

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of a unique architectural style, together with an ethnic migration following political and economic changes in Northern Thailand in 19th century, opens a new area for study. Understanding where the style came from, how they appear, and what their unique character differences can have far-reaching benefits for the subject group, the researchers and local and national communities. This particular study focuses on the architectural characteristics of Shan monasteries, a relatively new architectural style of 19th century, in Northern Thailand. Specifically, this study will compare two different groups of Shan monasteries built in a same period of time.

1.1 Problem Statement

There were several Shan monasteries built in Northern Thailand during late 19th and early 20th centuries. The evolution of these monasteries was associated with trading and migration effects in Northern Thailand particularly influx Shan migration and foundation of Mae Hong Son city in 1830s and teak trade booming in the middle of the 19th century. The previous studies referred to these monasteries as Shan monasteries or Shan and Pa-O¹ mixed monasteries. On the other hand, they are locally called wat “Tai Yai” or wat “Tai”. The relationship between Shan monasteries from Lampang and Pa-O monasteries from Lower Burma has been proved by comparing roof styles and decorative items (Chaturawong, 2003). Besides, the researcher used a trade route between Mawlamyine² of lower Myanmar and Chiang Mai and Lampang of Northern Thailand which was undertaken by Dr. Richardson, a British military doctor, in 1829 as one of the evidences in tracing lower Burma influence upon Northern Thailand Shan monasteries.

¹ The Pa-O or Taungthu are the second most numerous ethnic group in the Shan State after the Shan themselves. See Richard K.Diran, *The Vanishing Tribes of Burma* (London: Seven Dials, Cassell & Co., 1999), p. 76

² It has been well known as Moulamine in the 19th century

However, there is a missing knowledge of Shan influence upon these monasteries, in a particular way of investigation. There was another link which the research failed to spot is about “the gold and silver road of trade” between Mawlamyine and the Shan States through Chiang Mai by the British government in 1836. This mission was carried out by Captain W.C. McLeod and Dr. D. Richardson. Their route started from Mawlamyine and split into two at Mainglongyi (today Mae Sariang of Northern Thailand). Captain McLeod led a route to Kengtung via Chiang Mai; meanwhile Dr. Richardson reached Innwa³ via Mone (Mongnai) and Nyaung Shwe (Yaungwe): the Southern Shan principle states (Mangrai, 1965). These routes evidenced the connections between Southern Shan State, Northern Thailand and Lower Myanmar.

Moreover, the foundation of Mae Hong Son city in Northern Thailand marked the relationship between Southern Shan State and Northern Thailand since the first line of the Mae Hong Son rulers are the descendents of the ruler of Mauk Mai Town which is located in the Southern Shan State. Among the Shan principal towns along the trade routes and migration routes, Mongnai, Mauk Mai and Nyaung Shwe (Yaungwe) located in the Southern part are mainly resided by Tai Yai race (Conway, 2006).

The previous studies described the Shan monasteries among the Burmese monasteries and Lan Na Thai wats by using the general descriptions of their architectural characteristics. Because of the variations in their appearances, they are always mix-identified and sometimes, misidentified. Their identities varied and mixed according to the ethnic of donors, the ethnic of builders, the communities they exist, the detail decorations, the roof forms, and the spatial planning. To achieve a thorough understanding on the architectural characteristics of Shan monasteries in Northern Thailand, providing only general description is inadequate.

In the field of vernacular architecture, the analysis of building data is vital for explaining culture, society, learning and living pattern. In fact, for one cultures either social custom or belief system, it is mainly based on the activities and functions which can obviously see in the spatial arrangement in architecture (Widodo, 2004).

³ Myanmar capital city in 19th century which was once well known as Ava

Hence, in order to understand the Shan influence in Northern Thailand Shan monasteries, a comparative study particularly in spatial planning with Shan monasteries from Shan State of Myanmar (homeland of Shan people) must be carried out since it is considered to be indispensable.

