



## Nakorn Lampang Urban, Thailand in the Time of Economic Flourishing From the Forest Concession and the Arrival of the Railway

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### Abstract

When English enlarged the forestry business from Burma into Lanna of Siam, many English forestry companies were founded by receiving the concession from the Siamese government since 1864. From 1883 onwards, Lampang flourished from the forestry business because it was able to connect to many other areas far away, so it became an important trade center. On the east bank of Wang river in Lampang, urban laid the pier for goods transshipment and for sending the teak logs down the river to the south, so it was full of the people's diversity. The urban community and trade center so appeared in this area called "*Chinese Market*." In the earlier Burmese, including Tai Yai, were the most economically powerful groups. They owned the forestry business and as the traders and later the coming of many Chinese traders. Most of them became to be the millionaires and built splendid houses in various styles. When the railway arrived in Lampang in 1915, it led to the big transformation of the economic and transportation system. The new market was erected around the Lampang railway station and became the source for trading by train and the trade center instead Chinese Market. Most of the traders are Chinese, enlarging the power of the economy. Lampang, as the important center of economics and society, was gradually declined because of the construction of Pahalyotin Road to Chiangrai and expanding the railway to Chiangmai in 1914 and 1921, respectively. Thus, it became just only to the passway city to Chiangrai or Chiangmai. The rulers and aristocratic class of Lampang also were reduced the role and power because the political administration was in the hand of Siam royal official from Bangkok.

**Keywords:** Lampang, Forestry concession, Burmese and Chinese Communities, Lanna, Nakorn Lampang railway station, Modern transportation.

### 1. Introduction

Nakorn Lampang urban has ever been the trade center of Lanna, especially in 1883-1922, because of the forestry concession and modern transportation. They brought about the economic flourishing of the city. Most of the forestry business was operated by the Westerners, Burmese, and Tai Yai. Moreover, the trading was in the hand of Chinese and Burmese. Most of them became to be millionaires. They built the splendid houses in various styles decorating with delicate elements and also had built or restored the Buddhist temples according to their believes and faith. Moreover, Lampang also was in a suitable location for easily connecting to the other regions; therefore, it became the center of the economy and society of northern Siam. The arrival of the railway to Lampang in 1915 significantly encouraged economic growth. Until the expanding the road to Chiangrai and railway to Chiangmai, including World War I directly affected to reduce the role of Nakorn Lampang in the case of the economic center of Lanna. Besides, the political and social reformation by the Siam government changed the independence state of Lanna to be a part of Siam finally.

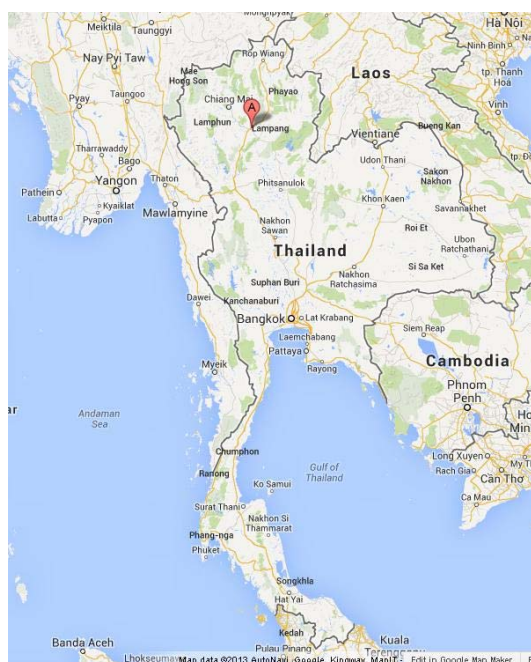
The English colonization over Southeast Asia made a big change to this area. As a result, King Rama V of Siam had to reform the regime to be a strong absolutist state. Because the rulers of dominions in old administration had the full freedom to manage the local resources so that they could seize to free themselves from Siam. The close connection between Lanna and English and Burmese was extremely worried by the Siam government. In 1899, Chiangmai had raised its status from the dominion to the city and gathered towns in the vicinity, founding as Mandala and ruled by the official appointed from the Ministry of Interior in Bangkok. This reformation directly affected Lanna rulers losing the benefit from the local resource and the power in the levy.

