

Hoi An - Perspective from Urban Morphology

Pham Trong Thuat

Associate Professor, PhD, Arch, Hanoi Architectural University (HAU), Vietnam

Abstract: *This article focuses on analyzing the urban morphology of Hoi An historic change under development, in specific, analyzing the characteristics of the street, organisation the public space, the development in architecture in order to point out the factors that affect the long-term sustainability of this ancient town. The argument is the traditional settlement patterns, is set taking into account social cohesion, local economic interactions and the dominant factors directly to the urban morphology of Hoi An. At the same time, the analysis shows that the changes from the original architecture to a new architecture is the process of adapting to new elements, but remains the main ways of organizing properties.*

Keywords: Hoian; urban morphology; urban history; old trading port; asean urban; policies of urban development

1. Introduction

In 1999, Hoi An was recognized by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage, which was known to be a former trading town of Vietnam, one of the major destinations of the trading route from East to West. Located 30km away from Da Nang City-Vietnam's third largest city, having a favorable geographical location, Hoi An was once formed as a famous international trading port, destination of large commercial shipments from China and Japan, Hoi An was also known as the trading port of Champa and an important mark of the Silk Road. Only until the last half of the XIX century, the trading port of Hoi An gradually degraded and in favour of the Danang – which was constructed by the French at the time to become a new trading port. With urban conservation areas, Hoi An is one of the typical examples of a town in ancient Southeast Asia relatively preserved the value of urban heritage, relative architectural preservice.

This article aims to discuss the challenges of the growth of urbanization in Hoi An, reviews the process of urbanization of the urban areas in the South-East Asian region, and conclude with appropriate policies of urban development in order to preserve the heritage and value of Hoi An.

2. Urban Southeast Asia

Unlike the metropolis of Europe like Rome and Paris, which have had a stable and lasting development, the urban development of South East Asia is like a musical, seem to be diverging but with interruption periods.

Over the course of history, South East Asia is the crossroads of different cultures, which includes the Indian culture and Chinese culture. Some even argue that South East Asia can be divide into two “categories”: one that was greatly affected by the Indian culture and the other by the Chinese. However, Southeast Asia still keep their own features, relatively uniform in terms of culture, on the foundation of the culture agricultural rice-farming. Over the urban history of Southeast Asia, there has been two types of urban group: urban farming and urban commercial (commercial town and land town).

Urban land is very typical in Angkor or there are many other distinct examples such as Wat Phou, Luang Prabang in the

period of before the fourteenth century, or in Pagan, Sukhothai, Mojopahit... Urban Commercial appears around mid eleventh century to the late thirteenth century in Pasai (nose North Sumatra), then developed with Malacca (XV century), and the port area in Islamic area in the centuries of XVI, XVII and XVIII (Banten, Aceh, Makassar, Palembang ...). Only when the first half of the fifteenth century, most countries in Southeast Asia today were formed during this period, and began to enter the stage flourished. Only until the eighteenth century, the new feudal empires began to weaken and fall into the invasion or dependence of Western nations.

3. Emigration and maritime of Hoi An

3.1. Originality

- Viet Nam is a part of the Indochina area, and covers most of the East side of this area, creating a unique feature of the peninsularity of Vietnam. Business were done with traders from the south coast of China (Shanghai, Fujian and Guangdong) over the Gulf of Tonkin and towards the Central Coast (Champa) and the Gulf of Thailand.
- The need of exchange with other Asian domestic domain. The dynamic of Asian population migration in direction from North to South, from the mountains down to the Plains, based on the river basin in Southeast Asia.
- -Need of exchanges with the region and between the coastal sea. In South-East Asia has immigrants out Islands and immigrants from the island on ... From the previous ad, has formed an important transportation routes in Southeast Asia Routes along the Red River: From the plateau Van Qui (Chinese: Kunming) through the ancient Center of Vietnam: Viet Tri, Loa Connie Long, Long bien, (Hebei) out to the Tonkin Gulf.

