

Landscape Language in a Contemporary Thai Buddhist Temple Ground: The Case of Wat Phra Dhammakaya

Weera Nongmar^{1,*}, Saran Samantararat², Paisarn Tepwongsirirat²
and Sasiya Siriphanich³

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to analyze the language and meaning in the landscape design of a contemporary Buddhist setting—the Dhammakaya Temple—in comparison with traditional temples. Research methods used included a study of landscape planning, an analysis of landscape signs, and the use of participatory observation to obtain information about spatial use. The study of the language of landscape covers an analysis of the signifier and the signified, and the relationship between them, including both denotative and connotative meanings. The study found the language of the landscape in the Dhammakaya Temple was clearly different from that in traditional temples in terms of landscape planning, landscape signs, and spatial use. The traditional aspects that were maintained included the use of north-south and east-west axes for layout and the use of Buddhist terminology. The language of landscape used in the Dhammakaya temple exemplified a departure from traditional Buddhist temple ground design. As a result, it no longer communicated the same messages.

Keywords: landscape language, Thai Buddhist temple, *Wat Phra Dhammakaya*, semiology

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจการสร้างภาษาภูมิสถาปัตยกรรมของพุทธสถานร่วมสมัย โดยหยิบยกพุทธสถานร่วมสมัยวัดพระธรรมกายเป็นกรณีศึกษา โดยศึกษารูปแบบการวางผัง องค์ประกอบภูมิสถาปัตยกรรม รวมถึงกิจกรรมการใช้พื้นที่ผ่าน การสังเกตแบบมีส่วนร่วม เพื่อเปรียบเทียบกับพุทธสถานแบบประเพณีนิยมตามแนวทฤษฎีสัญวิทยา

การศึกษพบว่าการสร้างภาษาภูมิสถาปัตยกรรมของวัดพระธรรมกายมีลักษณะแตกต่างไปจากภาษาแบบประเพณีนิยมอย่างเห็นได้ชัด ทั้งรูปแบบการวางผัง องค์ประกอบภูมิสถาปัตยกรรม และกิจกรรมการใช้พื้นที่ ซึ่งส่งผลไปสู่การแสดงออกทางภาษาภูมิสถาปัตยกรรมที่แปลกตา และไม่ได้ขัดแย้งกับโครงสร้างทางภาษาหลักของวัฒนธรรมดังเช่นในอดีต

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาภูมิสถาปัตยกรรม พุทธสถานไทย วัดพระธรรมกาย สัญวิทยา

¹ Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Landscape Architecture, Graduate School, Kasetsart University, Bangkok 10900, Thailand.

² Division of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Kasetsart University, Bangkok 10900, Thailand.

³ Department of Horticulture, Faculty of Agriculture at Kamphaeng Saen, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus, Nakhon Pathom 73140, Thailand.

* Corresponding author, e-mail: march.nm@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Thai Buddhist landscape architecture is a complicated native language that is rooted in beliefs and is linked to the core culture. In addition to communicating religious messages, it is also designed to express various meanings such as a reflection of the ruling class paradigm (Sapphasiri, 1998; Somboon, 2004), as a power proxy (Prakitnonthakan, 2007), and the individualistic attitude of the designer (Intararumpun, 2009). Contemporary Buddhist temples such as the Thai Temple in Nong Khai, the Pa Lak Roi Temple in Nakhon Ratchasima, the Puech Udom Temple in Pathum Thani, the Pa Mahajedee Temple in Si Sa Ket, the Muang Temple in Ang Thong, the Phai Rhong Woa Temple in Suphan Buri, and the Khuad Temple in Songkhla were built in harmony within a cultural and historical context of the area with traditional language patterns and so have led to very little argument. However, the landscape design language of another contemporary Buddhist temple, Wat Phra Dhammakaya, has led to heated discussions with its application of unconventional design in space arrangement, architectural patterns, and the usage of activity areas. The debate over the design is not limited to those who are in the common Buddhist culture. This article will explore the differences in language structure and patterns of the contemporary Buddhist settings in comparison with the traditional language.

THE LANGUAGE OF THAI BUDDHIST LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Thai Buddhist landscape architecture has its own layout patterns and elements inherited from custom architecture (Kalyanamitra, 1996; Dohring, 2000; Jiratatsanakul, 2001). The division of an area into parcels for particular uses follows Buddhist regulation (Nor Na Paknam, 1997) and the universal

paradigm of *Traiphumikatha* (Buddhist cosmology). The temple settings, especially the *Kamavasi* temple (urban temple) is divided into two types: royal temple and community temple. In the case of a royal temple, the location is fixed on a specific area (Kalyanamitra, 1996: pp.87–88) such as the area of a royal cremation ceremony or on the place where important events in history took place. The locations of community temples are usually decided simply by where the donated land is located and by parceling it into areas such as the Buddha's quarter (Figure 1), with the monks living quarters and temple estate quarters granting greatest importance to the Buddha's quarters (Jiratatsanakul, 2001: p.27)—a sign and symbol of where Buddha lived and consisting of the main structures—namely, the *Viharn* (sermon hall), *Ubosatha* (ordination hall), and *Chedi*, (cetiya).

