Chiang Mai City Hall: Western or Siamese Architecture in Lanna

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ABSTRACT

During the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) to King Rama VI (1910-1925), Chiang Mai City Halls were developed from local Lanna to Siam-Western style. This study revealed the political reasons that Chiang Mai City Hall (former) was a Western-style building mixed with a local style. At present, this Chiang Mai City Hall is converted into Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Center. The Chiang Mai City Hall was once a large-scale City Hall and ranked the status to be the Monthon Payap (Northern region) City Hall. Therefore, it was one of the significant buildings of a whole Lanna. This research was to raise a question about the style of Chiang Mai City Hall (former) regarding the reasons for its construction of the Western-style building in the center of Chiang Mai City. This research also provided the answers through its comparative studies on the styles of city halls in Thailand from the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) to the end of the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925), including social events and politics in each particular period. It found that Chiang Mai City Hall (former) was constructed in line with the standard patterns of city halls in that period from Bangkok whereas the reasons for such Western-style building stemmed from the popularity of such particular styles since the reign of King Rama V for political reasons. The Western-style building of that city hall was therefore chosen through the reasons and preference of centralized power in Bangkok to be constructed in Chiang Mai. For this reason, to consider the style of this building, Siamese had played an important role to influence Chiang Mai city hall over the Western-Style itself.

Keywords: city hall, Western-style architecture, Lanna architecture, crypto-colonialism, policy
INTRODUCTION

A provincial city hall is the government office in each province. It conveys the meaning of the nation-state, representing the whole of Thailand, with its center of power in Bangkok. A provincial city hall, therefore, houses the central power to control each province of Thailand. Chiang Mai City Hall is the working place for Thai public servants in one of Thailand’s large northern provinces.

Nevertheless, consideration of the architectural style of the old Chiang Mai City Hall raises the question of why the building was built in a Western-style instead of employing Lanna-style architecture. This article searches for the answer to this question by categorizing the design and construction of government buildings in the country into four periods: The architecture of governance in the Lanna vassal state (before 1868), the early Rama V period (1897-1910), later bureaucratization of the city halls under the centralized Bangkok government (1910-1980), and the final reinstitution of local stylistic elements in new city halls, with specific focus on the Lanna style used in Chiang Mai (1980-present).

While the present Chiang Mai City Hall is located in the government complex at Ban Mae Yuak, Chang Puak Sub-district, on Chotana Road to Mae Rim District; it was moved there from the old City Hall in 1996. The old City Hall building remains, though today it houses the Chiang Mai City Arts and Cultural Centre. A comparison of the architectural styles between the old and new city halls reveals outstanding differences. The gable of the present city hall is furnished with Kalae (a decorative feature of the northern Thai architectural style) and the materials, colors, and decorations of its roof are based upon an application of Lanna style in combination with the full functions of contemporary design. On the other hand, the old city hall is a Western-style building located in the center of Chiang Mai City, which had been regarded as the center of power for Lanna since ancient times.

"For cities in the old days, there were no government buildings for administration like in the present. When houses were built, they would be used as the government buildings like those of the city governors called "governor's residence." Some medium-sized halls were constructed outside the fence in some cities, so-called "city hall," used as the meeting place for city commissioners regarding their public discussions, orders, and other matters. It was also used as the court for judgments, with its detention area like a prison inside the governor's residence" (Dumrongrachanupab, 2017, pp. 435-436).

His Royal Highness Prince Damrong Rajanupab, when he was the chancellor of the Siamese Ministry of the Interior (around 1892-1915), mentioned that, in many cities in the past, city halls had not been available like those of his time. He also talked about a pavilion hall, a so-called Kao-Sa-Nam-Luang, or a "meeting hall" used to host city commissioners’ meetings for discussing public matters or trying judicial cases. The style of this type of hall is shown in Figure 1, which displays a picture of Nakhon Lampang Court.

The public administration in Lanna was centralized in the governor's house, or "governor's residence," known in Lanna as "Khum Chao Luang" (former ruler's residence). Its administrative authority covered the areas of Wiang Kaew-Hor Kham in the city of Chiang Mai (Dumrongrachanupab, 2017).

Until the late 19th century, Chiang Mai was a semi-autonomous kingdom. However, administrative changes were implemented in the reign of King Rama V with his royal initiative to unite the nation. This included the formulation of the intendancy system of administration, which required a greater number of public servants to govern the cities. Meanwhile, it was necessary to build government offices to accommodate public servants and the new administrative system. One interesting aspect of all this relates to the westernization policy of King Rama V. Under the influence of the king’s desire to westernize the country, new government buildings constructed at that time were designed with Western-style influences. This enhanced the opportunities for those in Siam who had knowledge or skill in designing and constructing western-style buildings. An example of this is the (former) city hall of Chiang Rai, which was design by Dr. William A. Briggs (an American Presbyterian Missionary, proselytising in Chiang Rai from 1903 to 1918). The style of this building is rather tricky to define, but it has similarities to the presidential
palace of Hanoi (built between 1900-1906), which was designed by Auguste Henri Vildieu during the colonization period. The palace incorporates elements of Italian renaissance design, although most parts of the design are more typical of French Colonial Architecture (Chungsiriarak, 2010).