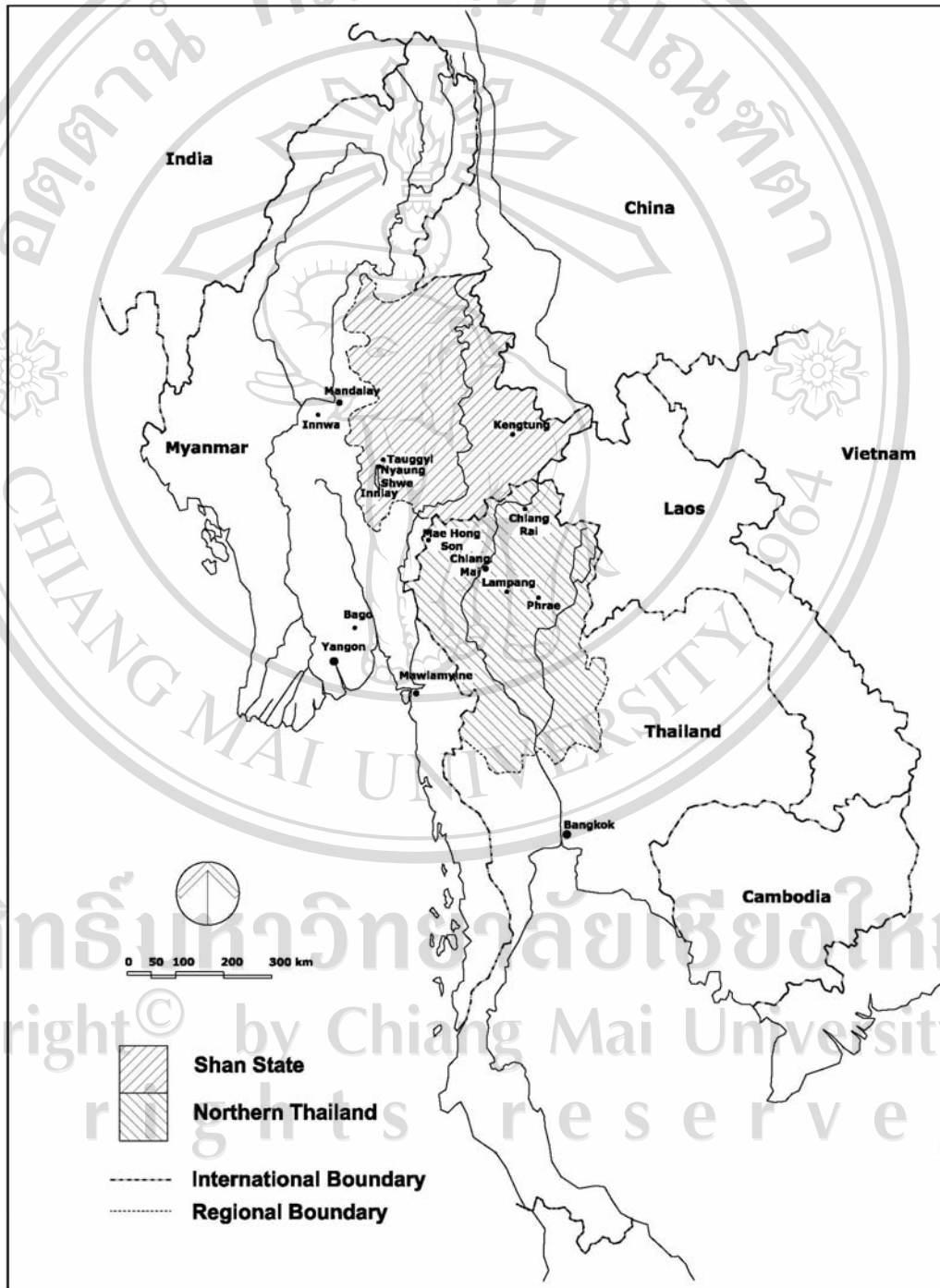


Figure 1.1 Map of Shan State and Northern Thailand



Figure 1.2 19th Century Trade Routes and Shan Migration Route in Shan State and Northern Thailand

1.2 Hypothesis

The hypotheses of the study are:

The architectural characteristics of Shan monasteries in Northern Thailand has transformed and varied from those of Southern Shan State of Myanmar due to trading and migration effects.

The Shan influence in Northern Thailand Shan monasteries is identified by the spatial arrangements of main monastery buildings which have been inherited from Southern Shan State.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the study are

1. To clarify and broaden the existing knowledge on the architectural characteristics of Shan monasteries in Northern Thailand by comparing with those of Southern Shan State, Myanmar
2. To find out the relationship between spatial planning of Shan monasteries in Northern Thailand and those of Southern Shan State of Myanmar by focusing on their transformations and variations due to trading and migration
3. To provide an explicit document and report on Shan monasteries from Northern Thailand and Southern Shan State of Myanmar for further studies and applications

1.4 Scope of Research

A comparative study is carried out between Shan monasteries of Northern Thailand and Southern Shan State Myanmar within the scope which is determined as period, area, samples and focus of study.

The period is limited during the late 19th and the early 20th century, particularly the period between 1830s-1930s since the influx Shan settlement started during 1830s and the trade routes with Myanmar declined during 1930s.

The study area is limited both in Northern Thailand and Southern Shan State Myanmar. In Northern Thailand, the study area will be in Mae Hongson, Khun Yuam, Lampang, Phrae and Chiang Kham where the 19th and 20th century Shan monasteries are predominantly found.

In Southern Shan State Myanmar, the study area will be in Nyaung Shwe Township particularly in Naung Shwe Town and Innlay Lake area where the old Shan monastery buildings are still survived and can be found considerable amount of samples. Moreover, Shan monasteries around Nyaung Shwe Town and Innlay Lake area have some similarities in their architectural characteristics with that of Northern Thailand in general observations.

