Ramayana in Arts of Southeast Asia

Amarjiva Lochan, PhD
Associate Professor in History and Culture,
University of Delhi
Land of Ramayana in Southeast Asia
The Kingdom Ayodhya
A Thai painting depicting the Kingdom of Ayodhya
Wall painting in Cambodia giving a picturesque view of the kingdom of Ayodhya
Depictions of Ravana
Lions flee as Ravana uproots the mountain where Lord Siva sits with his consort Parvati.

Temple relief
Angkor, Cambodia
1. Yama, lord of death, flees as Ravana overturns the cow-headed cauldron of hell containing lazy and evil souls.

2. Ravana fights Yama.

3. Yama kneels before Brahma who tells him that only a human can kill Ravana.
Lord Visnu (known as Wisnu) sits in heaven on Sheshanaga. On his left kneels a Garuda, on his right Gods ask Wisnu's help in defeating Ravana who is ravaging heaven and earth.

Temple relief
Prambanan, Java, Indonesia
The Exile: Ram, Sita and Lakshmana leave Ayodhya
An Indonesian painting depicting a night scene they halt on the banks of Ganga where Guha the King of Nishada accords them a warm welcome
Rama, Sita and Lakshmana travel by chariot and then boat into exile. On the left bank of the river, Sumantra bids them farewell. On the right bank a holyman greets them. The upper right corner shows Rama's father dying of grief surrounded by his three wives.
Life in the forest
Indonesian Puppetry: Rama, Sita and Laksmana enter the forest.
Rama rejects Shurpanakha

Ravana's sister, Shurpanakha, disguises herself as a beautiful maiden, surprising a servant in the lower left corner. Shurpanakha entices Rama as Sita and a servant listen. (Lower right) Lakshman cuts Shurpanakha's nose and she changes back into an
The Golden Deer

Rama pursues the golden deer *Wayang golek* (rod puppet) and *wayang kulit* (leather puppet), performed by Ki Suparman.
Myanmar: Details from polychromed wooden entrance (17th century) Shwezigon Paya temple
Capturing Sita

Ravana kidnaps Sita.

*Lakhon bassac* (folk opera), DaoTan Drama Theatre, Vietnam
Cambodian Theatre
Jatayu (left) tries to save Sita by attacking Ravana. Temple relief Prambanan, Java Indonesia
Jatayu tries to rescue Sita. Detail of mural painting (late 18th C) at Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo) Temple Bangkok, Thailand
Ravana holds Sita while he battles Jatayu
Sita’s Rescue
Rama and Lakshman set out to find Sita

Detail from mural painting (late 18th century, restored 1971-74), Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo) temple Bangkok, Thailand
The monkey Hanuman's adventures finding Sita

A sea monster tries to get Hanuman to enter its mouth as the monkey flies to Ravana's kingdom of (Langka) Lanka.
Hanuman delivers Rama's ring to Sita.
Ravana's men try to kill Hanuman, but he leaps onto a pedestal and smashes their heads together.

Detail, mural painting (late 18th century, restored 1971-74), Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo) temple, Bangkok, Thailand
The monkeys build a causeway of rocks to Ravana's kingdom. Hanuman dives below the sea and finds Suvarnamatsya.

Detail from painted window panel, Wat That Luang Ratsamahawihan temple Luang Phabang, Laos.
Hanuman attacks a fish that is trying to carry away a boulder.

Mural painting (late 18th century, restored 1971-74), Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo) temple, Bangkok, Thailand
Detail from mural painting (late 18th century, restored 1971-74), Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo) temple
Bangkok, Thailand
Lintel from a Temple from northeast Thailand
1075-1125
Rama's forces triumph over Ravana

Rama and Ravana fight (center) while monkeys and ogres battle around them. Detail of mural painting (1990s), Thai Cultural Center, Bangkok, Thailand
Cambodian Theatre: Rama exterminates Ravana
After the battle
Cambodian painting depicting common folks gossip about Sita’s Virtue
Sita is tested
Rama holds the portrait of Ravana drawn on a slate as Lakshman and Sita look on.

Lakhon khol (masked dance drama), Siem Reap troupe
Angkor, Cambodia
A modern Thai painting depicting the episode of agnipariksha
The monkeys watch Sita walking through the fire fanned by Hanuman.

Detail of mural painting (late 18th century, restored 1971-74), Wat Phra Si Ratana Satsadaram (Wat Phra Kaeo) temple
Bangkok, Thailand