When Burma was an English colony, English enlarged the forestry business into Lanna. Many English forestry companies were founded by receiving the concession from the Siamese government since



1864. From 1883 onwards, Lampang flourished from the forestry business because it was able to connect to many other areas far away, so it became an important trade center. On the east bank of Wang River in Lampang, urban laid the pier for goods transshipment and for sending the teak logs down the river to the south. The urban community and trade center so appeared in this area. In the earlier Burmese, including Tai Yai, were the most economically powerful groups. They owned the forestry business and as the traders and later the coming of many Chinese traders.

When the railway arrived in Lampang in 1915, it led to the big transformation of the economic and transportation system. The new market was erected around the Lampang railway station and became the source for trading by train and the trade center instead Chinese Market. Most of the traders are Chinese, enlarging the power of the economy. Lampang, as the important center of economics and society, was gradually declined because of the construction of Pahalyotin Road to Chiangrai and expanding the railway to Chiangmai in 1914 and 1921, respectively. So it became just only to the passway city to Chiangrai or Chiangmai. The rulers and aristocratic class of Lampang also were reduced the role and power because the political administration was in the hand of Siam royal official from Bangkok (see the location of Lampang, Thailand in Figures 1 and 2).



**Figure 1** Map of Thailand showing the location of Lampang Province. World easy guides. (online)



**Figure 2** Area of Lampang Province Lampang Governor Office. (online)

## 2. Objectives

1. To study the evolution of the economy and society in Nakorn Lampang urban about the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century effecting from English and Burmese forestry concession and the arrival of the railway including the commercial under Chinese control until to the time of declination of it as the former center of economic of Lanna.
2. To study the architectural style and function of the residential and commercial buildings, including some public buildings in Nakorn Lampang urban effecting from the economic flourishing.



### 3. Materials and Methods

The historical research methodology was used for this study by analyzed from primary and secondary resources. The important primary resources are such as daily archives of the westerners, maps, and old photos from anywhere, including the summarize from the chronicles. At the same time, the information acquisition from general books, thesis books, and articles in journals for an explanation concerning concepts or others, including the electronic information from the internet, was the secondary resource. Meanwhile, the field trip in the concerning places was very important for getting clear evidence. After that, it is necessary to analyze and synthesis all of the information for the fulfillment of the objectives.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### *The economic flourishing from the forest concession*

The northern area of Thailand and Burma used to be rich in good quality of the teak forest. It was the reason why it was an important economic area. No doubt, it was tried to benefit by Lanna rulers and by both the Siamese government and the English government who ruled Burma at that time. In 1892 Siam reluctantly gave England the land on the east bank of Salvin River next to Chiengsaen, where the teak forest was fertility. The English government cited this area was previously a part of Burma, so then it must be the English colonial, too (Jongjitngam, 2006, 95). Later, English enlarged the forestry business into Lanna by letting the Burmese be concessionaire instead of the English government.

From 1883 onwards, the city of Lampang flourished from the forestry business because the location of Lampang was able to control the inner area of Wang River in Wang Nuea and Ngao district where the teak was fertility. Many English forestry companies were founded in northern Siam by receiving the concession from the Siamese government as British Boneo Co. Ltd., Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation Ltd. (Figure 3), Siam Forest Company Ltd., L.T. Leonowens Ltd. and East Asiatic Co. of Denmark. Besides, Lampang also was situated on the important trade route between southern China and southern Burma as from Yunan to Kengtung, passing Shan State to Chiengsaen-Chiangrai- Payao (in the north of Siam) and then to Lampang, Toen, Rahang, Mae-Sod and Mawlamyine in Burma, respectively. Meanwhile, Lampang also able connected to the city in the northeast as Nan and Luang Prabang in Laos, including to the south as Prae, Pitsanulok and Sukhothai (see Figures 1 and 2).



