

Commercial Buildings and their Relationship with the Economic Situation during a Period of Transition towards Capitalism: Site Study of Historical Commercial area in Thapae, Chiang Mai, THAILAND

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Abstract—Commercial architecture is created to support trading demand. Furthermore, the pattern of consumer behaviour is affected by the economic situation in each period. During the transition towards capitalism, the idea of commercialism is influential in the formation of new commercial buildings. This study aims to discover the relationship between commercial architecture and the economic situation in the historical commercial area of Chiang Mai, Thailand in order to comprehend the cause of formation and factors affecting the transformation of commercial buildings.

Keywords: commercial architecture, capitalism

1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture supports the role of city and land utilization. The creation of commercial architecture aims to support demand and shopping styles and is created in accordance with the economic system and state of society. In the case of Chiang Mai, during a period of economic subsistence, the commercial buildings were not specifically planned but appeared distinctively after modernization due to the transition towards capitalism.

Before production began fully in Chiang Mai, the growth of trade under feudalism was confined only to the aristocracy, and therefore, the majority of inhabitants could not take advantage of the commercial spaces defining capitalism. The permanent selling space in Chiang Mai was created originally by Chinese merchants using the trade shipping route and settling down on the east side of the Ping River. This area was convenient for transportation and trade, and affected the commercial area in Charoenraj Road. This area evolved accordingly, as shown by the historical evidence.

Thapae Road is a prominent commercial area in Chiang Mai and has long played a role in the city's history. Linking the eastern wall of the old city to the main port on the Ping River, the area brought about bartering. In addition, Thapae was ideally situated to become Chiang Mai's commercial hub and much evidence of its history can still be seen through the old architecture along the street.

Commercial architecture is related to consumer behavior which depends on the economic system moving from subsistence to capitalism. The idea of commercial spaces became apparent after capitalism but because of feudalism, commercial buildings evolved gradually in accordance with economic and political factors. Due to the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the development of commercial buildings gradually depended on social factors such as the political situation. However, after period of capitalism, many kinds of commercial buildings materialized.

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between commercial buildings and social factors, and clarify the reason why old style buildings were transformed and adapted by categorizing their recent functions, investigating the historical data, date of construction, and historic comparison in accordance with social and economic conditions.

2. METHOD

2.1 Historical data including papers, old Chiang Mai city maps, and historical photographs were collected in order to provide information about the history of Chiang Mai, political issues, and economic system to be used as a basis for urban and architectural data.

2.2 A survey of the commercial buildings in the study area was undertaken. The base map for the survey is a current map to provide collective dates, land use, and proprietary rights of land and commercial buildings.

2.3 Analysis of the relative spatial commercial architecture was carried out, to define the characteristics of trading from subsistence to capitalism.

3. PERIOD OF ECONOMIC HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANT IN CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

In order to discover the relationship between commercial buildings and social factors, it is necessary to use historical data as an economic reference to concentrate on the significant occurrences in Chiang Mai. Trade in subsistence economies (1782–1833) under feudalism is related only to the King and aristocracy, who have power and proprietary rights. The state of society continues in the feudal system and therefore, economic benefit is restricted to the elite. In a self-sufficient society, the idea of trading did not arise and had no effect on the formation of commercial buildings. Since the beginning of capitalism (1884–1921), the Western has been the key factor [1,4]. Even though commercial buildings had previously appeared under the feudalism system, servants and slaves were not prevalent in commercialism which was confined to working class and nobility only. During this period, conservatism was demolished because of Western ideas. In addition, the establishment of the Siam National State was centralized to the Absolute Monarchy and established a new bureaucracy creating the middle class in Chiang Mai. [2-3], The Chiang Mai Railway began construction due to a change of regime to democracy (1921–1933). This period is significant in the development of transportation for Chiang Mai. [3] Products and materials from Bangkok were able to be conveniently transported to Chiang Mai. Construction technology materials were transferred to Chiang Mai. The characteristics of the modern style started to appear. Chinese immigrants increasingly came to the commercial area. A new commercial hub was formed near the railway station (Charoenprated Road) and reparation of the Nawarat bridge connecting the new commercial area (Charoenprated Road) to


the old (Thapae Road). After the change to democracy prior to the Economic Development Plan (1933–1960). The expansion in commercialism after the Indochina war developed gradually. Chinese merchants were on top of commercialism following democracy, and the Thai government established an official base in Chiang Mai since it is the center of Northern Thailand. The government employees became the elite in Chiang Mai. [3] From 1938–1944 the nationalism policy did not affect Chinese merchants in the long term. The period from 1960 following the Economic Development Plan gave precedence to the economic infrastructure, especially with the construction of roads to connect the city and the use of cars as the main form transportation. The Economic Development Plan affected the expansion of Chiang Mai city on the west side and included the establishment of Chiang Mai University. From 1967–1971 the Second Economic Development Plan emphasized tourism promotion.

