THE PASSAGE OF LOTUS ORNAMENT FROM EGYPTIAN TO THAI

A study of origin, metamorphosis, and influence on traditional Thai decorative ornament

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Abstract: Lotus is believed to be the origin of Thai ornament. The first documented drawing of Thai ornament came with Buddhist missionary from India in 800 AD. Ancient Indian ornament received some of its influence from Greek since 200 BC. Ancient Greek ornament received its influence from Egypt, which is the first civilization to create lotus ornament. Hence, it is valid to assume that Thai ornament should have origin or some of its influence from Egypt. In order to prove this assumption, this research will divine into many parts. This paper is the first part and serves as a foundation part for the entire research, showing the passage, metamorphosis and connotation of Thai ornament from the lotus ornament in Egypt. Before arriving in Thailand, Egyptian lotus had travelled around the world by mean of trade, war, religious, colonization, and politic. Its concept, arrangement and application are largely intact, however, its shape largely altered due to different culture and belief of the land that the ornament has travelled through.

Keywords: Lotus; Ornament; Metamorphosis; Influence; Thailand

1. Introduction

Through the long history of mankind, the traditional decorative ornament has originally been the symbol of identifying and representing the nation. It has become a communication tool between man and man, nation and nation. It articulates a realm of the imagination. The ornament is a natural and universal system of human communication that can present a valuable segment of human thought [1]. The ornament has been created from the memory of what creator had seen or experienced and been transformed what creator sense to be the natural laws into unreal forms [2].

Many traditional decorative ornaments have survived a lot of generations. It is the culture-based philosophy and ethnic belief behind the tradition that is leading a world to change the way of life and therefore more satisfying sensually, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually which keep their art and culture survive. However, in the modern ages, accelerated urbanization and modernization have significantly transformed the society over the past years. This situation inevitably caused a great effect on the changing of culture and art. Traditional decorative ornament has also changed, nowadays it can be assumed that the derivation has been neglected, the correct meaning behind the ornament has been distorted, in which will eventually lead to the demise of the inherited traditional ornament in the society. Likewise in Thailand, where the culture mixed, it is also the factor that most of traditional decorative ornament had been vanished from daily life, remnants limited only for specific place or group of people.

Therefore, this study aims directly to investigate and explore what caused shape and form of present ornament, and explore the origin and transformation of the characteristic or identity of traditional decorative ornament in Thailand. This study is the first part, which serves as a foundation part for the entire research. It includes research beyond the Thai history of the first documented drawing of Thai ornament. It demonstrates the connection between Egyptian lotus and traditional Thai ornament for the next part of the research, which will focus on the analysis and comparison study on structure and arrangement of the pattern between these two periods.
2. Traditional Decorative Ornament in Thailand

...If one has not made a deep study of Thai art, one may be misled into thinking that it is based on no principles. But, in fact, Thai art follows principles not only of its own but also of many other subjects including psychology. To give an example, the religious edifices, shrines and halls of ceremony built by our ancestors are not only beautiful but also inspire the visitors with piety and noble ideas. All this is not achieved by mere chance but by following certain definite principles [3].

The above quotation explains the essential of knowledge of Thai art that has developed for more than a thousand years. And all of history made its unique characteristic. In order to understand any aspects of Thai art, a study in Thai ornament, or Lai Thai in Thai language, or Kranok is necessary and deserves serious attention.

2.1 Meaning of its name

Phra Phrombhichitr [3] claimed that “Lai” in Lai Thai means patterns in the shape of flowers, vines and leaves, real or imaginary, employed for decorating ceilings, walls, pedestals, panels etc. “Kranok” means Thai arabesque pattern of interlaced leaves and branches. Thai arabesques are composed of flowing lines interspersed with leaf-like patterns, which resemble flames or strips of cloth fluttering in the wind. Moreover, Kranok in Sanskrit means thorn, which can be seen in any Kranok pattern that it would have a sharp form at the end of the pattern, like a thorn. However, Suwankiri [4] also claims that King Rama V explains about Kranok in the Tra-Pha-Khan novel as Kranok also means the golden pattern since it was used to call the pattern drawn with the gold line in the past.

2.2 Shape of Kranok or Lai Thai

From the numerous forms of Thai ornament, or Lai Thai, Kranok is the most foundation ornament. Most of Lai Thai has been created from a basis of this form. Shape of Kranok originated from a right-angled triangle. Starting from a curved line at the bottom-left of the shape, as its base, it shaped up with curved line like a spiral from the base to the middle and upward to the top (Fig.1-left).