**Figure 3** Office of Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation Ltd., Lampang branch (Sukprakarn, 2001, 79)



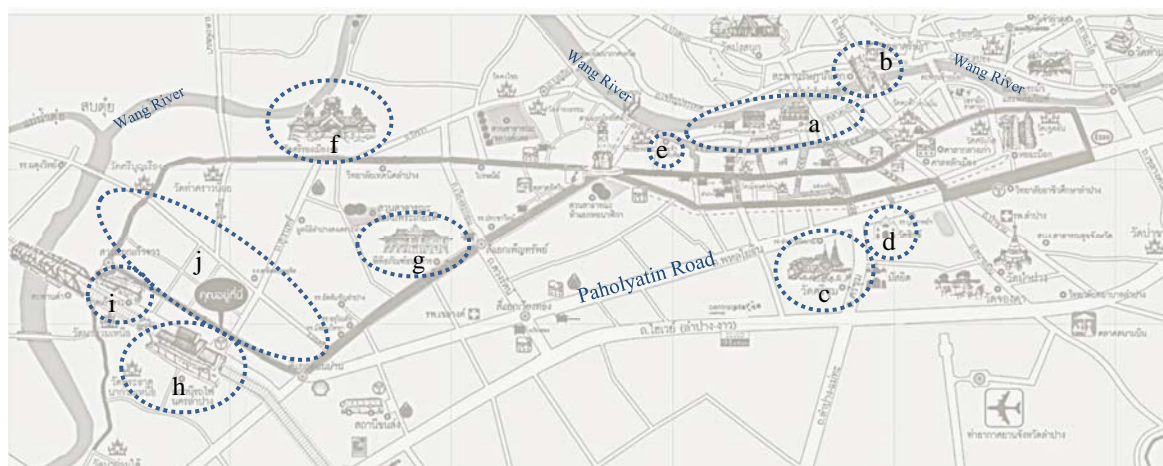
**Figure 4** The old photo in 1920 shows a lot of teak logs in Wang river near the pier in Lampang urban on the left. Warmraw. (pseudonym) 2006 online

At that time, on the east bank of Wang river in Lampang, urban lied the pier for goods transshipment and the pier for sending the teak logs down the river to Nakhon Sawan. The old picture in 1920, showing many teak logs in Wang river near the pier in Lampang urban, was evidence of grand forestry business in Lampang (Figure 4). So in Lampang urban was full of the people's diversity and various ethnic groups such as Tai Yai, Burmese as the owers of forestry business and traders, Indian the traders, English the forestry concessionaires, Kamu as the labours, local people and others. The urban community and trading center so appeared in this area called "Chinese Market" or "Kad Kong Ta" (means pier market). Chinese traders were



the intermediaries who exported rawhide, rice and red stick lac to Bangkok or Nakhon Sawan by shipment and imported sugar, salt, cotton and dried fish for selling in Lampang. (Sukprakarn, 2001, 76-77) (see the position of the Chinese Market in Figures 5 and 6).

In the earlier, Burmese was the most economically powerful person of the Chinese Market community. They gradually came to Lampang since 1896, working for English officers who were assigned by the Siamese government, founding the forestry system in the northern. Those Burmese settled down in this area because of the convenient transportation by the river.



**Figure 5** Map of Nakorn Lampang urban showing some of the important historic places mentioned in this paper

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. Chinese Market (Old Market) or Kad Kong Tha | f. Wat Sri Rongmuang                    |
| b. Ratsadaphisek Bridge                        | g. Siam Commercial Bank, Lampang branch |
| c. Wat Sri Chum                                | h. Nakorn Lampang Railway Station       |
| d. Sihk Monastery                              | i. Kao Jaow Market                      |
| e. Chinese Shrine                              | j. Sob Tui zone                         |



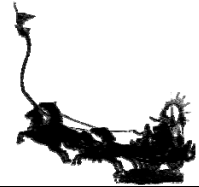
**Figure 6** Wang River flows through Nakorn Lampang urban. On the right located Chinese Market or Kad Kong Tha, the former economic center of Lampang.



