

Adaptations of Colonial Buildings to Modern Contexts in the Seaport Areas of Southern Thailand

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Abstract

This article is a study of the adaptation of colonial buildings in the modern context, located near the old seaports, in the Eastern and the Western coasts of Thailand's southern peninsula. They were once multicultural territories, with people from various cultures, ethnicities, and religions. Culture of these regions and their architecture have been inspired by many influences, especially Chino-European architecture. These seaport areas still conserve the historical architecture influenced by the culture and architecture style named Peranakan, based on the Southern part of Thailand. However, regardless of the times, these historical structures are still in use flawlessly.

The study employs a qualitative research method: case studies in the seaport areas in the southern parts of Thailand. It uses a field survey along with data gathering from related documents.

The paper concludes that economic factors, at the time when cultural tourism was popular, were the major causes of adaptation of colonial buildings. The purpose of adaptation is to attract the newer generation of tourists. Therefore, the buildings have been repaired, renovated, expanded and restored in order to revitalize the cities to bring them back to life away from economic stagnation. In fact, these buildings have been eventually put into use again. This is the adaptation to the modern context to support tourism in a creative manner. At a time when cultural heritage elements were the selling points, these colonial buildings have been modified into trendy boutique hotels, cafés, restaurants, craft studios, museums, art galleries, cultural spaces, and event spaces, which promote the uniqueness of these classical buildings.

Keywords: Colonial Buildings, Adaptations, Seaport Areas, Southern Thailand.

Introduction

Thailand has two seaport areas. The one on the West side is called the Andaman coast, while the one on the East side is known as the Gulf of Thailand coast. The most popular pattern of the structures often built on the seaports belong to the "shophouse" style. Shophouse buildings possess unique aesthetics inspired by the culture of the Chinese who settled around the Malay peninsula (Oliver, 1998), resulting in the regional luminary of architecture that evolved over time. Surrounding areas have been influenced and combined into great commercial sites. There was a combination of European and Chinese artistry in many seaport areas in the Southern part of Thailand. Colonial architecture has been built and used in the various provinces, especially the provinces that regularly traded with the foreigners. Areas such as Phuket, Songkhla, Trang, and Nakhon Sri Thammarat, are the most important such trading sites in the southern part of Thailand.

Recently, the classical colonial buildings have been renovated and rehabilitated according to the modern context to be used for various purposes, such as museums, offices, hotels, restaurants, café, cultural spaces and residences. These buildings have been preserved and repaired as major cultural and historical heritage sites. At the same time, they are used as facilities in the modern context. Today, the idea of creative districts has become the most influential factor for the growth and development of the city. The challenge between entrepreneurs in attracting the attention from the creative class has begun to occur (Florida, 2004). New ideas for developing the economy creatively have been proposed in order to increase the overall strength of the economy in particular and creativity in general (Panyapohn, 2022), under the theme “creative places” (Helmy, 2015). These ideas are to improve the urban areas to be more livable and delightful. Currently, many countries are fighting for the exceptional points in terms of economics that stand out, using cultural differences. This goes in the same way as the city development that tends to place importance on cultural heritage, artistry, and local identity more than ever.

This article is a comparative study that compares the adaptation of colonial buildings located in the Eastern and Western coasts, which consist of 4 seaports. Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat are the primary and secondary seaports of the East coast respectively. While Phuket and Trang go exist in the same manner for the East coast. In this context, the research objective is to study and compare the adaptation of colonial buildings in the old town on both sides of the sea and identify the factors affecting the transformation of the old buildings in the modern context.

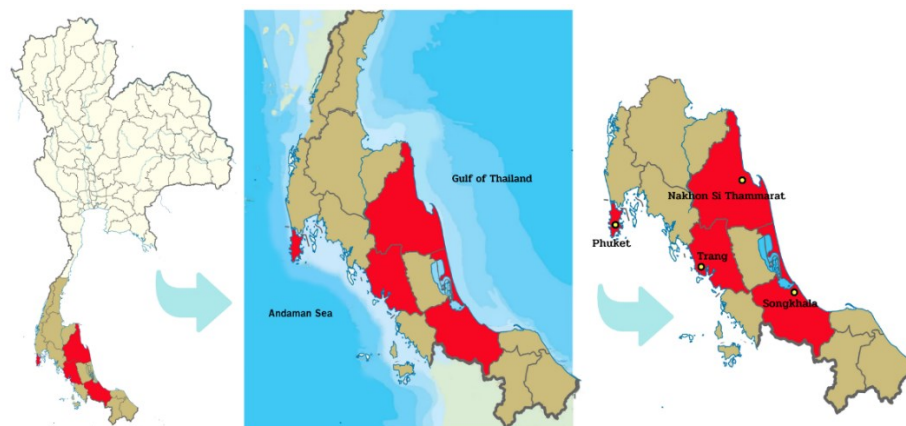


Fig. 1: Phuket Province, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Trang Province, Songkhla Province, Southern Thailand
Source: Author, 2023