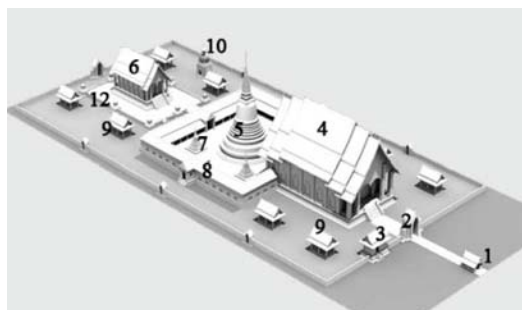


Figure 1 Landscape elements in Buddha quarter; 1. *Sala Thanam* (riverside pavilion), 2. *Soom Pratu* (lintel), 3. *Plap Pla Pleung Kleung* (royal's changing pavilion), 4. *Viharn* (sermon hall), 5. *Chedi*, (cetiya/stupa; with relics of the Buddha), 6. *Ubosatha* (chapel/ordination hall), 7. small *Chedi* or *Pra Prang* (grave monument), 8. *Phra Rabieng* (walking galleries/ cloister), 9. *Sala Rai* (open-sided pavilion), 10. *Hor Rakang* (campanile/bell tower), 11. *Maha Sima* (great boundary wall), 12. *Kampheng Keo* (wall of jewels).

Source: Jiratatsanakul (2008)

In planning the layout and the orientation of the buildings, their relation within the relevant context of *Traiphumikatha* will be taken into consideration (Jiratatsanakul, 2001: p. 35) an axis pattern is used for ranking purposes and for developing architectural balance while teaching the influence from *Traiphumikatha* through landscape elements. In addition, there are symbolic usages of space by aligning the areas of different zones, both vertically and horizontally according to Thai influences (Eawsiwong, 1992). This is done in order to set up boundaries and zone lines giving priority and importance to each area, with rules and a different meaning of each area with its specific usages (Bhandhavee, 2004: p. 84). For example, the walking galleries have both a zone line and boundaries that block the area around the *Kampheng Keo* (wall of jewels)—a separation of an area or building in a Buddhist setting in order to show the importance of the location and boundary of that architecture. Another important attribute of the traditional Buddhist settings are the patterns called “oblation” or the hierarchal element in Thai architectural decoration to express the uniqueness and styling of communication of the individual architecture, of whether it is temple or palace (Suwankiri, 2004: p. 373). For example, a royal temple will have three tiers of roof, laying tier by tier, and the gable roof is adorned with the decorative elements. A community temple has two tiers of roof, the upper part will be decorated with *Ruay Raka* (Thai architecture roof ornament for temple and palace)—a kind of decorative element (Nimlek, 1996: p. 12). These attributes have been deemed a custom pattern of landscape architectural languages in the design of Thai Buddhist settings. Although the languages of layout and architectural pattern are not strongly enforced and their variation depends on the immediate context of time and place, the basic concept of design remains the same.

After the reformation of the Buddhist monastic order in the period of King Rama IV, temples became self-reliant with regard to

maintaining religion and religious places. Abbots gained control over layout formations and elements of the landscape architecture in the temple grounds (Jiratatsanakul, Jaturawong, & Sapphasiri, 2005: p. 227). Moreover, the government policy of promoting the physical development of temples (Buddhist Monastery Division, 1981) has resulted in ever increasing competition when creating new Buddhist landscape architecture. The rise of the contemporary design of the Dhammakaya temple derives from the above-mentioned reasons as well, and the argument may be different from other cases ever since the case of distorting Dhamma discipline that occurred and caused conflict in the ideology of social religious principles (Payutto, 1999) together with activity patterns that brought criticism into the relevant fields (Alumni Association of Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 1999) and physical attributes that spread widely to general recipients of landscape architectural language (Sanitsuda, 1998; Mydans, 1999; Taylor, 2008). As part of the design intentions of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, are to make the temple a Buddhism Center, comparable to the Vatican City or Mecca and to make it one of the wonders of the world (interview Phra Thatthacheevo, the Dhammakaya Temple assistant abbot, in Scott, 2009: p.102), this has had a direct impact on the physical changes and leads to an apparent exploitation of the landscape spaces. It is, therefore, essential to raise funds to create the desired elements in landscape architecture through changes of the ideal concept from “Merit” to “Goods”, (Fuengfusakul, 1998: p. 128; Scott, 2009) which gives rise to the social negotiating language pattern of landscape architecture, using the phenomenon in religion as a guiding tool (O’connor, 1993; Mackenzie, 2007: p.191; Taylor, 2008).

THE STUDY CONCEPT AND METHODOLOGY

As Roland Barthes wrote, “(a)s soon as there is a society, every usage is converted in to a sign of

itself ” (Barthes, 1967: p. 41), the landscape language has more meaning than itself. Ferdinand de Saussure explained that sign or language was a kind of system. If one is to study the system, one needs to explore each element and its interrelations with other elements before it can be considered to constitute a system by different kinds of code. The term ‘system’ refers to the shrine or Buddha area or other areas in which landscape architecture elements or signs are set to develop language meaning and meaning in such areas. Rendering a certain meaning by such a code depends on the context at that time. There were two key methods that Saussure (cited in Kaewthep, 2010: pp. 46–51) used to differentiate the application of signs for code systemization in order to find the meaning—namely, paradigmatic and syntagmatic. Paradigmatic is a set of signs of similar meaning where each sign in the same paradigm must have certain common characteristics, while syntagmatic is a method for assembling different signs in sequence to get the desired meaning.