A single Kranok pattern may be incorporated in many ornaments or combined with other patterns to create more sophisticated ornamentations. For example, the triple Kranok (Fig.1-right) also plays a significant part in the creation of Thai ornament.

2.3 Origin of Kranok or Lai Thai

Since Lai Thai has been created from the ancient time and its lack of referable source, there is no any evidence to prove where Kranok shape came from. However, Thai arts were traditionally primarily Buddhist, Suwankiri [4] believes that Kranok’s shapes were primary derived from halved lotus (Fig.2 – 3). With some other shapes came from 3 lotuses tying together, ear of rice, and natural elements.

Fig.2: From shape of halved lotus to Kranok or Lai Thai [4]

Fig.3: Kranok in the shape of lotus [5]

Phra Phrombhichitr [3] once depicted about the top Chief Master of Thai art, Prince Narisaranuwattiwong, in his book. The prince enlightened Phra Phrombhichitr that the origin of Thai Art is from lotus. He expanded that lotus existed since Buddha era. It is a miracle flower that embraces Buddha’s power throughout his life. It is also the main flower in Buddhist ceremony. The main thing that Prince Narisaranuwattiwong bestowed was lotus is the origin of Thai Art. Ultimately, lotus transferred into novels and visual arts. The visual artists have used lotus on temples, significant monuments to show that Thais like lotus shape. Thais use lotus shaped carved wood and shaped clay almost everywhere.

The Lai Thai manuscript by Khanachang [6] also said that the origin of Lai Thai is lotus. The main reason is that lotus has soft curved lines match with Lai Thai than any other elements. It was used as a basic foundation when create Lai Thai.

By interleaved a more sophisticated pattern into the drawing, the evolution of Lai Thai has begun. For example, the more sophisticated lotus was given a name as Ta-Oy.
Later on, the natural stem was replaced with a more elaborate drawing and called it Poom-Khao-Bint (fig.4). Tua-Ngao (Fig.5) was derived from just curved shape of a lotus and not lotus as a whole. Tua-Thet (Fig.6) and some component parts of Thai pattern (Fig.7) were adapted from a lotus petal. It resembles the Egyptian "Grape ornament".

Phra Devabhinimmit [8] concluded that whatever the origin of inspiration of the Kranok might have been, it is clear that it has been developed on the principle of subjecting nature to the dictates of aesthetics.

Lotus is an important source of inspiration in Thai Arts. Most of Lai Thai’s shapes and forms are adapted from this fairest flower. The Thai arts masters use lotus as a foundation to create many pattern of Lai Thai beyond their imagination.

Fig. 4: Poom-Khao-Bint [5]

Fig. 5: Tua Ngao from a shape of lotus [7]

Fig. 6: Lotus and Tua-Thet [7]

Fig. 7: Lai Thai by petal of the lotus [5]

Fig. 8: Lai Thai from a shape of lotus [7]

3. Evolution of the lotus

To understand Kranok or Lai Thai, which derived from lotus, this study will take a closer look at the history of lotus before it arrived in Thailand. There are no evidences proved exactly where Lai Thai came from. However, there are some evidences shown that Lai Thai got influenced from neighboring countries particularly from India. Leksukhum [9] claims that the ornament had reach Thailand through Buddhist missionary from India since 800 AD when India had influence in Asian region. Diskul [10] claimed that Lai Thai got influenced from Gupta culture, which influenced by Amaravati culture. Amaravati had a rich culture in decorating with their wine branch patterns, which influenced directly from Greek, Roman and Iran.

This study also has found many evidences suggest that there are lotus ornamentation and its transformation throughout human history from Egyptian lotus to Greek Palmette, Roman Corinthian, Byzantine Anthemion, Indian lotus, Chinese Peony and Kranok or Lai Thai. Even the name or what so call of the ornamentation in each period are different, they were created by base from. And among the lotus ornamentation in human history, the oldest evidence can be traced back to ancient Egypt.

