



การเปลี่ยนแปลงภูมิสังขานเมือง และแนวทางการอนุรักษ์เมืองประวัติศาสตร์สงขลา¹ Change of Urban Morphology and Conservation Guidelines for Songkhla Historic Town

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการเปลี่ยนแปลงภูมิสังฐานและรูปแบบมรดกสถาปัตยกรรม และเป็นพื้นฐานนำไปสู่ข้อเสนอแนวทางการอนุรักษ์โดยใช้กระบวนการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณร่วมกับการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า เมืองประวัติศาสตร์สงขลาเป็นเมืองท่าการค้าทางทะเลอย่างต่อเนื่อง ตั้งแต่เมืองสงขลาหัวเข้าแดง เมืองสงขลาแหลมสน และเมืองสงขลาบ่ออย่าง รวมทั้งมีความหลากหลายของกลุ่มวัฒนธรรมไทย จีน มุสลิม และรูปแบบมรดกสถาปัตยกรรมที่หลากหลายดังปรากฏเป็นหลักฐานมานานถึงปัจจุบัน ลักษณะภูมิศาสตร์และการกระจายตัวของชุมชนที่มีการเชื่อมโยงโครงข่ายถนนเพื่อเป็นทางสัญจรส่งผลต่อรูปแบบผังเมืองและการสร้างอาคารในลักษณะต่อเนื่องแบบ “ตึกแถว” ปัจจุบันเมืองประวัติศาสตร์สงขลาประสบปัญหาการพัฒนาอย่างขาดความเข้าใจในพื้นที่และขาดแนวทางอนุรักษ์ก่อให้เกิดผลกระทบแก่มรดกสถาปัตยกรรม ดังนั้น การศึกษานี้จึงนำไปใช้เพื่อทำความเข้าใจการตั้งถิ่นฐานของชุมชน รวมไปถึงการเสนอแนวทางการอนุรักษ์และควบคุมการเปลี่ยนแปลงที่เหมาะสมเพื่อรักษาคุณค่ามรดกสถาปัตยกรรมของพื้นที่เออไว้ได้

คำสำคัญ: เมืองประวัติศาสตร์สงขลา ภูมิสังฐาน การอนุรักษ์

Abstract

The objective of this research is to study change of urban morphology and the styles of architectural heritage in order to provide some advice on proper conservation methods. This research employed both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The result of the study reveals that Songkhla historic town has continuously been a trading seaport since the time of Songkhla at Hua Khao Dang, to Songkhla Lam Son and to Sonkhla Bo Yang. Songkhla is rich in its cultural diversity from Thai, Chinese, and Muslim groups with a variety of styles in its architectural heritage which is evidently in the present time. The geographical setting and the distribution of the community which is connected via a road network impacted the city plan and caused clusters of continuous buildings known as “row houses”. Presently architectural heritage is facing a few problems. The development in the historic town area is done without understanding of the local context nor conservation guideline. Consequently, the development has caused some negative impact on architectural heritage. This study, therefore, seeks to understand the community settlement in Songkhla Historic town and provide some guidelines for conservation and development control suitable with the context in order to conserve and maintain the value of the local architectural heritage.

Keywords: Songkhla Historic Town, Urban Morphology, Conservation

Introduction

Economic growth pushes urban development in many areas. In some cases, historic areas with ambiguous policies and urban development plans are severely impacted by the changes because proper guidelines to handle this kind of threats in the context of historic towns are missing.

In the past, conservation in many countries focused only on maintenance of ancient remains by continuously holding to UNESCO guidelines. [1] In the mid of 20th century, attention to conserve aspects of the character of places increased. In the case of urban areas, the rising attention was especially evident in the concern to areas, sites and structures of historical significance. [1] The relationship of various aspects in a town is to be analyzed with street systems, plot patterns and building patterns. The relationship reveals the town structure and architectural characters of each period. [2] As for Songkhla historic town, even though authority was decentralized to local administration organizations so that the local authority may play a more important role in the preservation of cultural heritage [3], in practice the local administration organizations still adhere to the responsibilities given from the national organizations who follow international conservation concepts and methods without sufficient understanding the development of town structures. [4]

