

The conservation project of the old Ubosot at Wat Daeng through the participatory process of the community.

Wat Daeng is located in Khao Phra Bat Subdistrict, Chian Yai District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. It is one of the important ancient temples in the Chian Yai area. Currently, the temple still retains significant religious structures that are valuable for architectural study, including the old ubosot (ordination hall) of Wat Daeng. This ubosot features local southern architectural characteristics, specifically an open hall structure with a gable roof. Unfortunately, it has fallen into disrepair and has been left to deteriorate naturally, as the temple has constructed a new ubosot to replace the old one.

Due to the architectural and social value of the old ubosot, which has a long history with the community, the Faculty of Architecture at Walailak University has collaborated with the temple and the community to find ways to preserve this structure. The outcome of these discussions led to the establishment of a conservation project for the old ubosot, involving community participation.

The old ubosot of Wat Daeng retains its traditional southern architectural style, which is now found in only a few places in the south. The architectural details include a base with a local craftsmanship style that has deteriorated and cannot support the pillars of the ubosot properly. Previous project efforts have included raising the base of the ubosot that was buried underground to ground level and reinforcing it with a foundation and ground beams to support the structure above.

The main structure is open, supported only by pillars that hold up the roof. Currently, the pillars are beginning to lean due to subsidence at the foundation. However, the wooden pillars remain in good condition, and the project has worked to align the pillars to ensure they are level.

The roof has a gable shape, with the upper gable covered in glazed tiles, and the ends of the tiles are adorned with intricate designs of celestial beings interspersed with floral patterns. The lower layer of the roof is a traditional gable covered with ancient clay tiles, many of which have broken over time. The project has sought to replace these by requesting donations of old tiles from local residents and nearby temples.

The old ubosot features decorative elements at the base and the gable ends on the east and west sides. The base is adorned with stucco floral patterns and decorated with glass. The eastern gable features a central stucco figure of Indra riding the Erawan elephant, while the lower panel is decorated with glass. The western gable depicts Prince Siddhartha shaving his head to enter monastic life, surrounded by celestial beings, also adorned with glass.

Notably, the use of glass decoration in the ubosot is uncommon in the southern region, except in temples of significant importance. The presence of glass decoration at Wat Daeng indicates that it was once a highly significant temple in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The craftsmanship wisdom of the old ubosot has been studied to determine conservation strategies, revealing that reinforcing the foundation of the ubosot in the past was essential for its stability.