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Elements of art and literature in the murals of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, Nakhon Phanom Province

Athichart Thengwattanachote
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

Noppadon Chasanguan
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

Aeknarin Klaewklong
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

Kanamporn Pasri
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

Suwat Boontam
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

Kungsadal Jongka
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

Umnart Sunaprom
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

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Corresponding Author:	Kanamporn Pasri
E-mail Address:	Kanamporn@snru.ac.th

Abstract

The research titled "Elements of art and literature in the murals of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, Nakhon Phanom Province" is a qualitative study. Its objective is to examine the artistic and literary elements depicted in the murals of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima in Nakhon Phanom Province. The target groups include local scholars, abbots, and community leaders in the Ban Fang Daeng and Ban Nam Kam areas. Field data were collected using surveys and unstructured interviews. The findings

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were categorized and analyzed. The results show that in terms of artistic elements, the murals at Wat Pho Kham are arranged symmetrically and in an orderly manner, with paintings limited to the interior walls. In contrast, the murals at Wat Phutthasima are arranged more diffusely, with paintings on both the interior and exterior walls of the ordination hall (sim). Regarding literary elements, both temples emphasize depictions of Buddhist history (Phra Phuttha Prawat), while depictions of Jataka tales and local folklore differ between the two. Notably, the main local folklore story Suriyawong has not been previously depicted in murals in the Isan region.

Keywords: Mural paintings, Artistic elements, Literature, Nakhon Phanom, Lan Xang

Introduction

Mural paintings, or *Hub Tam* (wall paintings) in the Isan region, have existed from prehistoric times to the present. Created to fulfill religious beliefs, serve as acts of Buddhist devotion, function as educational media, and embellish Buddhist sites, these artworks also reflect the identity of Isan communities across various eras, influenced by neighboring regions (Trachoo, T., 2023). Traditional Isan murals serve as historical records of ideas and cosmology, provide evidence of community history, and illustrate connections with external societies such as the Siamese state and other nations (Singyabuth, S., 2017).

In terms of academic inquiry, research on Isan murals began in 1959 under the leadership of Professor Silpa Bhirasri. Between 1988 and 1997, higher education institutions started conducting systematic studies of these murals. From 1998 to 2007, the research expanded to include government agencies and adopted increasingly interdisciplinary approaches. Between 2008 and 2011, studies became more specialized, drawing the interest of foreign scholars. Finally, from 2012 to 2016, researchers examined murals within shared cultural basins, comparing Isan murals alongside contemporary art and the development of cultural capital. These investigations confirm that Isan murals remain a culturally significant heritage, and further research may uncover additional perspectives (Yanapisit, K., 2017).

Mural paintings are found throughout the southern, central, and northern parts of the Isan region. In central Isan, provinces such as Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, and Roi Et feature murals that can be categorized into two main periods: pre-1957 and post-1957. Earlier murals often did not strictly follow formal composition principles, showing a free, unrestrained style. In contrast, murals created after 1957 frequently drew upon Sa Thammapakdi's printed illustrations, displaying larger paintings within defined frames and orderly narrative sequences. Each mural section highlighted both primary and secondary points, filling every surface of the wall. Skilled mural artists working in the traditional Thai style adopted

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composition techniques from central Thailand, arranging scenes in a continuous narrative that could be read from left to right or from top to bottom. Acrylic and plastic-based paints were commonly used because of their durability.

Regarding literary content, pre-1957 murals often depicted religious stories such as the life of the Buddha (Phra Phuttha Prawat), Phra Malai, Traiphum, the Ten Jatakas (Thotsachat Jataka), the Phra Vessantara Jataka, and commentaries (Atthakatha Jataka). They also incorporated riddles and local literature like *Sinsai*, *Phra Lak Phra Ram*, and *Tao Pajit-Nang Oraphim*. Post-1957 murals primarily focused on religious themes such as the Buddha's life, Phra Malai, the Phra Vessantara Jataka, the Ten Jatakas, and local histories including *Heet Sip Song*. Local literature was largely absent during this period (Plengdeesakul, B., 2011). Along the Mekong River in Isan, murals blend traditional Thai artistic elements with local art, creating a style characterized by simplicity and directness. They integrate Buddhist teachings with depictions of community life, underscoring their cultural value as tools for teaching Buddhist morality and ethics alongside worldly and community knowledge (Kobbun, P., 2022).