Songkhla historic town is one of the towns facing the changes in physical, social and cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions from the various factors. In 2005 The Rattanakosin and Old Town Conservation Committee listed Songkhla as one of the 10 historic towns in group 1. The towns in group 1 must urgently implement proper conservation and development in order to prevent a threat from town expansion and development that may invade or damage the historic town. Later in 2010, the boundaries of the historic towns were announced. The announcement of the boundaries of Songkhla historic town indicated that Songkhla historic town is a significant cultural heritage to be preserved for the future generations. [5]

After the boundary announcement, no concrete action plans nor conservation guidelines for implementation are created. Architectural heritage in Songkhla historic town is still facing problems from urban development constantly. For examples, some valued buildings have been demolished to construct modern buildings that can accommodate commercial usage better. Other valued buildings are left desolated and run down. In addition, many valued buildings which were built for residential purposes are devalued from a misuse of the buildings. Therefore, as a way to be prepared to handle the crisis from these problems, this study aims to study contributing factors of the changes of morphology and architectural styles of each period and to present some issues in the conservation of Songkhla historic town that relating organizations are currently facing. These issues provide background and understanding of the situation and lead ways to find appropriate conservation guidelines suitable with the context of Songkhla historic town.

Methodology

To meet the objectives, this research uses a mixed method that includes both qualitative and quantitative researches. The data was collected through various data collecting methods as follows. 1) The data was collected through a survey of 568 households mainly in the study area, namely, Nakorn Nok road, Nakorn Nai road, and Nang Ngam road. The collected data was analyzed and compared according to the criteria for evaluation and identification of the value of buildings. In the survey, the building location, style of the building, and materials used in the building were identified. An interview with the building occupiers provided information about the history of the building, the age of the building, ownership, and building uses. According to the evaluation and identification criteria, 130 out of a total of 568 households are valued buildings and occupied by the property owners 2) The data from the documentations in local organizations relating to conservation policies, plans, and activities was collected. 3)

The data was collected by interviewing representatives from various relating organizations. The data from the interview revealed the concepts, visions, and limitation of conservation in Songkhla historic town. 4) The data was collected from questionnaires, in conjunction with a series of in-depth interviews with the 130 owners of valued buildings identified in 1. 5) The data and information from all these sources were analyzed by content analysis and SPSS for window. Then a focus group interview with various stakeholders was conducted to discuss the result of the study. The feedbacks and comments from the focus group interview was taken into consideration and summed with the result of this research.

Settlements background

Since prehistoric period, the settlement of Songkhla's community has been on Songkhla lake basin area indicated by traces of various remains such as ditches, berms, and monuments. At that time, Sathing Phra was the administrative and trade center in the South East Coast Peninsula. It was particularly important as the starting point of the ancient trade route linking with South East Asia and Middle East. [6] In 1357, Sathing Phra began to decline probably by an invasion of Malay pirates. Thus, some residents migrated to form new communities such as Songkhla at Hua Khao Dang and Phatthalung. [7] In 1450 to 1550 the name of Songkhla kept appearing in memorandum of Arab-Persia traders. The origin of the Songkhla name would come from topography as "Sting". The Indian traders had called Songkhla as "Sing Krol Lar" and the Western traders as "Singora", which was a well-known port in the Malay Peninsula. Finally, the location was called as "Songkhla" as in the present name. [8] (Figure 1)



Figure 1 Maritime trade routes in Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD)

Source: <http://chinese-unicorn.com/ch19/> (23/3/2015)

In 1613, Songkhla at Hua Khao Dang was established by Dato Mogul - an immigrant from Indonesia who became the first king of Singora. Trade activities in Songkhla increased due to the security system, trading facilities, and more importantly the tax-free benefit. In 1680, King Narai of Siam sent troops to Songkhla and the troops burnt everything in the city. After the attack, the ruined Songkhla was beyond the point of restoration. The loss of the battle to the Ayutthaya marked the end of the reign of Muslim leaders of Songkhla at Hua Khao Dang and the end to the role of the seaport. [8]

Since Songkhla at Hua Khao Dang was destroyed, people moved to Bo Sab's hillside known as "Songkhla Lam Son". During 1775, Chinese immigrants especially from Fujian came to settle here and to trade. King Taksin of Thonburi dynasty appointed Yeang Sae Hao, – a Chinese merchant - Songkhla's ruler. The first Chinese leaders later became Na Songkhla families. [9] During the reign of King Rama I, the City Pillar was bestowed at Songkhla Bo Yang. At that time, Wat Matchimawat, Wat Yang Thong, and Wat Pho were built. [10] Continually to the reign of King Rama II, seven towns in the most southern area were under the patronage of the King of Siam. Therefore, the seven roads of Songkhla Bo Yang were named accordingly as: Pattani, Nong Jig, Yala, Raman, Yaring, Sai Buri, and Satun. [8] (Figure 2)



