

KHUM CHAO: THE CHANGES OF STYLE IN CHIANG MAI'S GOVERNOR HOUSES IN THE PERIOD OF WESTERN-COLONIZATION

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ABSTRACT

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The Western-style Khum Chao (governor's house) is a building complex that can still be seen in the city of Chiang Mai. The buildings were influenced by Western architecture in terms of architectural style, decoration, and functionality. This research aimed to study the reasons for building Western-style governor's houses in Chiang Mai despite the fact that the buildings were formerly built in the traditional Lanna style. Presumably, Siamese influences on Chiang Mai affected the construction of Western-style governor's houses. In this research, it was found that the Western-style governor's house was clearly identifiable in the period of Chao Inthawichayanon, the seventh ruler of Chiang Mai. The popularity for building Western-style governor's houses continued until the period when Chiang Mai was annexed as part of Siam, when the administration of Monthon Thesapiban (literally, local government) was adopted. The Western-style governor's house changed from its original pattern to a functional layout. However, the research found that during the transformation indicates that the rulers of Chiang Mai did not directly accept architectural styles from foreign countries but through Siam, with its growing influence on Chiang Mai. Thus, the Western-style governor's house in the framework discovered in this research may be called Siamese-influenced building.

Keywords: Khum Chao; governor's house; Siam; Monthon Thesapiban; Western influence

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Khum Chao* (governor's residence) was a large-sized building used as a residence by the northern rulers of Siam (Thailand). This research aims to study the governor's residences with Western influences in Chiang Mai from the early period of building the governor's house in traditional styles until their later construction in Western styles, following administrative transformation. In this research, the timeframes are divided into three periods. In the traditional Lanna period (beginning in 1781 AD), the rulers of Chiang Mai had absolute power and autonomy despite Chiang Mai being a vassal state under Siam; administrative decision making still belonged with its rulers, including lifestyle decisions, which all depended on and followed the traditional culture. The second period represents the time when Siam and Western countries began their

colonization in South East Asia¹ (in this research, from 1870 AD, when Chao Inthawichayanon, the seventh ruler, began governing Chiang Mai), influencing the lifestyles of local people. Siam initially tried to control the city administration and undertook negotiations with Western countries regarding the Lanna boundaries. Meanwhile, the bureaucratic system was created, and public servants from Bangkok were encouraged to settle down in Chiang Mai. Government buildings with new styles were constructed in the city center as the administrative power of the Chiang Mai rulers gradually diminished, in contrast with the increased Siamese influence arising from its *Monthon Thesapiban* administration.² In the third period, Chiang Mai was completely annexed as part of Siam (after the reign of Chao Inthawichayanon, that is, after 1897 AD). During that time, the positions of the northern rulers were gradually abolished. This transformation greatly affected the lifestyle of the northern rulers, including the Chiang Mai rulers. The styles and functionality of the governor's houses in the city changed for the aforementioned reasons. The study of these transformations based on the historical timeframes in parallel with the changing styles and functionality of the governor's houses helps to explain the grounds for such changes in more detail.

2. METHODS

The research assumption was made that transformations in the Siamese administration of Chiang Mai had an impact on the changing styles of Khum Chao in the city. The research method involved investigating the documents and historical evidence in both architectural and socio-political matters.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Chiang Mai governor's house in the traditional periods

Chiang Mai in the early period as a vassal state under Siam began when Chao Kawila, the third ruler of Nakhon Lampang during 1774-1782 AD, was raised to Phra Chao Kawila, or Chiang Mai ruler, by King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke in 1782 AD. Due to Chiang Mai's higher status than other cities, Chao Kawila gave the city of Lampang to his younger brother, Chao Duang Thip, as the fourth ruler, with absolute power over its administration, although the governors were sent from central government for joint administration with the former vassal rulers of Lampang. However, it took Chao Kawila more than 14 years to gather people to establish the city of Chiang Mai, which was deserted for a long period. At that time, Phra Chao Kawila temporarily settled in the city of Pasang (presently in Lamphun province) through "Sang Paeng, Khum Noi, Hor Non, Tang Prakan Lam Wiang, Kai, Ku, Sabu, Hua Mu, Pratu Wiang..."; this refers to the building of small houses, residences, and other city components, such as a moat, camp, and city gate. The old city walls were discovered in Wiang Pasang (in Lamphun Province) in 2017 AD. Interestingly, Phra Chao Kawila built a Hor Kham (royal pavilion) in addition to a Khum Luang (governor's residence) (Nachiangmai, 1996; Sansa, 2013).