In That Phanom District, Nakhon Phanom Province, which is a significant area for cultural tourism, key mural sites include not only Wat Phra That Phanom Woramahawihan (the site of Phra That Phanom) but also Wat Phutthasima and Wat Pho Kham in the surrounding areas. According to Yanpisit, K., Wongpongkham, N., and Srisantisuk, S. (2020), the murals at Wat Phutthasima date to 1920, while those at Wat Pho Kham were produced between 1933 and 1934. Research by Chunnabunyatip, P. (2022) indicates that the murals at Wat Phutthasima in Ban Fang Daeng, That Phanom District, Nakhon Phanom, feature local painting styles both inside and outside the ordination hall (sim). These murals portray Buddhist history, the Ten Jatakas, important local literature, and scenes of daily life.

Several studies have examined the artistic and literary elements of Isan mural paintings. On the artistic side, Chompru, M. (2022) noted that traditional *hub tam* depicting the Phra Vessantara Jataka in central Isan (pre-1957) were rooted in local wisdom and displayed simplicity, spontaneity, and minimal adherence to complex patterns, reflecting the characteristics of folk art. Their compositional style prioritized narrative storytelling by emphasizing the main characters and including depictions of local lifestyles for narrative completeness. In contemporary Isan mural creation, experiments that integrate traditional local forms have advanced multi-dimensional development and established principles for contemporary *hub tam*. These innovations, derived from traditional Isan forms, can be refined further for both preservation and progressive adaptation.

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Regarding literary content, Akarawatthanakul, P. (2022) observed that while the Ten Jatakas (Thotsachat Jataka) had long been a popular subject for mural paintings in central Thailand, they were less common in Isan murals until the 20th Buddhist century (early 1900s CE). At that time, central Thai influences merged with local Isan expressions and shaped the dominant style adopted by local artisans. Similarly, Saengsurin, S. (2015) found that murals on the exterior walls of sims often drew on the Traiphum. Depictions of hell, for example, expressed belief systems emphasizing karma, heaven, and hell, along with broader Buddhist teachings. According to Wutthidhambundit, P., Sarit, P.S., and Hormsombat, P. (2024), Buddhist art in the Mekong region is founded on Buddhism, and collaborative networks have helped sustain and develop Buddhist art knowledge there.

Despite these contributions, Isan murals face three major crises, as identified by Singyabuth, S. (2018) political, physical, and cultural awareness crises. Political crises stem from national policies promoting "one nation, one culture," which disrupt the systematic conservation of Isan cultural heritage. Physical crises arise from natural deterioration, human neglect, and damage by animals or construction. Crises of cultural awareness have led to the demolition of ancient ordination halls with traditional murals and the construction of Bangkok-style halls in their place. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive mural studies aimed at conservation and development. At the same time, incorporating mural paintings into cultural product designs can appeal to consumers on an emotional level and emphasize local identity (Inkhong, P., 2018). According to creative economy principles, mural paintings have value as cultural capital and hold significant economic potential (Yanpisit, K., 2024).

