

The identity of Modern Architectural Patterns in Songkhla Old Town: Documentation and Identity

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Abstract

Thailand's conservation practices are based under the patronage system including laws and regulations. Those practices are applied to be conservation practice in Thailand for a long period of time. At present, modern architecture buildings in the old town area are affected from the deterioration circumstance and some of them are adapted into the new functions. The main objective of this research was to manage the heritage list and identify the significant values of the modern architecture in Songkhla Old Town. The framework also included data collecting from documents and related maps, site surveying and photo collection together with qualitative in-depth interview. The result of this research also works as the database in operating and managing the appropriate conservation plan for Songkhla Old Town.

Key words: Modern architecture, Historic buildings, Urban conservation, Conservation Guidelines,

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Introduction

In general, the changes in architectural patterns depend on specific contexts and other complicated factors that alter according to goals, objectives, conditions and limitations through time (Horayangkura, 2015). Economic, social, cultural and technology advancements are main factors that influence on architectural patterns (Horayangkura, 2012). The loss in high significant value buildings after World War I had encouraged the idea of preventing and conserving cultural heritage (Neducin, 2009). In addition, international charters had determined concept and conservation principles in order to protect and preserve original fabrics.

In the 20th century, there have been changes in architectural patterns. They were resulted from the evolution of technology and engineering after the industrial revolution in the 18th century (Charoenphak, 1999). Although people acknowledged more about the importance of modern architecture, they were still lack of knowledge and appropriate conservation practices (The Getty Conservation Institute, 2015). For this reason, the International Working Party for DOCOMOMO International was established in 1988. Its main objectives are to prepare documents and exchange

appropriate conservation practices in modern architecture. In Thailand, Fine Arts Department (FAD) is responsible for protecting and conserving cultural heritage. The department also legislate conservation laws and regulations. Moreover, registering those cultural heritages as national historic sites is one of the conservation practices. On the contrary, modern architecture does not seem to get much attention and appropriate conservation practices. Therefore, modern architecture is in critical situation. There is a high risk and chance of being demolished in the future (Abhichartvorapan and Watanabe, 2015). According to the current and future situation of modern architecture in Songkhla Old Town, they are affected from being deserted and deteriorated. Some buildings are applied to be compatible with use of a building.

The objective of this paper was to access the evaluation and documentation of the modern architectural buildings in Songkhla Old Town. The fundamental process of planning and conservation guidelines that are suitable for Songkhla Old Town were also applied. The guidelines could be appropriate for the town's contexts in both the present and future.

Research methodology

The study of Songkhla Old Town Conservation Planning was investigated. Most collected data in the paper came from field surveys. The primary source of data gathered by the in-depth interview with local people in the community. The secondary data in collected from records, reports, office maps, photographs, websites and other publications.

Context of the Study

Songkhla Settlements

The name “Songkhla” first appeared in the records of the Arab sea merchants during 1450 – 1550. At that period of time, the town was called as “Singgor” or “Singgora” (Jantharat and Songmuang, 1991). The first settlement of Songkhla was at “Hua Kao Dang”. The first governor of Songkhla Hua Kao Dang was Dato Mogol. The Arab leader had initiated an international free trade with Western and Asian merchants. Because of this initiation, Songkhla Hua Kao Dang became a well – known trading seaport (Benjapalangkul,

2001). In 1680, Songkhla Hua Kao Dang was defeated to Ayutthaya troop in the reign of King Narai the Great. The once prosperous town finally came to an end. The left rest of townspeople had moved and resettled at “Tha Lam Son”. Later on, a Chinese merchant named “Yiang Sae Hao” was appointed as Luang Intarasombat by King Thonburi. Since then, Chinese people played more significant role in governing the town. He was also the ancestor of Na Songkhla family (Jantharat and Songmuang, 1991). With some geographic constraints, namely the lack of fresh water and limited plain space for expansion, the community had no choice, it was thus moved to “Ban Bor Yang” or the current settlement in 1832.

Songkhla Bor Yang used to be a prosperous port town. It was also the governing center of the South during the reign of King Rama V. However, Songkhla was downgraded to be one of the provinces in Thailand in 1932. At present, the economic center has been moved to Hat Yai instead, since the city serves as the regional transportation center.

