

## Communization of Courtyards in Shophouses

- Focused on Phnom Penh's Chinese District -

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### Abstract

From the middle of the Protectorate government era to the Independence of Cambodia, shophouses have been celebrated as a major characteristic of urban development and an extension of Phnom Penh, and today this archetype covers more than 60 percent of the built up area of the city.

Shophouses in the Chinese district of Phnom Penh have progressively evolved due to the influences of colonial urban development and new building technology. Other influences include western culture, and the massive increase in the urban population. Accordingly, the spatial organization of shophouses has been transformed from the traditional shophouse to a modern urban complex shophouse, with a more sophisticated and diverse spatial organization.

Based on the author's earlier work (2014), among the main features found in the process of the modern transformation of shophouses, the communization of the courtyard is the most unique phenomenon, as this cannot be found in relation to other Southeast Asian shophouses.

This study aims to analyze the space organization of shophouses in Phnom Penh, with a focus on the transformation of the courtyard. The study includes a survey of twenty shophouses located in the Chinese district of Phnom Penh, ranging from early shophouses to modern complex shophouses built from the, 1910s to the early 1970s.

It was found that the courtyards of the Chinese shophouses in Phnom Penh have been transformed from an isolated small air well for minimum ventilation and lighting for a single shophouse, to larger areas with sufficient ventilation and lighting for multiple-households. They also functioned as main passageways to and from individual units above and serve to strengthen the social activities in a community.

We anticipate that this study will clarify the identity of shophouses in Cambodia in comparison with the shophouses in other Southeast Asian countries.

**Keywords:** courtyard; space organization; shophouse; Cambodia; Phnom Penh; Chinese district