All samples are the Buddhist monasteries built during late 19th and early 20th century both for Northern Thailand and Southern Shan State having least refurbishments in order to trace their original planning and design. The samples from Northern Thailand are predetermined as Shan monasteries, or mixed Shan-Pa O monasteries, or wat Tai, or wat Tai Yai.

The study is focused on and the spatial planning of main monastery building in particular and the composition of monastery compound and the forms and the detailed decorations in general.

1.5 Organization of Research

This research is organized into seven chapters in which each chapter completes with relevant components in detail.

Chapter one introduced and justified the study in the field of research area by establishing with the research problem followed by the hypotheses. It also mentioned the objectives of the study. To limit the extent of the study, the research is scoped in to sample, period, area and the focus of the study. The organization of the research presents the brief explanations of each chapter. The terms used in this research is explained in advance so as to understand the contents clearly.

Chapter two discussed on the relevant literatures that has been reviewed. They are taken in two parts; background and the approach. The review on the background is mainly focused on the history and of the Shan people and the existing knowledge on the Shan monasteries. The history of the Shan people is reviewed by using their migration to the Shan State and Northern Thailand. For the knowledge on the Shan monasteries, their evolution and their general architectural characteristics are reviewed.

The latter part of this chapter is the review on the research approaches that has been used in the field of vernacular architecture and in the specific researches. They are discussed according to theoretical approach and Methodological approach. Then the appropriate approaches are chosen to implement in this research.

Chapter three announced the methodology used in this research. The principal method of this study is a survey research in which both documentary and field surveys are carried out. Documentary survey is used to obtain the information and background of the samples. The documents include the previous researches, books and journals and related to Shan monasteries both in Southern Shan State and Northern Thailand. The field survey was carried out based on the information from both documents and the field itself. The collected data are organized into appropriate format to be analyzed such as tables and drawings. The analysis method is the comparative analysis method. The architectural characteristics of Shan monasteries in two different major regions have been compared within a specific period of time.

Chapter four presents the detail investigations of the Shan monasteries in Southern Shan State specifically in Nyaung Shwe Township built during 1830s-1930s. The study emphasized on the biography of the monasteries, the site plans, the spatial planning of the monastery building, the roof forms and the detail decorations. The chapter concludes with the architectural characteristics of Southern Shan monasteries.

Chapter five presents the detail investigations of the Shan monasteries in Northern Thailand specifically in Mae Hong Son, Khun Yuam, Lampang, Phrae and Chiang Kham built during 1830s-1930s. The study emphasized on the biography of the monasteries, the site plans, the spatial planning of the monastery building, the roof forms and the detail decorations. The chapter concludes with the architectural characteristics of Northern Thailand Shan monasteries.

Chapter six performs the comparative analysis between the architectural characteristics of Shan monasteries from Southern Shan State and Northern Thailand during 1830s-1930s. The analysis is carried out by looking at the site, the spatial planning, the roof forms and the details. The conclusion comes up with similarities and differences between the samples of two specific regions. It is explained according

to the transformations and variations in their characteristics through different time and region.

Chapter seven provides summary and conclusion of the whole research including limitations which appeared during the study, implications which can be used out of this particular study, and recommendations for the further study based on this research.

1.6 Terms and Definitions

1.6.1 Terms

Since the study is for a same building type in two major different regions, the terms used for the same subject may be varied according to the locality. Hence, terms which are used frequently are defined herein to avoid confusion. Some particular terms are explained in the related part. If there is alternative term exists for a particular item, it will be appeared in the bracket.

Kyaung

“Kyaung” in Myanmar means a monastery or a school and also refers to a monastic compound that contains a single monastery and sometimes includes ordination hall, a pond or a well, and a rest house where lay people can stay and keep precepts during Special religious days. The word “Kyaung” always appears as a suffix in the name of a monastery in Myanmar such as Shwe Kyaung, Pahtama Kyaung, etc.

Wat

The term “Wat” is used in Thai to describe the majority of religious enclosures which has a closest description as a Buddhist monastery although most wats are places of worship and more like temples. However, Wat in Thai generally refer to as a monastic compound containing a stupa, an ordination hall, a Buddha hall, a library and monk residences. The word “Wat” always appears as a prefix in the name of a monastery in Thai such as Wat Sri Rong Muang, Wat Nan Taram, etc.

1.6.2 Years

In this study, the dates may appear in three different categories according to the local usage. However, they are standardized by converting into Gregorian dates for comprehensive comparison.

AD = Christian Era (Gregorian calendar)

BE = Buddhist Era (Thai calendar)

ME = Myanmar Era (Myanmar calendar)

1.6.3 Names

Although the name is more familiar to the foreigners, the name Myanmar will be used throughout this research since it is recognized as its official name.

Likewise, most of the Romanization of geographical names in Myanmar is changed according to their new pronunciation. Their new official names will be used however the old names are expressed in the bracket for their first appearance.