Barthes (cited in Kaewthep, 2010: pp. 51–58) explained that when the first set of the signifier and the signified has combined together as a sign, the following result will be continually interpreted at different levels including with other signs to the extent that its meaning may lie at the deep level and become a myth. The initial interpretation may result from applying subjective experience while at the second level, such interpretation may extend to cover the meaning at the social level. While the implied meaning is being used, the user may unconsciously think that he/she is just using the sign at the semiological level.

Analysis of the symbolism in the designs of the landscape architectural language as it relates to the influences from cosmology and influences from the identity in each society is inherent to religious landscape architectural areas (Houston, 1998; Maré, & Rapanos, 2007) or countryside architectural areas (Xu, 1998; Imazato, 2007). The study will consider the occurrence of a series of symbolic elements, the relationships of the symbols and their influence on

the invention of connotative meaning of that symbol, which is a kind of landscape architectural language analysis, taking the areas that are used according to traditional practice and belief in each society and applying them to explain the relationship and other hidden meanings in the invention of those landscape architectural languages.

To summarize, this study analyzes the language of form and the meaning in the design of landscape in a contemporary Buddhist setting in comparison to traditional temples. *Wat Phra Dhammakaya*, with its most unorthodox design, is officially endorsed as a Buddhist temple in modern Thai society, and was chosen as the main study site to exemplify the contemporary Buddhist setting. This research utilized two sources—*Temple-Thai Buddhist architecture* (Jiratatsanakul, 2001) and *Thai character in Buddhist setting: a study of word* (Bhandhavee, 2004) as the main references for the traditional design of a Thai Buddhist temple ground, especially in the area of the Buddha quarter, in terms of relationships between physical forms and their meanings. For the areas beyond the Buddha quarter (the monks’ living quarters and the temple estate area), the method of analyzing form-meaning relationship in Jiratatsanakul’s 2001 study provided a good example to follow. However, because of the nature of the study site (*Wat Phra Dhammakaya*), the research project added the dimension change over time in the analysis.

Following semiotic theory, this study covered an analysis of the signifier and the signified, and the relationship between them, including both denotative and connotative meanings. *Wat Phra Dhammakaya* was analyzed in terms of design pattern, layout plan, influences from the *Traiphumikatha* and elements of landscape architecture, as well as spatial use. Methodology used included both document research and field survey to study landscape planning and analyze landscape signs, while participatory observation was used to obtain information about spatial use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wat Phra Dhammakaya is a community temple built in late 1969 in Klong Sam sub-district, Klong Luang, Pathum Thani. It received patronage to become a Royal boundary marker on January 12, 1979. It was built to conduct religious ceremonies which is emphasized by the monks and the large number of Buddhist participants during working days and on important religious days, especially the first Sunday in the month when a lot of faithful Buddhists make contributions to the temple. There are also social network activities throughout the country and with those who live abroad through every possible form of public relations media to persuade people to take part in various activities, such as ordinations on different occasions and training courses for every age level in the educational system.

In setting up the location, some sources of information say that it was contributed by faithful Buddhists (Satheerasilapin, Yamnill, Dhammija Medhi, & Dhammik Muni, 2005) but some say that it was received in bad faith by the Abbot of the temple and other monks (Buddhamamika, 1999). Usually, a temple or monk activity boundary must

be built on a virgin area that is free from objectivity and subjectivity (Kalyanamitra, 1996: p. 40). The structural analysis on landscape architectural language is allocated into three phases of time according to the occurrence of symbolic landscape architecture (Figure 2).

First period (1969–1985) The area in the Buddhist quarter and monks' living quarters is 196 rais (31.36 hectares). In the Buddhist quarter area, there is the Ordination Hall, *Khun Yay Archaraya*, the Sermon Hall and the Candle Hall—all three buildings are organized on the same axis (Figure 3). In this period, the temple was designed to meet the legal and Buddhist regulations. The area is divided into two parts, with the monks' living quarters on the left, while on the right side is the Buddhist quarter in which the landscape is decorated with various kinds of plants and places to emphasize nature as the area concept. Originally, there was a large free-form pond for meditation and religious practices before they were relocated in the second period. As a result, it changed the entrance from the front with easy access to the Buddhist quarters to the south entrance, making the change in language awareness.