Noticeably, the construction of the governor's residence included not just one building but a building complex and other constructions. Once Chao Kawila gathered enough people from the surrounding cities—Tai Yai, Tai Khern, and Tai Lue—they moved to the city of Chiang Mai to restore it in 1796 AD. The location of the governor's residence was chosen by Chao Kawila near the city center (Figure 1). The constructions included the Hor Kham (royal pavilion), Hor Ratchamonthon (royal residence), a rice barn, a theater, a garage, an elephant corral, a kitchen, and buildings for local dancers, florists, and other craftsmen (Arkarapoti Wong, 2019).

¹ The two main countries seeking colonies in South East Asia relevant to Thailand were France and England.

² The *Thesapiban* administration began in the reign of King Rama V, known for the centralization of power to the central administration in Bangkok, restricting the role of the former vassal rulers.

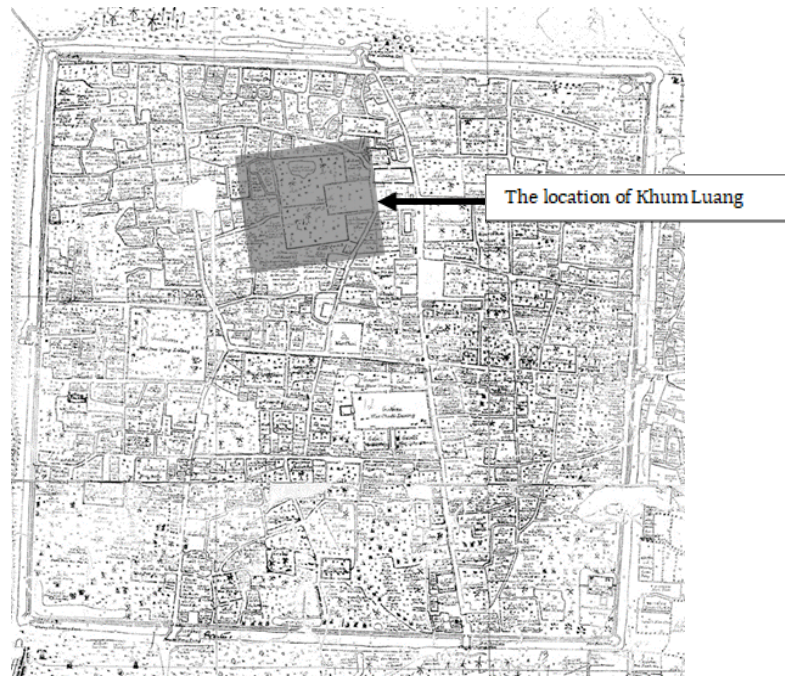


Figure 1: Location of Khum Luang from the Reign of Chao Kawila until 1893 AD (During the Reign of Chao Inthawichayanon) (Meechoobot, 2017)

Obviously, the early Khum Luang featured other complementary buildings, and those buildings embraced the traditional styles from the periods when Chiang Mai was a vassal state, from the rule of Chao Luang Kawila, the head of the family, until Chao Luang Kawilorot Suriyawong, the sixth ruler of Chiang Mai (1856-1870 AD). The only evidence found was later pictures of inner buildings inside the Khum Luang compound showing the style of traditional Lanna buildings (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Khum Luang Chiang Mai, the Last Photo Taken in the Khum Luang Compound (Potiprasart, 1970)