Chiang Mai City Hall was constructed (finished in 1924) during the period of the intendancy system (the so-called "The-Sa-Phi-Ban (1897-1933)) and is based upon Western classical architectural style. Such a building raises some questions about why the Lanna style was not applied since it was probably easier for construction and more suitable to the locality. Moreover, it seems that the Siamese style would have been more familiar and comfortable for public servants. These questions and observations have brought about the argument for this research study regarding the reasons why the Siamese government purposely chose this Western-style building as the focal point of national governmental power to be located in the center of Chiang Mai City. The study covers the influences on the building style of the city hall in Chiang Mai from the reign of King Rama V (1897-1910) to the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925).

Figure 1
Sala Kao-Sa-Nam-Luang, Lampang province


RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was divided into three steps: 1) the preliminary document survey, literature review, and interviews with people involved; 2) the survey of an entire building in the area; and 3) the analysis. This study comprises a qualitative study, with pictures of buildings both in the past and in the present used for reaching the analytical conclusions in this research paper.

SCOPE OF BUILDING STUDY

The building complex used in this study is the former Chiang Mai City Hall, which is compared with other buildings designed and constructed in the timeframe from the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) to the end of the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925).

Western-style design in Siamese buildings (1851-1925)

Western-style influence came to Siam around the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868) and became popular in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) for political reasons. In the reign of King Rama IV, the western-style buildings were designed by Siamese noblemen who mostly imitated the building characteristics based on pictures or oral narration. Therefore, while the western style buildings from this reign were similar in appearance to western architecture, they actually differed widely in function, form, and decoration. Singapore was the first country to which the Siam royal government sent the nobles to observe and import the western look for designing buildings in Siam. After this, many bureaucratic buildings in Siam applied classical western architecture elements into the decorations of their designs. In the reign of King Rama V, the character of western buildings in Siam were different from the previous reign due to increased political pressure to westernize the country. King Rama V tried several strategies to release the pressure; the creation of “instant civilization” in Siam was one of the strategies used. With this strategy, western style buildings were built in Bangkok. Mainly, Italian architects were chosen to design the
buildings; the rest were German, British, or French. Therefore, the Italian Renaissance and neo-classical styles are seen in many buildings from this time period since the Italian architects designed so many projects. However, Baroque, British colonial, and French colonial styles can also still be seen in Bangkok and most other major cities in the country. In the last year of the reign of King Rama V, there was an attempt to create a Siamese nation-state by unifying the vassal states into the single unified country of Siam. A city hall was built in every administrative region to represent this central Siamese power, and a standard design for city halls was used around this time. The buildings were actually designed by the central authority from Bangkok and the standard plan was sent to every administrative region. The effect was to create the identical building style in different regions of Siam, supporting the perception of a single nation through this one style of building. The instant civilization policy was supported by the western character of the building design. The original Chiang Mai City Hall was built in this period, and it reflected the Siamese policy through the building’s appearance (Chungsiriarak, 2010; Ongsakul, 2008).

The arrival of Western colonization and acceptance of Western architectural influences (1851-1924)

Colonization came to South East Asian countries during the reign of King Rama IV. At that time, Siam’s neighboring countries were occupied by two main colonizing countries: France and England. France colonized Laos and Vietnam, while Burma, located to the north of Siam, bordering Lanna, was occupied by England. The Malay Peninsula to the south of Siam, was under British control. The arrival of these colonizing countries created a lot of pressure on Siam. Despite the fact that the country had flexible policies to allow these Western countries to seek benefits freely in Siam, which had the effect of removing pressure to occupy or colonize the Kingdom of Siam, marginalized areas like Lanna with unclear international boundaries caused an ambiguous situation. Chiang Mai, which had formerly relied been administered as a vassal state with an absolute right to govern itself, but Siamese control over Chiang Mai was intensified due to the fear that England would seek grounds to occupy the land, or that a Chiang Mai ruler might attempt to separate from Siam and cooperate with England. The first and second Chiang Mai Treaties were executed to reinforce Siamese control over the area through its vassal Chiang Mai rulers. The Sa-Phi-Ban or the Siamese intendancy system was manipulated during the reign of King Rama V to advance the development of the nation-state. While this administrative system was introduced by Siam to Lanna at this time, it was not a new system. Siam had been trying to develop this governance system since the reign of King Rama IV. Finally, it was succeeded in the reign of King Rama V by imitating the colonization systems in Singapore, Java, and India (Winichakul, 1994).