Figure 2 Location map of seven roads at Songkhla Bo Yang in present
 Modified by: Nattaneeporn Noisangiam (22/8/2015)

During the reign of King Rama III, Songkhla expanded steadily. [9] Unfortunately, this location came with geographical limitation, namely, the lack of flat area, less fresh water, and narrow land. Thus, the town was moved to a new location called Songkhla Bo Yang, or the present day Songkhla. [7] (Figure 3)



Figure 3 Songkhla settlements
Modified by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam (23/8/2013)

Results

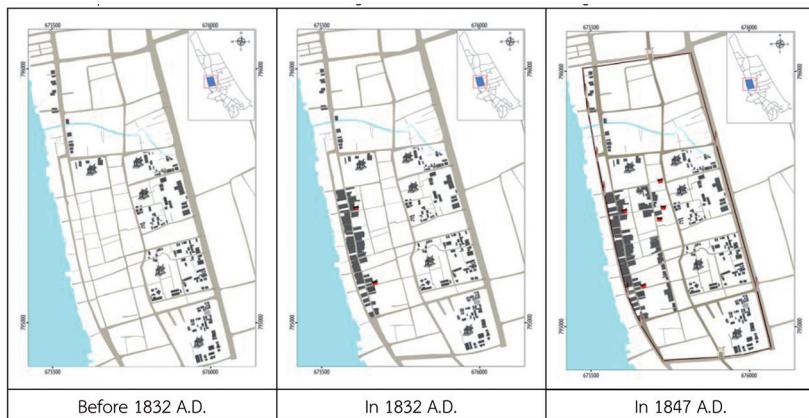
The result of this research covered the following 1) the changes of urban morphology and the architectural styles 2) conservation of architectural heritage in Songkhla historic town 3) proposed conservation guidelines.

The changes of urban morphology and architectural styles.

Urban morphology of Songkhla historic town at Bo Yang is important to the pattern and the development of the community. It causes some changes in the old way of life in physical, social and cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions. The development of Songkhla historic town is a continuous one. The initial settlement originated by the geographical features of the area which is enclosed by Songkhla Lake on the west and the gulf of Thailand on the east. These features made Songkhla suitable to be a port for shipping and linking to other towns. In the beginning of Songkhla

historic town settlement, the temples were the community centers on the east of the area. Later, as the population of Chinese immigrants increased, they moved to settle at a new location on the west of the lake on the north-south direction with Nakorn Nai roads as a main pathway. The Chinese settlement and the geographical setting of the new community caused a unique architectural style. This area was filled with houses in traditional Chinese row house style and local Thai row house style (Table 3). In 1836, the area could not accommodate the rising number of Chinese immigrants anymore. The community was then expanded to the east in parallel to the original community on Nang Ngam road. The new area was connected to the old by a road network. Thus, the road network became the main contributing factor for the grid pattern in the morphology. At that time, the area of Songkhla historic town was bounded by the city walls built during the reign of King Rama III. [11] (Table 1)

Table 1 Map of urban transformation of Songkhla historic town at Bo Yang (Before 1832 A.D.-1847 A.D.)



Drawn by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam (28/2/2013)

According to a field survey, the main roads connecting the city gate with temples or shrines are wider than the minor roads used as passageways within the community such as Yaring road, Nong Jik road, and Yala road. These passageways are small and narrow and can be used only by foot, bikes and motorbikes only. (Figure 4, 5)



Figure 4 The main thoroughfare on Yaring, Nang Ngam, and Yala roads
Taken by Nattaneeporn Noisangjam (15/7/2014)



Figure 5 The secondary thoroughfares in the communities
Taken by Nattaneeporn Noisangjam (15/7/2014)

