thereafter mentioned in the legal documents as a second-class city of the Ayutthaya Kingdom. Later, King Narai the Great (B.E. 2199 – 2231) set town plans and built a strong wall around the city. Nakhon Ratchasima continued to be an important center under administrative reforms of the Ayutthaya. Walliphodom

(2000) said in the book “Our Ayutthaya” that the testimony of Khun Luang Ha Wat Pradu Song Tham and other archaeological evidences showed that goods were sent upcountry and claimed to be production of space to these commodity hubs around the capital. Merchants from Nakhon Ratchasima and Phra Tabong would bring resin of cashew trees, honey, bird wings, lotus textile, square fabrics, animal skins, meat, tendon, dried meat, lac, silk, benzoin, tin, sesame, cardamom, and other forest products to sell at Ban Sala Tha Kwian were an evidence of commodity market hubs between Nakhon Ratchasima and Ayutthaya.

The relationship between Nakhon Ratchasima and Ayutthaya started since the foundation of Ayutthaya Kingdom. Trading between the two cities did not only carry products, but was also a way to exchanging their cultures. The trade had been carried out up until Rattanakosin era.

The ship-shaped Ubosot is architecture of late Ayutthaya era. Kanlayanamit (2005) defined “Ubosatakan” as “the building for Buddhist monks to perform religious ceremonies, also called as Phra Ubosot and Bot. The same scholar also defined “Thong Samphao” (literally translated as the tummy of ship) (page 240) as below.

“The base line for bricklaying of Thai architecture, for example, the base of Bot (ordinary hall), the base of Prasat (castle), unique to the art and architecture of late Ayutthaya era, the line is gently curved like a rope hanging around the elephant’s tummy.

The origin of the ship base is assumed to be based on Mahayana Buddhist belief which compared the ordination hall as the deck line of a ship. This is because at that time a ship is the only vehicle that can carry lots of stuffs. Therefore, the curved base of the ship is interpreted in architecture by this reason.”

Thoemphaengphan (1997) investigated the belief of symbolic Buddhist ship, and his findings were as below.

From the findings it was evident that the people in the society belief in the story of the symbolic Buddhist ship and they take it seriously through observing the tradition of Thet Mahachat (Preaching of the Greatest Life), partly due to the belief in the virtue of hearing preaching. In addition, the belief of the symbolic representation of Buddhist ship has also been affected every aspect of religious architecture. As a consequence, those who believe in Buddha’s teachings about the story of one man’s spiritual journey to nirvana, anything related to the Lord was transformed the abstract into the concrete. The Buddha image, representing the Lord Buddha, is comparable to a captain who steers the Buddhist ship across the ocean of round of existences. There

have been attempts to create the abstract Buddhist ship into the concrete construction. As a result, when Buddha images are kept inside, the buildings are somewhat similar to Buddhist ships to reflect beliefs about the teaching.

Rodphrobun (1995) studied a design of Phra Ubosot and Phra Vihara of late Ayutthaya period in Petchaburi province. His discovery proceeded as follows.

Petchaburi's Art and Craft of Ayutthaya – early Rattanakosin refers to the examples of architecture and art that could be the transition between those two eras. The term 'early Rattanakosin' covers the reigns of King Rama I to King Rama III because people at the time were the same group living in the same social context, namely inheriting from Ayutthaya Kingdom. Therefore, the shift of power center did not change the society or the culture. Examples of the late Ayutthaya art were evidently illustrated by the royal artist style working in Bangkok and nearby area, and the style were shifting relatively fast. Starting from the reign of King Rama III, arts and architecture really became Rattanakosin style. However, the style may not take dominance over the same culture. In other words, the artists living far away from the capital were still working on their traditional style, and a new development or a style change speed was slower than those in the capital.

Based on the story, we have noticed the transfer of culture from the Chao Phraya river basin to the Khong-Chi-Mun river basins where Korat was the transit point along the way. During transportation, the concept of cultural capital has received widespread attention among Korat people, from Bangkok and Thai-Lao fellows. Some elements of the received culture were chosen and adapted to be their own unique culture.