4. CHARACTERISTIC OF COMMERCIAL BUILDING IN THE STUDY AREA, THAPAE ROAD, CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

The study area is concentrated around the historical commercial area of Chiang Mai (Thapae Road), which connects to Waroros market on Wichayanon Road. The study area (Thapae Road) is a prominent historical commercial hub in Chiang Mai. The buildings concentrated along the street can be categorized into seven types: wooden house, shophouse, market space, convenience store, bank, hotel and etc. The buildings' original functions were used to evaluate and determine the category for comparison with the current economic situation in each period.

As shown in Table 1, buildings were categorized into six types using current building characteristics. A representative sample of 27 was taken from 88 buildings to access the historical data: shops before the modern period, 8 from 15 (53.3%); shophouses from the modern period, 14 from 54 (25.9%); convenience stores, one building in the study area, two banks from 9 (22%), two hotels from 4 (50%) and etc. are not concentrate.

Table 1: Categorization of buildings in Thapae Road and period of formation.



1870	1900	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
				1914 storage				1980-2000 rented for shop			Abandoned	N08
				1930 Dwelling + Shop 1st FL								N12
												N18
												N19
												S02
												S04
												S12
												S20
												N04
												N05
												N06
												N07
												N09
												N10
												N11
												N14
												N15
												N16
												N27
												N28
												N35
												S21
												S08
												N13
												N38
												N39
												N17
												S30

4.1 Shop prior to modern period. These buildings were created during 1900–1930. Three were originally shops, four were created for residential functions, and one for the storage of products for sale at Waroros market. The oldest building is N18, and presumably created before 1899. The building is a double-floor wooden house, characteristically similar to the decorative buildings in Myanmar, Western and Sino-Portuguese. The door, door frame, and window frame are wooden.



Fig. 2: Characteristics of shops prior to modern style: N08, N12, N18, N19, S02, S04, S12, S20 (photo taken by the author).

4.2 Shophouse in modern period. These buildings were constructed during the period 1930–1980. The historical photograph shows that wooden shophouses existed on Thapae Road before the modern style era. The oldest building is N05, created in 1921 and the first of concrete construction in Chiang Mai, in the period before modern Thai style, where the space was divided into five units for rent and business activities. In addition, N04 was created ten years later by the same owner for living accommodation. The majority of buildings are modern Thai style, and the main characteristics are vertical and horizontal eaves, with spaces divided into units for rent.



Fig. 3: Characteristics of shophouses in after modern period: N04, N05, N06, N07, N09, N10, N11, N14, N15, N16, N27, N28, N35, S21 (photo taken by the author).

4.3 convenient store. The first modern convenience store in Chiang Mai was created in 1957 and called “Tantrapan Thapae” (S08). Before the creation of this building, there was no public open space for trade or entertainment. The first public building for trade was created in 1927 (S04) because other buildings are joint spaces for living and trading.



Fig. 4: Characteristics of convenience store: S08, N13 (phototaken by the author).

4.4 Bank. In Thapae Road, banks were constructed in 1963. Before the creation of banks, this area contained wooden houses. The owner of N38 sold it to a Thai politician (Mom

Rajawongse Kukrit Pramoj) for construction of the BBC Bank which was then sold to the Tanachat Bank, where it still stands. N39 was sold in 1963 to Krung Thai Bank.



Fig. 5: Characteristic of banks: N38, N39 (photo taken by the author).

4.5 Hotel. The representative samples in the study area were renovated from commercial spaces and shophouses. For example, N17 was originally created between 1980–1990 as a shop, S30 was renovated and two units of shophouses were converted into a hotel in 2013. The characteristics of S30, a shophouse in the modern Thai style, show separate units for rent and business. Two units of the building were renovated to provide a hotel lobby and reception.



Fig. 6: Characteristic of hotels: S30, N17 (photo taken by the author).

5. CONCLUSION

The historic architecture of Chiang Mai is generally difficult to study since the majority of houses and shops are less than a hundred years old. From historical data, wooden shophouses were found in Thapae Road, but the majority of them were recreated into new shophouses after the establishment of the railway station during the period from 1950–1980. The main characteristics of the commercial buildings in Thapae Road can be categorized into two main styles: before and after the introduction of the modern period. However, the majority were created during 1960–1980.