Therefore, The-Sa-Phi-Ban, or the intendancy system, which was introduced in Lanna around 1870 (formally in 1897), was, in effect, a crypto-colonization system† (Herzfeld, 2012; Noobanjong, 2013; Winichakul, 1994). Considered from this point of view, Lanna, in the period of the intendancy system, was controlled as part of the crypto-colonization of Siam.

In addition to consolidating the administrative management and control of the budding Siamese nation-state scope through such policies, there was an urgent need in Bangkok to promote modernity through Western architectures and new city planning. The new permanent structures and infrastructure required foreign craftsmen, architects, and engineers from several countries such as Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. The efforts to modernize Bangkok through such permanent structures also resulted in the popularity in building residential houses in the Western-style in Bangkok among people who were able to construct these buildings, namely, rulers and wealthy merchants. The Western

† The crypto-colonization can be explained as the state that a country claimed the status of independent from colonization but in reality, it was indirect controlled or dependent on western colonial power (as cited in Herzfeld, M. (2012) p. 209-223).
influence is believed to have also influenced Chiang Mai rulers, who were required to present gold and silver flowers in Bangkok every three years. As a result, during the reign of Chao Inthawichayanon (the Seventh Ruler of Chiang Mai), this influence was noticeable in the new Western buildings and new Western furniture (Bock, Phantharangsi & Tikhara, 2000). At the same time, the buildings of Chao Burirat (Maha-In) were made in the western style mixed with the local style, highlighting the Western influence on Siam and its vassal states. However, in the early periods, Chiang Mai rulers controlled the use of western design and architecture to suit themselves, and allowed western design features and local design features to be mixed. For example, Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In) was built with a sun terrace, one component of Lanna house, as part of the Western-style house (Figure 2). Figure 3 shows that the building demonstrates its western character through the Arch and the 1st-floor function, which differed from local constructions features like stilted buildings whose main functions were on the 2nd floor only.

Figure 2
Second-floor plan of Burirat Palace (Ma-Ha-In)

Note. From Khum burīrat (mahā ‘in) [Burirat Palace (mahain)] (p. 96), by P. Arkarapotiwong, 2019, Chiang Mai University. Copyright 2019 by Piyadech Arkarapotiwong.
During the reign of Chao Inthawichayanon, Siam began controlling the administration in Chiang Mai and formulated the administrative system of *Monthon Thesaphiban*. Hence, a great number of public servants were moved to work in Chiang Mai. Various building plans such as the Yupparaj Building of Yupparaj Wittayalai School, post offices, and train stations were brought from relevant ministries or departments. Monthon Payap City Hall, built in Chiang Mai, was similar to the standard plans of Luang Burakam Kowit. It should be noted that the construction of government buildings to accommodate these public servants was directed by the government in Bangkok, which was modernized as a Western-style civilized city. Under these policies implemented throughout the country, Chiang Mai as a major city of Lanna, was required to showcase modernity like Bangkok, although decorations were restricted to meet budget constraints.

In spite of the fact that colonization took place around the Kingdom of Siam and put a lot of pressure on nation in the reign of King Rama V, such pressure gradually decreased during the reign of King Rama VI due to the conflicts in Europe that led to the First World War. The Kingdom of Siam under King Rama VI joined the Allies. After the Allies gained victory, Siam was accepted at the international level, and while not deemed as the equal of Western countries, an enormous amount of pressure from South East Asian colonization was relieved (Chungsiriarak, 2010). The policies that had previously prioritized national unification during the former reign were transformed into a focus on love of nation, religion, and king. However, one of the problems of this reign resulted from the large-scale bureaucratic system inherited from the reign of King Rama V. Another significant issue was that King Rama VI abolished the *Huay Kor Kho* (lottery), gambling tax, and opium tax. These three sources of government revenue were significant for Siam at that time (Chungsiriarak, 2010). Consequently, there was a loss of financial equilibrium for the Siamese government, and a reduction of national expenditure was necessary. In response to all of this, the construction of government buildings in major cities had to be completed with austere budgets that led to a reduced focus on decoration and aesthetics. This affected the construction of Monthon Payap City Hall and others.
City halls in Thailand (1868-present)

The architecture of governance in the Lanna vassal state (before 1868)

Under the traditional administrative system of the vassal state, city halls functioned as the government house. In Lanna, 'Hor Kham' also served as the government building, but it was inside the area of Wiang Kaew -- the area where the ruler's residence was located -- and it was built in the traditional Lanna architectural style.

Early Rama V period (around 1897-1910)

The physical aspect of city halls changed during the latter part of the reign of King Rama V (around 1897) under the Siam intendancy system. This new administration was divided into regional intendancies whereby Lanna was known as Monthon Lao Chiang, and Chiang Mai was the major city in the region at that time.

Also, during this time period, the city halls were built after adoption of the intendancy system. The oldest remaining city hall that was built during the reign of King Rama V that can still be seen is Chiang Rai City Hall (finished in 1900) (Figure 5-7).