Therefore, this study could be a guideline for promoting, conserving, and developing the unique art, culture, and architecture of Nakhon Ratchasima. Objectives of this study were to explore the design concept of the ship-shaped Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima and to examine the architectural fundamentals and style of the ship-shaped Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima.

Materials and method

1. 27 books on review of literature were surveyed on Nakhon Ratchasima city, Ayutthaya era and Rattanakosin era from Royal Chronicles, Thai architecture from late Ayutthaya period to early Rattanakosin period, Dictionary of architecture and arts, Culture Encyclopedia in the central and eastern of Thailand, and Buddhist Studies from the Royal Mahachat.

2. Survey and interview were processed on Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima province, district 32 were classified as Ubosot built in late Ayutthaya period, along with the city of Nakhon Ratchasima, which maintains a mixture of 3 temples and another 4 temples in early Rattanakosin period.

3. Ship-shaped Ubosot including with an architecture floor plan drawing were found in 2 temples at Wat Bueng Muang district and Wat Na Phrathat Pak Thong Chai district.

4. Analysis of the architectural concept and style of the ship-shaped Ubosot compared to the ship-shaped Ubosot was built from the late Ayutthaya period to the early Rattanakosin.

5. Architectural concept and style of the ship-shaped Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima were proposed.

Results

1. Ubosot is a building where Buddhist religious ceremonies such as ordination and chanting, are performed. The main purpose of Ubosot is regarded as the ordination hall for men aged 20 and up who are expected to be ordained as a monk. Buddhist monks are those who take it upon themselves to live a life devoted to train himself and follow the preaching of Lord Buddha, including dharma studies, practices, enlightenment, the eightfold path, the precepts, meditation, and ultimately achievement of nirvana. Therefore, Ubosot is comparable to the Buddhist ship that brings all men across the ocean of transmigrating, including those who do not have a chance to become monks themselves to pursue a variety of practices involving merit-making and self-sacrifice to set themselves free from greed and avarice. Monks would better understand the practice of meditation and hold the precepts to become free from worldly attachment and anger and thoroughly understand all characteristics of all dharmas as they really are.

2. Style of the ship-shaped Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima

The ship-shaped Ubosot is, therefore, the building that Buddhist monks perform their religious ceremonies. The building is characterized by its gently curved base like a rope around the elephant's tummy or the base of a ship, which is a unique trait to late Ayutthaya period.

2.1 Style of Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima

2.1.1 Ubosot in late Ayutthaya era (Figure 1 A – C) such as ubosot Wat Bueng (A), Wat Boon (B), Wat Isan (C). Wat Bueng (A) is characterized by its gently curved base like a rope around the elephant's tummy or the base of a ship.



Figure 1 Ubosot in late Ayutthaya era in Nakhon Ratchasima

A) Wat Bueng B) Wat Boon C) Wat Isan

2.1.2 Ubosot in early Rattanakosin era (Figure 2 A – D) such as ubosot Wat Mai Amphawan (A), Wat Na Phrathat (B), Wat Pathum Khongkha (C), Wat Khok Sisaket (D). Wat Na Phrathat (B) is characterized by its gently curved base like a rope around the elephant's tummy or the base of a ship.



Figure 2 Ubosot in early Rattanakosin era in Nakhon Ratchasima

A) Wat Mai Amphawan B) Wat Na Phrathat
C) Wat Pathum Khongkha D) Wat Khok Sisaket

2.2 Ship-shaped Ubosot architectural style in Thailand (Figure 3 A - D) The ship-shaped Ubosot in central region is symbolized the architecture of King Narai in late Ayutthaya Kingdom to early Rattanakosin Kingdom such as ubosot Wat Suwandararam

Ayutthaya (A), Wat Yai-intaram Chonburi (B), Wat Sabao Petchaburi (C), Wat Chongnonsi Bangkok (D).