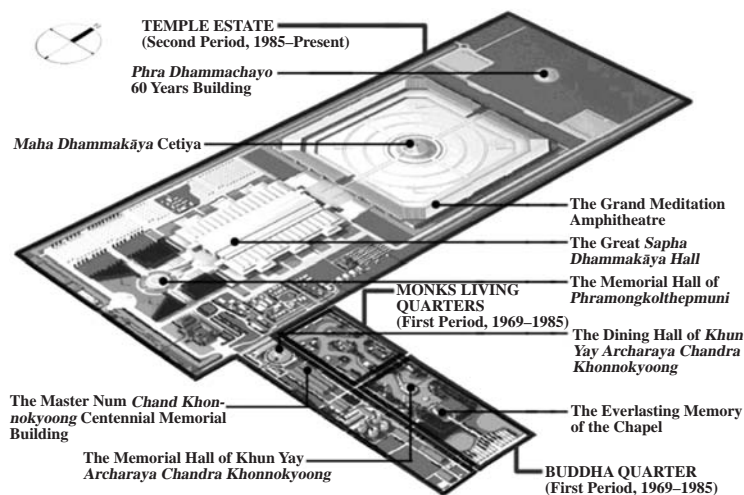


Figure 2 Wat Phra Dhammakaya layout

Source: Kalyanamitra (2009a)

The design of the Ordination Hall still has a respectful look in terms of architectural ratios according to the monks' activities and Buddhist regulations. However, the other architectural elements such as oblation, wall, pillar, arch, and gable roof, do not reflect the meaning influenced from *Traiphumikatha*. The wall of jewels that leads to the end of the importance of sacred area to public areas is also missing (Bhandhavee, 2004: p. 188)

The function of the *Khun Yay Archaraya* Sermon Hall is like a sermon hall but the shape is like a *Chedi* (Figure 3). Its position is in the core axis of the Ordination Hall which was originally supposed to be the position of the *Chedi* (Jiratatsanakul, 2001). When paying worship to the Buddha statue in the Ordination Hall, the statue of *Khun Yay* will also be given respect as well which is to give patronage to an ordinary Buddhist who has ascended to the same level of the great Buddha, in compliance with the intention of *Phra Raj Phowwana Visut* who wanted this place to be a place of worship for humans and all of the saints (Popparn et al., 2011: p. 115).

In this new landscape architecture design, the Bell tower has been replaced by the Candle-light tower, which is located between the Ordination Hall and the memorial hall for *Khun Yay Archaraya*. This hall emphasizes the importance of an ordinary woman in the temple landscape.

For the monks' living quarters, the area of landscape architecture is designed to be the same as the Buddha's quarters that is, a large free-form pond



Figure 3 Landscape elements in Buddha quarter
Source: *Kalyanamitra* (2009b)

and a variety of trees of different sizes and shapes. The monk's houses are built as contemporary buildings, the same as other buildings where general laypersons would live. There are security guards at the entrance, a wider walking path allows easier access to vehicles for monks living in houses together and traveling to other areas for religious worship. In addition, the mode of transport for monks traveling inside the monks living quarter's area has changed from walking to bicycle riding.

Second period (1985–present) This has been an era of expansion to build religious settings on the 2,000 rais (320 hectares) of land, making the total land area ten times larger than it was in the first period. Figure 4 shows the area that emphasizes practicing *Dhamma*. The area is surrounded by the Memorial Hall of *Phramongkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro)*, the Great *Sapha Dhammakaya* Hall, the Grand Meditation Amphitheatre, *Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya* and *Phra Dhammachayo* the the 60 Years Building, to which all religious activities have now been assigned. The use of this part relies on the meaning of the area in the first period for performing monks' activities and also a large area allocated to users for religious rites which affects the size, area proportion, and architecture.

The entrance to the area has been changed from the main area in the first period at Klong Sam road (east) from which entry to the front of the



Figure 4 Landscape architectural element relation in temple estate
Source: Pawluang (2011)

Ordination Hall is possible, to the entrance to temple estate quarter at *Bang Kan-Klong Luang* (south) which can be accessed by car with ample parking under the *Dhammakaya* Council Building and a parking lot for buses is available between the *Dhammakaya* Council and The Grand Meditation Amphitheatre. This is to mainly facilitate area users and create awareness of the different meanings of the traditional temple which users can reach by walking.

The architectural pattern focuses on the size, shape, immensity, and strange look without using Thai architecture. Considering the layout pattern, there is an open space available for both indoor and outdoor main activities. The main architecture is set on a single axis, that is, the Memorial Hall of *Phramongkolthepmuni*, the Great Sapha *Dhammakaya* Hall, the Grand Meditation Amphitheatre, *Maha Dhammakaya* Cetiya, and the *Phra Dhammachayo* 60 Years Building are all laid along a north-south main axis (Figure 4).

The Memorial Hall of *Phramongkolthepmuni* is the symbolic interrelation from *Wat Pak Nam Pasichareon* in order to attract Buddhists who worship the Venerable Monk *Sodh Candasaro* and practice the *Dhammakaya* doctrine. This building is named a Sermon Hall but it has the shape of a *Chedi* which creates a conflict in architectural performance. The Memorial Hall is the place for exhibition and meditation practice before participating in main activities in the Great *Sapha Dhammakaya* Hall which functions as a Sermon Hall or religious study pavilion but it is different because it does not use any Thai architectural elements in its design and places emphasis on having the maximum area available for activities regardless of the climate.