Fig. 9: Sample of the lotus ornament in many ages [11]

Even though most of the Thai art history said only that Thai art got influence mostly from India, but Indian art also was influenced by Greek, Roman and Arabian art since 50 BC. The matter is Alexander The Great from Greek had conquered part of present India in 200 BC. Even through the army has left, some rank and file stayed behind to rule the colony. The Greek ornament started to travel into India during this period. Once the Roman ruled the Greek, their influences started travel into India also. The Arabian started to travel into India around 1000 AD. During that period the Muslim started to invade Northwestern part of India, bringing their arts along with them. Arabian art became the major influence on Indian Art when the Mughal Empire ruled the country around 1500 AD. Thus, this evidence shows a link between Greek art, which influenced directly from Egypt, and India art before its influence on Thai [12].

Considering the shape and form of the lotus there are some similarities between Egyptian and Thai lotus. Both Thai and Egyptian shape was drawn from halves lotus
inspired by nature, both has open and closed form with sharp pointed tip, both arrangements are symmetrical and graceful. Egyptians and Thais used lotus ornament throughout its sacred architectures even though they have different belief.

Moreover, from the nature perspective, there are three species of lotus in Egypt, the white lotus (Nymphaea lotus), the blue lotus (Nymphaea Caerulea) and pink lotus (Nelumbo Nucifera). All three species were depicted in Egyptian arts. In Thailand, the lotus is called Bua. There are also three species of lotus in Thailand. First, Bua Luang or Pathum (Nelumbo Nucifera), which is the equivalent of the pink lotus in Egypt, secondly, Bua Sai or Ubon (Nymphaea lotus) which is the equivalent of the white lotus in Egypt, and thirdly, Bua Kradong (Victoria sp.). Therefore, Thailand and Egypt share two species of lotus, the white and the pink lotus.

These lead to the conclusion that it may be possible that Kranok or Lai Thai has some association with Egyptian lotus. To clarify the hypothesis, this research will show the evolution and metamorphosis of these two sharing species from Egyptian lotus into Kranok or Lai Thai.

Sample illustrations in this study are from well-known publications and are the most common form of that era.

3.1 Egyptian Period (ca. 3100 BC - 332 BC)
The concept of Egyptian ornament was derived directly from nature inspiration. Egyptian has no foreign or prior influences. They experienced things by their eyes, and transfer their experiences by their hands. Thus, it is assumable that origin of lotus ornamentation is from Egypt.

There are many types of patterns and ornamentation derived from lotus in Egypt. Among those ornamentations, Palmette is a type of ornamentation that has noticeable migration and influence on Kranok or Lai Thai.

Palmette, Goodyear [13] explained that it represents the combination of the lotus rosette with sepals and calyx. Egyptian transforms dried lotus ovary stigma taken from nature into rosette, which later assimilates into part of lotus-Palmette. Fig.10 shows Egyptian transform dried ovary stigma into lotus-rosette and use it on the column.

![Fig.10: Left - Dried ovary stigma of the lotus after seeding, pictured from nature. Right - Lotus buds supporting rosettes, columns at Esneh. From PRISSE D'Avennes [13]](image)

There are many lotus combinations form, which the Palmette is derived. For example, in the tomb-ceiling patterns of Prisses d’Avennes there is a frequently recurring motive, illustrated by Fig.11-Left. The motive also occurs with a conventional outline for the Palmette portion as in Fig.11-Right, which also includes an inverted bud. As there is no doubt that Fig.11 represent lotuses.

![Fig.11: Egyptian Palmette in the tomb-ceiling patterns of Prisses d’Avennes [13]](image)

The connotation of the Palmette’s shape is from the oldest shape in ancient Egypt. It was a rosette or daisy-like lotus flower emerging from a 'V' of foliage or petals resembling the 'akhet' hieroglyph depicting the setting or rising sun at the point where it touches the two mountains of the horizon – 'dying', being 'reborn' and giving life to the earth (Fig.12). Notice the similarity of the outlining shape in Fig.11, 13 and 14.

![Fig.12: The Ancient Egyptian papyrus (of Ani), the vignette in the British Museum](image)

![Fig.13: Left - A gold jewel from ancient Egypt [14] Right - Drawing of Palmette Necklace [14]](image)

![Fig.14: Common Palmette shape and drawing in Egypt [13]](image)

In conclusion, the Egyptian lotus ornamentation mostly appeared in a form of Palmette. The Palmette crown is the rosette, which drew from a dried lotus. However, the Egyptian Palmette, some does not portray the whole rosette.
It denotes a supposed concealment of a portion of the rosette. This can be attributed to decorative consideration, with 2 sepals always curved outward. The calyx is closely mimicking the nature. The stem is straight and simple. In this period, the Egyptian used lotus ornament mainly to decorate their architecture, which mostly made from stone, earth, sand and wood. Therefore, the pattern was drawn by a simple line, based on geometry shape with fewer components.