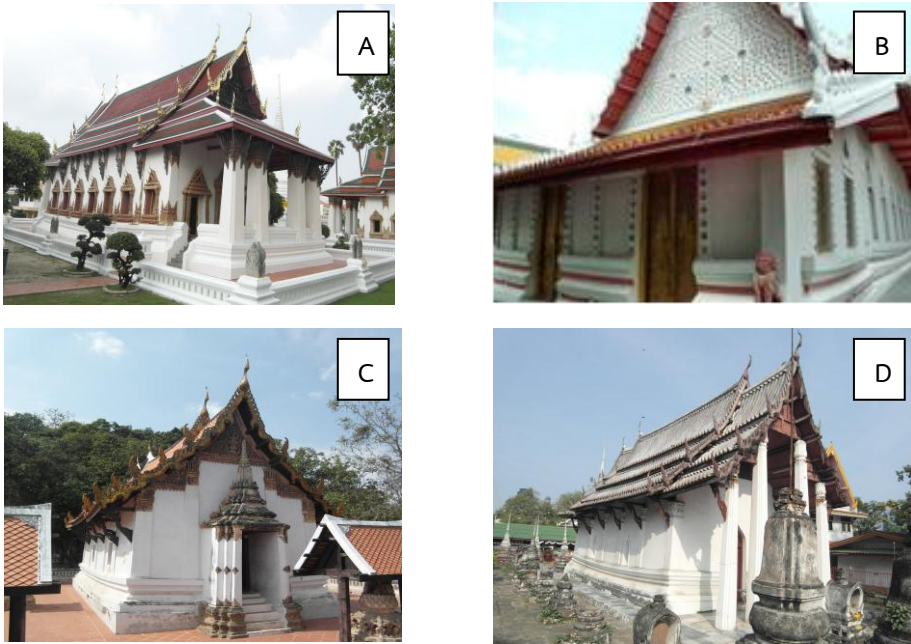


Figure 3 Ship-shaped Ubosot architectural style in Thailand

A) Wat Suwandararam Ayutthaya

B) Wat Yai-Intaram Chonburi

C) Wat Sabao Petchaburi

D) Wat Chongnonsi Bangkok

2.3 Ship-shaped Ubosot architectural style in Nakhon Ratchasima

2.3.1 Wat Bueng Nakhon Ratchasima (Figures 4 – 6)

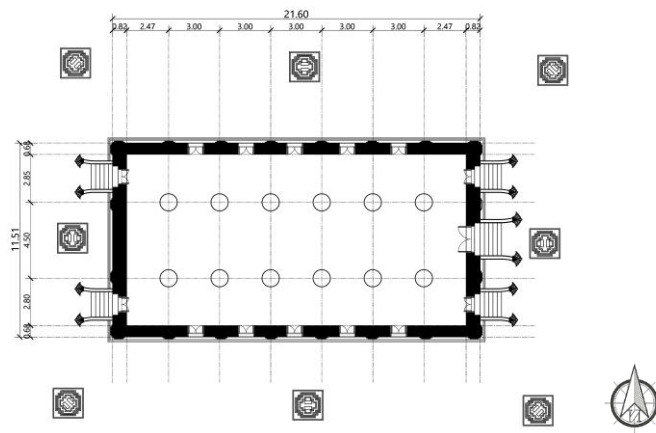


Figure 4 Ground Floor Plan Ubosot Wat Bueng Nakhon Ratchasima

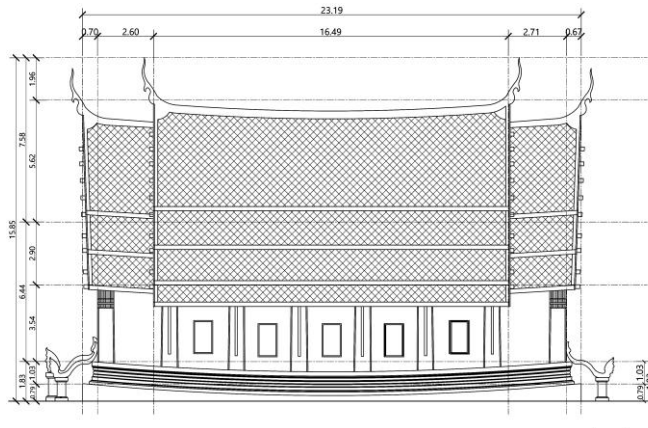


Figure 5 Right Elevation Ubosot Wat Bueng Nakhon Ratchasima

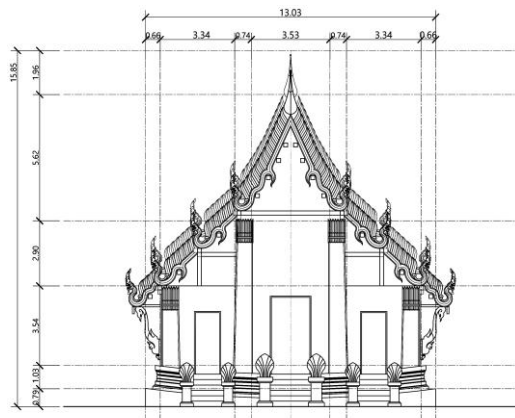


Figure 6 Front Elevation Ubosot Wat Bueng Nakhon Ratchasima

2.3.2 Wat Na Phrathat Nakhon Ratchasima (Figures 7-9)

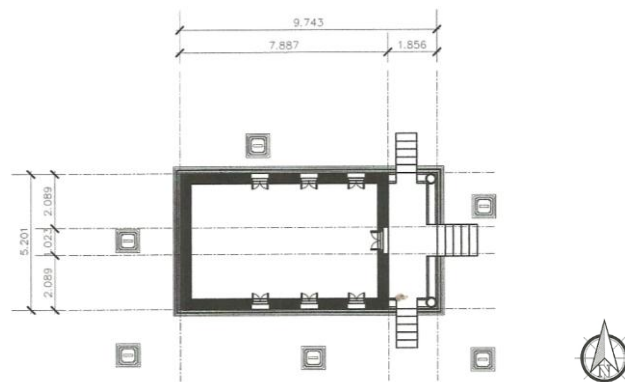


Figure 7 Ground Floor Plan Ubosot Wat Na Phrathat Nakhon Ratchasima

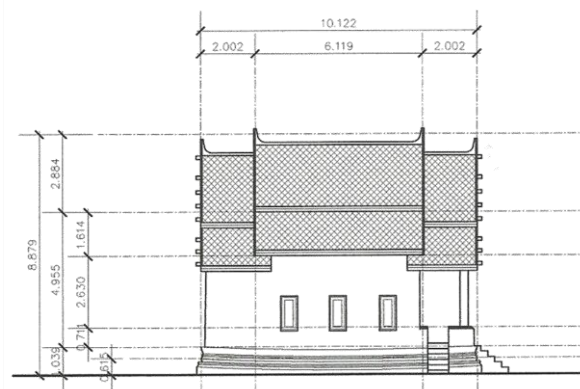