The name and shape of the Grand Meditation Amphitheatre follow the function of a walking galleries cloister adapted from the traditional pattern. Though it has a boundary, it lacks a clear entrance axis. The structure is made up of large concrete covers (the *Maha Dhammakaya* Cetiya) making visitors aware that the main

traditional architecture has become inferior (Bhandhavee, 2004: pp. 170–171). *Maha Dhammakaya* Cetiya is built with the concept of the Sanchi Stupa shape in India. It is a combination of three out of four *Chedi* types—namely, *Dhatu Chedi* (relic shrine), *Dhammachedi* (doctrinal shrine), and *Uddesika Chedi* (shrine by dedication). This concept is opposed to the traditional concept that clearly separates the *Chedis* and their functions as architecturally separate from each other (Rajanubhab; 1960) with the area around the *Chedi* base called the *Sangha* Stage where that monks sit to perform rites. The middle of the *Chedi* is called the *Dhamma* Stage. The top is mounted with 300,000 *Dhammakaya* statues and is called the “Buddha Stage”. This kind of design will never be found in traditional temple patterns as the maker wanted to build a *Chedi* which had a unique and different design from all other *Chedis* in general in order to attract Buddhists (Charoenpuntaweasin, 2000: p. 118). This kind of architecture does not use Thai architectural elements in accordance with influence from the traditional *Traiphumikatha* in which there is an adaptation of the architectural design using the “words” related to Buddhist settings to cover it only.

At the extreme back, next to *Maha Dhammakaya* Cetiya is the *Phra Dhammachayo* 60 Years Building. The building has a round shape like *Maha Dhammakaya* Cetiya. It is a place for practicing high level *Viccha Dhammakaya* and only those given permission are allowed to enter this area. It is intentionally made so that even a venerable monk will have difficulty in gaining permission to enter (Fuengfusakul, 1998: pp. 32–35) and there is very strict security including guards in the area which has changed the relationship between the venerable monk and the people of the community, according to custom.

The Dining Hall of *Khun Yay Archaraya Chandra Khonnokyoong* is a result of using a unique attribute of *Maha Dhammakaya* Cetiya to modify the shape of the building. Usually, the Dining Hall

in a traditional Buddhist setting will be situated in the monks' living quarters (Jiratatsanakul, 2001: pp. 157–159) according to the division of area in the past. This place will be used for practicing Dhamma and the Dhammakaya Council (former) which is not usually specified as being in the monks' living quarters. Moreover, other landscape architectural elements have been used such as the construction of extensive concrete grounds around *Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya* for outdoor activities by designing the layout and positioning the participants to be sub-elements of the landscape architecture for the purpose of communication via photography and video to virtuous persons worldwide (Figure 5).

With respect to *Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya*, it can be clearly seen that it is the matter of determination of implied meaning from the beginning in order that the signifier and the signified can combine as a sign of following the level that the second tier of interpretation cannot be done in a different way. This also includes a mechanism and other signs to the extent that the individual followers will share the same feeling that they have a “miracle common agreement” which will become a social meaning or myth at the undeniable level. This has proved to be a success in developing signs that can mitigate the risk in implementing Buddhism activities in a business sense as well as other risks including social and political risks during the establishment and at later stages.

A large geometrically formed pond has been



Figure 5 Design of layout for participants in activities as part of the landscape architectural elements

used in a raised horizontal position in order to reflect the architectural setting and *Pradipat* pine trees have been used as elements to make the landscape architecture appeal internationally and contemporarily through the type, attribute, shape, and method of planting in a turntable form which reflect neatness and provides a boundary or scene for the architecture and strengthens the distinctiveness of the architecture.

Third period (Future) There will be construction of the Master Nun *Chand Khonnokyoong* Centennial Memorial Building (Figure 6) which will be used as the headquarters of the temple with large conference rooms for *Phra Pariyaddhamma*, and large rooms for Dhamma practice for Buddhist monks and *Ubasok/Ubasika* (laypersons), as well as a Museum of *Maha Puhneeyacharnaya*.

The Centennial Memorial Building originated from the concept of gathering the Sun, Moon, and Pyramid that refer to an obvious internationalization. The building is under construction in the sub-axis that stands vertically with the main axis of the second period. Considering the design of architecture in the horizontal, it will be a large and prominent building and the most important building. The usage of the area will be different from the other architectural structures. Though it is not in the area of the Buddha's quarters, it will be located on the main axis of the layout by using the symbol of *Ubasika Chandra* to express

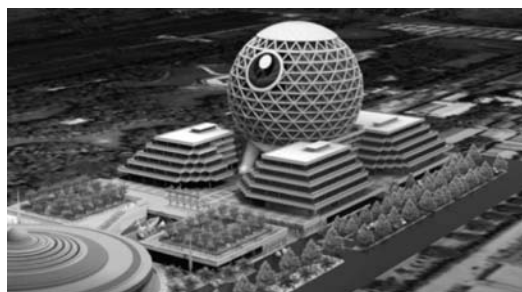


Figure 6 The Master Nun *Chand Khonnokyoong* Centennial Memorial Building
Source: Poppam et al. (2011: p. 140)

admiration of *Ubasika Khun Yay Chandra* as a representative of the temple eventually. The Dining Hall will be upgraded and will be put on the main axis of the layout at the same level as the *Chedi* and the Sermon Hall and will result in the Ordination Hall, which is the main architectural feature in the area, being removed from the important main axis. While the Dhammakaya language has its own perfect sentence, the Centennial Memorial Building will be a symbol of the new meaning of the temple and will in this way deteriorate the value and meaning of the first period.