Background of the Seaport Territory in the Southern Part of Thailand

Southeast Asia is globally known as a region that is part of the sea lane used for trading from the Coromandel coast of India to the Andaman Sea of Southeast Asia, through the Strait of Malacca in the Malay peninsula (Armani, and Arbi, 2014). This is also known widely as “Indochina”. The community under the local commercial area was founded, highly influenced by the frequent stoppage of the cargo ships due to the monsoon. At first, the locals traded their own products with the goods from the foreign visitors. The referred seaports in the Malay peninsula and the peninsula in the southern part of Thailand includes Malacca, Singapore, Penang, Pattani Songkhla, Kantang, Thalang, and Takua Pa. These seaports have been connected as a community that communicated via the “Peninsula Sea Lane” (Wongpradit, 2022). The seaports in the southern part of Thailand have been developing gradually, along with the growth of maritime trading in the area. One can see prosperity through the style of the tenement buildings that appear in various seaports in Thailand such as Pattani, Songkhla, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Kantang, Phuket, and Takua Pa. The colonial architecture style has

been applied in many important cities, especially the areas where maritime trading has occurred. Phuket, Songkhla, Trang, and Nakhon Sri Thammarat were the areas that regularly made a contacts with the foreign traders from many countries, such as India, China, the Arab countries, Holland, England, France, Java, and Malay. Therefore, they were consequently influenced by many cultures, especially the Chinese and the European cultures.



Fig. 2: Physical environment of the study areas: Phuket[A], Songkhla[B], Trang[C], and Nakhon Sri Thammarat[D].

Source: Author (modified from Google map, 2022)

Trang and Phuket are in the southern part of Thailand, facing the Andaman Sea. They have a major role as a route to the sea via seaports, as well as the border towns. They are significant transportation center points. In the past, they were selected as the administrative centers of the Eastern provinces. The predecessor was Phuket but was demoted due to the riot in 1876. Therefore, Trang was selected as the administrative center instead. Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Songkhla are the provinces that are in the East side of the southern part of Thailand, facing the Gulf of Thailand (Panuwat and Chaturun,2022). They shared in trading with the many foreign countries as well.

In terms of the arrival of the Chinese in the southern part of Thailand, the merchants from China loaded their goods in the junk rigs (vintage Chinese sail rig) and brought them to be sold at the seaports in the Eastern and Western sides of the Malay peninsula. When the Southeastern monsoon hit the area, they would bring the goods brought from the local back to China for sale (Percell, 1965). The first group of Chinese immigrants mostly consisted of labourers and artisans living in the Straits Settlements (Ryan, 1983). With more Chinese merchants settling down, and additional Chinese labor in Penang thanks to the English distribution, the Chinese community had an opportunity to migrate to Singapore and Penang. When Penang and Singapore were crowded with the Chinese until they became the major popularity, Chinese and Penang merchants sailed to make commerce in the Southern part of Thailand. From these maritime contacts with the ships from Penang, Malacca, Singapore, and Macau, Thailand applied the Chinese and Chinese-European architecture styles to the structures and tenement buildings around the seaport communities (Wongpradit, 2018). Hence, the colonial architecture style also known as Chino-European style came into being. The 'Peninsula Maritime Route' has created a connection between the ports. Network Important ports within this trading system are Malacca, Penang, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Singapore on the Malay Peninsula, and Phuket, Takua Pa, Pattani, and Songkhla on Thailand's southern peninsula. In addition to ships and boats (Wheatley, 1961), these routes reflected the development of ports in the upper and lower peninsulas, which were all growing because of trade.

The colonial buildings in the port area are the result of a long period of human settlements and multi-layered trade. Types and styles of residences and businesses combined in this region's distinctive tenement buildings. It is a direct reflection of the natural surroundings and the rich cultural overlay of the area. The built environment of the Southeast Asian peninsula therefore comprises a unique cultural landscape arising from the complexity of development and the dominant layers of social, cultural and economic influence. The local environmental characteristics gradually declined and were replaced by a phenomenon known as urbanization. Therefore, it falls under the definition of historic urban landscape. (Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, 2018)

Theoretical Context

Adaptive Reuse of the Colonial Buildings

Colonial buildings are the cultural heritage that remain in Southeast Asia. Due to the growth of the town development, these colonial buildings were adapted, while some of them were left and abandoned. Some of them were sold to be used for commercial purposes. However, the main priority of these buildings is to keep and preserve the beautiful patterns of original architecture under modern renovations, rebuilding, rehabilitation, and modifying (Sengupta, 2017).

Nowadays, the buildings that are the heritage from the colonial era, are modified to suit today's functions. Thus, the buildings are being reconstructed and modified corresponding to the current trends of the society. Building preservation and rehabilitation is the method to improve the physical appearance. They are expected to revitalize the city that was economically somber, and to be made refreshing and alive again (Yongtanit, 2013). They involve the process of repairing, modifying, and expanding, in order to make them functional again (Grimmer, 2017). Even though the external appearance remains the same, the functional quality has been improved to correspond to the change of time, while the inner functions have been redesigned to suit the customers in the modern context (Fajarwati, 2019).

Colonial-themed buildings reflect the prosperity of the past and are the cultural heritage of the southern provinces. In the era where heritage is trendy, the surrounding buildings built after have also been inspired by the old-fashioned architecture like colonial architecture to enhance the aesthetics and the identity of the buildings. Many old building functions have been redesigned to serve new roles such as hotels, cafés, restaurants, museums, and art galleries.

Such action is known as Adaptive Reuse. Basically, these buildings are remodeled according to their original purpose, which is mostly cafés & studios (Okky and Agus, 2022). This adaptation is for survival in the society that changes over time by changing the functional ability of the buildings. Additionally, the customers' trend in this era prefers experiencing the past via the atmosphere of historical structures and architecture in the colonial era. These changes have been applied to allow the buildings to survive, regardless of the time period.