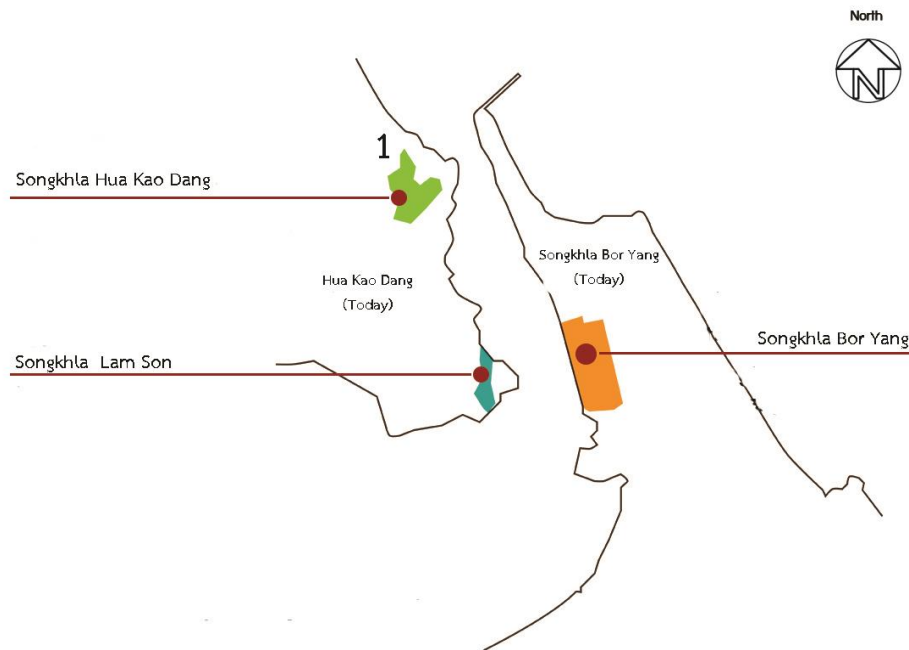


Figure 1 Map of Songkhla settlement location

Source. Suriyan Kamjang

The significance value of Songkhla Bor Yang was not only presented through its history of being an international trading port town but it also demonstrated as a diverse community with the multi-cultural social structure. The town composes of three main ethnic groups; Buddhist Thais, Chinese, and Muslim.

Songkhla history has been developed continually. Its variety of cultural heritage still remains and is inherited from

generation to generation. The existing intangible heritage in the old town consists of city walls, forts, palaces, temples, pagodas, shrines, mosques, and various architectural patterns in the residential area. The architectural patterns of the old town also reflect the town's development and influences. There are four main architectural patterns in Songkhla Old Town: traditional Chinese, Sino-European, contemporary and modern styles.



Figure 2 Cultural heritage buildings

Source. Nattaneeporn Noisangiam

The Understanding of Modern Architecture in Songkhla Old Town

Most academics believe that the foundation of modern architecture came with the advancement of technology and engineering in the late 18th century after the Industrial Revolution. Steel, mirror and concrete were applied as main materials of a building (Pimonsathean, 2008). In Thailand, the changes of architectural patterns were mainly related to social, economic, and cultural structures during the reign of King Rama IV – King Rama V. Both designs and building techniques were passed to Thai building contractors from Western architects (Horayangkura, 2015). After Siamese Revolution of 1932, Thai architectural patterns have been changed

to modern Western architecture patterns. It was because some of Thai students had completed their study from Europe and brought some of the knowledge back as well. Somehow, Western – Thai buildings were applied to be concordance with Thailand's contexts (ASA, 1973).

In terms of architectural patterns of Songkhla Old Town, due to immigration of Chinese people as well as the trading relationships with middlemen who sold their products together with packages and shipped them to customers in Penang, Malaysia and neighboring countries (Satayasanhasakul, 2001), this matter affected the mixture of Thai traditional and Chinese architectural patterns leading to

the specific traditional Chinese architecture patterns in Songkhla Old Town. When Songkhla people contacted other foreigners for trading, it resulted in the mixture of Western and Chinese architectural patterns called Sino-European and Western architecture pattern, respectively.

In the other word, the relationships through trading were the main factors influencing on selection of locations along streets in order to be convenient for logistics in the area of Nakorn Nok and Nakorn Nai Roads because logistics for that period of time was mainly by shipping. Therefore, it can be easily seen that modern architectural patterns majorly appear on both roads nowadays.

Furthermore, architectural patterns were adapted to build town houses and shop houses in order to relevant to the environment through specific construction techniques for this area. Hence, the architectural patterns for construction was changed from wooden house and half-wooden-half-concrete houses to simple concrete houses with modern architectural patterns. Construction materials such as cement, colors for house painting, and zinc

were imported from Penang, Malaysia (Satayasanhasakul, 2001).

It can be concluded that there are two factors impacting on the changes of architectural patterns in Songkhla Old Town from the traditional Chinese to modern styles. The first is the internal factors in the area, namely way of life, environment, culture, way of living, and races. The second is the external factors, i.e. culture and modern technology which were brought to the community to change their way of life and environment. Therefore, people in the community had to adjust themselves in order to cope with trends of these changes.

Inventory of Modern Architecture Heritage in Songkhla Old Town

Modern architecture in Songkhla Old Town can be the solid evidence telling-stories and development of town's economy as a significant port town. At the same time, particular architectural pattern also presents town's particular identity and aesthetic.