Originally, if the Northern area of Vietnam is considered as the root of Dong Son culture, the Southern area is the root of the Doc Chua – Oc Eo culture, then the South Central Coast would be the root of Sa Huynh culture. Hoi An, lying inside the area of Hue – Binh Tri Thien is the interference of the two culture Dong Son – Sa Huynh.

In the second half of the XV century of Vietnam, the Vietnamese migrants from the inner area towards the domain of Cham people. Impact of the expansion of the

country in this period was the expansion down the South to search for agricultural land to provide food for the growing population of Vietnam, with better organized army. After the wars as well as the political marriage between Dai Viet and Champa, Dai Viet territory has expanded from Hengshan mountains (North) to pass the Cu Mong (Northern Phu Yen). Other political factors were being maintained in order to trade with foreign merchants in the concessions in the way that Faifo (Hoi An) formed.

3.2 Commercial port

Having an ideal geographical location, locating on the route linking Indian Ocean with Pacific Ocean, Southeast Asia is still considered the land connections between China, Japan, India, Western Asia and the Mediterranean. Trade exchanges from ships had been formed for a long time. On the other hand, in Indian-China trading history, the East-West trading by the coastal road linking the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean had based on the development of rice agriculture, cultivation of mulberry, in the South of the river downstream of the Southern area of Vietnam has formed a wide a large system of cities and towns, that is Champa's most popular ports in the coastal area of Thu Bon river, the precursor to the port of Hoi An these days. Considering this coastal route of trading, Hoi An is the base of how Phu Xuan (now Hue) were formed, which is just a port rather than Pho

Hien that was a front port of trading in the Northern area, Phu Xuan was just a river port. Cochinchina (South of the 17th latitude) had a time of "openness" and have a better ocean-wise location rather than that of Tonkin (North of the 17th latitude).

Hoi An of Vietnam is one of few ancient cities that was considered as a trading city. The mutual element of these cities is that the majority of the ports were formed on the global trading routes rather than domestic transportation needs. In the XIX-XX centuries, it was realized that the colonized cities such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Saigon, etc. were not discoveries of the Western countries, but they were transformed from the base of these cities with trading ports. The conflict between the agriculture system and the trade system allowed cities to evolve from typical conflicts between Indian affection and China affection towards these countries. It is clear throughout history that the trading ports of Viet Nam in this period were an essential part of urban history of Indochine, when they have rather a different approach to adapt new systems.