Reuse of buildings is an adaptation of the cultural heritage in the present context. It is also an important method to bring historical buildings to life again by changing their purpose (Fahmawee and Omar, 2022). Many colonial buildings have been subsequently adapted for wider purposes. Conserving colonial buildings is significant for maintaining cultural heritage. It also promotes tourism and relates history with the modern world by keeping the buildings in their original state, to express the historical identity.

In many South Asian countries, there have been many renovations of the colonial buildings to be put into use for heritage tourism (Lucia, and Lilianny, 2022). At the same time, they keep maintaining the conditions of the buildings not to deteriorate along with time. They have also revived the tourism industry and economy within the locality using tourism (Maria and Ramos, 2023).

Reuse of colonial buildings in the modern context is filled with historical essence. Each building has its own value and cultural identity from the past to the present through the heirs and the predecessors who used the buildings. Needs of the usage of these buildings are to improve them to be up to date, for the people of the next generation to see and experience these

heritage sites easier. In Indonesia, there have been building rehabilitations by turning the preserved old buildings into museums, public buildings, and coffee shops that serve customers for photographic purposes.

The objective of building redecorations is to bring back the dead city to life (Fajarwati, 2019). According to Günçe and Mısırlısoy (2016), the value of cultural heritage is about reusing the buildings by adapting them for reuse. Cultural heritage is significant for its settings, structural elements, construction technique, materials, and the stories of the buildings underlying the forms of memories of the past. In Malaysia, many colonial buildings suppressed by the city development have evolved along with the modern society. Many old buildings have been replaced by new buildings. There was also a lack of heritage preservation. Hence, the historical value of them have faded away (Muhammad and Sharyzee, 2021).

Adaptation of Heritage Buildings to the Modern Context

Adaptation of heritage buildings to the modern context, and adaptation of existing buildings for new functions is not a new trend: the theoretical approach towards adaptive reuse has been established and theoretically formulated as early as the beginning of the 19th century. Heritage buildings give identity to cities and consequently to communities. Thus, these buildings should be preserved or reused for the present and future generations (Jacobs, 1961). Adaptations for contemporary use have resulted in new forms based on old forms but adapted for contemporary use (Singh and Laraib, 2019). Through 'the process of converting a building to a function which is significantly different from the original function' (Brooker and Stone, 2014), adaptation and restoration appeases the stakeholders (Ramola, 2013). According to the needs of building owners and appropriate renovation projects, adaptive reuse projects should integrate five principles into the design as follows.

- Perform the functions well for which they are redesigned.
- Be long-lasting and adaptable to the new uses.
- Respond well to their surroundings and enhance their context.
- Have a visual coherence and create 'delight' for users and passers-by.
- Be Sustainable.

Hugony and Ramsay (2012) describe "the adaptation of historical buildings for future cultural uses" on the future adaptation trends of historic buildings. Historic buildings can retain their architectural and historical values; the façade cannot be altered. However, the indoor space can be adapted effectively. Many historical buildings will be converted into museums in the future, to maintain the historical value and use for public use as learning and resting places. It considers both existing buildings and newly renovated buildings based on practical and modern usage in conjunction with physical structures (Brooker and Stone, 2014).

Today, there is a growing attention to the adaptive reuse of buildings in general and heritage buildings in particular. There are many buildings which have lost their primary function and which could be adapted to accommodate new functions (Arfa, et al, 2022). At present, conservation and restoration are the backbone of the contemporary adaptation movement (Shabnam, 2019). Future adaptations to "alterations and extensions" incorporating new buildings into heritage buildings will support heritage values and accommodate new functions (Inas, 2018).

In Thailand, the development of creative cities has been pushed for. Therefore, the importance of cultural heritage, art, and architecture has been promoted. In fact, many old buildings have been converted to promote cultural tourism (Panyapohn, 2019). Old buildings in many cities have been adapted accordingly to urban developments (Tat, 2021).

Old building adaptations rely on repairing and changing the buildings under the original framework, to achieve modern utility. Adaptive reuse in the scope of conservation has many variations including preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation. These are the methods to revitalize a building, enhance its strength, and increase the cumulative benefits. It is conservation by improving the building partly to support the modern usage. Building adaptation is done for improving the performance or the usage of the building according to the current context (Tat, 2021). When the buildings are in use for a while, the users would change their

behavior to suit the building. This change occurs because of various causes, including the change of the users, the change in terms of society, business, or tourism (Douglas, 2006). These are the reasons that old buildings need to be improved to suit the modern context.

Research Methodology

This study examined literature such as journals and books to gather historical information, economy, society, settlements, and the patterns of architecture located in the seaport areas, both in the Andaman and the Gulf of Thailand peninsula. It also carried out a field survey, in order to study physical environment of both the architecture itself and the adaptation of the buildings that are noticeable. It involved the following.