3.2 Assyrian and Persian Period (ca. 934 BC - 609 BC)

The Assyrian and Persian borrowed style from the Egyptian modified by the difference of the region and habits of the Assyrian people [11]. By comparing Assyrian’s ornament with those of Egypt, it is apparent that the same mode of representation has been adopted and the objects represented are frequently so similar. The Assyrians originated only a little in the way of decorative motives. They still used same material and technique as Egypt.

The details regarding the provenance of the pattern in Fig.15 is rather descriptive than illustrated. It was obvious from this form that the Assyrian Palmette derived from the Egypt. They both have similar shaped lotus. Assyrian followed the natural law of radiation and tangential curvature as the Egyptian but much less accurately as they were drawn from habit instead of instinct.

Fig.15: Assyrian Palmette with lotus flower (left) and with lotus bud (right) from fresco, British Museum [13]

3.3 Greek Period (ca. 800 BC – 600 AD)

Greek art, though borrowed partly from the Egyptian and partly from the Assyrian, was the development of an old idea in a new direction, unrestrained by religious laws. Greek ornament was meaningless, purely decorative, never representative, and can hardly be said to be constructive, unlike the Egyptian [11].

The most remarkable change appears in Greek art in the seventh century BC. Eastern pictorial motifs were introduced. Palmette and lotus compositions are one of those motifs. Certain phases of the Egyptian lotus are exactly identical with certain phases of the Greek anthemion form [13].

In ornament, the fan-like petals remain the same. The two sepals curves down are slightly different. The ovary shape in the middle remains the same. There are three triangles at the calyx of the rosette from Egyptian period but it deceased to only one triangle in the Greek period.

Fig.17: Left - Ionic lotus, supporting demi-rosette. Detail in stone carving from Cyprus, decorating handles of the enormous stone bowl in the Louvre [13]
Middle - Drawing of Assyrian terminal Palmette [14]
Right - Greek anthemion. Detail from the handle of a Greek bronze vase, from Sidon [13]

In motive and pattern, the Greeks curved the petals of the Palmette in various ways and refined their forms in an extraordinary variety of ways, creating out of monotonous and lifeless Palmette an entirely beautiful ornament.

Fig.18: Anthemion with Volute scrolls, from a vase [11]

Fig.19: Various types of Anthemion motives [14]

As many evidences in this study from the three great laws, geographical and political reasons, to both Goodyear W. [13] and Jones O. [11] suggest that the Egyptian lotus
has passed through Greek. The Greek has adopted it and change it to better suit their lifestyle and purposes.

3.4 Roman Period (ca. 753 BC – 480 AD)

The conquest of the Hellenistic kingdoms (Last ancient Greek kingdom) triggered a fusion between Roman and Greek culture. The characteristic of the Roman art can be described as self-glorification. From the base of the column to the apex of the pediment every part is overloaded with ornament, have a tendency to dazzle by quantity than to incite appreciation by the quality of the work, lacked somewhat of the refinement and restraint of the Greek, but was more varied and more flexible. It was eminently adapted to the purposes, which it had to serve.

Fig.20 demonstrates the similarity of the Anthemion or Palmette shape of the Roman and Greek period. There is some distinction between the two but it is hard to deny the similarities. The shape of the Anthemion stills the same oblong. The top is fan-like shape, however, the Roman infused curve tip but the Greek has straight tip. The Roman sometimes added pottery at the base as a decoration. The Roman omitted the oval shape in the middle entirely. The two curve down sepals are similar but the Greek tug the tip of the petal when roman just maintain the curve as others petal up top.

Fig.20: Left - Greek Anthemion of the Parthenon [11]. Right - illustration of Roman Anthemion [14]

Fig.21: Left - Drawing of typical roman carved Anthemions [16]. Right - Fragment form, Forum of Trajan in Lateran Museum [11]

From the conquest of Hellenistic kingdom to the assimilation of Greek arts, it is certain that the Egyptian lotus has travelled through the Roman.