Apart from the above-mentioned landscape architectural element, the name of the building is called in relation with wording in Buddhism such as “*Viharn*” or “*Maha*” as words that refer to the greatness and power in order to comply with the architectural size and the activities in the area. In addition, the name of *Khun Yay Chandra* has appeared in buildings for example, *Viharn Khun Yay Archarn Chandra* (the Sermon Hall of *Khun Yay Archaraya Chandra*) / *Hor Chan Khun Yay Archaraya Chandra* (the Dining Hall of *Khun Yay Archaraya Chandra*) / *Arkarn 100 years Khun Yay Archaraya* / (the Master Nun Chand Khonnokyoong Centennial Memorial Building)—a reflection of great respect to *Ubasika* through the architectural equivalent to a *Chedi* and *Viharn* (sermon hall) which are the words of Buddhist settings via conceptualizations of the main axis layout design, together with activity of admiration such as the funeral ceremony of *Ubasika Khun Yay Archaraya*, showing the monuments of ordinary people to the public instead of the ruling class which occurred in the past.

In addition, there is a conjunction of the sub-element of the architecture in order to bind virtuous persons to take part in and attract people to join activities in the temple all year round, such as making the Dhammakaya status identifiable and endorsements in the name of that person for keeping inside the *Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya* as a representative in sending the good deeds back to the

owners even if they do not come to join the activities at the temple.

Patterns of activity programs that affect the change in usage of an area, such as the annual ordination of *Ubasika Kaew* is a short cut means of using the area for holding main activities that relate to Buddhism worship including free-of-charge group ordination ceremonies which are a technique to recruit a large number of people to join the activities by using so-called marketing concepts such as, persuading five people to go into the monkhood results in the proponent receiving a special prize. By so doing, it has distorted the ideal concept of ordination.

Apart from this, there is an effort to claim *Tripitaka* as an excuse to build elements of various landscape architectures which confront *Phra Dhammavinai* or Buddhism law (Payutto, 1999) such as, making thirty two great men in the style of Buddha statues, but the symbol results in an image of simplicity and dignity and not in detail and internationalization. The same also can be said to apply to the Hexagon Golden Mountain of the *Chadin* millionaire as appeared in the *Tripitaka* but the shape looks like a pyramid without any Thai architectural decoratives at all.

On the influence from the *Traiphumikatha* which is the main concept in the layout design and traditional architecture, these are not included in the layout plan. Only the influences from traditional belief about the directions in putting the Buddha statues facing toward an easterly direction and a southern direction is included, with the positioning of various architectural structures on the axis just to reflect neatness.

It can be said that the structure of the Dhammakaya contemporary Buddhist settings of landscape language is one of trying to present a sacred language through the neatness, cleanliness, and emphasis on the simple and international language in order to communicate to target linguists worldwide to fulfill the objective of the creator of the said landscape language.

CONCLUSION

From the study of the language structure of traditional Buddhist structures and those of *Wat Phra Dhammakaya* and by comparing the differences in the use of landscape code concluded from the documentary research, there are five codes: 1) location, 2) landscape sign elements, 3) size of the areas used by monks, 4) direction, and 5)

influence from the *Traiphumikatha*. Such differences are summarized in Table 1.

Therefore, upon comparing the use of landscape sign as mentioned above through the period of time and forming the process of signs and the meaning of those landscape signs leads to analysis of the denotative meaning that is summarized in Table 2.

Table 1 Comparison of the use of landscape code in creation of language and meaning of traditional Buddhist place and the contemporary one of *Wat Phra Dhammakaya*

Landscape code	Traditional Buddhist setting	<i>Dhammakaya</i> contemporary Buddhist setting
1. Location	'royal temple' is located by referring to important site 'community temple' is determined from the donation of land for the foundation of that temple and its location implies the opportunity to appreciate the religion and propagate Buddhism in community.	- <i>First period</i> : A contemporary Buddhist place of <i>Wat Phra Dhammakaya</i> is a "community temple" determined from land devoted by the followers during this first period - <i>Second period</i> : a period for expanding from the existing location which has led to certain conflicts with farmers owning the land around the temple
2. Landscape sign elements	Function of landscape sign in relation to monk activity, Buddhist code, and to reflect the traditional sign through the language of landscape sign	- <i>First period</i> : has complete elements in terms of legal requirements and Buddhist code - <i>Second period</i> : create elements to mainly respond to the activities held in the area and number of users - <i>Third period</i> : create architectural elements qualitatively focusing on activity and sign showing public nature
3. Size of the areas used by monks	Used for determining size of area to be used of architectural structure	- <i>First period</i> : construction of structure in accordance with Buddhist code and monk activities - <i>Second period</i> : adaptation of landscape sign to respond to the activity of massive crowd beyond the demand of monks in their activity
4. Direction	Determine the axis for laying down architectural signs by turning the Buddha Image to the east or the south or the major transport route by either watercourse or road	- <i>First period</i> (Buddha quarter): use east-west direction line to lay down the axis of architectural structures - <i>Second period</i> (temple estate): change the main axis into north-south line
5. Influence from the <i>Traiphumikatha</i>	Regulate landscape drawing, priority and sign of the landscape and creation of meaning for the sign and language structure of Buddha area	- <i>First period</i> : no evidence of <i>Traiphumikatha</i> belief found in the landscape and elements of landscape sign. - <i>Second period</i> : there remains only the simulation of the structure of the Buddha area in the architectural priority