In 1847 some Muslims migrated in and settled around the south of the wall which was called “Ban Bon” After a year, in 1848 Don Rak temple was built at the north of the town. The development of the community during that time expanded in the north-south direction because it was low density areas and thus, could conveniently accommodate the town expansion. In 1862 King Rama IV bestowed 3 year tributes to Chao Praya Songkhla (Boon Sunk) to be used as the construction cost of Sai Buri road – a linking road between Songkhla town and Sai Buri town. This road was to enhance the traffic between the two towns so that people could travel to each other conveniently and rapidly. In that construction project, Praya Sai Buri built a road from Sai Buri town to meet the other side at the border between the two towns. Therefore, Sai Buri road is considered the first road that crosses Malay Peninsula. It was used for trading activities between the two towns from that time until the present time. [8] In the same period, Songkhla was also trading with Penang, Malacca and Singapore. One of the influences of this international trading activity is seen in some buildings in Western architectural styles in the midst of buildings in Chinese architectural style. (Table 3)

During the reign of King Rama V, there was a governing reformation. A new system was made to establish a group of states which called in Thai “Menton”. The reform changed Songkhla into a governing center for the lower south of Thailand. More new roads were constructed and developed to enhance inter-city travel between Songkhla and its surrounding cities. The economic and governing factors pushed Songkhla to grow bigger. However, Songkhla expansion was limited by the city walls. As such the walls were taken down to enlarge the city boundaries. The bricks from the wall were used as material for Nakorn Nok road construction. The process of road construction in Songkhla was recorded in a report about the southern city from the Minister of Interior at that time. (Figure 6)

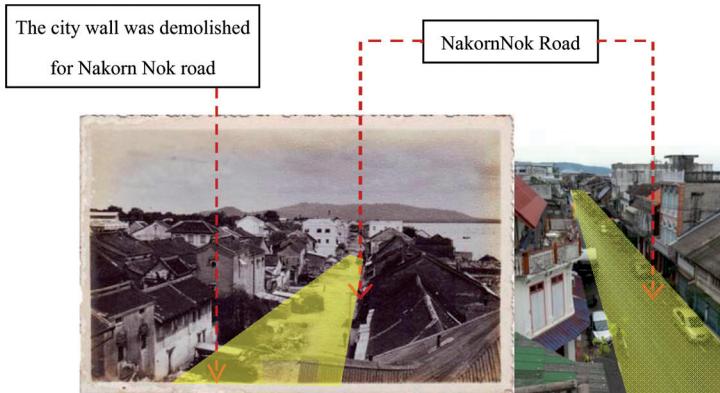
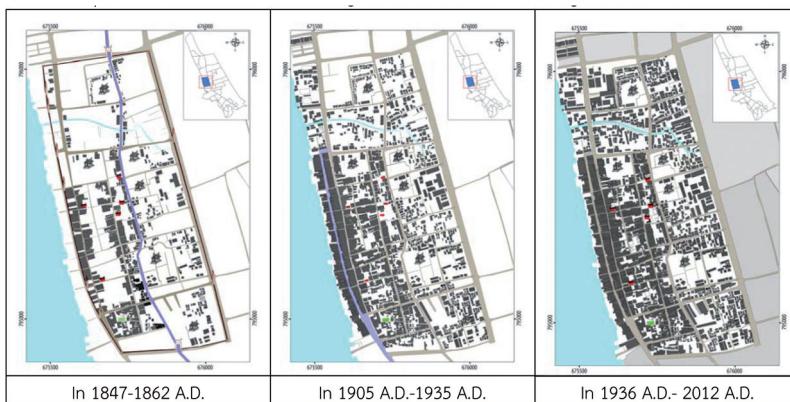


Figure 6 NakornNok road in King Rama V (Left),
NakornNok road today (Right)

Source: Anak Navikamul and Jamrat Janphammarattana (2003, 106)
Taken by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam, (15/7/2014)

Consequently, the deconstruction of the wall not only expanded the area for town development to the area outside the wall with roads to connect the shipping routes, but also completely changed the physical, social, economic, and governing setting of Songkhla. Later Songkhla's urban morphology changed again but this time because of the railway system which was built to connect to the ports. With this new development, the community then expanded along the railway since the area within the walls had already become a condense residential area. The community that expanded out in all direction also causes environmental deterioration in the present time. (Table 2) For this period, contemporary buildings first appeared during the region of King Rama VII and continued on to the early years of King Rama IX. These buildings can be categorized into two groups as contemporary style and local Thai contemporary style. (Table 3)

Table 2 Map of urban transformation of Songkhla historic town at Bo Yang
(In 1847 A.D.-2012 A.D.)