Wat Pho Kham was established between 1932 and 1933 by artisans Lee Chapran and Boonpan Chapran. Located in Ban Nam Kam, Nam Kam Subdistrict, That Phanom District, Nakhon Phanom Province, under the Mahanikaya Sangha, the temple covers 10,264 square meters (6 rai, 1 ngan, and 66 square wah). Its main structure is an old sim measuring 6 meters by 12 meters, built in 1933 with concrete walls and a tiled roof. Wat Phutthasima was founded in 1765 by artisan Khamsing Chaiyo in Ban Fang Daeng, Fang Daeng Subdistrict, That Phanom District, Nakhon Phanom Province, also under the Mahanikaya Sangha. It covers 39,192 square meters (24 rai, 1 ngan, and 98 square wah), and its principal building is an old sim measuring 8 meters by 11.5 meters, constructed in 1917 with brick and mortar. Wat Phutthasima received royal consecration (Wisungkhamsima) on January 15, 1919.

Both temples house significant mural paintings that have been registered and restored by the Fine Arts Department. In light of their cultural importance, this research explores how artisans conceived and

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organized the artistic elements and literary content when creating the mural paintings at Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima.

Research Objectives

1. To study the artistic elements in the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, Nakhon Phanom Province.

2. To study the literary content depicted in the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, Nakhon Phanom Province.

Research Methodology

1. Scope of the Research

1.1 Geographical Scope: This study focuses on Wat Pho Kham, located in Nam Kam Subdistrict, That Phanom District, Nakhon Phanom Province, and Wat Phutthasima, located in Fang Daeng Subdistrict, That Phanom District, Nakhon Phanom Province. These locations were selected purposively.

1.2 Content Scope: This research defines two main aspects. The first aspect focuses on artistic elements, which include visual elements, materials, techniques, and the arrangement of artistic compositions. The second aspect focuses on literary content, which includes Buddhist literature and local folklore.

2. Research Instruments

For studying the artistic elements in the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, surveys were employed. In the case of studying the literary content depicted in the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, both surveys and interviews were used. The target group included five individuals, comprising abbots, community leaders, and local scholars, selected purposively.

3. Data Collection Methods

1. Reviewing documents related to artistic elements and literary content.

2. Developing research instruments.

3. Conducting fieldwork by surveying the sim with mural paintings on both the interior and exterior walls and interviewing the target group about the literary content depicted in the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima.

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4. Data Analysis

Categorizing the data based on the research topics and performing descriptive analysis with illustrative images.

5. Conceptual Framework of the Research

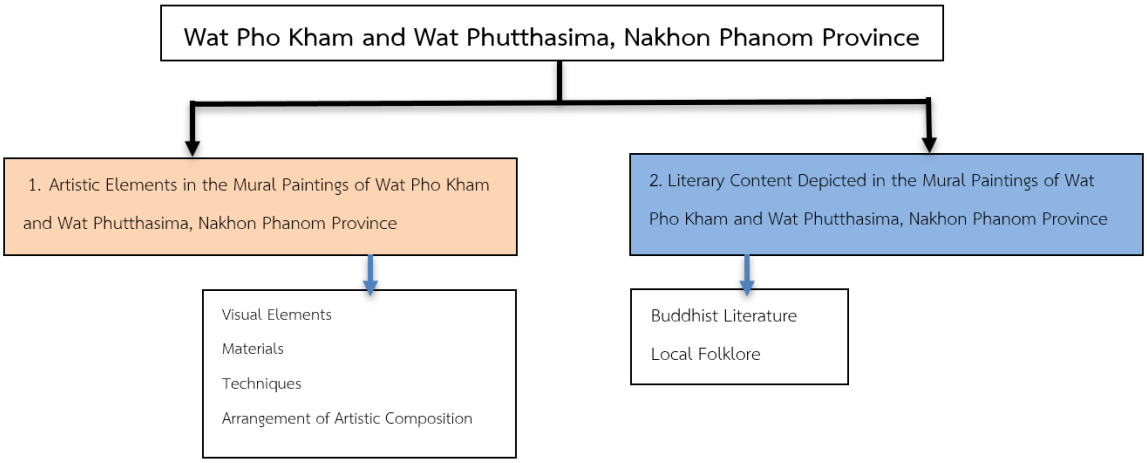

Figure 1 *Conceptual framework of the research*

Research Results

1. Artistic Elements in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima

1.1 Artistic Elements in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham

Figure 2 *Interior wall, West side*

Figure 3 *Interior wall, North side*

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Figure 4 *Interior wall, East side*