The occurrence of language in the landscape and architectural design in the contemporary Dhammakaya temple Buddhist setting has an obvious difference when it is compared with traditional landscape architecture in terms of layout plan, influence from the *Traiphumikatha*, and the elements of landscape architecture. It can be seen that only the concept of direction and axis structure do exist but only to reflect the neatness and the design of the international landscape architectural structures to appeal to a target group worldwide by focusing on the usage of a large area for Dhamma practice and referring to the conceptual thinking of “vocabulary” on Buddhist architecture to cover the development of the landscape architectural elements. Therefore, all of these factors affect the design of

language and thus result in differences from the structure of the landscape architectural language and the original meaning in a traditional Buddhist setting.

The *Wat Phra Dhammakaya* Buddhist setting is an example of the questioning and testing of a new dynamic of landscape architecture on the main cultural language, of conceptual thinking on the shifting of influence from the *Traiphumikatha* or traditions that have been inherited strongly throughout the Thai Buddhist landscape architecture through the common ideology of creators and designers that lead to the invention of Buddhist landscape architecture in an international language in which the language itself is adhered to ego, body, and permanent object which confront the conceptual thinking of Thai Buddhism.

Table 2 Conclusion of the sign meaning of landscape architecture within language structure of Buddha area and monk area of *Wat Phra Dhammakaya*

Domain	Landscape sign	Connotative meaning
Buddha's quarter	Chapel/Ordination Hall	The landscape code presenting the original adaptation of the last sign (Ordination Hall) that relates to traditional belief of landscape architecture relating to core cultures.
	Candle Hall	The landscape showing respect to Master Nun through the same location as Cetiya in traditional Buddhist place.
	<i>Khun Yay Archaraya</i> Sermon Hall	Landscape sign showing respect to Master Nun at the higher position than angel or similar position to the Lord Buddha
Temple Estate	The Memorial Hall of <i>Phramongkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro)</i>	Interlinking existing signs from <i>Wat Pak Nam</i> aimed to draw or separate middle-class followers of <i>Phramongkolthepmuni (Luang Pho Sodh)</i> to join <i>Wat Phra Dhammakaya</i>
	The Great Sapha Dhammakaya Hall	Not only a landscape sign manifesting interaction between monks and layperson but it is also a market for making merit.
	The Grand Meditation Amphitheatre	A building gathering religious followers around <i>Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya</i> , a sign rendering meaning of this Temple aimed to establish faith in all activities
	<i>Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya</i>	A landscape sign built with an aim to bind the customer (area user) through personal <i>Dhammakaya</i>
	<i>Phra Dhammachayo</i> the 60 Years Building	A landscape sign similar to the throne of <i>Amitabha Buddha</i> or king who is the centre figure of the activity
	Master Nun <i>Chandra Khonnokyoong</i> Centennial Memorial Building	Presentation of the elements of architectural sign as public space rather than as a sacred space and of the symbol of Master Nun that is superior to any other existing symbol in terms of traditional sign.

The result of the study, therefore, reflects a phenomenon in the physical change of landscape architectural language which is dressed up under a social context and era through creators and elements of landscape architecture. However, one of the important factors is the recipient or the language user which is an important indicative factor that determines the occurrence, survival, and change of the Buddhist landscape architectural language that eventually leads to the change in meaning. As a result, future studies will have to deal with the issue on attitude through a survey of the users of the language which is regarded as an important part of the communication process of landscape architecture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Graduate School, Kasetsart University provided the graduate research funds for publishing in an international academic journal.