From the study, cultural heritage of Songkhla historic town is the buildings under the care of the national organization by the Fine Arts Department that under the Ministry of Culture. These buildings are registered as monuments. Some cultural heritage is residential buildings that indicate historical development of the town through their unique architectural styles in different periods from the beginning in 1832 to the present. Buildings in traditional Chinese and local Thai styles are scattering on both sides of Nakorn Nai road. Buildings in Sino-European style are on Nakorn Nok road. Buildings in contemporary and local Thai contemporary styles are mainly on Nang Ngam road and scattering in the area of Yaring road, Nong Jig road, Raman road, Patani road, Yala road, and Phatthalung road. This type of buildings is increasing and spreading throughout the three main roads, but more crowded on Nang Ngam road and Nakorn Nok road. (Figure 7)

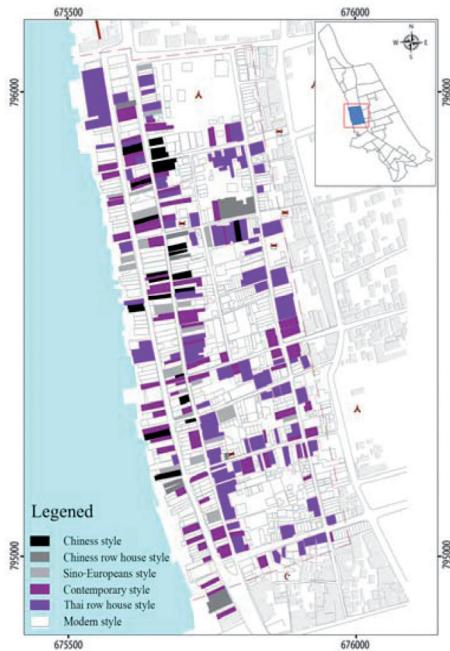


Figure 7 Location map of architectural heritage
 Drawn by Nattaneeporn Noisangjam (28/2/2013)

Table 3 Types of buildings in Songkhla historic town

(1836 A.D. -1851 A.D.)		(1851 A.D. -1932 A.D.)	(After 1932 A.D. -1966 A.D.)		Present
Tradition Chinese style	Local Thai Row House style	Sino-European style	Contemporary style	Local Thai contemporary style	Modern style
					
24 Units (4.22%)	20 Units (3.52%)	29 Units (5.10%)	108 Units (19.03%)	47 Units (8.27%)	340 Units (59.86%)

Recently, the architectural heritage at Nakorn Nok road is deteriorating severely with rising tendency. Some building deterioration is in the old, unmaintained buildings, particularly those that are closed without any activities and left decadent to the point that cannot be repaired. Some value buildings are inappropriately used as warehouse, fish market, and mechanic shop. It also devalues the buildings.

Conservation of architectural heritage in Songkhla historic town

The awareness of conservation in Thailand particularly in the conservation of historic towns became apparent in 1982. The Rattanakosin and Old Town Conservation Committee was appointed with a mission to determine the boundaries of historic areas [12], to register historic sites, and to make policies and guidelines for conservation under the concept “Old towns or historic towns are the nation’s important cultural heritage”, [13] During that time, many laws are used as a conservation tool such as Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, B.E 2504 (1961) or Monument Act, Building Control Act, B.E.2522 (1979), Town and Planning Act, B.E 2518 (1975) as well as The Enhancement and Conservation of National Quality Act B.E. 2535 (1992). These Acts have some practical implications in Thai bureaucratic system. Thus, according to the Acts, any conservational activities and legislation on historic towns are practically difficult to be implemented. This is because each of these Acts indicates only roles and responsibilities of relating authorities without providing any operating guidelines. In addition, some aspects of these Acts are difficult to enforce due to their layers of conditions such as the hierarchy of laws, nature of control, and period of enforcement. [3]

According to Decentralization Act 1999, local administrative organizations have an important role and more responsibility in cultural heritage conservation at local level. In 2004, The Rattanakosin and Old Town Conservation Committee agreed to place Songkhla in the list of 10 towns which were urgently important to implement proper care and protection and to maintain the value of the old towns which were crucial in terms of history and culture. On 9th November 2010, the committee announced the boundaries of Songkhla historic town which covered the area of the old town and natural environment. [14] (Figure 8)

Therefore, in term of conservation policies in Thailand, local administrative organizations have received policies and concepts for the conservation work from Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning

in a top-down manner. The local administrative organizations have set plans, projects and activities in their development plan in a way that their plans are in congruence with the national plan at that time.