It was found on the surveys that the most modern architectural buildings were located on Nakorn Nai Road, in total of 32

buildings, followed by 22 buildings on Nakorn Nok Road and 21 buildings on Nang Ngam Road. These modern architectural buildings aged during 1938 – 1967.

Similarly to buildings in Songkhla Old Town area, modern architectural buildings including single column buildings and 1-3 column shop buildings were mostly simple and symmetrical with 2-3 stories. The first story was beneficial for trade. The middle of the first-story area was a spacious hall. There was a small pool in the middle of some buildings for ventilation. The second floor was used for accommodation. For three-story buildings, the second story was for product storage, and the third story was

for accommodation. In terms of steel-reinforced concrete building structure, concrete tiles were also used for the first story, but clay tiles were applied for some buildings. In addition, hard wood flooring was employed for the second and third floors. Hard wood, steel, and mirrors were used for doors and windows. Concrete was used for roofs on the roof-deck floor. Buildings were also decorated with geometric stuccos. The front of most buildings were symbolled with the year of construction on a concrete wall, which was considered as the identity of modern architectural buildings in Songkhla Old Town.



Figure 3 Location map of modern architectural style

Source. Nattaneeporn Noisangiam

Table 1 Modern architectural style in Songkhla old town

		Description
Modern architectural typology	Nakorn Nok road	●Cultural value - The modern structure - Evidence of trading relationships ●Physical appearance - Design Symmetry - 2-3 story buildings - 1st floor business - 2nd floor residential - Simple façade - Less decorative with Geometrical pattern or number of established building
	Nakorn Nai road	●Building material - Concrete structure - Glass and steel - 1st floor top on tile or

	Nang Ngam road		concrete - 2nd floor top on tile or concrete or hard wood - Concrete roof structure
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Conservation issue

In Thailand, the importance of significant cultural heritage has been highlighted for ages. Temples, royal palaces and important government buildings are registered as monuments and stayed under the responsibility of Fine Arts Department (FAD). The department manages national heritage under the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums of 1961 (Pimonsathean, 2011). Moreover, it also works with national conservation laws and regulations by considering heritage’s aesthetics, archeology, history, technology, education and society (Pimonsathean, 2008).

In 1988, DOCOMOMO International organization for the modern architecture was established in order to do the documentation about high significant

buildings as well as conserve them. Thailand is one of intergovernmental organizations of seven nation members. Also, Thailand became a member of Asian DOCOMOMO’s member in 2014.

However, there are still some of the differences from FAD’s working process. Historic sites in the consideration of FAD must be older than 75 years (Abhichartvorapan and Watanabe, 2015), while DOCOMOMO Thailand defines modern architecture of buildings that was constructed during 1909 – 1979. Therefore, this conflict on the definition of cultural heritage between organizations is one of the limitations in registering modern architecture as historic sites.

Songkhla Old Town was nominated to be a Class A old town in Thailand in 2005. Therefore, it must be conserved and

developed appropriately. Later in 2010, Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning had declared Songkhla old town zoning. In 2017, there were local laws and regulations in the old town area. The municipal law would rather focus on restrictions of the maximum height of structure than preparing design guidelines for new buildings in the old town area (ONEP, 2011). Neither advance protection nor conservation was stated in the municipal law.

At present, modern architectural pattern in Songkhla Old Town tends to be

damaged and adapted. Normally, the adaptations were applied in wish to be compatible with current use of the buildings. Some buildings in the old town had been changed their use into warehouses and birdhouses (swallow). At the same time, some buildings were left behind that it causes building elements and structural damage. According to the stated problems, it can lead to the search of appropriate architectural heritage protection and conservation guidelines in the future

Table 2 Conservation issues

	 	
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- Lack of design guideline	- Miss used (Bird nest)	- Revival to new function

Conclusion

In short, modern architectural patterns in Songkhla old town were influenced from international trade with people in Penang, Malaysia and Singapore. Because of the influences, the architectural patterns in Songkhla old town seems to be different from the original ones. A new form of architectural patterns can be found on Nakorn Nok, Nakorn Nai and Nang-Ngam roads.

Obstacles towards the conservation of architectural heritage in Songkhla old town come from different ages of historic sites defined by FAD and DOCOMOMO Thailand. Although local municipality had legislated local regulation, it restricted only the maximum height of structures. Furthermore, it still lacks of design guidelines towards new architectural patterns that is appropriate and

concordance with surrounded environment of Songkhla Old Town.

Lastly, there is a high risk of modern architectural patterns in Songkhla Old Town to be devalued or demolished. Some stakeholders are afraid that new buildings may be eventually replaced. It is also believed that Songkhla Old Town tentative list and the assessment of architectural significant values will be the first step in managing an appropriate conservation pattern under the context of Songkhla Old Town in the future.

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