Figure 8 Left Elevation Ubosot Wat Na Phrathat Nakhon Ratchasima

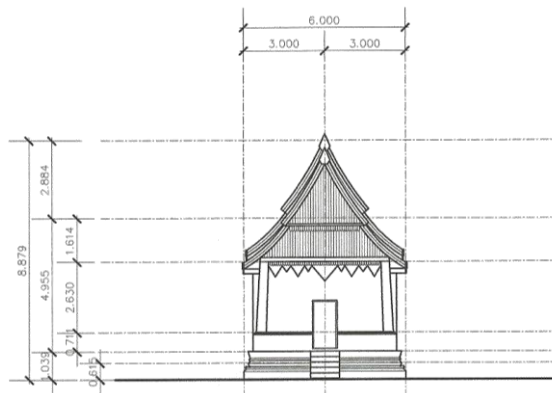


Figure 9 Front Elevation Ubosot Wat Na Phrathat Nakhon Ratchasima

Discussion

The most important religious places in Thailand are temples. Ubosot or ordination hall is the heart of a temple where ordination of Buddhist monks can be practiced. The area of Ubosot must be granted Wisungkhamsima, a royal granting of the land to a particular temple by announcing in royal decree. Ubosot is an area where Buddha image represents Lord Buddha. In northern and northeastern regions, it is a tradition that women are prohibited from entering the ordination hall. Despite its location in the northeastern region, Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima, women are permitted inside. The less strict rule reflects strongly dominated from central culture.