3.5 Byzantine Period (ca. 330 AD – 1453 AD)

Pure Byzantine ornament is distinguished by broad-toothed and acute-pointed leaves, which in sculpture are beveled at the edge, are deeply channeled throughout; the running foliage is thin and continuous. The imitations were crude and imperfect. They mixed the speaking art of the Egyptian, the natural grace and refinement of the Greek, the geometrical combinations of the Roman and their own.

In all Byzantine decorative carving, the patterns were chiefly based on the Acanthus and Rinceau (foliage) in bud-bloom pattern. Hamlin [14] suggests that the Acanthus came about through Roman version of the anthemion on the vase ornament, surviving in Roman carving and Mosaic.

Fig.22: Anthemion Frieze at St. Mark’s Venice, 600 AD [14]

The shape of the Anthemion stills the same oblong. The top is fan-like shape, however, the Byzantine reduced the number of petal and used broad-tooth and acute-pointed leaves rather than a curve tip. The Byzantine has essentially replaced the flower with Acanthus leaves. The flowers are really Acanthus leaves in disguise.

Fig.23: Left - Acanthus leaves on stone sculptured ornament, Santa Sofia Constantinople. 600 BC [11]. Right - Byzantine Anthemion carving on portion of a capital, St. Michael’s church. 1200 AD [11]

The Byzantine used the sepal to outline the shape of the Anthemion. This pattern will later on pass on to the Arabian (Fig.24 – left). Although it is not the same, Hamlin [14] has explained that this is due to the influence of the Asiatic Greek, who would naturally combine the Asiatic love of surface decoration in detailed all-over patterns, with the traditional motives of Greek classic and Roman art.

3.6 Arabian Period (ca. 632 AD – 1031 AD)

The Arabian simply imitated Byzantine. The imitations were crude and imperfect. This imperfection gave birth to a new style of art as same as what happened in Byzantine.

The Arabian imitated the Acanthus from the Byzantine. The flower is the prime example of how crude and imperfect. The Arabian lost all the details of Byzantine carved Anthemion. Compare Fig.22 with Fig.24, the only characteristic that remained intact is the outlining shape of the flower.
Fig.24: Scrollwork around the windows from the Mosque of Touloon, Cairo 876-7 AD [11]

The Arab adapted Byzantine ornament to its own used. There are some differences such as the art in Byzantine was a three dimensional whereas the one in Arabian period is a two dimension art mainly painting on vase, wall and tile. No matter how crude or imperfect the imitation was there are undeniable similarities of the outlining shape of the flower and scrollwork. This study concludes that Arabian ornament was influenced by Greek, Roman and Byzantine.

Fig25: Palmette pattern painted in luster on a vase found at Fustat, 11th Century, Victoria and Albert Museum [16]

Fig26: Left – Border of split-Palmette foliage, from the Mihrab of the Mosque of Sultan Hasan, Cairo, Middle 14th Century. Right – Surface pattern developed from Left [16]

3.7 Indian Period (ca. 3000 BC – 1400 AD)

The Indian united the severe forms of Arabian art with the graces of Persian refinement. All of the Indian works have the same guiding principles; there is always the same care for general form, the same absence of all excrescences or superfluous ornament. The Indian style ornament is somewhat more flowing and less conventionalized, and been more subjected to direct Persian influence.

The lotus ornamentation in India can be divided into 2 types. First, the flower in the early Indian period looks like the lotus-rosette of the Egyptian period. There is undeniable similarity of Fig.27 and Fig.10. This type of ornament looks like lotus dried ovary stigma, drawn from top view. In Fig.28 shows the crown is half rosette with calyx and sepals at its base, which has the same basic elements of the pattern as Egyptian lotus ornament. This type of pattern came directly from Egyptian through Hindu. Second, the patterns derive from the lotus. This pattern has change from the ancient Egypt’s ornament.

Fig.27: Left - Part of the top of Ashoka The Great’s stone column, Ancient India, Sarnath Museum [12]. Right – Ornament in painted boxes, the Indian Collection, Paris [11]

Fig.28: Fabric ornament, the Indian Collection, Paris [11]

By receiving influence from many cultures, India has many varieties of pattern more than any civilization not only the natural lotus patterns but also the abstract lotus patterns that do not looks like lotus anymore as well.