In the last year of the reign of King Rama V (1910), the Siamese government initiated standard designs for bureaucratic buildings and constructed the buildings by utilizing standard designs from Bangkok in cities under the power of Siam. The standard plan design still relied on the western style and decreased the liberty for local authorities to design their own western-style buildings. It can be seen from examples of city hall buildings where construction was initiated after 1910 that they mostly adapted the designs from the standard plans of the Siamese government. The western style obviously influenced the building form and roof pattern. However, at the time the Chiang Rai City Hall was built, the local authorities were still allowed to build in the local style. The brick wall material and castle-like appearance made the Chiang Rai City Hall look outstanding from the local building context.

Another remaining city hall from the reign of King Rama V is the Cha Choeng Sao City Hall shown in Figures 8-9, which was built in 1906 (Chungsiriarak, 2010).
Figure 5

The former City Hall of Chiang Rai, finished in 1900

Figure 6

1st-floor plan of the former Chiang Rai City Hall

Note. Adapted from Sathāpattayakam bāp tawantok nai Sayām samai ratchakān thī sī - Phō. Sō. sōngphansirōipātsīp [Western architecture in Siam in the period of King Rama IV-2480BE.] (p. 181), by S. Chungsiriarak, 2010, Silpakorn University. Copyright 2010 by Somchart Chungsiriarak.
Figure 7

Front elevation of the Chiang Rai City Hall (former)


Figure 8

Cha Choeng Sao City Hall in the present day

During the middle of the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), the city halls showed significant differences in each particular city. For example, Chiang Rai City Hall was designed by Dr. William A. Briggs, an American Presbyterian Missionary preaching proselytising in Lanna (Chungsiriarak, 2010). On the other hand, the design of Cha Choeng Sao City Hall shows Western influences with a mixture of local architectural styles, with a hip roof covering the long, narrow building that sits parallel to the Bang Pakong River.

**Later bureaucratization of city halls under Bangkok (1910-1980)**

At the end of the reign of King Rama V, the standard layout plan for these city halls was initiated. The styles of city halls were based upon the importance of that city, and were divided into three types: those built of wood, brick, and a large-sized city hall for Monthon (administrative subdivisions). Such styles were widely adopted during the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925), as part of the strategic policy for uniting the nation and enhancing the sense of nationalism. The word "Muang" (city) was changed into "Changwat" (province) to demonstrate the scope of Siamese power. Many city halls were then built to serve as the headquarters for provincial governors in charge of chiefs of the government offices (Chungsiriarak, 2010). Examples of the standard city hall design are illustrated in Figures 10-11.

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2 Luang Burakam Kowit was a Thai self-taught architect. He worked with a German architect at Banpuen palace, Petch Buri province for 4 years starting in 1911. Then, he worked as an architect at the Ministry of Interior, Bangkok. Most of the city hall designs in the beginning period of Siam were his work.
Figure 10
The standard drawing of city hall, drawing by Luang Burakam Kowit


Figure 11
The standard drawing of a Monthon city hall, drawing by Luang Burakam Kowit

Reinstitution of Lanna stylistic elements in new city halls (1980-present)

After 1980, a revised concept for building government complexes to accommodate all government offices was proposed. It was suggested that the way city halls had formerly been used had resulted in disorganization and ineffective administration since these government offices used space inefficiently, and they were disorderly and scattered. By designing and building government complexes, it would be possible to gather all of these offices into one place (Churstarponsiri, 2001).

Such concepts brought the design and construction of government complexes to all provinces across the country. In Chiang Mai, the new large-sized government complex is located away from the city center (within the city wall), and the city hall has been moved to this new location with its entirely new design (Figure 12).

Figure 12
The present City Hall of Chiang Mai at the government complex

With respect to style and function, transformations of city halls in the country can be categorized into four periods (Table 1). In the first period encompasses the time before the reign of King Rama V (i.e., before 1868), when the government commonly built the city halls in the vassal states in the form of an open pavilion in traditional style. The styles of those local pavilions were different depending on the local customs in each area; however, the meeting pavilions were generally located in the royal palace. The second period comprises nearly all of the reign of King Rama V, and is broken into two periods. In the early period of the reign of King Rama V, between 1868 and 1897, the city halls in Siam were designed and constructed using the same pavilion style as before his coronation. During these years, the King was young, and still did not have power to reform the nation. However, during the second period of his reign, the creation of a new bureaucratic system resulted in the construction of city halls that were
designed to be working places for public servants from Bangkok in the vassal states. These buildings were different in every city, with some underlying influences of Western architecture combined with traditional elements of local architecture apparent in the building styles.

