# THE COLOR IDENTITY IN
# TRADITIONAL THAI BUDDHIST TEMPLES

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## ABSTRACT

Thailand has been a land of Buddhism for over a thousand years. Buddhist temples spread across 2,000 kilometers from the north to the south of the kingdom. This research aims to identify the colors that represent Thai Buddhist temples and to create colors themes that represent the similarities and the differences of all the regions of Thailand. The method used was the collection of outdoor and indoor images of major temples in five different regions: north, northeast, center, east and south; then processing the average value by using additive color theory from major design elements of the temples. Five color sets per theme will be created, each from indoor and outdoor photos. Each theme will be compatible with Adobe Kuler design environment. The color themes can also be utilized in different design applications.

## INTRODUCTION

Over one thousand years ago, when Buddhism came to this region of Asia, it developed unique characteristics and created a genuine identity over time. Buddhist temples have become parts of the Thai way of life and distinguished themselves from other neighboring countries.

Color is an important part of the architecture. This study examines the colors of Thai temples: what tints make Thai Buddhist temples so unique? Can colors of Thai temples define Thai identity? How this set of colors is distributed across the kingdom? Do they remain the same schemes from north to south? Can we apply the color themes from Thai temples to other applications and recognize them as Thai?

## OBJECTIVE

1. To study and extract color sets from Thai temples that can represent Thai identity and the uniqueness of Thai temples.

2. To find the differences and similarities of color sets in each region of Thailand.

3. To design color themes that can be applied to other design tools or applications and maintain Thai characteristics.

## METHODOLOGY

**Step 1**

We analyzed color patterns from five selected well known Thai temples in each region throughout the kingdom. The selection is based on the principle of similarity, principle of proximity, principle of closure and principle of constancy.

**Step 2**

We classified temples in three categories for color data collection:

1. Outdoor Category: the colors of the main chapel.

2. Indoor Category: the interior Buddha image of the main chapel.

3. Overall Category: the pagoda and overall temple look and feel.

**Step 3**

We used digital single lens reflex camera (DSLR) as a tool to collect the color data by photographing each part of the temples in additive (RGB) color model.

Using image editing software such as Adobe Photoshop, we sampled down to determine elements of the photographs into single RGB value: five colors per category for each temple.

Data value was averaged by using Adobe Photoshop, which is not only averaged by values of colors mathematically, but also accumulated from the portion amounts of colors as well. The method applied to find out the representation colors of each regions as well as final overall colors of Thailand.

## RESULTS

The total sampling of temples from five regions found that most colors are on the warm side of color wheel, regardless if it was indoor or outdoor. There are some differences on the color themes between the different regions. The north utilized more darker colors in general: rooftop, indoor and outdoor. The north-east uses more saturated vivid colors overall, especially rooftop and outdoor. The central region has brighter color on the rooftop and exterior. The east and south display similar color moods and tones.

The result chart **(Table 1: Results chart)** below display result of each region in to roll of five colors set per theme. Each column display category from outdoor, indoor and overall. The last roll shown the result of final Thai temples theme that averaged from each regions.
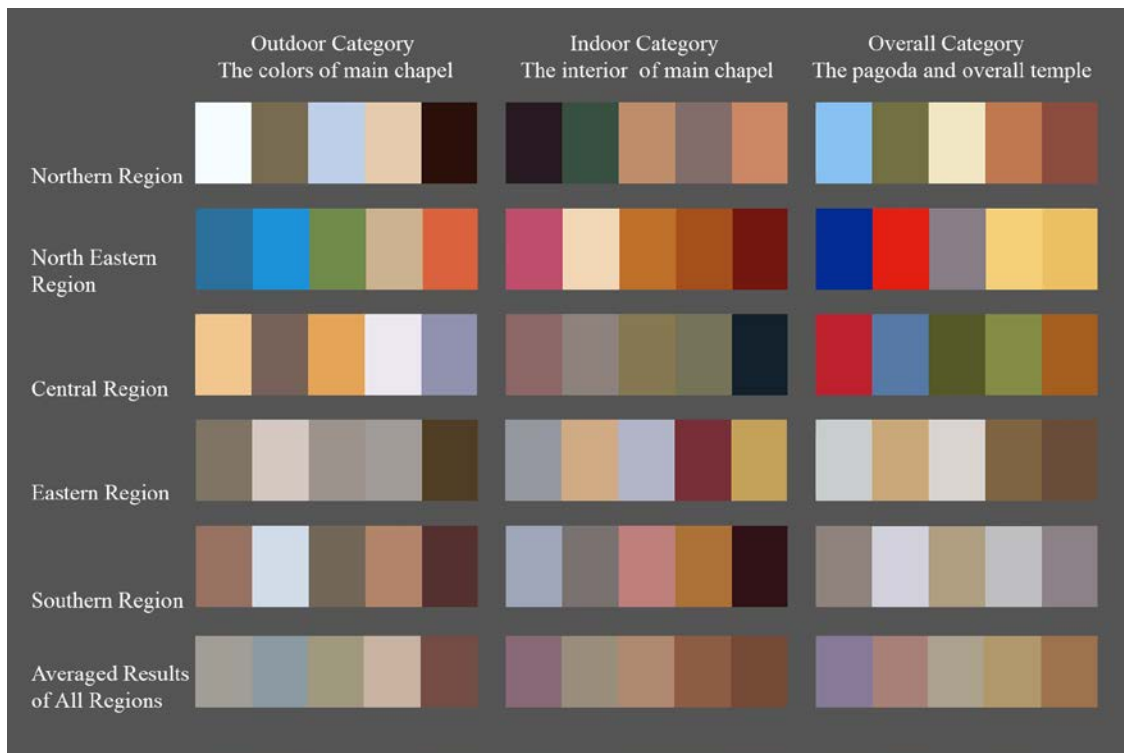
| Outdoor Category<br>The colors of main chapel | Indoor Category<br>The interior of main chapel | Overall Category<br>The pagoda and overall temple |
|---|---|---|
| Northern Region | | |
| North Eastern Region | | |
| Central Region | | |
| Eastern Region | | |
| Southern Region | | |
| Averaged Results of All Regions | | |

**Table 1: Results chart**

Since Thai temples are so colorful, it is difficult to sample colors of the temples without aesthetic consideration. These methods have to be selected by visual artists and are very time consuming. It also generated overwhelming data. Therefore, in order to create a successful set of color themes, a mixed method approach seems more appropriate. Moreover, there could be more than one theme representing the colors of Thai temples in each region.

These color sets can be used traditionally as a color reference and digitally as RGB values. In addition, in our digital, this research was conducted based on color sets that can be applied as popular Adobe Kuler themes, digital designers and artists can download and use these themes via Adobe's website and use them with Adobe Kuler compatible applications as color theme template.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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