From Fig.29-Left, the cone’s form is a conical in shape, but lotus-like in detail, and the flower is metamorphosed into a strange Chinese style of scroll. This is the knop and flower pattern. It is proved by the curved line, which unites the base of the knop with the base of the flower. On the shawl border (Fig.29-Middle), the knop becoming the cone, the branches of which fan out like the fronds of the lotus. From Fig.29-Right, there is a striking similarity to the Greek and Roman Palmette, Byzantine Anthemion and Arabian arabesque.

Fig.29: Left – A typical Persian plates [17], Middle - Knop and Flower pattern on a Delhi shawl, Right - Indian Palmette from Baden Powell's "Punjab Manufactures" [17]

The later Indian period the flower looks similar to those of Byzantine and Arabian Acanthus (Fig.30).

Fig.30: Ornaments from Works in Metal, the Indian Collection, 1851. [11]

This study has shown that the Indian has received influence from Egyptian Palmette and Arabian Acanthus. The evidence is in their metal work and textile. A typical household item in Indian's day to day life. The similarity of Indian Palmette and Greek/Roman Palmette/Anthemion is beyond deniability. It is beyond a reason of doubt that the Egyptian's lotus has travelled through Indian.
3.8 China Period (ca. 221 BC – 1644 AD)

The Palmette and scrolls brought to China to decorate Buddhist architecture, seems to have remained tied to architecture and to the embellishment of Buddhist figures [18]. Bloomer [1] claims that Chinese artisans adopted the half-Palmette because it has a vivid thrusting action that, when repeated, punctuates the direction of translation. The minimal arrangement of wave and half-Palmette that migrated into China was sufficient to perpetuate the foliated scroll and to nourish the development of elaborate flower patterns that were uniquely Chinese influence.

Chinese artisans, abandoning the rigorous symmetry and geometry of the Greek Palmette, dynamically rotated the half-Palmette into a fan shape growing out of a joint along the wavy stem (Fig.31). This elegant radiation features a miniature cluster of scrolls sprouting from its base. On either side of the newly sprouted plant figure, slightly detaches scrolls trail off into space, plumes of vapor reminiscent of Asian cloud motifs. In subsequent designs, such clouds seem to assert themselves and demand their own sky (Fig.32) in the turbulence of a rather free and calligraphic composition. The ancient Greek forms were giving way to Chinese portrayal of elegance and energy.

Fig. 31: The half-Palmette was transformed into a fan [1]

Fig.32: The scrolls are detached and trail off, while the clouds assert themselves within the pattern [1]

After the tips of blossom shapes, originally derived from the Palmette and the lotus, dissolved into clouds, the blossom itself was transformed into a peony (Fig.33-Left). By the 11th century, the dominant motif consisted of a peony forming, billowing around the axis of the wavy line, and emitting clouds from its tips. By the 14th century, the lotus had reappeared as the principle motif on a foliated scroll (Fig.33-Right). The ancient lotus motif has pointed tips, and the Asian peony motif has round tips. This new flower seems to be peony-lotus. The vine revolving about the flowers is sprouting scrolls as well as scrolls issuing clouds that seem to be leaves, and thus an illusion of natural vining is also a semblance of spiraling wind.

From Fig.31-33, this study has shown that the Greek lotus has travel through Silk Road into China. Chinese had adopted it and tweak them as their own.

3.9 Hindu Period (ca. 200 BC – 100 AD)

In the 19th century, Hindu was used as a very general term for any oriental style of architecture, including Indian, Chinese, and Moorish. Many ornaments are actually Buddhist. Most of the decoration is figurative, showing scenes from the life of Buddha. Lotus and Jewel seemed to be the chief types of the decoration on the molding. The ornament in Fig.34 comes from a statue of Surya, an Indian sun god. In many images, the god was portrayed with a lotus in each hand. As in Egypt, lotus was a symbol of the sun.

Fig.34: Ornament from a statue in basalt at the house of the Royal Asiatic Society [11]

Rawson J. [18] offers an explanation of the means by which the foliated scroll moved from the borders of Greek temples into similar spaces upon the elevations of Buddhist cave temples. The enshrined figures, upright statues of important men located between the columns with scrolls running along the entablatures over their heads, placed there for political and didactic purposes, were exalted by their presence within the architecture. When the early Buddhist adopted some of the elements, they placed Buddhas between columns and appropriated the scrolls. The scrolls that prevailed in the early years of their adoption were crude compared to the Greek prototype, but still contained all the genetics.