Traditionally, Lanna buildings consisted of three main types: temples, governor's houses, and houses for commoners. However, there were other complementary buildings, such as a bathing place and a rice barn. The Khum or Khum Luang included other complementary buildings, depending on status. Interestingly, the area of the Khum was also used as the working place for rulers, besides being a residence. This accordingly resulted in more buildings inside the *Khum*; the *Khum Luang* in particular consisted of several supplementary buildings for numerous functions. Furthermore, upon the death of Lanna rulers and the ascendancy of new rulers, the *Khum Luang* or *Hor Kham* were disassembled and given to the temple. In Chiang Mai, the *Hor Kham*

of Chao Mahotarapraphet, the fifth ruler of Chiang Mai (1847-1854 AD), was dismantled by Phra Chao Inthawichayanon (the seventh ruler) (1870-1897 AD) and later constructed as the *Viharn* (auditorium) of Wat Phan Tao (Figure 3) (Ongsakul, 2008; Meechoobot, 2019).



Figure 3: Viharn of Wat Phan Tao, Formerly the Hor Kham of Chao Mahotarapraphet, the Fifth Ruler of Chiang Mai

The periods of Chao Kawila to Chao Kawilorot Suriyawong lasted from 1782 to 1870 AD, viewed as the early periods of Lanna, and Chiang Mai was under the traditional administrative system. With regard to the administration of the vassal state, Siam granted absolute power to the autonomous administration. Therefore, it was the right of the city rulers to implement their traditional administration for each city, viewed as an independent city whose rulers had absolute power over any decision making. From the periods of the first ruler to the sixth ruler of Chiang Mai, the Khum Luang complexes were located in the inner city's walls and most were inside the area called Wiang Kaew Hor Kham, the site initially chosen by the first ruler.

3.2 Siamese and Western influences in Chiang Mai

The main event transforming the living conditions in Chiang Mai was the arrival of Westerners. The evidence indicates that Westerners came to the city during the reign of the fourth ruler, Phraya Putthawong (1825-1846 AD). However, they did not have much of a role at that time. In fact, Western influence on the city of Chiang Mai was clearly noticeable only during the reign of Phra Chao Inthawichayanon, the seventh ruler (1870-1897 AD) as Phra Chao Inthawichayanon himself was in favor of Western culture.³ Accordingly, Western-style household items were used in everyday life.

The *Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In)* (Figure 4), built in the period of Phra Chao Inthawichayanon, was influenced by Western styles in terms of architecture, featuring such elements as the arch, a floor layout with the three-sided balconies of British Colonial buildings, and a functional ground floor different from general houses in Lanna, which have no specific purpose for the ground floor⁴ (Arkarapoti Wong, 2019).

³ Presumably, Phra Chao Inthawichayanon's Western influence came through Siam since the position of Chao Inthawichayanon was political, being viewed by Siam as obedient.

⁴ Lanna belief prohibited any passing through space under a house due to *Khued* (taboos), inhibiting prosperity.



Figure 4: Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In)

Khum Chao Rajbutre (Sompamitree Na Chiang Mai) (Figure 5, 6) was built in 1882 AD. This palace shared the same period as *Khum Chao Burirat (Maha-In)*. The roof form of this building was a gambrel, and it was built in the cottage style. The material of the whole construction was wood, and the layout plan was rectangular. It was a two-story building with stairs at the front of the house.