Figure 5 *Interior wall, South side*

a. Interior Wall (West Side) The wall behind the principal Buddha image. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the image into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row has a symmetrical composition, with balanced shapes and the stupa at the center. Characters on both sides face toward the central stupa. The lower row is divided into sections using vertical straight lines, with red spaces separating each section.

b. Interior Wall (North Side) The wall on the left side of the principal Buddha image features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the image into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row runs along the entire wall, with stories separated by trees, mountains, walls, and buildings. Images of buildings, people, and animals are arranged in rows. The lower row is similarly divided into sections using trees, mountains, walls, and buildings, with people and animals arranged in an orderly manner.

c. Interior Wall (East Side) The wall at the entrance to the sim features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the image into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments,

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water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row runs along the entire wall, with the Buddha image at the center. Trees, mountains, walls, and buildings are used to divide the stories into sections. Palaces, buildings, people, and animals are arranged in rows. The lower row is similarly divided into sections using trees, mountains, walls, and buildings, with people and animals arranged in an orderly manner.

d. Interior Wall (South Side) The wall on the right side of the principal Buddha image features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the image into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row runs along the entire wall, with stories separated by trees, mountains, walls, and buildings. People and animals are arranged in rows. The lower row is similarly divided into sections using trees, mountains, walls, and buildings, with people and animals arranged in an orderly manner.

1.2 Artistic Elements in the Mural Paintings of Wat Phutthasima

Figure 6 *Interior wall, West side*

Figure 7 *Interior wall, North side*

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Figure 8 *Interior wall, East side*

Figure 9 *Interior wall, South side*

Figure 10 *Exterior wall, North side*

Figure 11 *Exterior wall, East side*

Figure 12 *Exterior wall, South side*

The artistic composition in the mural paintings at Wat Phutthasima is arranged with details separated according to each wall as follows

a. Interior Wall (West Side) The wall behind the principal Buddha image features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the

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picture into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row uses a dispersed arrangement, with shapes filling the space. City walls and mountains divide the story into episodes. The lower row uses a dispersed arrangement, with trees and mountains as dividing lines for the story into episodes.

b. Interior Wall (North Side) The wall on the left side of the principal Buddha image features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the picture into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row uses a dispersed arrangement, with shapes filling the space. City walls and mountains divide the story into episodes. The lower row uses a dispersed arrangement, with trees, mountains, buildings, and window spaces used to divide the story into episodes.

c. Interior Wall (East Side) The wall opposite the principal Buddha image features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, vertical straight lines are used to outline architectural structures, and curved lines are used to depict people and animals. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row uses a dispersed arrangement, with shapes filling the space. City walls and mountains divide the story into episodes. The lower row uses a dispersed arrangement, with trees, mountains, buildings, and door spaces dividing the story into episodes.

d. Interior Wall (South Side) The wall on the right side of the principal Buddha image features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks and ground, horizontal straight lines divide the upper and lower rows, vertical straight lines divide the picture into sections, and curved lines are used for decorative patterns. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the

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surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white and turquoise paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row uses a dispersed arrangement, with shapes filling the space. City walls and mountains divide the story into episodes. The lower row uses a dispersed arrangement to create a sense of freedom and liveliness, with trees, mountains, buildings, and window spaces dividing the story into episodes.

e. Exterior Wall (North Side) The exterior north wall features one row of paintings with two window spaces. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks, and curved lines are used to depict people, trees, and objects. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are arranged above the window arches, moldings, and column capitals in the upper part of the wall, above the window frames. The lower section is left white and smooth.