Table 2: A comparison between commercial buildings and the economic situation

	1870	1900	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
Commercial building		Shop before Modern style			Shophouse						Re-created to Hotel		
Economic situation	1782 - 1803 Self-Sufficient (feudalism)	1804 - 1911 Beginning of Capitalism / Feudalism	1921 - 1931 Production for commercial	1932 - 1940 Commercial Economy after war?					1980 - Economic Development Plan 1 - 11				
		1884 Chiang Mai became to Siam National State (Thailand)	1921 1st Railway Bangkok to Chiang Mai	1932 Absolute Monarchy to Democracy			1959 - 1961 Tourism Promotion 1961 Economic Development Plan	1970 External immigration from Indochina wars			1997 Constitution 1997		

5.1 Commercial building prior to modern style period (1900-1930)

For buildings created in the transition period of pre-capitalism, the idea of commercialism had not been clarified. In addition, feudalism still persisted in society and the cause of commercialism was not calcified. The representative buildings were originally created to support other functions, but adapted for trade later. The most ancient of these are wooden houses, which adapted their spaces for trading in the area connecting to the street. The majority of buildings appeared at the end of the period during 1927–1934. The train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai is the main cause of new types of buildings being created specifically for commercial purposes, such as the modern shophouse. S04 is an interesting example of the first building with concrete and wood construction and supports the main objective of commercialism. This is the first public commercial space for shopping. It is also a significant historical building to represent economic growth in this area, and provides an accurate image of the commercial area during the economic period after the formation of the railway station in Chiang Mai. The role of Thapae Road from 1900–1930 remained an important commercial area in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

5.2 Commercial buildings after the modern period (1930 - 1980)

Commercial buildings were created following the start of construction on the railway in Chiang Mai and the beginning of democracy. The idea of democracy in Thailand is modernism concerning equality, and buildings were less decorative and used concrete technology for construction as is apparent in public buildings, dwellings, and shophouses. The first concrete building was created in 1921 (N5), the same period during which Chiang Mai railway station was established and the transition period of pre-capitalism. Such buildings were representative of the wealthiness of their owners (Chinese merchants). N5 is not in the modern style. The majority of shophouses were created between 1960–1980, a period of transition into democracy, and in line with the Economic Development Plan. The characteristics of shophouses during this period were “modern Thai style” and were influenced by shophouses in Bangkok. Building

technology materials were moved from Bangkok to Chiang Mai by train. The majority of modern style shophouses are located in old commercial areas of Chiang Mai, such as Thapae Road, Changmoi Road, and Charoenprated Road, where the new commercial hub was formed after the construction of the railway.

As indicated by the survey study and interviews, most of the wooden houses were destroyed and recreated into modern shophouses because their structures collapsed, usually as a result of termites or fire. These events occurred at the same time as the introduction of concrete construction, resulting in the buildings being transformed into modern style shophouses. During this period, many shophouses were created and can still be seen through the modern style shophouses along Thapae Road. Therefore, from 1930–1980, Thapae Road was still an important commercial area in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

5.3 Commercial building after 1980

Accessibility to shop and consumer behavior is related to this period, since almost everyone walks or cycles, and shophouses located along the street are appropriated according to inhabitant behavior. In the period following the introduction of the Economic Development Plan the desire to develop transportation by constructing road links to all cities affected the formation of new communities, and shophouses were created along new streets and commercial areas were expanded. With the development of roads, cars became the main form of transportation, and accessibility, inhabitant behavior, and life styles changed accordingly. Shophouse types did not respond in accordance with consumer behavior. The old commercial area of Thapae Road was flat and therefore some buildings had to be transformed for tourist accessibility as illustrated by hotels in the tourist promotion “Amazing Thailand” in 1998.

Thapae Road became a lifeless area as a consequence of road development, city expansion, and changes in consumer behavior. However, it has since been adapted to support tourism due to its close proximity to various tourist attractions. Since 2000, shophouses have been converted or rebuilt into hotels.

Currently, most shophouses and buildings in Thapae have been abandoned and not used efficiently. Shophouses were ideally accessible to those on foot, but consumer behavior has changed with department stores now supporting modern lifestyles and the easy availability of personal transport.

Modern shophouses are representative of the vigorous commercial area in 1980, but have recently become abandoned and not used efficiently. For continued study, the spatiality of shophouses and the role of Thapae Road could be developed.

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