**Figure 7** Some houses and shops on Chinese Market Road (Old Market Road) or Kad Kong Tha community nowadays.

#### *Some important buildings in the old trade center*

English forestry business made Burmese have economic power over Siamese, such as getting more salary and other much income, including forgiving the taxes. So most of them became to be the millionaires. They built the splendid houses showing their status. The various styles of houses erect along the road in Chinese Market such as 1 or 2-storey rowhouse shops, 2-storey timber or cement houses or half-timber



decorating with delicate elements, magnificent Burmese houses mixed Lanna style and the house imitated the wealthy style in Bangkok. (Figure 7). One of the most important people of the Chinese market in that time as U Ngoeysin, ancestor of Suwanna-aut family, was the first Burmese headman of Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation Ltd. in Lampang and wealth from the forestry business (Figure 8). His gingerbread house style is the most outstanding in the Chinese Market, built-in 1907 by craftsmen from Burma (Figure 9). Another important one was U Yee or Mr.Yai Boriboon, Burmese headman of L.T. Leonowens Ltd., and was one of the influential Burmese merchants in Lampang (Figure 10). He was the owner of Boriboon Market and many business. His beautiful house was built in the Chinese Market and decorated in mixed European-Lanna-Burmese style, including carved wood ( Figure 11).



**Figure 8** U Ngoeysin , ancestor of Suwanna-aut family



**Figure 9** U Ngoeysin' s house in Chinese Market



**Figure 10** U.Yee (or Mr.Yai Boriboon), One of the Burmese influential merchant in Lampang.  
(Hengsadeekul, 2010, 13)



**Figure 11** Boriboon House of U.Yee (or Mr.Yai Boriboon), 1915.



**Figure 12** Kanchanawong Building, 1908 used to be Burmese residence and tailor shop.

Besides being the forest businessmen, many other Burmese earned a living as the merchants selling the clothes, silverware, medicinally herbs, and forest products. They also built the beautiful buildings for residence and stores, such as Kanchanawong Building in 1908 that used to be Burmese residence and tailor shop. This concrete building was decorated with gingerbread wood style and stucco by the craftsmen from Mandalay (Figure 12). (Hengsadeekul 2010, 53). Business affairs were in the hands of the Burmese until the Chinese Hainan and Hakka came by their cargo ships during the beginning of the pier market flourishing. Thenceforth they became the most influent because of their diligent and clever characters. The market was full of Chinese that was why it was called “*Chinese Market*” (Later, it was changed to be “*Old Market*” when Marshall P.Pibunsongkram was the prime minister of Thailand under the nationalism policy.) (Hengsadeekul, 2010, 10-13) Many splendid buildings were built by Chinese owners such as Fongli Building of the trade magnate, Master Fong, 1891-1901, the early half brick and wood building in Lampang (Figure 13). Master Fong was the forestry concessionaire and was the holder of a government monopoly in opium and liquor of Lampang. The prominent commercial building in western and Chinese style as Yean Zi Tai Li Ki Building, 1913 of Mr.Jin Yean (Aree Tiwalee), the big Chinese proprietor. Once was the biggest department store in the Chinese Market (Figure 14).

There are the others interesting houses and shops in Chinese market such as Mae Daeng House of Mr.Gao Sae-Haew and Mrs.Daeng Panichphan sold the import up to date goods from Bangkok and abroad. The building was decorated with stucco by craftsmen from Mandalay, Burma ( Figure 15) Kamson House, the first cement house in the Chinese Market community, 1917. The construction materials were sent from Bangkok by train and ship ( Figure 16). Sinanonta House of Mr.Gimchien Sae-Oung, the Chinese millionaire, 1919, who has been appointed as Luang Kamjonwanich and the surname bestowed by King Rama VI as “*Sinanonta*.” It was the first reinforced concrete house in Lampang. Iron and cement were sent from Bangkok by train (Figure 17)

Both Burmese and Chinese merchants spread the economically influence as the loan lenders through Siam Commercial Bank which opened the Lampang branch in 1930 and was the first branch of Lanna. (see Figure 18)



**Figure 13** Fongli Building of Master Fong, 1891-1901



**Figure 14** Yean Zi Tai Li Ki Building, 1913 of Mr. Jin Yean (Aree Tiwalee) used to be the biggest department store in Chinese Market.