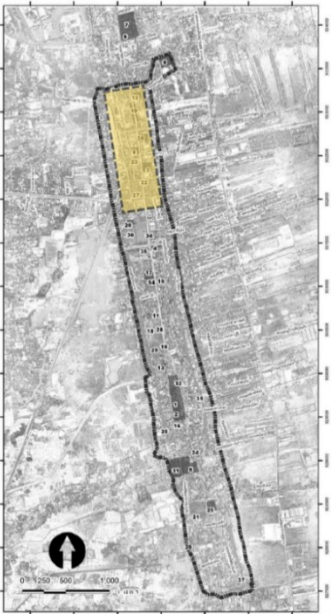

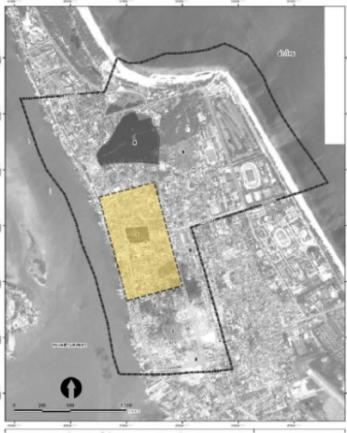
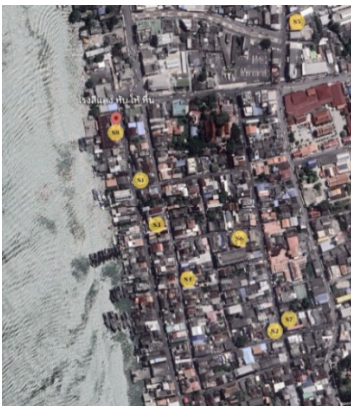
1. Gathering data of colonial buildings via a survey and photographs, to study the components and architecture patterns in each area. Fieldwork began with a survey of the old quarter, observing, and photographing the interior and exterior of the building. Selected buildings that have been reused conspicuously have been chosen as case studies for comparison and data analysis.
2. Comparing the functions of the colonial buildings to see the difference between the original and current functions of the buildings. Comparing case studies began by collecting data that suggests that the colonial buildings completely adapted and have been modified contrasting to its original purpose and functions. It referred to the case studies from the 4 seaports to assess similarities and differences of the adaptations, in order to analyze further to find the cause of adaptation in modern context.
3. Analyzing data of the improvements and functions of the colonial buildings from the past to the present.
4. Summarizing and discussing the adaptation of buildings in the modern context.

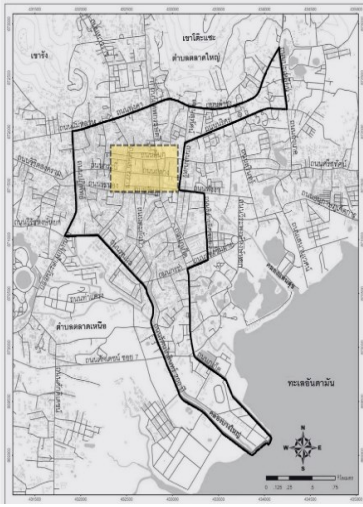
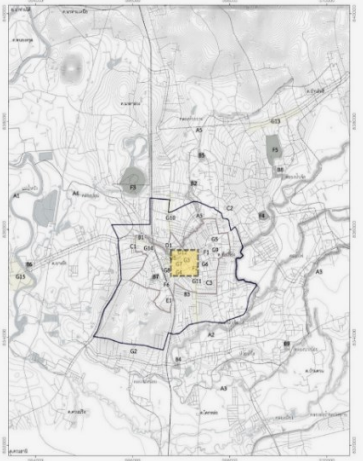

Findings and the Discussion

Change of Use of the Buildings

Current adaptation of cultural heritage buildings pays great attention to the preservation of historic buildings. Changing the use of the building is to make it used again. Many colonial buildings in southern Thailand have been adapted for a variety of uses. In the area of the case study, there are 4 port cities consisting of the eastern seaboard with the main port being Songkhla and the secondary port city being Nakhon Si Thammarat. On the West coast, there is the main port city, which is Phuket and the secondary port city, which is Trang. Walking survey was carried out in Phuket and Songkhla. Being the economic capital of the southern region, there are travelers from many countries. Thus colonial buildings have been modified to meet the needs of the foreign tourists. However, the secondary city Nakhon Si Thammarat and Trang don't have a booming economy like the other main cities. Building changes are therefore still less visible there; most of the buildings are still the original houses of the local people.

Table 1: The layout of the old towns of 4 cities and the locations of the case study buildings.
Source: Field Survey Map From Office of Natural Resource and Environmental Policy and Planning, Thailand

Study area boundary of 4 cities.			
	Field Survey Map	Building location	Case study
Nakhon Si Thammarat Province			<p>Tha Wang , Nakhon Si Thammarat</p> <p>N1 Yongkang N2 Norm space N3 Shun Ngwan Chinese N4 Borvorn house N5 China Commercial Association</p>
Songkhla Province			<p>Oldtown, Songkhla</p> <p>S1 Songkhla Station S2 Khian Charoen S3 Ban Nakhon Nai S4 Hu café hostel S5 Songkhla Tae Raek Antique Hotel S6 Cafe Amazon S7 a.e.y Space S8 Hub Hoe Hin</p>

Phuket Province			<p style="text-align: center;">Oldtown, Phuket</p> <p>P1 I46 Old town P2 Woo gallery P3 Torry's Ice Cream P4 Bookhemian 2521 P5 PARADAI P6 Thaihua Museum P7 Phuket Philatelic Museum P8 A49</p>
Trang Province			<p style="text-align: center;">Kantang, Trang</p> <p>T1 Ling Chen Cafe T2 Kantang Railway Station T3 Keng chio hoi kuan shrine Tubtieng, Trang</p> <p>T4 Asian cafe T5 Rumluk Cafe</p>

Transformations of the Old Buildings in Phuket

Phuket is a main economic province located on the eastern peninsula of Thailand. It is widely known as the land of enriched multicultural elements. There are people of many ethnicities, cultures, religions, languages, and lifestyles. Phuket has embraced various cultures and has been influenced by the Chino-European style in terms of architecture (Wongpradit, 2022). Alterations in terms of economy have allowed the colonial buildings in the area to have a major role again, in terms of renovating for maintaining historical and cultural values.

