

Significance and Values of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

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Received on December 18, 2019 | Revised on September 27, 2020 |

Accepted on November 13, 2020

Abstract

Physical change in religious architecture has an effect on perception of the building's historical value and significance. This article discusses the case of the physical transformation of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception which has undergone four successive changes in architectural characteristics since Christianity was first established in the area in 1881. Methodologically, this study comprises a review of historical documents and interviews with Christians who live in the cathedral's neighbouring areas. The result shows that the cathedral is significant for local residents as a centre of Christianity and beliefs which have been handed down through generations. From the beginning of its establishment, the cathedral has continually been used for social gatherings in religious activities, therefore, in spite of physical changes, its social and functional values still remain unchanged. Overall, the historical significance of the cathedral to the historic urban landscape of Ubon Ratchathani lies in its intangible rather than its tangible value.

Keywords

change – significance and value – Cathedral – belief – historic urban landscape

1 Introduction

Significance and value assessment of cultural heritage vary depending on time and aspects of consideration. According to international charters and documents on conservation, the approaches to identification of significance and values of heritage do not concern only architecture and other physical attributes but all elements, both tangible and intangible, that are related to and continually shape the heritage must be considered. This paper aims to discuss the approach for identification and understanding of the significance and values of heritage places which have undergone physical changes by studying the selected case study, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand.

For the purpose of this study, first of all, international charters and documents on conservation were reviewed in order to understand the development of approaches on heritage values perception from the past to the present. The earliest document which is relevant to the issue is the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, SPAB, Manifesto* of 1877. This document focuses on the buildings' value in the antiquity of architectural styles and elements. The next document, the 1931 *Athens Charter*, applies scientific principles to conservation methodology and begins to be concerned with the context of monuments and other elements in a significant place. From these concepts on conservation, the Venice Charter was created and adopted in 1964. This charter has become the foundation for conservation concepts and practices worldwide. The charter supports the application of modern techniques in conservation and focuses on authenticity, as well as expanding the scope of historical area boundaries from buildings to urban and rural areas.

After the Venice Charter, important charters concerning heritage values are, firstly, *European Charter of the Architectural Heritage*, 1975, which initiates consideration on social and economic values beyond cultural value. This approach gives the opportunity for various relevant components to be included in the assessment of significance and values of heritage. Secondly, the 1987 *Washington Charter* raises the topic of urban development, that is, historic areas and urban areas should be protected and conserved along with the development and should be harmonized with the current lifestyle. Thirdly, the 1999 *Burra Charter*, one of the most important milestones of conservation concept, highlights the significance of intangible heritage because the assessment of heritage values which are based solely on physical characteristics are not sufficiently conclusive. Consequently, the aesthetic, historic, scientific and the spirit of place values are included as aspects of consideration in heritage values assessment (Rodwell 2007, 12–14).

These principles show that the awareness of heritage significance and values have been expanded, physically, from individual buildings to contexts and settings. Furthermore, intangible aspects have been included in values identification and assessment apart from consideration on tangible dimensions of heritage.

Current theories on cultural heritage management encourage an awareness of heritage in historic urban areas. The Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted on 10th November, 2011 in Paris, aims at preserving the quality of the human environment and enhancing the productive and sustainable use of urban spaces while recognizing their dynamic character and promoting social and functional diversity. It integrates the goals of urban heritage conservation and those of social and economic development. It is rooted in a balanced and sustainable relationship between the urban and natural environment, between the needs of present and future generations and the legacy from the past (UNESCO 2011, 3).

The historic urban landscape approach moves beyond the preservation of the physical environment and focuses on the entire human environment with all of its tangible and intangible qualities. It seeks to increase the sustainability of planning and design interventions by taking into account the existing built environment, intangible heritage, cultural diversity and socio-economic and environmental factors, along with local community values (UNESCO 2013, 5). The main concepts of this approach consider all layers of cultural significance conveyed in the urban landscape and their varied interpretations as possibly valuable, therefore, not only the aesthetic, historic and scientific values but also values of, for example, economic, social, ecological or political background (Veldpaus and Roders 2013, 3) are included. This framework offers a way of understanding the significance and values of heritage throughout its many physical changes.