**Figure 15** Mae Daeng House of Mr. Gao Sae-Haew and Mrs. Daeng Panichphan



**Figure 16** Kamson House, the first cement house in Chinese Market community, 1917.



**Figure 17** Sinanonta House of Mr. Gimchien Sae-Oung, or Luang Kamjonwanich the Chinese millionaire, 1919, the first reinforced concrete house in Lampang.



**Figure 18** Siam Commercial Bank, Lampang branch opened in 1930. Now this old building was exhibited as Thai Bank Musuem, Thai Bank Museum. (2010)

Those Burmese and Chinese millionaires also gave back to the communities. The Burmese often had built or restored the Buddhist temples together, showing the wealth and faith of Burmese Buddhists at

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that moment. Moreover it's the symbol of apology to the deities of trees. Wat Sri Chum (Figure 19), the biggest Burmese temple in Siam, was built by U Yee and his party. Besides, Wat Pa Fang, Wat Sri Rongmuang, Wat Jongka (or Wat Chai Mongkol) Wat Mon Puyak, Wat Mon Jamsil, and Wat Ta Ma-O were also built by Burmese and Tai Yai. Many Chinese families jointly build the Wat Kao Walukkaram (Figure 20) and Poon Tao Kong shrine, which is the oldest Chinese shrine in Lampang (Sukprakarn, 2001, 15). In the meantime, some Kamu from Laos who were honest, diligent, and thrifty moved to Lampang for being the labors of forest companies and the residence servants of the Westerners.



**Figure 19** Wat Sri Chum, Lampang, the biggest Burmese temple in Siam was built by Mr. Yee and his party.



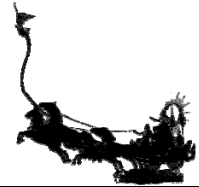
**Figure 20** Wat Kao Walukkaram on the bank of Wang River in Chinese market community (Kad Kong Tha) was built by many Chinese families.

#### *Some travel records of the westerners about Nakorn Lampang*

The westerners who came to Lampang in the reign of King Rama V noted its topology, culture, lives, and social as Carl Bock, Norwegian naturalist who came to Siam for surveying Siam geography since June 1881 to August 2, 1882. In his travel records, *"The Temples and Elephants"* noted that he traveled from Rahang (Tak) to Ban Mae Tam in Lampang (now is in the district of Saem Ngam, Lampang province.). He named Lampang as *"Muang Lakorn"* where he arrived in December 25, 1881. He described it's the important city surrounded with 6-8 feet thick brick wall and ruler of Lampang in that time was Chao Prommapipongthada. Carl Bock also said Lampang people had skill in making the beautiful silverware such as betel casket, water dipper, kettle, earrings, bracelet, necklet, and hairpin. The price of silverwares depended on the weight of pure silver plus 50 % of the price of pure silver. The lacquerwares were also popular, too.

Carl Bock also described the administration of six colonies of Siam in the north: Lakorn (Lampang), Lampoon, Chiangmai, Nan, Luangprabang, and Prae were independence in each city, but each highness ruler and the viceroy had been assigned by the King of Siam. Each year the rulers of six colonies had to pay tribute to King of Siam such as silver and gold betel casket, vase and necklet decorating with 100 pieces of rubies including 8 feet height silver and gold replica trees. There were many small towns being on the subject of those six colonies. The rulers of small towns had the authority to rule themselves. All the land in each colony belonged to the rulers only by the paper, but the rulers gave some part of the land to the aristocratic class for reaping the benefits. They paid no taxes but collected the taxes from the people. Moreover, Carl Bock mentioned the constructions in Lampang, such as a court of justice, prison, royal temple, the residence of highness ruler and viceroy, elephant-trapping pen, and public well including tattooing, Karen ethnic group, judgment, marriage, and character of people. He left Lampang in January 7, 1882 to Chiangmai. (Bock, 1986, 72-85)