f. Exterior Wall (East Side) The exterior east wall features two rows of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks, and curved lines are used to depict people, trees, and objects. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the east wall is divided into two parts. The upper part consists of a low-relief pediment, primed with white paint and outlined with black lines. The lower part features white paint applied to spaces between columns and above the sim door frames, with outlines drawn in black. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are divided into two rows. The upper row consists of a low-relief pediment, where shapes fill the space and color is applied to the relief. The lower row uses a dispersed arrangement, with stories divided according to the door and column spaces.

g. Exterior Wall (South Side) The exterior south wall features one row of paintings. The findings show that in terms of visual elements, points are used to create leaves, textures of rocks, and straight lines are used to depict houses, while curved lines are used to depict people, trees, and objects. In terms of materials, powdered pigments, water-based glue, and brushes of various sizes were used. In terms of techniques, the surface of the sim wall was smoothed, primed with white paint, and outlined with black lines. In terms of the arrangement of artistic composition, the images are arranged above the window arches, moldings, and column capitals in the upper part of the wall, above the window frames. The lower section is left white and smooth.

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2. Literary Content Depicted in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima

2.1 Literary Content Depicted in the Sim of Wat Pho Kham

The mural paintings inside the sim of Wat Pho Kham appear on every wall, with the literary details separated as follows.

a. Interior Wall (West Side) The upper row features murals arranged from the right of the principal Buddha image to the left. The episodes include Phra Sri Ariya Mettrai leading his followers to worship Chulamanee, Phra Malai Thewarathera arriving at the Vejchayanta Prasat Amarin, and the Buddhist story of kings competing for the Urangka relic. The lower row features murals arranged from the right of the principal Buddha image to the left. The episodes include Phra Malai traveling through the human world and hell, and Phra Malai flying across the sea to worship Chulamanee relics.

b. Interior Wall (North Side) The upper row features literary murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Chapter 26 Mahaparinibbana Sutta with scenes of the cremation, the physician Gomarabhat, Phra Ananda offering water, and the meal at the house of Juntha Gamara. Chapter 25 Aggasavaka Nibbana Parivatta with the elephant and monkey attending the Buddha at Parileyyaka forest. Chapter 8 Buddhabucha Parivatta with Lady Suchada offering milk rice. Chapter 11 Bodhisappanna Parivatta with the two merchant brothers offering rice cakes and rice powder. Chapter 13 Dhammacakka Parivatta with the Buddha delivering the Ovada Patimokkha sermon and realizing the Four Noble Truths: Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, and Magga. Chapter 22 Yamaka Patihariya Parivatta with the Buddha going for alms in Rajgir. The lower row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Chapter 3 Kabbhanikkhamana Parivatta with Lady Suchada giving birth to the Bodhisattva and visiting Lumbini Park in a golden palanquin. Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta with Prince Siddhartha's excursion and the vision of the Five Divine Messengers. Chapter 5 Rajabhiseka Parivatta with the Bodhisattva demonstrating martial arts and archery. Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta with Prince Siddhartha's ordination surrounded by the Four Guardian Kings at the feet of the horse Kanthaka. Chapter 5 Rajabhiseka Parivatta with the coronation of Prince Siddhartha and Lady Pimpa. Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta with the obstruction of the ordination by Mara Vasavadi.

c. Interior Wall (East Side) The upper row features literary murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Chapter 22 Yamaka Patihariya Parivatta with the Buddha performing miracles, Chapter 18 Pimpavilap Parivatta with the Buddha visiting Lady Pimpa, Chapter 23 Tesana Parivatta with the Buddha preaching to his mother in Tavatimsa Heaven, and Chapter 24 Tevorohan Parivatta with the Buddha returning to the human world on the crystal ladder while observing offerings from gods and humans.