Case Study 01: Bookhemian 2521

The old building located in Talang St. in the city of Phuket has been renovated by the owner, a Thai novelist. The building has been redesigned to be a library-like facility to provide working space for the tourists to read books and drink coffee in the 1st and the 2nd floors. It is open as a space for art exhibitions and a gallery to display the works of Thai and foreign artists, including watercolor paintings, mixed-media arts, and photography.

Case Study 02: 2rooms Boutique House and Torry's Ice Cream

This is a pastel pink-colored, 2 storied shophouse, in Rommanee alley, Talang St. This twin shophouse was originally an English brochure-making factory named Art and Culture, that published stories about art in Phuket for more than 10 years. The 1st floor has opened as

an ice cream shop named Torry's Ice Cream premium homemade ice cream shop blended with local sweets. There is a small hostel named 2rooms Boutique House on the 2nd floor.

Case Study 03:Phuket Philatelic Museum

The old post office building has one floor white Hip roof, Chinese and European architecture, and Romanesque-influenced art. This building has been built in 1915 and has been used as the main post office for many years. It used to be a residence of the nobles of Phuket, such as the governor of the western province. Later, this building was used for government functions and as a post and telegraph office. At present, it is adapted to a cultural center that displays art, performance arts, as well as workshops.

Case Study 04:Phuket Governor's Mansion

This is a mustard yellow-colored building with white and green decorations. This building is 119 years old. In the past, it was used as a summer house outside Phuket's downtown for the guests. This majestic colonial building used to be the house for Phuket's Governors. It has been repaired to retain the original appearance as much as possible. Today, the first floor of the manor is used as a culinary school and a Michelin restaurant named "Blue Elephant". The 2nd floor, has been renovated to be a luxury accommodation and gallery. Additionally, the front space of the building can be used as an activity area on important occasions.

Case Study 05:Woo Gallery & Boutique Hotel

This is a shophouse building that once sold and repaired watches, as well as imported merchandise from Penang and other foreign countries. The business continued along with the prosperity of multicultural cities like Phuket until World War II started in 1939. They started to experience hardships in importing goods from Penang, which forced them to go out of business. After WWII, the building was sold to other business operators. Recently, the third generation owner of the building has brought this hotel and turned it into a boutique hotel and a gallery. The original kitchen part of the building has been turned into a 12-room hotel. The old watch shop has been turned into a gallery.

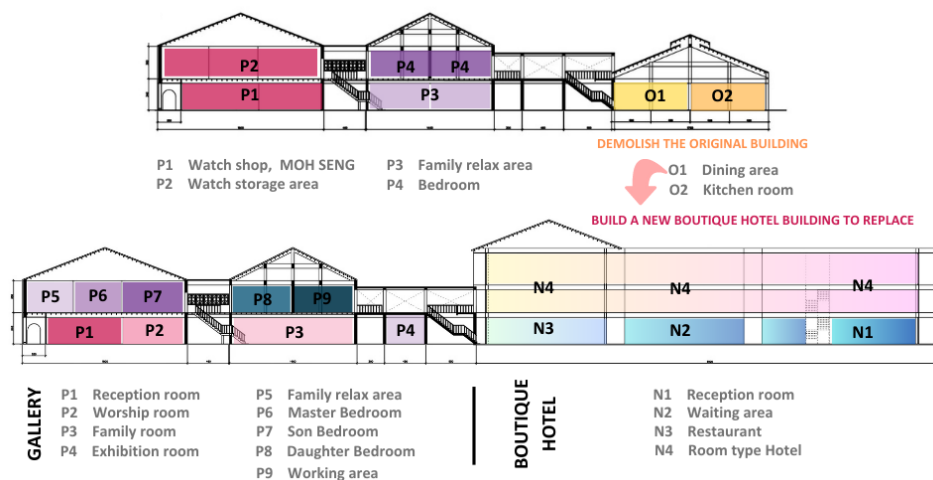


Fig. 3: The adaptation of the Woo Gallery & Boutique Hotel building, Phuket's ancient city.

Source: Author, 2023



Fig. 4: (Upper) MOH SENG & Co. shop before, (Lower) Woo Gallery 7 Boutique Hotel now.
Source: Woo Gallery & Author 2020

Transformations of Old buildings in Songkhla

Songkhla is the economic province located in the western peninsula of Southern Thailand. The old town district, Songkhla has a long history of about 200 years. In the past, these areas were used as the port for trading and transporting the merchandise with foreigners. The countries that used to be in contact with Songkhla are India, China, Arab countries, Netherland, England, France, Java, and Malaysia. Songkhla also embraced culture from many countries and was a land of multi-culture like Phuket. However, Songkhla's influences lean more towards Chinese culture. These architectural structures evolve along with the eras, according to economy and society in each period.

Case Study 01:A.e.y - A worn-out hundred-year-old building.

It used to be the renowned classic restaurant in Songkhla city. It was rehabilitated based on the original structure of the building. It has been turned into a creative space, exhibition space, gallery, and activity area, which allows the artists to create and display their art.