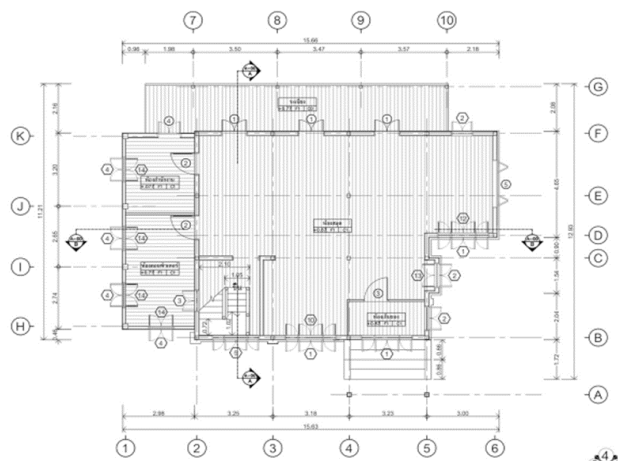


Figure 5: Khum Chao Rajbutre Layout (Rittisorn, 2015)



Figure 6: Khum Chao Rajbutre Exterior

There were two main reasons for the spread of Western influence in Chiang Mai. First, Burma was a British colony, and the territories of Lanna adjoined it. Consequently, British influence began to creep into Chiang Mai. Second, the Chiang Mai No. 1 and No. 2 treaties (1873 and 1883 AD) granted the absolute right to Siam to grant permits for forest concessions in Lanna. Such treaties, with Siamese involvement as the concession grantor, raised the confidence of Westerners. Subsequently, Westerners began to flow into Chiang Mai. Besides the Western influence, Siam started to influence Chiang Mai (Ongsakul, 2008).

Siam desired to unite all the Lanna areas, including Chiang Mai, as part of Siam. The Siamese centralization of power was a concept initially observable in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910 AD). It was perhaps a model derived from Western colonization. However, according to the evidence, Somdet Chao Phraya Srisuriyawong, the regent at that time, always objected because he desired to maintain the administrative system of the traditional vassal ruler (the vassal ruler had absolute power over his entire governing area but had to present golden and silver flowers as tributes to Bangkok every three years). The centralization of power occurred gradually after the death of Somdet Chao Phraya Srisuriyawong in 1882 AD.

3.3 Chiang Mai annexed as part of Siam

The episodes of power bargaining ended once the *Thesapiban* administrative system was implemented and power was centralized in the government in Bangkok. Subsequently, Siam sent its own governors for joint administration with the northern rulers. The arrival of these public servants required the use of the city center to build the government complex. These complexes shared some similarities because the building plans were forwarded by the central administration in Bangkok. Obviously, these were Western-style brick buildings. The

Chiang Mai rulers needed to adjust themselves to the new influence and gave several land plots they owned to the Siamese government for the construction of government offices. For example, *Monthon Payap City Hall* was built in the area of the former governor's residence, whereas *Wiang Kaew Hor Kham*, built in the reign of Chao Kawila, was used for building a standard prison, as required by Siam. Since the administrative transformation of the vassal state into *Monthon Thesapiban* (literally, a regional administrative system), *Khum Chao Luang* and the residences of the key rulers of Chiang Mai were increasingly influenced by the building styles of Siamese aristocrats or wealthy merchants in Bangkok. For example, *Khum Chao Burirat House (Kaew Mung Muang)* was built in 1918 AD in the reign of Chao Inthawalarot Suriyawong, the eighth ruler, during the transformations of Chiang Mai into the *Monthon Thesapiban* administration. This house's standard style differed from other Lanna houses in terms of its two-story functionality (Lanna houses were generally raised above the ground and the upper story was mainly used) and its building materials, the first floor with bricks and the second floor with wood. In addition, the Lanna sun deck and terrace were excluded, while the pediment was furnished with carvings. Overall, such distinctions were in parallel with the buildings constructed by Lanna rulers in other cities (e.g., in Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, and Nan). All of these were influenced by the building styles of the aristocrats and wealthy merchants in Bangkok.

Another such building was the Daraphirom Palace of Princess Dara Rasmi, the princess consort of King Rama V. Built in Chiang Mai, her private palace was a large-sized residence not reliant on the northern style; the roof featured dormers and complex systems, regarded as Western in style via Siam (Office of Art and Culture, Chulalongkorn University, 2016).

