

Origins of the Subsidiary Spire-Topped Prasat-Type Chedi Wat Ratchaburana, Ayutthaya

Santi Leksukhum

Abstract

Wat Ratchaburana in Ayutthaya Province has a *prang* as its principle *chedi*, together with a *vihan* and an *ubosoth* lying to the east and to the west, respectively, within its compound. This is a typical lay-out plan of the *wat* or Buddhist temples in the early Ayutthaya period. The style of the *prang* or principle *chedi* and its remaining decorative stucco patterns correspond with the results of the study of the lay-out plan of *wat*, and more significantly with chronicular accounts, according to which this *wat* was established in 1976 B.E. Some of the remaining stuccos must have been restored at some point in time, while other parts of these decorative patterns are still in their earlier form.

The main focus of this study is a *chedi rai* or small satellite *chedi* in the temple compound. Lying among the remains of what must have been supplementary constructions of the late Ayutthaya period at Wat Ratchaburana, this particular religious monument is distinctly different in style from those remains. This is not mention its uppermost part which is no longer there, but must once have been in place. No remains of this part are available.

Conceivably this lost part should have been in cone-shape, a pattern that accounts for the specific nomenclature for a *chedi* of this style, namely, **spire-topped prasat-type chedi**. This is not a very familiar style of this type of religious monument. *Chedi rai* here refers to any type of small *chedi*, erected as a subsidiary of the principle *chedi*, the *ubosoth* or the *viharn*. The expression “spire-topped prasat-type chedi” describes its overall shape which consists of a **base** supporting the

chedi's middle part or **relics chamber** which is symbolically equivalent to the main body of a house, before leading up to the **cone-shape spire** of a bell-shape form tapering to the spire-type top.

This study of the *spire-topped prasat-type chedi* is based on a comparative analysis of the various types of *prasat-type chedi* available in the early Ayutthaya period. It was found that the Ayutthaya craftsmen were apparently inspired by the *prasat-type chedi* predominant in Sukhothai art. This type of *chedi* evolved in Ayutthaya art through affiliation with other *chedi* styles before ending up as this *spire-topped prasat chedi* of Wat Ratchaburana. Hence, this study covers in scope other types of Ayutthaya-style *chedi*. The contents of study may be set forth as follows:

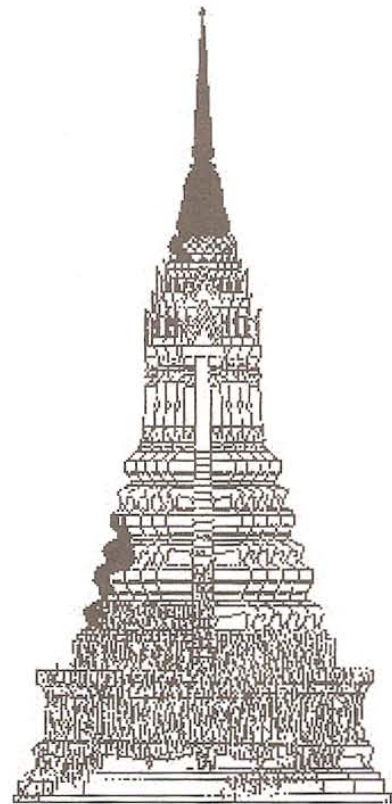
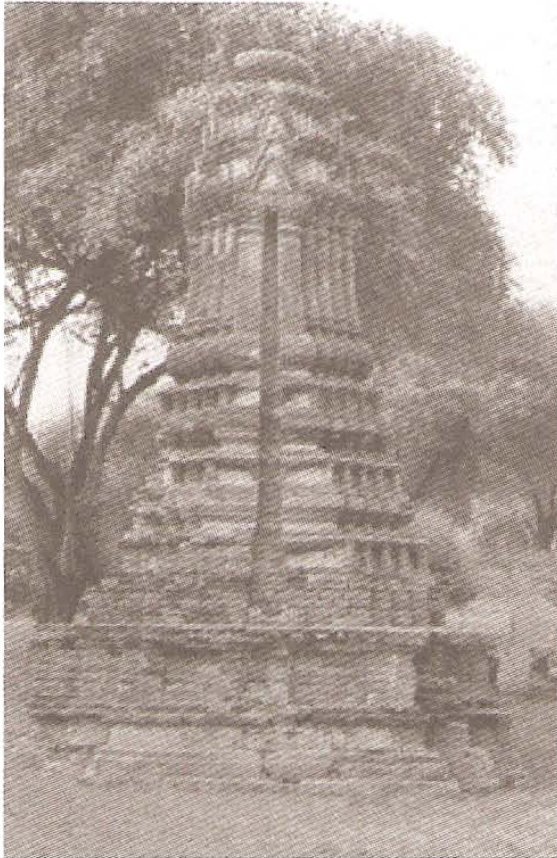
part I provides a historical account of the establishment of Wat Ratchaburana and describes its overall lay-out plan, the style of its *prang* or priciple *chedi*. The investigation of these architectural works corresponds with the chronicular account of the temple's founding. With regard to *spire-topped prasat-type chedi*, the study confirms that it was built at a later date.

part II focuses on the evolution of the *spire-topped prasat-type chedi*. It is proposed that the craftsmen of the early Ayutthaya period were inspired by the same type of *chedi* in Sukhothai art. In the study the evolutionary characteristics leading to the satellite *chedi* of *spire-topped prasat* form at Wat Ratchaburana of the late Ayutthaya period are identified.

part III shows that three types of *chedi*, namely, *prang*-type, multi-angular type, and multi-angular elaborated type, were stylistically related in their evolution until the late Ayutthaya period. Included among these architectural innovations is the *prasat-type* subsidiary *chedi* of Wat Ratchaburana.

part IV studies the stucco patterns decorating the *spire-topped prasat-type chedi* of Wat Ratchaburana. The study yields results in conformity with those of the study of the *chedi* styles.

part V concludes the study with an account relating reconstructed historical events, evolutionary characteristics and patterns, and datings of the various types of *chedi* associated with the results of study of satellite *spire-topped prasat-type chedi* of Wat Ratchaburana



Subsidiary Spire-Topped Prasat-Type Chedi, Wat Ratchaburana, Ayutthaya
(*Santi Leksukhum 1998*)