The third period (1910-1980) began in the final year of the reign of King Rama V, and continued to take hold during the reign of King Rama VI when centralized administration from Bangkok and a more unified national identity was becoming firmly rooted, and the city halls were designed in compliance with standard layout plans whose styles were based upon the importance of each city. These styles of city halls heavily incorporated Western functionality but allowed for some local decorations. The standard layout plans from Bangkok continued to be used beyond the period of King Rama VI and the Siamese coup d’etat in 1932. After Thailand moved from absolute monarchy towards democracy, the political perspective changed gradually to give greater priority to local needs.

The fourth period (1980-present), has seen the construction of government complexes that has brought with it large-sized city halls in varied styles, which ignore the Western-style decoration, while retaining modern architectural function. However, the government complexes of this period have emphasized local architectural traditions in their designs, such as the use of intricate *kalae* decorations on the gables, and clay tile roof of the current Chiang Mai City Hall.

### Table 1

*Comparison of the city halls*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown (before 1868)</td>
<td>Sala Kao-Sa-Nam-Luang, Lampang province</td>
<td></td>
<td>1(^{st}) period, the pavilion hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>City Hall of Chiang Rai (former)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2(^{nd}) period, the western-style under colonization pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>City Hall of Chiang Mai (former)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3(^{rd}) period, the standard plan of city hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Comparison of the city halls.*
When focusing on the Western-Style city halls in Thailand, they can be compared with two examples (from the 2nd and 3rd periods, respectively). In a second period building like Chiang Rai City Hall, the layout of the city hall is obviously different from that of the city hall in Cha Choeng Sao, which was built in the third-period style. The layout of Chiang Rai City Hall features a front open area used as a hall with working space in three sides, whereas Cha Choeng Sao City Hall was designed with front and back balconies emphasizing the main entrance, but the rooms were in the middle of the balconies. During the reign of King Rama VI, a standard design was used for city halls, with the city hall buildings being constructed of either wood or bricks, and incorporating the E-layout plan (Chungsiriarak, 2010).

The city halls of Monthon (County) were built with the two-court style. All buildings featured the Western style with clearly separated functions. However, they also displayed local decorations mixed with central Thai features, bearing the Garuda symbol in front of the gable, symbolizing the Siamese government. This style was then handed down until the construction of city halls that took place in the later periods, focusing on larger buildings and more focus on the uniqueness of each locality.

In this sense, the city hall buildings of the 2nd period, such as the city hall of Chiang Rai, were western-style buildings designed and built by westerners (in the case of Chiang Rai City Hall, this was Dr. William A. Briggs). These buildings were constructed under the loose supervision of the Siamese government in line with the instant westernization policy of King Rama V. In the 3rd period, the city halls were built from standard designs which mainly applied western-style architecture, as ordered by the Siamese government. The western style of these local bureaucratic buildings represented a decisive act of supervision by the Siamese government, which wanted to exert control over the local authorities. During this 3rd period, the central government of Siam intentionally designed a western-influenced city hall and required the design to be used for the new city hall in Chiang Mai.

The design and construction of western-style buildings in Siam began in the reign of King Rama IV, but most of them were built in the reign of King Rama V. In the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925) that followed, Siam joined the Allies who were the victors in World War I. This had the effect of decreasing pressure for the colonization of Siam. While western-style buildings continued to be built in the reign of King Rama VI, the intention of the government shifted from "instant westernization" to the strengthening of the Siam nation-state. Therefore, city halls all around the country were required to be identical since they represented one nation (Siam). The standard design of the city hall in Chiang Mai, for example, used the design of Luang Burakam Kowit to represent this idea.
Former Chiang Mai City Hall (1924-present)

The former Chiang Mai City Hall was built in the area “Hor Phra Kaew” (shown in Figure 13) in 1893 (Arkarapotiwong, 2020). Initially designed as the Monthon Payap City Hall, it was completed in 1924, and was on title deed no. 4951, parcel number 29, with the area of 9 Rai 2 Ngan 44 square wah (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996).

Figure 13

The 1893 Chiang Mai map

Note. The shaded oval area is the location of the former Chiang Mai City Hall. Adapted from The 1893 Chiang Mai map, 1893. Copyright by Payap University Archive.

Analysis of the building style of the former Chiang Mai City Hall (1924)

The Chiang Mai City Hall construction was completed in the reign of King Rama VI, in 1924. Its period of construction matched with the time when the Siamese standard layout plans were widely used. When compared with the standard plans of Luang Burakam Kowit (Figure 14), several similarities can be seen in the floor plans.

This Monthon city hall, as shown with pictures and city plans, was constructed in Lampang province as well. Nakhon Lampang City Hall (Figure 15) shared some similarities with Monthon Payap City Hall in Chiang Mai -- a two-story building that differed from one-story Monthon City Hall designed by Luang Burakam Kowit. Figure 16 shows that the building had two courts, and was very similar to the former Chiang Mai City Hall. When comparing these two buildings with the standard City Hall in the Luang Burakam Kowit drawing, the similarities can be seen and it can be assumed that the city halls in Lanna were developed from this standard design.
Figure 14
1st-floor plan of Chiang Mai City Hall (former)


Figure 15
The Lampang City Hall (former)

Looking at floor plans for Monthon Payap City Hall and standard city halls, a clear feature is the left and the right two-court style with inner balconies whereby all working rooms were located on the external part of the building, with windows facing outwards and office doors accessed from the interior of the building, facing the courtyards. While the building layouts were substantially the same style, the two wings of Chiang Mai City Hall were shorter than in the standard design.

