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KEY WORD: EVOLUTION OF CHEDI IN SUKHOTHAI

PRASERT CHANHOM: THE EVOLUTION OF CHEDI ARCHITECTURE IN SUKHOTHAI PERIOD.

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It is found from the study of "The Evolution of Chedi Architecture in Sukhothai Period" that the political change or society and religion play an affected role on the Chedi style. Especially the concept of the spread of Buddhism in each reign and the essence of Buddhism that the aristocrat had propagated to society. It exhibited the desire of moral code and morality of society.

Almost every principal Chedi in the Sukhothai period was built in accordance with traditions and the co-use of symbols that were based on the system of concept of Sukhothai Buddhist cosmology. All of the concepts were rooted in the Buddhist literatures that were written in Sri langka and Bukam (in the present Myanma). The entire Buddhist literatures were rewritten to show Buddhist cosmology within Sukhothai people's perspectives named "Tai bumikatha". King Lithai once again rewrote Tai bumikatha. So the principal chedis in Sukhothai period were used as a model of Buddhist cosmology in Sukhothai people's perspective. The cosmology was concluded through the concept of system of Buddhist cosmology symbolic and ritual traditions to build consciousness of wisdom so that people could recognize the Buddhist description and Dhamma which were the foundation of society in that time. Dhamma and the Buddhist essence was taught through legends, Beliefs and miracle stories. Their essence in abstract was transformed become the Buddhist cosmology, and the Buddhist cosmology transform become the symbolic system of Buddhist cosmology. This was used on the Sukhothai principle Chedi, By Sukhothai architectural techniques.

The Sukhothai principal Chedis may have been compared with the Buddha image or symbol of the center of the universe because the Buddha relic was kept inside the Chedis. It can be said "Whoever could see the Dhamma could also see the Buddha and the principal chedis". The concept of Buddhist cosmology was the foundation of thoughts and core concept reflected the important essence of Buddhist in that time. All of these essences can explain the meaning and the nature of the universe in every aspect.

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