A stone relief from 2nd to 3rd century AD Buddhist cave temple in Gandhara (Fig.35) has a simple wave stem sprouting partial scrolls efflorescing into half-Palmette.
3.10 Thai Period (ca. 1200 AD – Present)

The first evidence of early Lai Thai sketches is from the Sukhothai period, around 800 years ago. Patterns were engraved on wall corners of Wat Srijum, temple situated in Sukhothai province in the northern part of Thailand [8].

Fig.36: Lotus and early Thai ornament sketch, Carved Stone, Sri-chum Temple, Sukhothai, ca. 1300 AD

Fig.37: Early Thai ornament sketches:
1 – Dvaravati period, ca. 558-957. 2 – Khmer period, ca. 1207. 3 – Sukhothai period, ca. 1308-1357. 4 – Lanna period, ca. 1328. 5 - Before Ayudha period, ca. 1258-1307 [19].

Early Thai patterns are curly head, curved ending and full of curved lines. The patterns are very similar to Chinese Hindu, and Indian. Fig. 36-Left and Middle, the picture representing natural lotus, translating believe and religious. This form is similar to Hindu (Fig.34). Figure 36 - Right is a decorative ornament, this form resembles Indian fusions with Chinese. It looks like Indian lotus with Chinese gentleness resemblance of spiraling wind. This pattern may or may not incorporate flower into its pattern, the main focus are stem and leaves. This cloud and spiraling wind pattern, which influenced from China, became a very explicit pattern to Lanna (a region in Thailand) because the believing in theirs meaning of contented life style, abundance and free of nature disaster [20]. This pattern was mostly used in plaster for decoration. At first, the spiraling wind pattern did not have any obvious Kranok pattern mix into it, later on, Kranok Pattern had developed into its own particular form, the sharp edge at the end of the pattern, like a thorn (Fig.37 – 5), which presume that Thai later on received this form from Khmer. Its implication is trying to reach for the god or heaven, and this form do mix in almost all of the patterns.

4. Conclusion

Through this first paper, we have found that culture and beliefs has greatly influences the shape and forms of ornament throughout the history of mankind. This proves that people could translate their belief into visual arts since the first civilization, Egypt.

This first paper has looked at the lotus ornament, since its first appear in Egypt, how it is transformed from time through time, and found noticeable passage between each period until it arrive in Thailand, which could confirm that Egyptian lotus has some influences on recent traditional Thai decorative ornament. The Egyptian lotus and Kranok not only conceived more than 6,000 years apart but also the lack of evidence to prove their association may lead to assumption that the Egyptian lotus and Kranok have nothing in common. On the contrary, some strong influences are still noticeable.

However, the passage from Egypt to Thailand is not a direct influence. Thailand received influence from many different cultures, which can be demonstrated in Fig.38.

Fig.38: The summary map of influence of Thai ornament

The map shows three major influences of Thai ornament, which can be seen that they all can track back to the most ancient civilization, Egypt. As above figure shown, may be it can be assumed that the real origin of Thai ornament is from the ancient lotus ornament in Egypt.

There are 2 types of lotus ornament flowed into Thailand. First, natural lotus ornaments, this type of ornament try to imitate natural lotus as much as possible. Therefore, there is not much significant change in the design. This type of ornament mostly influenced from Hindu, which was influenced directly from Egypt. Second, abstract lotus ornament. The artists would like to convey meaning, belief and most importantly decorative purposes. Thai received this type of ornament mainly from India and China. This type of ornament has travel through many culture and belief, therefore, the shape and form had been significantly changed until there is no original forms left.
The development of shape and forms of ornament demonstrates that craftsmen were more likely to exploit forms inherited from their predecessors than to search out new motifs. In particular, they were unlikely to devise ornament based directly on representations from life. However, social or religious demands might cause them to make changes to the shape and forms of ornament.

It also demonstrates that the lotus ornament has a strong bond with architecture. In ancient time, the lotus ornaments were used to decorate architecture, wood and stone are primary materials. Carving stone and wood only allowed certain technique to be used. Therefore the patterns are primitive and less developed, for example as can be seen in Fig.14. As time passed, the lotus ornament has transferred into more advance materials like fabric, metal and ceramic. This allowed advance techniques to be used. Therefore more advance patterns emerged, as can be seen in later Indian (Fig.28) and China period (Fig.33).

An investigation into the nature, value, and potential of ornament, deserves serious attention to be a gradual renewal of interest in the subject of public, professional, and academic realms.

5. References