Both building layouts similarly centered on the main entrance, but differed from each other in that the standard design was for a one-story building. Chiang Mai City Hall, by contrast, was a two-story building, allowing the staircase to be placed in its entrance area.

Building styles

The city halls, both standard plans and Chiang Mai City Hall (former), all reflected the Western-style structurally, along with the Garuda emblem on the gable symbolizing Siam. Chiang Mai City Hall had an entrance area designed with classical architecture, and it was appropriately separated and symmetrical. This design was consistent with classical architecture in Europe, featuring simple decorations (Figure 17-18).

Building materials

The former Chiang Mai City Hall is a brick building with its load-bearing wall and roofing structure covered with kite-shaped tiles. Interestingly, the roofing material used on the building comprised Lanna clay roof tiles, although the use of kite-shaped tiles reflected the popularity of new materials from Bangkok. Lanna style roof tiles were rectangular, and were locally produced from earth mixed with sand and burned until they turned red. During this period, several buildings in Chiang Mai relied on kite-shaped tiles for roofing, e.g., commercial building of Luang Yonakanpichit at Kad Luang, old Chiang Mai Train Station. All of these buildings...
were built at nearly the same time as was Chiang Mai City Hall.

Meanwhile, the kite-shaped tile was square, but tilted 45 degrees to make a sawtoothed tile pattern. The material used for these kite-shaped tiles was clay or cement, which made the kite-shaped tile thicker than the traditional rectangular Lanna clay tile. In Chiang Mai, the buildings that were roofed with kite-shaped tiles were built in the reign of King Rama V, mostly after the building of the Chiang Mai train station in 1921 since it was convenient to import these tiles from Bangkok to Chiang Mai via the new railroad. The kite-shaped tile was normally used with bureaucratic buildings, palaces, or accommodations of wealthy people. Moreover, the use of kite-shaped tile represented the new taste and luxury from Bangkok as only people who were close to the new power could acquire this new material.

**Figure 17**

*Front elevation of the Chiang Mai City Hall (former)*

![Front elevation of the Chiang Mai City Hall (former)](image)

**Note.** From Khrongkan suksa ngan samruat lae o'ok baeo khrongkan prapprung salsalang (daem) pen hoo slingwa watthanatham lain mueang Chiang Mai changwat Chiang Mai [Project of survey and design of renovation and conversion of the former city hall to Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre] (p. 56), by Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996, Morsdok Lok. Copyright 1996 by Tourism Authority of Thailand.

**Figure 18**

*The former Chiang Mai City Hall as it appears today*
Expansion of Chiang Mai City Hall (1962)

In 1962, Chiang Mai City Hall was enlarged rearward, whereby two buildings were added to form a u-shaped pattern, creating another large-sized court in the middle and behind the original structure. The former city hall had been 47.50 x 25.50 meters or 1211.25 square meters; the additional expansion was of a similar size. Figure 21 is an ariel photo from 1969 showing the original City Hall building along with the completed expansion behind it.

Figure 19

*First-floor plan of the former Chiang Mai City Hall / new Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre*

Note. From Khrongkhan suksan samruit lae 'ok baep khrongkhan prapprung sableom (dem) pen hoh sinlap watthanatham lanmai muen Chiang Mai changwat Chiang Mai [Project of survey and design of renovation and conversion of the former city hall to Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre] (p. 53), by Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996, Morsdok Lok. Copyright 1996 by Tourism Authority of Thailand.
Figure 20
Second-floor plan of the former Chiang Mai City Hall

Note. From Khrōngkān suksā ngnān samruat lāe ʻōk bāp khrōngkān prapprung sālāklāng (dēm) pen hō sinlapa watthanatham lānā mūŋ Chīang Mai ḍhāngwat Chīang Mai [Project of survey and design of renovation and conversion of the former city hall to Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre] (p. 54), by Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996, Morsdok Lok. Copyright 1996 by Tourism Authority of Thailand.

Figure 21
Aerial view of the Chiang Mai City Hall (former) in 1969

The old building was used as a working place for several government offices: Revenue Office Region 5, Chiang Mai Revenue Office, Royal Property Office, Office of Public Prosecution Chiang Mai Magistrate Court, Chiang Mai Provincial Administrative Organization, and Office of the Inspector for Interior, Region 10. In 1996, a policy was announced to establish a government complex on Chotana Road, six kilometers away from the former Chiang Mai City Hall. As a result, this older city hall was renovated to serve as the present-day Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Center (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996).