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Chapter 9 Maravijaya Paritta with Mara's attempt to obstruct the Buddha's enlightenment, and the Suriyawong story with the city of Pengchan and King Brahmadatta. The lower row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Chapter 8 Buddhabucha Parivatta with the Buddha consecrating a bowl to float in the Neranjara River. Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta with the Buddha cutting his topknot. Chapter 7 Tukkakiriya Parivatta with the Buddha undertaking extreme ascetic practices. Other stories include Sugriva and Hanuman capturing Kumbhakarna, Phra Ram capturing Ravana, Phra Phet Pharayathorn seizing a lady, and King Suriyawong lying with Nang Kasorn.

d. Interior Wall (South Side) The upper row features literary murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include the Suriyawong story with King Suriyawong disguising himself as a Brahmin to beg for alms in Gandhan City, King Suriyawong's battle with the giant Ravana, and Nang Suwanpimpa and King Suriyawong entering the city of Pengchan. The lower row features literary murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include the Suriyawong story with Ravana abducting Nang Suwanpimpa and her child, and the city of Pengchan.

2.2 Wat Phutthasima

From the field survey of the mural paintings at Wat Phutthasima, literary content was found both inside and outside the sim. The details are separated by wall as follows.

a. Interior Wall (West Side) The upper row features murals arranged from the right of the principal Buddha image to the left. The episodes include Chapter 9 Maravijaya Paritta, Mara attempting to obstruct the Bud dha's enlightenment, Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta, the Buddha cutting his topknot, Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta, Mara Vasavadi obstructing the ordination, and Chapter 6 Mahabhinikkhamana Parivatta, Prince Siddhartha's ordination surrounded by the Four Guardian Kings at the feet of the horse Kanthaka. The lower row features murals arranged from the right of the principal Buddha image to the left. The episodes include the Gandharva demons, Sinxay crossing a river two yojanas wide, and Sinxay stopping the mighty elephant Chattananta.

b. Interior Wall (North Side) The upper row features literary murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Vessantara Jataka, including chapters such as Mathree, Giving Alms, Kumara, and Maharaja. Vidhura Jataka, the scene where Punnaka the Yaksha desires the heart of Vidhura the Wise and disguises himself as a young man to gamble with King Dhananjaya by wagering the magical gem and divine horse. Narada Jataka, with Narada disguised as an ascetic carrying golden panniers, and the story of the ascetic Cuchiva. The lower row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Sinxay

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wandering in the forest and meeting a kinnari to marry, Sinxay killing Thon to seize the miraculous lady fruit, and Sinxay defeating Yak Kumphan while searching for his mother.

c. Interior Wall (East Side) The upper row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Chanda Jataka, Bhuridatta Jataka, and Mahosatha Jataka. The lower row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Chandakorap and Sinxay.

d. Interior Wall (South Side) The upper row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Nemi Jataka, Suvannasama Jataka, Mahajanaka Jataka, Temiya Jataka, and the story of Nang Mekkhala and Ramasun. The lower row features murals arranged from right to left. The episodes include Sinxay, Episode 8 (Khojon) and Episode 9 (Anuyutthakam).

e. Exterior Wall (North Side) The first section near the door of the sim on the upper row features Vessantara Jataka, Chuchok Chapter. The second section features The Three Realms, Naraka, depicting scenes of hell.

f. Exterior Wall (East Side) The first section near the door of the sim on the upper row features The Buddha's Life Story. The second section near the right door features Indra and Brahma paying homage to the Buddha. The third section near the left door features Vessantara donating an elephant to the Brahmin.

g. Exterior Wall (South Side) The first section near the front of the sim on the upper row features Temiya Jataka. The second section features Mahajanaka Jataka. The third section features Sinxay, Episode 4 (Vipavasakam) and the Rocket Festival.

Summary and Discussion

1. Research Findings

1.1. Artistic Elements in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima

Regarding visual elements, the mural paintings at both Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima exhibit similarities in point, line, color, shape, space, and texture; no differences in these elements were observed between the two temples. In terms of materials, both sets of murals employ powder-based paints, water glue, and brushes of various sizes, indicating no notable differences in this respect either.