After the reign of Chao Luang Inthawichayanon, Siam had considerable influence on Chiang Mai and other governor's houses in the city through the building plans used in Bangkok or for Western-style buildings.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis of Western-style houses in Bangkok and Chiang Mai

Western-style houses were widely built in Bangkok following the construction of the Western-style palace in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910 AD); bureaucrats began to follow the trend. The popular Western-style house plans were divided into two patterns. One featured an L-shaped pattern with its staircase outside the house, in conformity with Thai beliefs. The staircase was in two locations: at the front, as the main entrance, and at the back with a staircase as a private entrance for owners and servants. This two-staircase pattern was generally observable in wealthy merchants' houses in Bangkok (Chungsiriarak, 2010).

The other pattern was square-shaped, with the terrace stretching across the house's front. Somchart Chungsiriarak (2010) pointed out that this pattern followed the Singaporean-style house built since the reign of King Rama IV, with the staircase inside. These two patterns were first built in Bangkok by bureaucrats and wealthy merchants before they were popular on a wider scale. Such Western-style house plans were then used for the construction of Chiang Mai governor's houses. The L-shaped layout was found at *Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In)*, built between 1473 and 1482 AD, during the reign of King Rama V. Presumably, Chao Burirat (Maha-In) probably built the Western-style house in response to the fondness of Chao Luang Inthawichayanon for Siamese and Western modernization acquired through close relationships with Siamese aristocrats⁵ (Bock, 1986; Ongsakul, 2008).

As a result, people working with Chiang Mai rulers like Chao Burirat (Maha-In) had a fondness for Siamese modernity and began constructing Western-style houses. *Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In)*, with its L-shaped floor layout and outside staircase, is shown in Figure 7; the sun deck and a small staircase were added to serve household activities. The layout sample shows a similar pattern to that of the Western-style buildings in Bangkok built in the same period.

⁵ One daughter of Phra Chao Inthawichayanon was Princess Dara Rasmi, the princess consort of King Rama V.

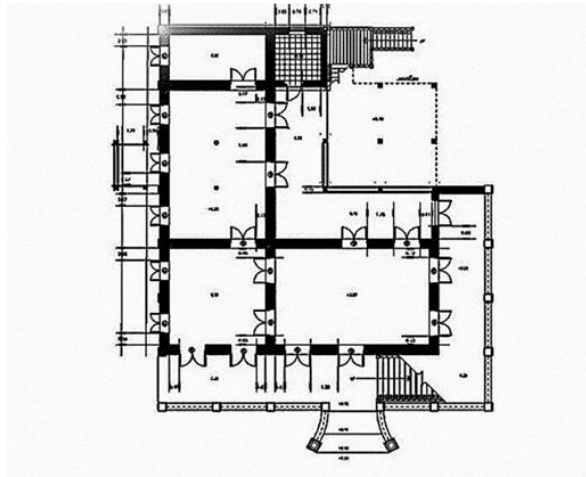


Figure 7: Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In) Layout (Arkarapoti Wong, 2019)

Khum Chao Burirat House (Kaew Mung Muang) was built in 1918 AD during the reign of King Rama VI. The objective of building Western-style houses in this period changed from that in the reign of King Rama V to reasons of modernity,⁶ comfort, and quality-of-life. However, the building plans still relied on the L- and square-shaped patterns from the previous reign. The building style of *Khum Chao Burirat House (Kaew Mung Muang)* showed similarities in terms of its square-shaped plan with a central projecting portico (Figure 8). The functional layout was consistent with the increasing privacy provided by traditional building plans. Two sets of staircases still remained, with the front being the main entrance and the back the private entrance. Interestingly, this governor's house had its main staircase in the middle of the house, contrary to Thai beliefs that a staircase should not usually be placed inside the house. This typical house in the city of Chiang Mai represented the era of transformation, focusing on importance and functionality rather than traditional beliefs.