The enlargement after 1962 was based upon the building’s old design, but it was carried out with construction knowledge of concrete beams, different from load-bearing walls. Decorations for doors and window frames showed efforts to retain the original patterns. Obviously, the old building utilized a symmetrical layout with great influences from classical architecture; however, the later expansion did not maintain its classical floor layout (Figure 22). One building was designed in a rectangle shape while the other one was for an L-shaped building. Such layouts reflected the design concepts with no regard to the order of previous layouts, putting greater focus on functionality and independence of design. Figure 23 shows the extension, which connects with the original building.

**Figure 22**

*Roof floor plan of the former Chiang Mai City Hall/ new Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre*

Note. From Khrongkān suksā ngān samrubt lāe ʻök bāp khrongkān prapprung sāāklāng (dēm) pen hō sinlapa watthanatham lānnā mūrng Chīang Mai changwat Chīang Mai [Project of survey and design of renovation and conversion of the former city hall to Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre] (p. 55), by Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996, Morsdok Lok. Copyright 1996 by Tourism Authority of Thailand.
A combination of local building styles was remarkably seen in the roof of the building with its surrounding eaves to shelter against sunlight and rain. This building style was adopted by Westerners arriving in South East Asia for the reasons of colonization during the mid-19th century for its functionality in the tropical region. The former Chiang Mai City Hall was later expanded at least once to increase the amount of functional space. In this expansion, there was an attempt to conserve the patterns and materials of the original design, but some differences were still noticeable. The old building was based on the design of a classical building with its symmetrical style. However, the newly-built structure was designed with functionality in mind, with the roofs of the additional building outstandingly different from the old one.

With respect to the standard Monthon City Hall by Luang Burakam Kowit, there were some similarities in the floor layout between it and the Monthon Payap City Hall in Chiang Mai. In the standard style, the one-story large building with its left and right courts were designed so that a pathway was formed within the courts, while its working rooms surrounded the pathway. In fact, the layout with the left and right courts in the Western architecture during the Renaissance was used in the work of Palladio called Pallazo Della Torre, showing that symmetrical floor layout with its left and right courts was perhaps an application of classical building style (Figure 24). Additionally, the building centered on the entrance room as its entrance gateway, and it was decorated mainly in the Baroque style, including the emblem of Siam at the pediment of its entrance gateway.

Note. From Khrongkan suksa ngan samruat lae ʻok bae khrongkan prapprung s娃娃lāklāng (dām) pen hō sinlapa watthanatham lānnā māang Chiang Mai changwat Chiang Mai [Project of survey and design of renovation and conversion of the former city hall to Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre] (p. 57), by Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996, Morsdok Lok. Copyright 1996 by Tourism Authority of Thailand.
However, this standard Monthon City Hall used a hip roof to cover the entire building, and its eaves offered shelter from sunlight and rain. These were considered to be suitable adjustments to the tropical region, much like bungalows in India adopted Western-style houses for their use of roof cover and eaves for shelter from sun and rain shelter. This concept shows that the standard Monthon City Hall design was for a building that mixed classical and locally applied concepts for the sake of functionality (Chungsiriarak, 2010). Actually, this led to a particular building style which the government in Bangkok chose in order to represent the government’s centralized power in provinces and localities. This was seen in Chiang Mai through the construction of Monthon Payap City Hall.

**Transformation of the administrative system and Western influences on the architecture of Chiang Mai City Hall (1873-1924)**

Regarding the city of Chiang Mai after the period of "Fuen Man", or the ending period of Burmese influences in the beginning of the Rattanakosin period, the Siamese government played a crucial role in assisting Chao Kawila to restore the Kingdom of Lanna. Kawila was one of a group of Lanna nobles who rebelled against the Burmese in northern Thailand during the Burmese-Siamese War, and in 1782 was appointed the ruling king of 57 cities by Rama I of Thailand. Chao Kawila, the ruler of Lampang, was appointed to rule Chiang Mai as well. Accordingly, there came the establishment of
Lanna royal families governing the major cities of Lanna: Lampang, Chiang Mai, and Lamphun. In the early periods, Lanna used its traditional administrative system whereby the rulers had full power to govern their own cities, although it served as a vassal state to Siam. In other words, tributes, gold and silver flowers, and gifts were presented to Siam. Nevertheless, the absolute power for city administration still belonged to the Lanna rulers, including the appointment of succeeding rulers. This relationship continued until the Seventh Ruler of Chiang Mai, Phra Chao Inthawichayanon (1873-1897). It was around this time that Siam began introducing a new administrative policy by combining the cities of vassal states into Monthon called Monthon Thesaphiban (literally, local government). Administration and taxation systems were centralized to Bangkok, public servants were sent to govern Monthon cities, and government buildings were constructed to accommodate these people (Ongsakul, 2008).