Differences arise, however, in certain painting techniques. In both temples, artists prepared the *sim* walls by smoothing them, applied white or pale blue base coats, and outlined figures in black. At Wat Phutthasima, bas-relief gables were incorporated into the upper sections, and additional paintings were executed on the window cornices features that do not appear at Wat Pho Kham. The artistic compositions

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also differ: Wat Pho Kham presents murals exclusively on the interior walls in a symmetrical, orderly arrangement, whereas Wat Phutthasima adopts a more scattered layout, with murals adorning both the interior and exterior walls of the *sim* as well as the window cornices.

1.2. Literary Content Depicted in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima.

With respect to Buddhist literature, Wat Pho Kham primarily features the Life of the Buddha. Wat Phutthasima, on the other hand, features the Life of the Buddha and the Ten Jataka Stories (Vessantara Jataka, Vidhura Jataka, Narada Jataka, Chanda Jataka, Nemi Jataka, Suvannasama Jataka, Mahajanaka Jataka, and Temiya Jataka). In terms of local literature, Wat Pho Kham primarily features Suriyawong as the main narrative with additional references to the Ramayana. Wat Phutthasima primarily features Sang Sinxay as the main narrative with additional references to Nang Mekkhala and Ramasun and the Rocket Festival.

Thus, the literary content depicted in the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima shares similarities in featuring the Life of the Buddha but differs in the depiction of Jataka stories and local literature. It is evident that the Life of the Buddha is emphasized by both temples, while the Jataka stories and local literature are distinctly portrayed.

2. Discussion of Research Findings

2.1 Artistic Elements in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima

In terms of visual elements, the murals of both temples feature points, lines, colors, shapes, spaces, and textures. The materials used include powder color, water glue, and various sizes of brushes. The painting techniques involve preparing the *sim* wall surfaces to be smooth, applying white and pale blue base colors, and outlining with black. The artistic composition of the murals at Wat Pho Kham exhibits a symmetrical and orderly arrangement. In contrast, the murals at Wat Phutthasima are painted on both the interior and exterior walls of the *sim*, including decorative patterns on window cornices. The arrangement is scattered and includes both symmetrical and asymmetrical styles.

2.2 Literary Content Depicted in the Mural Paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima

The literary content depicted in the murals of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima shares similarities in featuring the Life of the Buddha. However, differences arise in the depiction of Jataka stories and local literature. It is evident that the Life of the Buddha is emphasized in both temples, while the Jataka stories and local literature are portrayed differently. The primary local literature depicted in the murals of both temples represents valuable cultural narratives. This aligns with Harnkam, S. (1984), who stated that the story of Suriyawong was once widely known and popular across both banks of the Mekong River. The narrative is classified as world literature, where motifs from Jataka stories and other local

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literature were combined to create new characters and narratives. The story emphasizes karma, separation caused by past deeds, and eventual reunion. It teaches perseverance and the pursuit of virtuous acts, which ultimately lead to happiness. Literature that conveys Buddhist principles naturally serves as a medium for teaching Dharma. This aligns with Trachu, T. (2023), who noted that mural paintings were primarily created to reflect faith, serve as objects of Buddhist veneration, provide educational tools for communities, and decorate religious sites to enhance their beauty and inspire reverence. The discovery of Suriyawong highlights regional differences compared to Central Isan, where pre-1957 murals prominently feature local literature such as Sinxay, Phra Lak Phra Lam, and Thao Pachaet Nang Oraphim (Plengdeesakul, B.,2010).

3. Research Suggestions

3.1 Future research should focus on studying the reflections of traditions and culture in Isan mural paintings, conducting creative studies to develop contemporary art inspired by the mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima, or exploring the development of souvenirs derived from the Isan mural paintings of Wat Pho Kham and Wat Phutthasima

3.2 Community organizations should prepare informational resources for tourists or individuals interested in studying these topics, both onsite at the temples and through online platform

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