Case Study 02: Café Amazon, old town district branch

It is located in the Kao Hong district. It once was a tenement residence for the old nobles in Songkhla. Once, it has been abandoned. Then, from the influence of the conservative tourism promotion in the old town district, the famous coffee shop brand managed to renovate the building once more, by changing the function of the building to a coffee shop with a conservative building's image. It is also used as an open area for creative activity, such as an art exhibition or event space.

Case Study 03:Hub Ho Hin

The red rice mill near the Songkhla lake is the biggest rice mill in Songkhla. After the World War II, every rice mill was forced to go out of business because there was no rice to be milled and they could not export rice. This building has been turned into a storage for the merchants to store their merchandise before they go sailing. Today, since the old town has started to gain popularity once more, this mill has been turned into an exhibition that displays the history of the Songkhla city, as well as the activity space.



Fig. 5: Change of functions of the rice mill, Hub Ho Hin, to the exhibition center that consists of historical story in today's context.

Source: Author

Case Study 04: Khian Charoen House or the former Fujao tea house

Khian Charoen is the old building located in the corner of the Nang Gnam St. It has been used for around 100 years. Originally, the first floor was used as a morning coffee shop named "Fujao". The shop sold coffee, Chinese steamed dumplings, and steamed stuff bun. It is also the morning meeting point of people in the Bo Yang district. The upper floor has been used as a Tavern for the merchants who were doing business in that area. After the World War II, businesses were somber, many buildings in this area were abandoned, and some were opened for rent. This building has been brought back to life once more due to the promotion of tourism in the old town area. Restoration of the building has kept the original structure of the old building as much as possible, combining with new materials and patterns to enhance the strength. The place has been turned into an exhibition space. The place is also very flexible.

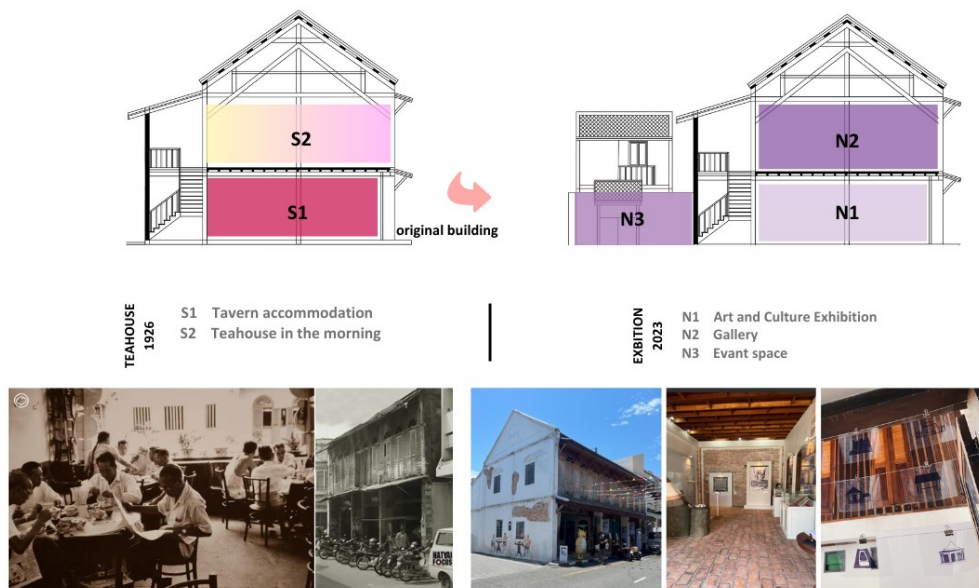


Fig. 6: Change of Khian Charoen House or the former Fujao tea house into the exhibition space and old pictures of Fujao tea house.

Source: Author 2022 and Old pictures in the past Songkhla

Transformations of the Old Buildings in Trang

Trang is located in the western peninsula of Thailand. It is one of the most important seaports in the West side connected to Phuket, Kantang and Tabtiang area. They are the historical districts of Trang which are based on a riverside location. It functions as the connector of the Andaman Sea and the river. It also embraces many cultures as same as Phuket. Colonial architecture is the exceptional style of the seaport.

Case Study 01: Kantang Railways Station

This is the transportation center of the provinces that are located on the Eastern peninsula and other provinces, as well as Bangkok. It has been used for more than 100 years. External appearance of the station is still the same as at the time it was constructed. In the past, it was the gateway for exporting and importing merchandise from foreign countries like Singapore, Malaysia, or Indonesia. Consequently, the trends of transportation and importing/exporting has changed. They have started to do business with Japan instead of European countries. It made train transportation lose its popularity. The main merchandise transportation has been relocated to the Kantang seaport instead. However, the train station has been open for service until now, but there is only one round trip from Kantang to Bangkok. Subsequently, tourism has a major role in the restoration of this classic structure. The station has been renovated into 3 parts consisting of a ticket selling booth, the exhibition space, and the café area which once was used as the cargo storage.



Fig. 7: Transforming Kantang Railways Station into Kantang Train Exhibition and Café.
Source: Author (modified from Construction drawings the State Railway of Thailand, 2023)

Transformations of the Old Buildings in Nakhon Sri Thammat

Nakhon Sri Thammarat is the economic province in the Eastern peninsula of Thailand as Songkhla. Nakhon Sri Thammarat old town is one of the most important seaports in the Malay coast. It is civilized in terms of Buddhism and trading. Tha Wang is the old neighborhood that used to be the port for parking ships. Most of the great junk rigs enter and exit through the Pak Nakhon Bay and are moored at the “Tha Wang port”. Due to the connections with the countries in the Malay peninsula, Nakhon Sri Thammarat had embraced Chinese and Western architecture in the Tha Wang zone, but not as intense as in Songkhla.