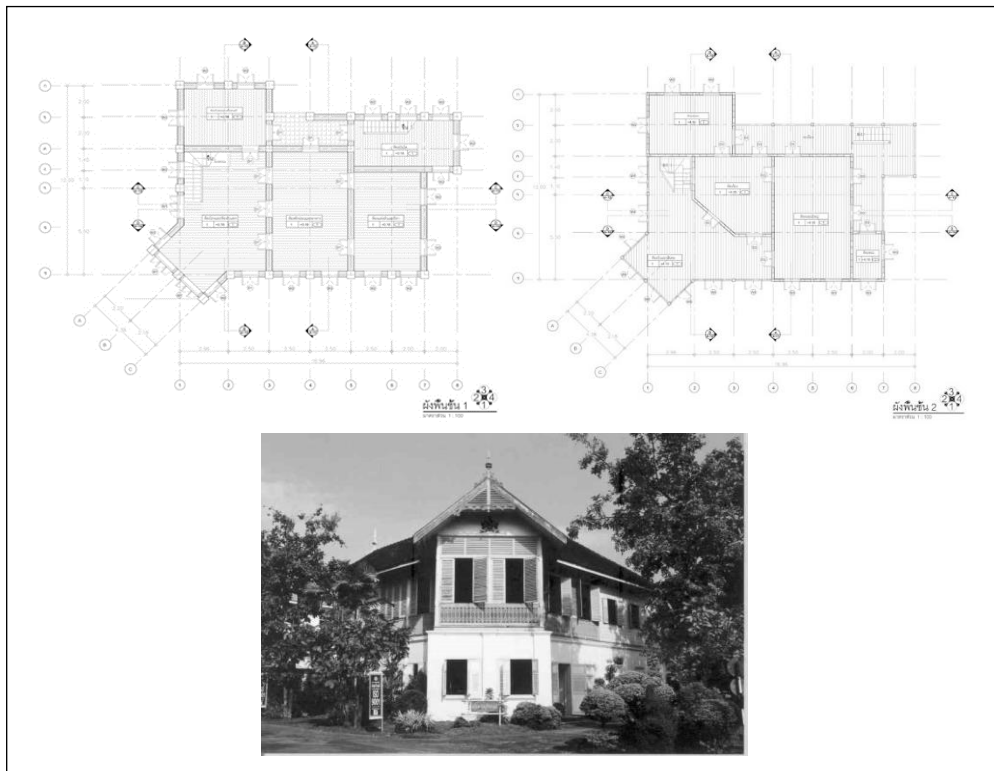


Figure 8: Khum Chao Burirat House (Kaew Mung Muang) (Above: Rittisorn, 2015; Below: Kambunruang, 2018)

⁶ King Rama V urgently modernized the country to keep up with the West, having anticipated a reduction in pressure from Western colonization at that time.

4.2 Examples of Western-style houses and governor's houses in the city of Chiang Mai

An outstanding example of house layout changes in Bangkok was Kraichitti House (Figure 9), located on Khao San Road, Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok, with the adjusted layout for more functionality and its staircase placed in the middle of the house, leading to other functional rooms, such as a bedroom, kitchen, and living room. This pattern was considered a modern one with Western influences. The layout and front elevation in Figure 10 show the floor layout, with a staircase placed in the middle of the house. Kraichitti House is located on Khao San Road, Bangkok, built in 1970 AD (at the end of the reign of King Rama V) by an Italian craftsman.

Another building plan observable in Chiang Mai was that of the *Khum Chao Dara Rasmi*, built during 1927-1929 AD, when Princess Dara Rasmi, the princess consort of King Rama V, was in charge of its construction. The Siamese influence was probably passed on to Princess Dara Rasmi because she lived in the Grand Palace in Bangkok as the princess consort. After the king's death, she returned to Chiang Mai. In total, she lived in Bangkok for around 28 years (1886-1914 AD) (Office of Art and Culture, Chulalongkorn University, 2016).