The purpose of this article is to reconsider the significance and values of heritage which have been affected by the current physical change of the historic urban landscape. The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception has been selected as a case study, which is a suitable example to illustrate the transformation of a cultural heritage site through time.

Ubon Ratchathani, or simply Ubon, is a province in Northeast Thailand, situated adjacent to the Mekong River which forms the border between Thailand and two neighbouring countries, Laos PDR and Cambodia. The city was founded on the northern bank of the Mun river in the late eighteenth century. The official establishment of Ubon Ratchathani took place in 1792 in the reign of King Rama I (Book Committee 1992, 5–10). Originally, Ubon was culturally

influenced by the Laotians who were the first people and founders of the city, however, due to several diverse factors from inside and outside which occurred in later periods, driven by both national and international causes, the city has been transformed in both tangible and intangible aspects.

Changes in Ubon city's physical attributes have affected people's perception of the significance and values of the historic urban landscape. It is difficult to recognize the city's historical value by visual perception since many of the historical landmarks of Ubon have been changed. Religious places, in particular, are the group of heritage sites which have undergone several changes in architectural style. These phenomena have occurred in both Buddhist and Christian religious places. Consequently, these places may not be perceived as historic places by outsiders, however, people in the neighbourhood of these temples and churches still perceive their significance and values because of their intangible attributes and the relationship between the places and the people.

The case study for this article is the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (RC) in Ubon Ratchathani, which was the first Christian settlement in Isaan, or Northeast Thailand, established in 1881. The cathedral is an historic element of Ubon; however, people in general may not recognize its historical values because the building's physical appearance has changed over the centuries. According to historical documents, there have been four changes to the building's architectural style since its establishment. It currently features a contemporary architectural style, so outsiders might perceive this building as a new element in Ubon's historic urban landscape and not appreciate its place as part of the antiquity of this city. However, this study has verified the significance of this church despite its physical changes.

The study methodologies for this article include a review of historical documents and interviews with Christians living in neighbouring area of the cathedral. The literature review focused on the propagation of Christianity in Ubon Ratchathani in order to develop an understanding of the historical background and the transformation process. The interview focused on the opinion of Christians who are the stakeholders of the cathedral and have lived in the periods when the architectural transformation of the church occurred, therefore, they are the people who understand the situation and can give opinions which reflect the significance and values of the place.

2 Background to Christianity in Ubon Ratchathani

Regarding the English names of cathedrals in Thailand, there are two cathedrals which are called the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception; one is in

Ubon Ratchathani and one is in Chanthaburi. Another place of similar name is in Bangkok, called the Church of the Immaculate Conception of Bangkok. All of these are Catholic churches. The name Immaculate Conception comes from Catholic belief that, by the will of God, the Virgin Mary was conceived free from sin.

There are several churches in the area of Ubon Ratchathani city, some are Roman Catholic and some are Protestant. The first church in the city was the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception situated to the west of Ubon old town near the Mun river, close to Wat Supatanaram. Due to the significance of this cathedral to the Diocese of Ubon Ratchathani, the Christian message also spread to the rural area, so the number of churches increased in the vicinity of Ubon Ratchathani province.

Reference sources concerning Christianity in Ubon Ratchathani have been collected in the cathedral archives. The historical documents provide facts about Christian propagation, settlement and development from its beginnings until the present. The information points out the significance and values of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception as a symbol of successful propagation in this area.