Case Study 01: Sun Nguan Building, Tha Wang

This is an old Chinese building built around 1899. In the past, this building used to be a shop and a medical clinic. When the economy stagnated, buildings have been rented out for a variety of businesses, but some of them have been left unused. Currently, it is the venue for the Creative Nakhon Festival: an exhibition by local creators who bring wisdom, techniques, methods, or materials around them to create contemporary works.



Fig. 8: Creative Nakhon Creative Festival in Sun Nguan Building, Tha Wang
Source: Nakhon Creative Festival 2021 form art4d

Case Study 02: Yong Kang Tha Wang

It is a former residence of the Kijwiboon family. The 2-story structure has been built with concrete and bricks around 100 years ago. Its architectural style has been influenced by Chinese-Western artistry. The first floor has been built of bricks to support the weight. The floor of the upper story is built of wood. It has a gable roof. In the past, it has been used as a building for transporting merchandise from the seaport to the city with cow or buffalo-harnessed carts. Later, economy had collapsed and the building has been put out of service and left abandoned. The new owner of the building has renovated the historic building to a café, restaurant, and activity space for Creative Nakhon, the event held under the Creative District Project.

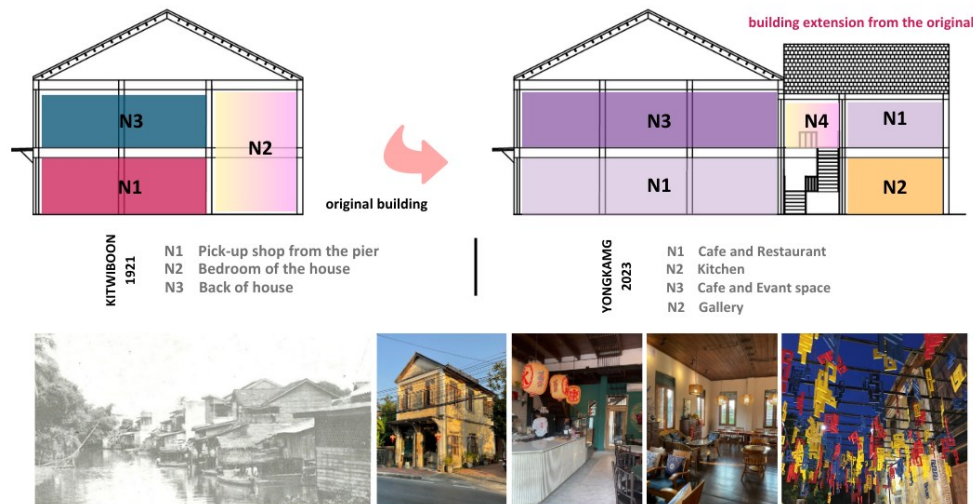


Fig. 9: The transformation of former Kijwiboon residence into Yong Kang café at present.
Source: Author 2023

Today, the ideas of ‘creative district’ have become the main influence for city renovation and development. The challenge in attracting customers to get into cultural tourism is intense (Florida, 2004). Building renovation is the main factor to increase the creative activities around the neighborhood because the creative district will later become the main factor in developing the business district (Panyapohn, 2022). Buildings have been subsequently modified for reuse through preservation and rehabilitation, involving repairing, modifying, and expansion, in order to bring them up to the modern standards in line with the city development plan of creative district tourism. At a time when heritage is the selling point, these colonial buildings are modified according to the contemporary trends.

As can be seen, many of the old town districts in Thailand have started to give precedence to the preservation of old buildings for reviving the old town's spirit through tourism.

At present, appreciation of architectural tourism has increased due to the uniqueness and timeless elements of the structures, especially when they are improved to suit the modern functions. It makes the new generation of tourists want to experience the prosperous historical time. These buildings have been consequently adapted into cafés or restaurants, which are popular due to the relaxing atmosphere they provide. At the same time, people have started to take an interest in art. Hence, art galleries and exhibitions have a major influence on the change of people's interests, due to their increased accessibility. The galleries and art exhibitions have gained popularity once more, as we can see that in many cafés, there is a mix of use with galleries and art exhibitions. Some buildings have been turned completely into museums, exhibitions, or learning centers for the youth. These changes enable the colonial buildings to be adapted.

Comparison of Adaptations of Colonial Buildings to the Modern Context

The change in era influenced by socio-economic factors have affected the colonial buildings to adapt along with the day and age, in order to retain the cultural values. Most of them have been modified for reuse. While the creative district tourism is a major trend in Thailand, these classic buildings have a major influence resulting in a growing number of creative class of tourists, forcing the changes of the functions to be more suitable for the contemporary lifestyles. Following tables display the comparison of the colonial building use in Thailand and the original owners of them.

Table 2: Case studies of buildings in the old town district, Phuket Province, Thailand.