After that, Pierre Orts, Belgium legal co-advisor of Gustave Rolin Jacquemyns (or Chao Phya Abhai Raja Siammanukulkij, General Advisor to the Siamese Government (1892-1902) in the reign of King Rama V) came to Siam at the end of 1896-1898. He recorded his journey to the north and the northeast of Siam during August, 1897 to January, 1898. In September 26, 1897, he arrived Lampang and mentioned there were approximately 300,000 population in the Lampang urban. Kamu was the large amount (around 50,000) and



most of them worked in the forest as the labours of forestry companies while the Chinese merchants under English's jurisdiction. He continually told Lampang was the beautiful city. In the ancient zone still appeared the ruin of city wall on the right bank of Wang River. (Figure 21) The foreigners here consisted three families of missionary and 3 companies representative: British Boneo Co. Ltd., Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation Ltd. and Siam Forest Company Ltd. He also was the part of some trial duration in that moment. Orts left Lampang to Chiangrai on October 1 of the same year (Orts, 2003, 120-124).



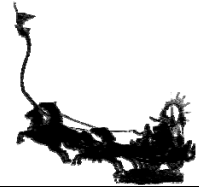
**Figure 21** A part of the ancient fortress and moat of Lampang remains.

In the case of forestry business in order to four English companies, Chinese, Lanna rulers, and people under Siam's jurisdiction could do nothing for the competition because of the high investment and the long term business. Moreover, the market was in the hand of the westerners, so the forestry companies of Chinese and local people must sell their woods to western companies.

#### *The arrival of the railway to Nakorn Lampang*

After the Ngaew rebellion in the late King Rama V reign, the Siamese government had realized the importance of the area link between Bangkok and Lanna by modern transportation for carrying many more people and goods so faster. So the railway to the north was begun in 1902. (arrived in Lampang in 1915 642.29 kilometers from Bangkok and to Chiangmai in 1921) (Figure 22-23). The arrival of the railway led to the big transformation of the economic and transportation system. The structure of the population largely was changed. A large number of people moved to the towns and cities which the railway passed, including Lampang for occupation as traders (Kirdsiri, 2007, 14-15).

Before the arrival of the railway to Lampang, the merchants in the Chinese Market had been doing business with the interdependence and coequal system. After that, Chinese merchants enlarged the role and power in trading because they have had extensive dealings with Bangkok since the river trade routes. When the new groups of Chinese merchants from the lower moved to the north by train, they got friendly help from the old groups.



**Figure 22** Nakorn Lampang Railway Station



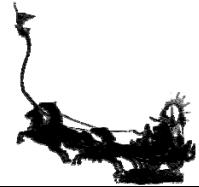
**Figure 23** Nakorn Lampang Railway Station when the first train arrived in April 1, 1915.  
Warmraw. (pseudonym). (2006)

Because of the more comfortable, quicker, and much more goods transport by train, so the goods from Bangkok were cheaper, which resulted in the trade with Mawlamyine was less and less along with the power of Burmese and Tai Yai merchants. Besides Siam Government had the project to construct the road linked Lampang to Shan State and Yunnan which had begun in 1914 but it was only possible to Chiangrai. (now is Lampang-Chiangrai road) However the trading between Shan State and Yunnan made Lanna to be the shipping center directly to Bangkok.

The new market was erected near Lampang railway station as “*Kao Jaow Market*” (Figure 24), including the shop buildings along the road in front of the station (Figure 25-26). Kao Jaow Market was the source for trading by train and was the center of agricultural production for sending to Bangkok. However, the Chinese Market had still alive because it was in downtown and was the trade center of forestry goods from the north of Lampang. Moreover, the Chinese merchants also enlarged the power of the big rice dealers of Lanna. They bought the rice from the farmers and continuously sent to Bangkok. Chinese Market still was important as the center of retail trade while the markets around Lampang railway station as the center of wholesale trade (Pojjanalawan, 2018, 122).