The city hall was constructed for such reason. Formerly, Chiang Mai City Hall was built at the level of a Monthon City Hall due to Chiang Mai’s importance as the major city of Lanna. Chiang Mai City Hall was located in the city center on a large open area donated to the Siamese government by Chao Intawarorot Suriyawong, the Eighth Ruler of Chiang Mai. This building was completed in 1924, at the end of the reign of King Rama VI (Arkarapotiwong, 2020).

Monthon Payap City Hall or Chiang Mai City Hall featured Western classical influences that were adjusted for more simplicity, probably because of the need for cost-saving construction during the reign of King Rama VI.

The selection of the Western classical style was not made by the Chiang Mai ruler himself; rather, the style was chosen by the government offices in Bangkok to be built in Chiang Mai.

The popularity of Western-style building had been growing since the reign of Chao Inthawichayanon, the Seventh Ruler of Chiang Mai, and the use of Western architecture for government buildings had previously been ordered by a number of Lanna rulers, but the movement away from traditional architecture and building styles was hastened by the political reality of a new focus on centralized government and the power of rulers in Bangkok. The new building mixed the Western classical architecture with the functionality of Lanna, as can be seen by inspection of the remaining royal residences such as Khum Chao Burirat (Maha-In) and Khum Chao Ratchabut (Sompamit), yet the government buildings constructed by order of the Siamese government were those whose Western-style was directly determined in Bangkok.

The former Chiang Mai City Hall shows the influence of Western architectural arts that were popular in Bangkok at that time, and which were used to determine the standard layout plan for all city halls across the entire country. The Western influences shown by the architecture of Monthon City Hall in Chiang Mai are best understood in the light of this analysis of surrounding factors in Bangkok.

The reasons for constructing the Western-style government buildings in the city center of Chiang Mai can be understood through knowledge of historical events. The former city hall was designed and constructed under Western influence as it was adapted from the standard Monthon City Hall design from Bangkok. In addition, the reasons for having the standard Monthon City Hall in the Western-style resulted from the efforts to promote modernization that had been in place since the reign of King Rama V. Afterwards, the Western-style building was intended to represent the modernity of the cities; construction of a Western-style building in Chiang Mai by the Siamese government was a reflection of the modernity and control that emanated from Bangkok. Chiang Mai rulers were forced to accept this for two reasons: 1) Siam was able to convert all of Lanna, including Chiang Mai, from vassal states into an integrated part of the new nation-state of Siam, depriving the northern rulers of their administrative power; and 2) the increased international influence of Siam put pressure the northern rulers to comply with this new power, including the way they tried to please the Siamese government.

The construction of Siamese buildings was deemed as elegant and artistic among the northern rulers at the same time that more houses in the western style were built in Siam for political reasons. However, the political realities of the new power centralized in Bangkok and forced on Chiang Mai was accompanied by the
arrival of Western-style government offices as dictated from Siam to Chiang Mai.

With regard to Monthon City Hall, the Chiang Mai ruler at that time donated his land in the city center to the Siamese government in order to build the city hall. The construction of the Western-style building as required by Siam was not surprising when major political events aware taken into account. In truth, there was little resistance since the Chiang Mai rulers at that time had already begun to adopt Western-style design in buildings being constructed in Chiang Mai. This Chiang Mai City Hall was in use as the center of government continuously until there was a policy to build a government complex. In 1997, Chiang Mai City Hall was moved to a new location and the old Chiang Mai City Hall was transformed into the Chiang Mai City Arts and Cultural Center.

CONCLUSION

It can be seen that the relationship of power between Siam, Lanna, and European influences impacted to the architectural style of bureaucratic buildings in Chiang Mai. In the first period (before 1868), Chiang Mai served Siam as a vassal state. Under this system, local rulers were allowed absolute autonomy, which was reflected in the building local style government buildings. During the second period (1897-1910), Lanna lost some of its administration power to Siam. It became part of the new governance system, the so called “The-Sa-Phi-Ban” which was introduced by the royal court of Siam in the period of King Rama V. Some of the city halls in Lanna were built in this period, demonstrating that the Siamese Royals preferred European form and decoration, as seen in Chiang Rai’s city hall. Chiang Mai’s former city hall was built in the third period (1910-1980), during which Siam controlled the whole of Lanna with a strong focus on the single nation-state policy. At that time the pressure of possible colonization was relieved after WW I; the Siamese Royal court kept the country unified through a policy that stressed the unity of nation over traditional regional power. The standard style of the city hall design was implemente in this period. The style of the building was less European and less decorative than those of the second period, but still kept some classical European elements such as column order and symmetrical form. The liberation from colonization pressure together with the Siamese coup d’etat of 1932 created more room from the Siamese government to allow for the reemergence of regional identities. Since 1980, which marks the start of the fourth period, the design of city halls has shown more local uniqueness. In Chiang Mai, that can be seen in elements such as the roof form, decoration, and even some materials like clay roofing tiles.

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