LITERATURE CITED

- Alumni Association of Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya. (1999). *Wat Dhammakaya from multiple perspectives*. Bangkok: Saha Dhamik Press. [in Thai].
- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of semiology: Translated from the French by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bhandhavee, C. (2004). *Characteristics of Thai Buddhist architecture: A study of terms* (Unpublished master's thesis). Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. [in Thai]
- Buddhamamika. (1999). *Inside Wat PhraDhammakaya*. Bangkok: Sahadhamik Press [in Thai]
- Buddhist Monastery Division. (1981). *Temple development 1981*. Department of Religion, Ministry of Education. [in Thai]
- Charoenpuntaweasin, R. (2000). *The transformation of sign and code of Buddhist architecture and art in Thailand* (Unpublished master's thesis). Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. [in Thai]
- Dohring, K. (2000). *Buddhist temples of Thailand: An architectonic introduction*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press.
- Eawsriwong, N. (1992). Space in Thai ideology. *Matichon Art and Culture Journal*, 13(2), 180–192. [in Thai]
- Fuengfusakul, A. (1998). *Religious understandings of contemporary urban society: The case study of Wat Phra Thammakai*. Buddhist Studies Research, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. [in Thai].
- Houston, S. D. (1998). *Function and meaning in classic Maya architecture*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Imazato, S. (2007). Semiotic structure of traditional Japanese rural space: Hagikura village, Suwa basin. *The Public Journal of Semiotics*, 1(1), 2–14.
- Intrarumpun, J. (2009). *The conception of Tri Phum reflection in the art and architecture from Wat Rong Khun Chiang Mai* (Unpublished master's thesis). Silpakorn University, Bangkok. [in Thai]
- Jiratatsanakul, S. (2001). *Thai Buddhist temple architecture*. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press. [in Thai]
- _____. (2008). *Thai Buddhist temple architecture*, Retrieved from <http://elearning.su.ac.th/elearning-uploads2/libs/html/16231/index.htm>
- Jiratatsanakul, S., Jaturawong, C., & Sapphasiri, C.. (2005). *Architectural forms of Buddhist temples in local communities*. Bangkok: Research and Development Institute, Silpakorn University. [in Thai]
- Kaewthep, K. (2010). *The examination in communication studies*. Bangkok: Parb Pim. [in Thai]
- Kalyanamitra, C. (1996). *Thai traditional architecture*. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press. [in Thai]
- Kalyanamitra, C. (2009a). *Dhammakaya layout*

- center of the world*. Retrieved from http://www.kalyanamitra.org/etc/index_etc2.html
- Kalyanamitra, C. (2009b). *Religious Ceremony [Ngan-Boon]*. Retrieved January 15, 2009, from http://www.kalyanamitra.org/events/year47/07_47/Program_arsaday_phansaday_47.htm
- Mackenzie, R. (2007). *New Buddhist movements in Thailand: Towards an understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Santi Asoke*. New York: Routledge.
- Maré, E. A., & Rapanos, A. (2007). The sacred and profane symbolism of space in classical Greek architecture: The temple complex of Apollo at Delphi and the Athenian Acropolis. *South African Journal of Art History*, 22(1), 117–133.
- Mydans, S. (13 August 1999). *Pathum Thani Journal: Most serene of sects creates uproar in Buddhism*. Retrieved <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/13/world/pathum-thani-journal-most-serene-of-sects-creates-uproar-in-buddhism.html>
- Nimlek, S. (1996). *Thai architecture: Roof structure and ornaments*. Bangkok: Amarin Printing & Publishing. [in Thai]
- Nor Na Paknam. (1997). *Manuscript of Sima of Wat Suthat Dhepvararam*. Bangkok: Muang Boran Press. [in Thai]
- O'Connor, R. (1993). Interpreting Thai religious change: Temples, Sangha reform and social change. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 24 (2), 330–339. Retrieved from <http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-EPT/connor.htm>
- Payutto, P. A. (1999). *The Dhammakaya case*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya. [in Thai].
- Pawluang. (2011). *Wat Gallery*. Retrieved from <http://www.pawluang.com/index.php?lay=show&ac=article&Id=40759>
- Popparn, P., Boonyarattana, N., Chan-in, P., Laosirimongkol, P., Pethcploy, P., Ruengjit, A., & Sae-Jao, N. (2011). *A living chronicle of the heart that build*. Bangkok: Rungsilp Karnpim. [in Thai]
- Prakitnonthakan, C. (2007). Wat Pra Sri Mahathat Bangkok: The democratic symbolic temple in era of the people's party. *Matichon Art and Culture Journal*, 28(8), 124–132. [in Thai]
- Rajanubhab, D. (1960). *Chronicle of Buddhist Stupa*. Bangkok: Sapon Pipattanakorn Press. [in Thai]
- Sanitsuda, E. (21 December 1998). *Phra Dhammakaya temple controversy*. Bangkok Post, Retrieved from <http://www.rickross.com/reference/general/general644.html>
- Satheerasilapin, S., Yamnill, S., Dhammija Medhi, S. (Ven.), & Dhammik Muni, S. (Ven.). (2005). *Management model for the study of religions and the spread of Buddhist temples: A case study of Wat Phra Dhammakaya*. Bangkok: Parb Pim Press. [in Thai]
- Sapphasiri, C. (1998). *A study of the architectural design's development at Wat Phra Sri Ratana Sadsadaram* (Unpublished master's thesis). Silpakorn University, Bangkok. [in Thai]
- Scott, R. M. (2009). *Nirvana for sale? Buddhism, wealth, and modernity in contemporary Thailand*. New York: State University of New York.
- Somboon, T. (2004). Interpretation of Artifacts in Wat Benchamaborpitr Dusitwanaram. *Ramkhamhaeng Research Journal*, 8(2), 74–89. [in Thai]
- Suwankiri, P. (2004). Fundamentals of Thai architecture. *The Royal Institution of Instruction Journal*, 29(2), 372–381. [in Thai]
- Taylor, J. (2008). *Buddhism and postmodern imaginings in Thailand: The religiosity of urban space*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing.
- Xu, P. (1998). *Feng-Shui models structured traditional Beijing Courtyard Houses*. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 15(4), 271–281.