**Figure 24** Kao Jaow Market near Nakorn Lampang Railway Station.



**Figure 25-26** The bustle with people around Lampang Railway Station or Sob Tui quarter. See the train, horse carriages and goods waited for transport into the train. Warmraw. (pseudonym). (2006)

Later, the Chinese Market had begun to fade down. Many families moved to the main road or Thipchang Road because of the flood in the Chinese Market every year (Figure 27). When the first train arrived in Lampang on April 1, 1915, and the first horse carriage came with it, the big change in Lampang appeared. A massive influx of Chinese moved into Lampang for trading. We can see many grand buildings in the Chinese-Western style founded in the Sob Tui quarter (Figure 28), so this area and Kao Jaow Market flourished instead because they are near the Lampang railway station. These Chinese were the second group entering to settle down in Lampang after the first group in the Chinese market. The trading between Lampang and Burma was changed to be Lampang and Bangkok instead because of the railway, so Chinese merchants in Lampang had advantage over Burmese and Tai Yai, who still transported to Burma by oxcart caravan.



**Figure 27** Downtown on Tipchang road



**Figure 28** A Western-Chinese style building in Sob Tui quarter

The flourish of Lampang in the time of modern history appeared after the administrative reform by the Lanna expedition to be the part of Siam in the reign of King Rama V, including expanding the railway affair. The short route of railway was developed and then spread the network all over the region. When the railway arrived in Lampang in the reign of King Rama VI, including constructed the road during 1907-1916 encouraged the communication and transportation between the north and the center were much more comfortable, which once used by boat and continually the elephants and horses. Lampang as the center of



economics and society had gradually reduced the importance when Pahalyotin Road towards Chiangrai and expanded the railway to Chiangmai were constructed and finished in 1914 and 1921, respectively. According to two cases, Lampang became just only to the passway city to Chiangrai or Chiangmai. However, as the center of the teak business, Lampang still went on and began to fade down during World War I.

The rulers and aristocratic class of Lampang also were reduced the role and power. The political administration was in the hand of Siam royal official from Bangkok, the power in the economy of Chinese, Burmese, and Tai Yai merchants who able to adjust themselves with change. The rulers and aristocratic class just only became to be the symbolism that was respected by the local people. When Chao Boonyawat Wongmanit, the last highness ruler of Lampang, passed away in 1922, the symbolism of local aristocracy disappeared. The old regime ended after the death of Chao Boonyawatwongmanit the last highness ruler in 1922, King Rama VI of Siam did not appoint anyone to be the ruler of Lampang anymore.

## 5. Conclusion

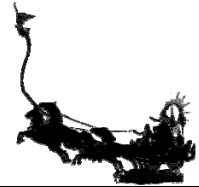
During 1883-1922 Lampang flourished from the forestry business because it was able to connect to many other areas far away, so it became an important trade center. On the east bank of Wang river in Lampang, urban laid the pier for goods transshipment and for sending the teak logs down the river to the south, so it was full of the people's diversity. The urban community and trade center so appeared in this area. In the earlier Burmese and Tai Yai were the most economically powerful groups. They owned the forestry business and as the traders and later the coming of many Chinese traders. Most of them became to be millionaires. They built the splendid houses in various styles decorating with delicate elements and also had built or restored the Buddhist temples. When the railway arrived in Lampang in 1915, it led to the big transformation of the economic and transportation system. The new market was erected around Nakorn Lampang railway station and became the sources for trading by train and the trade center instead Chinese Market. Most of the traders are Chinese, enlarging the power of the economy. Lampang, as the important center of the economy and society, was gradually declined because of expanding the railway and road far away. So it became just only to the passway city to Chiangrai or Chiangmai. The rulers and aristocratic class of Lampang also were reduced the role and power because the politic administration was in the hand of Siam royal official from Bangkok changed the independence state of Lanna to be a part of Siam finally. Today, Nakorn Lampang is still important as the living historic city and able to coexist with modernity together.

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