The history of the dissemination of Christianity in Siam and Laos emphasises that Ubon Ratchathani was the first target area in Isan, the northeastern region of Siam – the former name of the Kingdom of Thailand. Constant Jean Prodhomme and Francis Xavier Marie Guego were the French missionaries who brought the Christian doctrine to this city. The French missionaries' caravan arrived in Ubon on 24th April 1881. Their mission was to carry out a feasibility study regarding the establishment of Christianity in this region. The

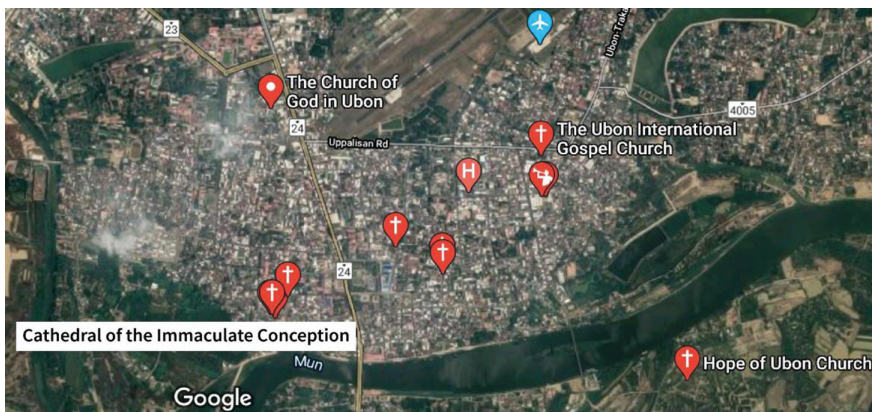


FIGURE 1 Map: Locations of churches in present day Ubon Ratchathani
(SOURCE: EDITED FROM GOOGLE MAP)

mission was not easy because they travelled to Ubon at the same time that Siam and France were engaged in a conflict over the sovereignty of the land on the left bank of the Mekong River. However, after staying for two to three months and gaining acceptance from the local people, a decision was made to establish Christianity in Ubon. The missionaries got permission to construct a building on a plot of land to the west, outside Khuanthani, the city wall of Ubon. After the missionaries had built their house, some of the people who had adopted Christianity came to stay in the neighbouring area. This community, then, became the first Catholic centre in Northeast Thailand (Costet 2006, 461–470).

The Christian settlement has become part of Ubon's historic urban landscape from 1881 until the present. During the propagation period, even though the Siamese-French conflict still persisted, bringing some problems to the French missionaries, the stability of Christianity in Ubon was greater than in Nakhon Phanom and Sakon Nakhon. In the case of Ubon, the Siamese government used a compromising strategy with the French missionaries, therefore, the Christian settlement was not forced to relocate, as was the case with the Christians in Sakon Nakhon (Costet 2006, 477–485). After Christianity had been founded in Ubon, propagation activities carried on continuously. Although there was religious persecution of Thai Catholics and the Catholic Church in the northeastern region in the 1940s, the situation in Ubon was not violent. The cathedral in Ubon was not forced to close, so it provided shelter for those who suffered under the persecution (Costet 2006, 662–663). The Christian community in Ubon was still stable and still retained its position as the center for the Diocese of Ubon Ratchathani.

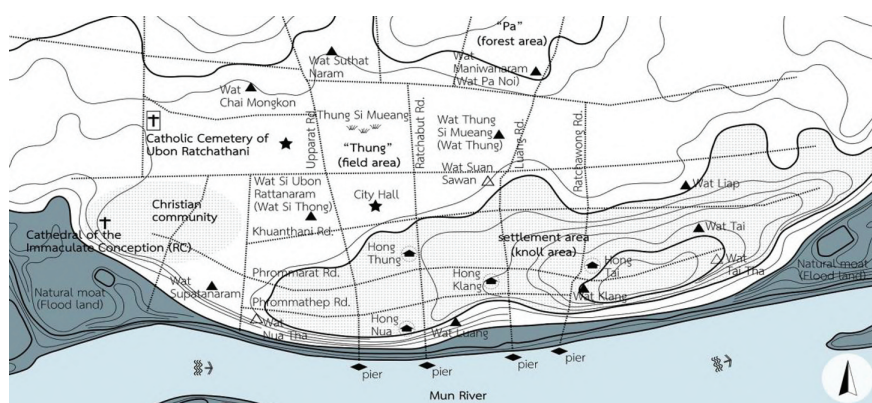


FIGURE 2 Map: Ubon Ratchathani in the 1880s; the Christian community settled on the western side of the old town, outside the boundary of the first settlement (SOURCE: LALIDA BOONMEE)