No.	Building	Location	Function (past)	Function (present)
P1	I46 Old town	Old Town, Phuket	Shophouse	traditional dessert / drinks shop / house
P2	Woo gallery	Old Town, Phuket	Watch shop	Gallery/Boutique hotel
P3	Torry's Ice Cream	Old Town, Phuket	publishing house	Café / Boutique hotel
P4	Bookhemian 2521	Old Town, Phuket	Shophouse	Café /Gallery / book store
P5	PARADAI	Old Town, Phuket	Shophouse	Crafted Chocolate / Cafe
P6	Thaihua Museum	Old Town, Phuket	Chinese School	Museum / exhibitions
P7	Phuket Philatelic Museum	Old Town, Phuket	The Old Post Office	Museum/performances and workshops
P8	A49	Old Town, Phuket	house	Office of Architecture

Table 3: Case studies of buildings in the old town district, Songkhla Province, Thailand.

No.	Building	Location	Function (past)	Function (present)
S1	Songkhla Station	Oldtown, Songkhla	medical clinic	Café / art space / workspace
S2	Khian Charoen	Oldtown, Songkhla	Tea shop / tavern	Exhibitions & art space
S3	Ban Nakhon Nai	Oldtown, Songkhla	old house	Museum & art Gallery
S4	Hu café hostel	Oldtown, Songkhla	old house	Café & Boutique Hostel
S5	Songkhla Tae Raek Antique Hotel	Oldtown, Songkhla	Hotel / tavern	Hotel & Gallery
S6	Cafe Amazon	Oldtown, Songkhla	old house	Café & exhibitions / events space
S7	a.e.y Space	Oldtown, Songkhla	old house	Art space / Gallery / exhibitions

No.	Building	Location	Function (past)	Function (present)
S8	Hub Hoe Hin	Oldtown, Songkhla	Rice mill	Pier / Exhibitions / events space

Table 4: Case studies of buildings in the old town district, Trang Province, Thailand.

No.	Building	Location	Function (past)	Function (present)
T1	Ling Chen Cafe	Kantang, Trang	old house	Café & Restaurant
T2	Kantang Railway Station	Kantang, Trang	Railway Station	Café / Gallery / Railway Station
T3	Keng chio hoi kuan shrine	Kantang, Trang	shrine	shrine / Gallery, events space / community center
T4	Asian cafe	Tubtieng, Trang	fabric shop	Café / Apartment
T5	Rumluk Cafe	Tubtieng, Trang	school	Cafe

Table 5: Buildings in the old town district, Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province, Thailand.

No.	Building	Location	Function (past)	Function (present)
N1	Yongkang	Thawang, Nakhon	Pick-up shop from the pier	Café & Restaurant / events space
N2	Norm space	Thawang, Nakhon	old school	Café / Gallery
N3	Shun Ngwan Chinese	Thawang, Nakhon	shop	Exhibition // events space
N4	Borvorn house	Thawang, Nakhon	old house	Museum / events space
N5	China Commercial Association	Thawang, Nakhon	Commercial Association	Furniture shop / events space

Conclusions

Adaptations of colonial buildings in the present has involved preserving the historical structures of the buildings built during the colonial era, for the purpose of reusing in the modern context, while maintaining the cultural and architectural values (Fajarwati, 2019).

The types of adaptations consists of:

1. Adaptation to museums: Many colonial buildings have been turned into museums for displaying cultural heritage and local history.
2. Adaptation to hotels or guesthouses: Colonial buildings and shophouses are converted into boutique hotels, accommodation for tourists (Fahmawee, and Omar, 2022).
3. Adaptations to modern office buildings: Many shophouses have been transformed into modern office buildings.
4. Adaptations to commercial spaces such as retail spaces and other kinds of commercial activities.
5. Adaptations to art exhibitions or creative spaces: The shophouses have been turned into exhibition areas and galleries for the local artists. Due to the structures of some of the building that contain high ceilings and spaces for natural light to come through, they are perfect for displaying art, sculpture, paintings, and other art.
6. Adaptations to cafés or restaurants: Due to the crowded situation of the commercial tourist areas, the local shophouses have often been transformed into coffee shops or restaurants (Okky, and Agus, 2022) which are relaxing to visit. The narrow and long shapes of the buildings and the table arrangements are usually done with small tables in limited spaces, resulting in the relaxing atmosphere while retaining the unique charm of the buildings.

With the current context that tourists are interested in cultural tourism and creative district tourism, old buildings have received new attention. They help promote and revitalize cities with economic stagnation to return to life as before. The colonial buildings in Thailand are being adapted to change the functions inside. Adaptations and changing spaces have the potential for suitable new uses.

Factors that Have Caused the Adaptations of the Buildings

1. Economic and tourism factors leading the policies to promote tourism has recently launched a campaign to stimulate tourism in the hope of stimulating the economy of the main cities and secondary cities that are down in economic terms.
2. Urban renewal by the government and private sector cooperations.
3. Creative district tourism trends are gaining popularity in Thailand. Urban developments have been conceptualized to push for a creative economy to support cultural tourism. The policy is to make a Creative District to attract creative class people and foreign tourists.
4. The return of the 3rd-4th generation heirs. With the sluggish economy, the heirs of the building owners have split up to build new houses and have sent their children to study both in the capital and abroad. These colonial buildings have thus been released and abandoned later. However, with the policy and the trend of cultural tourism, they have returned to be popular, causing the new generation to return to their hometowns to develop the cities jointly. This is an essential factor driving changes by bringing buildings to adapt to support tourism.

The purpose of adaptation has been to attract the newer generation of tourists. Therefore, the buildings have been repaired, renovated, expanded, and restored to revitalize the cities and bring them back to life from economic stagnation. This is an adaptation to the modern context to support tourism creatively.

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