4. The impact of reconstructing Hoi An

4.1. "Transforming" Hoi An

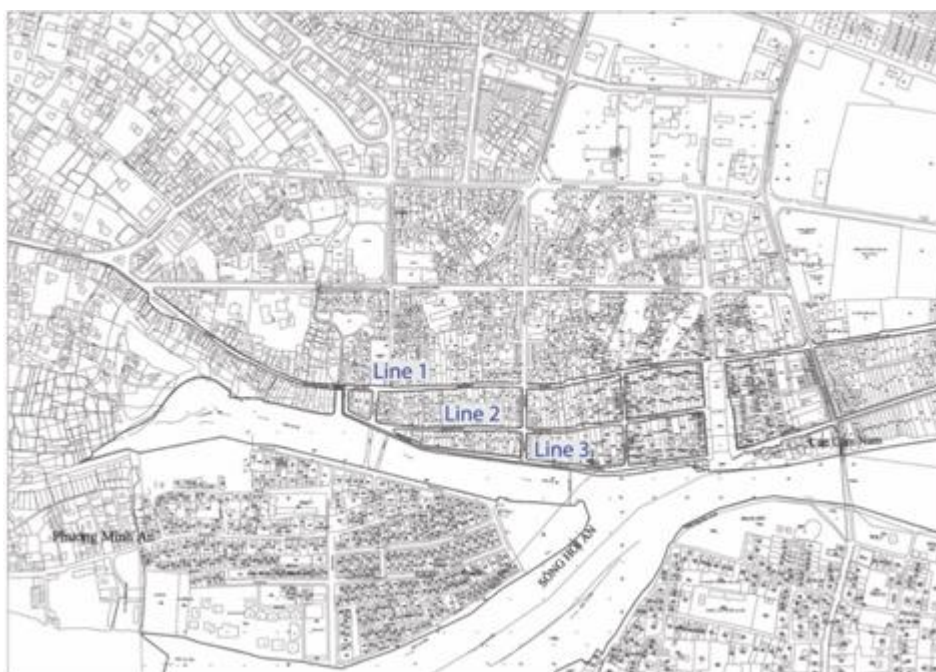


Figure 1: Major routes of Hoi An reconstruction

When the French colonized Vietnam, starting off with invading Danang in 1858, along with Hanoi, Haiphong and Danang that was taken over by the French in 1888. Danang at the time had become such a major trading port, and being only 30km away from Hoi An, the role of Hoi An in trades had dropped drastically. The scale of Hoi An is currently 60.7km², developed on the base which was considered as a heritage area with the area of 0.7km².

The trading module of Hoi An by that time was formed on the base of Tran Phu road (Line 1), going along Thu Bon

river. Houses on Tran Phu road have the following features: selling, trading and receiving products at the front, and having a patio and common area of the household at the back. The year 1814 marked the first expansion of Hoi An, developing on the base of Tran Phu road, and nowadays the core of Hoi An were expanded between the two parallel streets in the North side (Phan Chu Trinh street and Tran Hung Dao street). However, the road system were perpendicular with the riverside, creating a large grid system.



Figure 2: Nguyen Thai Hoc street (Line 2)

In the case of urban practices, the construction of a square in the grid of Hoi An is undoubtedly distinct throughout the course of history. However, among the old and the developed sections of Hoi An, there is a consistent in the

structure of the streets, whereas the house is not only for residence, but also linked the income generation and livelihood of the local community).



Figure 3: Hoi An modern day

4.2. Reconstructing settlement

In the final years of the 20th century, as the new policies of renovation that were nationally applied, Hoi An were strongly under the pressure of urban reconstruction. This process involved the result of the personalization and commercialize of urban development and trading services. Cities became the main destinations of migrants from nearby rural area, domestic and international investors. The handicrafts and small businesses were on the edge of extinction, and losing their place for the new economic system with new products and the pressure of the migration

process. In the period of 1986 to 1988, the residents of nearby cities of same scale such as Quang Ngai, Tam Ky, etc. had the trend to change their traditional household into more modern house, with non-traditional architecture material and style. Their social system and standard were changed. In some cases, the search of a place to replace old houses to modern ones were a challenge for Hoi An as they had a limitation of real estate. More and more old houses became private properties in Hoi An. However, both old and new Hoi An residents were aware of the heritage and architectural value of these houses. Hoi An became a typical example of the ability to maintain its core value at this stage.



Figure 4: The old house remain intact of their original structure

4.3. Urban morphology

For an urban researcher who uses space syntax, the problem often encountered is where to set up the boundary of the city for axial analysis. This is a common method of analyzing medieval urban areas of Europe, but it became more complex as it applies to Asian urban areas. Asian cities have obscure boundaries, and they rapidly expand. Central section of agriculture areas were clearly formed, however, this is not the case for Hoi An, as the central of it is fairly unclear. The communal areas are focused on the main streets. Even now, the impact of being a trade destination and city can still be seen on the streets of Hoi An. The main streets developed on the base of the waterfront. These streets are parallel to each other, and there are alleys connecting them every 40-50m, small enough for two people to walk in different directions, forming a grid which are basic neighbourhood units, with small sidewalks and road. Similarly to other ancient cities of South East Asia, streets are not simply serve transportation purpose, but they are also where business, social activities happen. This is also a feature of the public space in Eastern societies – where as for Western, are squares.

5. Conclusion

Hoi An is a rare ancient trading port of Vietnam, which in feudal time, was a typical trading port of South East Asia, with its structure developed on the base of the waterfront. After losing its role of a port to the new major port of Danang, along with the expansion of architectural structures, Hoi An has had significant changes. Hoi An in current day has remain intact, being a living cultural heritage. From the urban morphology perspective, the structure of Hoi An is not simply just affected by Indian, China or Japan culture but also represented layers and layers of cultural heritage of its resident, its people over time, creating a unique impression itself as an ancient city of South East Asia.

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