Thet Mahachat Sermon characterized by story of the last great incarnation of the Buddha has been observed since the Ayutthaya era, from royal to local levels. The story of Vessantara has been narrated through the way of life in temples learning center. The temple accompanied by the community decorated the temple into forests

assimilation by bushes and animals. In the sermon, a few monks characterized in the story were about to ask and answer questions. The Kumara chapter will sadden the audience when Vessantara called his children from the pond and gave away his own children to Chuchok the beggar. Vessantara their father mentioned the virtue of sacrificing to his children as the ship that would carry him toward nirvana. Having recognized the purpose, the son agreed to his father's will. He learned from the sermon that Buddhists are indoctrinated with the idea of sacrificing secular state of being for noble reasons. It was also put highlighted importance on Ubosot as the Buddhist ship that is believed to bring all creatures toward nirvana. The practice reminds Buddhists to take after how Lord Buddha lived his life, in pursuit of that ultimate goal. When the ship-shaped Ubosot came with Ayutthaya people, Nakhon Ratchasima people absorbed this concrete concept into their culture harmoniously.

It is not clear when Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima faded away in the reign of King Narai then became under the influence of Khmer Khmer style temples. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to observe late Ayutthaya to early Rattanakosin Ubosot. The ordination halls at Wat Bueng, Wat Boon, and Wat Isan were built at the same time as the central city foundation pertaining to the late Ayutthaya period. The findings were consistent with Leesuraplanont (2003) who examined Buddhist temples in Nakhon Ratchasima province, which revealed that the common characteristic of Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima was a unique ship-shaped style in late Ayutthaya architecture and a building construction was likely to be made by Ayutthaya artists. New Ubosot built during Rattanakosin era was established outside the city such as the ones in Wat Mai Amphawan, Wat Na Phrathat, Wat Pathum Khongkha, and Wat Khok Sisaket. These Ubosots are smaller and has fewer decoration details. It is worth noting that Buddhist temples situated in the city were designed by Ayutthaya artists, built under the sponsorship of the king, and renovated from time to time by city governors. On the other hand, the temples situated outside the city were founded upon faith and budget of the communities which vary in socio-economic conditions, which had a simpler construction and design. However, the function of all Ubosot remained unchanged.

In conclusion, it could be assumed that the ship-shaped ordination hall of Wat Bueng represents late Ayutthaya architecture while the one in Wat Na Phrathat represents Rattanakosin era. Both were influenced by the central culture infiltrating the northeastern region, where Nakhon Ratchasima had been the first town of the region ever since. The findings in this study could be a guideline for further studying in design

and characteristics of other architectural construction such as Chedi (pagoda) and Hor Trai Klang Nam (temple repository for the Buddhist scriptures built at the middle of the pond), as well as the concept of placing temples in the city planning of Nakhon Ratchasima.

Conclusion

1. The design concept of the ship-shaped Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima is inspired by the Buddhist belief of a specific charitable act of Vessantara's to be free from the cycle of birth and death and his collection of virtues to become a figurative vehicle crossing the ocean. The Ubosot serves as a venue where ordinations take place. It is also serve as a part of the threefold refuge to believe in and give allegiance to the Buddha just like a ship carrying goods and money supporting religion. The ship-shaped Ubosot in Nakhon Ratchasima was evidently influenced by the late Ayutthaya style as well as in the early Rattanakosin era until today.

2. The ship-shaped Ubosot in Wat Bueng, Mueang District, Nakhon Ratchasima, was built during the reign of King Narai the Great. Thus it was influenced by late Ayutthaya style, characterized by the rectangular plan, with tapering walls, bilayer roof with four steps, stucco pediment decorated with hornlike finial on the roof ridge (representing the head of the garuda), tooth like ridges on the sloping edges of a gable (representing the fin on the back of the naga), small finials jutting out of the two corners of the gable (representing the heads of the naga), and carved eave bracket. However, the Ubosot of Wat Na Phrathat was placed on the rectangular plan, with tapering walls, bilayer roof with two steps, pediment decorated with small finials. The latter part was simpler to reflect the royal preference of King Rama III.

Therefore, the ship-shaped Ubosot in Wat Bueng represented the style of late Ayutthaya while Ubosot in Wat Na Phrathat represented early Rattanakosin influenced by the architecture of Isan territory. Therefore Nakhon Ratchasima has been functioned as the first and most important town ever since then.

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