Figure 9: Kraichitti House in Bangkok (Boonjamnong, 2016)

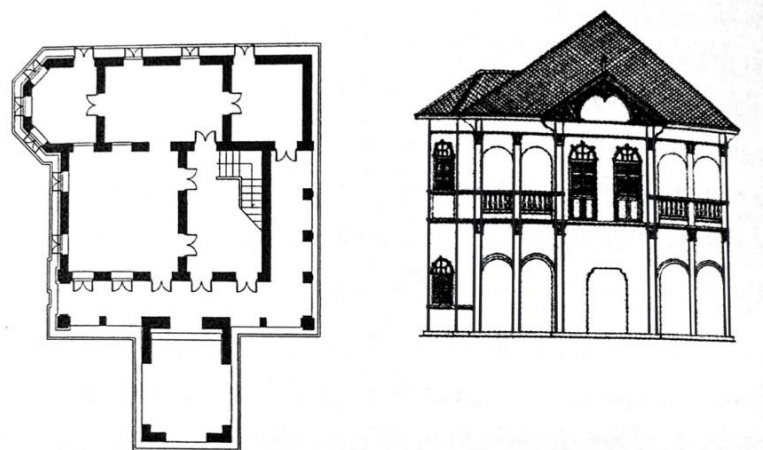


Figure 10: The Layout and Front Pictures of Kraichitti House (Chungsiriarak, 2010)

Khum Chao Dara Rasmi featured a main hall leading to other rooms (Figure 11). Interestingly, the main entrance was still similar to that found in Lanna houses. However, there was a staircase positioned in the middle of the building, as in most buildings in Bangkok, and a side staircase allowed entrance to the living room. Several rooms were also partitioned, while the building plan was asymmetrical. This typical building was considered a modern style widely accepted in Bangkok from the end of the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910 AD) to that of King Rama VI (1910-1925 AD).

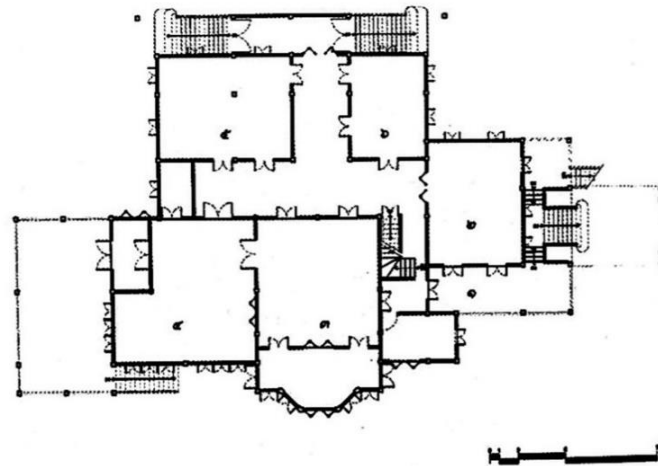


Figure 11: Plan of Khum Chao Dara Rasmi (Office of Art and Culture, Chulalongkorn University, 2016)



Figure 12: Khum Chao Dara Rasmi



Figure 13: Khum Rin-kaew



Figure 14: Khum Chedi-kew

Khum Chao Dara Rasmi, *Khum Chedi-kew*, and *Khum Chao Rin-kaew* (Figure 12,13,14 respectively) were built in the same period. The owner of the latter two was Chao Kaew Navarat, the last ruler of Chiang Mai (reigned 1910-1939 AD). These were very different from the traditional Lanna building in architectural style, materials, structure, technique, and function. The material was changed to concrete. The roof was flatter. The first-floor plan was used to serve building functionality, and the staircase was located in the middle of the house.