The announcement of the boundaries of Songkhla historic town in 2010 by Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning was done with local administrative and relating organizations were able to set direction of the development and to administrate a proper management for the conservation and development of historic towns. It was obvious that the announcement of Songkhla historic town was only to determine a physical boundary of the area without an operating plan leading to a concrete implementation. The following are the key concerns regarding the determination of the boundaries of Songkhla historic town:

1. The key factor for the determination of historic town boundary is a cooperation between Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning and the local administrative organizations. However, the decision on the boundaries of Songkhla historic town was made without both publicity to the local and the participation of the residents in the area. In this point, one of the residents comments, “I do not know that I am living in an old town area, nor do I know that there is an announcement about the boundaries of the old town area” (Puangthip Sirichot, interview July 20, 2013)

2. The old town area covers 4.335 Sq. Km. including 250 meters beyond the sea shore while Songkhla municipality cover the area of 9.27 Sq. Km. that the old town area covers historic sites and natural environment. Up to this point, there is no plan to accommodate conservation and development in the area. Therefore, if there is a decision on policies and plans to conserve and control the development in the future, owners of buildings which are classified as valued buildings will be impacted by the policies or the plans. (Figure 8)



Figure 8 Boundary of Songkhla historic town

Source: http://www3.onep.go.th/onep_file/UserFiles/songkhls%20map.pdf

3. Only historic sites are designated as first priority in significance. However, these historic sites have been under the protection and care of the Fine Arts Department already. Significance is not designated to the private-owned residential buildings that also demonstrate the development and uniqueness of Songkhla old town. Today this group of buildings is devalued from being misused from their original purpose as residential. Many of them are used as piers or fish markets, machinery shops and garages. Some buildings have been left desolated. Moreover, some valued buildings have been demolished to build new modern buildings that can respond to the needs for modern use in the buildings. Therefore, this raises some concerns. More valued buildings will be devalued in the future if there is no significance designation assigned to the group of private-owned buildings. In summary, even though there is a pre-requirement that the old town area must be accepted from various parties before the official announcement. In practice, the case of Songkhla historic town is solely done by the government sector. The local people have no involvement from the initial stage nor being informed or educated. [15] Any future plans or measures to conserve and develop the town may affect the residents who stay within the old town boundaries but do not possess valued buildings. This situation may also cause conflict on the operating level. Therefore, to set old town boundaries properly, the involvement of the people in the area should be supported from relating parties with the residents in the area at the first place. [16]

Proposed conservation guidelines

From the above study, the morphology of Songkhla historic town indicated the benefits of its geographical features as the main reasoning behind the decision to select to this location for settlement. The expansion of the community in each period has some effect to the size and nature of the commuting system. The initial settlement was on the wide main roads which were the connecting routes between the area inside and outside the

community. The minor roads were narrow and used only for the commuting within the community by foot only. The relationship between the space for the community settlement and the road network not only made the city plan of Songkhla historic town in a grid pattern, but also has some impacts on the building style which became a continuous set of buildings in a “row house” pattern.

However, in case Songkhla historic town from 2004s until now, the conservation plan of local government shows that the implementation has focused merely on both physical setting and tourism. In addition, the lack of regulations and local ordinance by the responsible agencies has worsened the town’s current situation. The demolition of significant historic buildings has been increasing. This phenomenon is not only a problem of Songkhla historic town, but also a problem of other historic towns in developing countries. [17]

Suggestions

Some suggestions to reduce the weaknesses of the present conservation situation in Songkhla historic town are:

1. Since public and private sectors still have insufficient knowledge and understanding about conservation, education in all dimensions should be given to raise awareness and appreciation for the conservation of cultural heritage and to help the people understand the reasons to conserve cultural heritage.
2. Local administrative and relating organizations should be promoted to participate in every conservation process as community committee. The making of conservation plan should integrate all aspects of relating science. Public hearing should be used to help people understand the situation better.
3. In case of building heritage, Songkhla municipality should issue a municipal law to control the development in historic area such as designating conservation area in order to maintain the environment and uniqueness

of the local setting. The municipality should also study the design of valued buildings in order to provide building design guidelines or to issue a local regulation for new buildings in the area so that newly constructed building will be harmonious with the old buildings in the area.

Finally, Songkhla historic town still needs to drive and push aggressively to reach the objectives with creative and proper guidelines of management. Just like many other historic towns in Thailand, Songkhla still needs to adapt to today's situation of the development.

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