5. CONCLUSION

Overall, the transformation of governor's houses in the city of Chiang Mai can be seen through their styles and building complexes, which were traditionally decorated with the *Chor Fah* (gable apex), *Bairaka* (toothlike ridges on the sloping edges of a gable), and *Hanghong* (typical wood carving pattern) of Lanna, representing traditional architectural features. The main event influencing changes to the *Khum Chao* in Chiang Mai was the unification of Lanna as part of Siam through the transformation of the *Thesapiban* administration. This transformation meant that those with the power to influence Chiang Mai truly changed the style of the *Khum Chao* there. For example, the *Khum Luang* was initially a building complex with an area for public work within the same place. After the transformation of the administrative system, the power of the rulers was subject to restrictions, and the system of northern rulers was eventually abolished. Supplementary buildings inside the *Khum Luang* for the city administration were therefore unnecessary and the *Khum Luang* became simply a large-scale residence. The development of *Khum Chao* was shown in Table 1.

The use of the building, apart from providing increasing privacy (from the entrance), was more complex, through the additional hall in the middle of the house leading to other functional and more proportioned rooms. The developed layouts, building styles, and building materials were all influenced by the Western-style building plans widely built in Bangkok. The *Khum Chao* traditionally made of wood was replaced by buildings in modern materials, namely, bricks and concrete, while the building and roof styles had greater variety.





The *Khum Chao* in Chiang Mai mentioned in this research exemplified those in the city with various Western influences. In other words, after the traditional form of *Khum Chao*, construction relied on Western influences through foreign wood merchants and from Siam. An outstanding example was the *Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In)* (1473-1482 AD). Later, more Siamese influence spread to Chiang Mai. Even though the *Khum Chao* adopted the Western style, this influence came via Bangkok, resulting in a combination of Western and Siamese influence, as in the *Khum Chao Burirat House (Kaew Mung Muang)*, built in 1918 AD, with its fretwork decorations around roof elements, showing the popular architectural decorations from the reign of King Rama V and King Rama VI.

During the end of the reign of King Rama VII (after the Siamese Coup d'etat in 1932 AD), Siam annexed Chiang Mai. *Khum Chao* buildings were further adjusted in response to the trends in Bangkok. The *Khum Chao Dara Rasmi*, built during this period, featured functionality different from that of traditional Lanna buildings, sequencing the functionality in terms of increasing privacy. Typical buildings contained a hall leading to other functional rooms, as well as complex roofing systems and popular roof styles, and belonged to wealthy merchants and Siamese aristocrats in Bangkok.

This study shows that the Western-style *Khum Chao* in Chiang Mai underwent transformations in relation to Siamese influence. Even though they adopted a Western style, the patterns and styles were passed

on from buildings popularly constructed in Bangkok. They displayed the Siamese influence of the time, which affected the Chiang Mai rulers' decision making regarding the style for the *Khum Chao*. The historical overview suggests that the Western-style *Khum Chao* in Chiang Mai can probably be redefined as "the Siamese-influenced buildings" rather than Western-influenced, as they were previously described.

Table 1: Styles of Khum Chao by Period

Plan	Built	Name of the building/owner	Planning design	Government system period
	N/A	Pantao Temple/ Chao Mahotarapratej	Traditional planning with function advancing from less private to more private. The stair was placed outside the building.	Vassal state (the period of King Rama IV, 1851-1868 AD)
	1473-1482 AD	<i>Khum Chao Burirat House (Maha-In)/ Chao Burirat (Maha-In)</i>	Traditional planning with function advancing from less private to more private. The stair was placed outside the building. Addition of the surrounding balcony as the British Colonial building.	Vassal state (the period of King Rama V 1868-1910 AD)
	1918 AD	<i>Khum Chao Burirat House (Kaew Mung Muang)/ Khum Chao Burirat (Kaew Mung Muang)</i>	Traditional planning with function advancing from less private to more private. The stair was placed inside the building.	Mon-Thon-The-Sa-Phi-Ban (The period of King Rama VI 1910-1925 AD)
	1927-1929 AD	Daraphirom palace/ Chao Dara Rasmi	Western planning, with a corridor and private rooms. The stairs were outside and inside, depending on function.	Mon-Thon-The-Sa-Phi-Ban (The period of King Rama VII 1925-1935 AD)

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