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception has been a landmark and highlight of Christian propagation in Ubon. When the first cathedral was built it was announced that Christianity had established a firm foothold in the area. Although the first cathedral was a simple building that did not have any remarkable architectural elements, it was important as a sacred place that belonged to God. After stabilizing Christianity in Ubon, the missionary leaders decided to replace the existing cathedral with a new western style building. This time, the building was larger and decorated with religious symbols representing God's divinity. In fact, the structure of the cathedral has been rebuilt four architectural styles that reflected what was socially popular at the time, highlighting the change in the significance and values of the cathedral.

In addition to its significance as a landmark, the cathedral is a spiritual centre for Christians in this area. Religious practice and public charity reflect people's belief in God. Christians in the neighbourhood and other parts of Ubon come together to pray and participate in religious practices at the cathedral. They also use the open spaces on roads in the community as a route for significant activities such as the celebration of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Moreover, some religious activities are carried out at the Catholic Cemetery of Ubon Ratchathani and in the homes of Christians in the neighbouring areas. The Christian community is connected by the functional spaces related to these religious practices, which can be perceived as intangible elements which draw people to the cathedral, which is regarded as a significant and valuable social space.

The arrival of Christianity has become a part of Ubon society in providing a spiritual anchor for many people in the city and the neighbouring area. The religion has also played an important role in integrating local Christians with those from other countries, such as the Vietnamese refugees who live in the neighbourhood of their settlement; therefore, the Christian settlement has grown and become a big part of the western side of the city up until the present. Its existence, and that of its parishioners, still sustain their roles in shaping the society and culture of Ubon, as part of the city's living heritage.

3 Transformation of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is located in the extension area on the west side of the first settlement of Ubon Ratchathani. Elements from different periods which coexist in the cathedral grounds indicate that the cathedral has been transformed over time, which can be seen in its historical layers. The main building of the cathedral, which is the centre of the place, has



FIGURE 3 The first cathedral in the Laotian architectural style, built in 1881
(SOURCE: THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION)

been changed four times since the church was established, including a change of location within the sacred grounds. This transformation indicates that the most significant element of the cathedral is intangible, that is, the spiritual meaning of the place, which is beyond its physical features.

The change in the cathedral's building relates to the development of the Ubon historic urban landscape. The various architectural styles reflect society and culture in each particular period. Each change expresses various issues of the stakeholders regarding the significance and values of the cathedral. This part will explain how the cathedral building has been transformed.

The first cathedral was built in the Laotian architectural style in 1881, the year that Christianity was established in Ubon Ratchathani (see Figure 3). The building provided a dwelling for the missionaries but it was also used as the church at the same time due to the lack of budget (Costet 2006, 469–470). The building was made of timber and the roof was covered with thatch. The style and structure were simple owing to the rush in establishing the place for Christian functions. Although it was a temporary building, it had significance and values as a sacred place for religious practice and was designed in the local architectural style during the settlement period of Ubon; therefore, it reflected the environment of the Ubon historic urban landscape which has since been lost.

This building was a primary symbol of the establishment of Christianity in Ubon. It also represented the success of the propagation of Christianity in



FIGURE 4A & 4B The second cathedral in Western architectural style, built in 1895
(SOURCE: THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION)

Isaan. The significance of this building was not only based on the architectural style but also the linkage to the establishment of Christianity in this area. This building was significantly associated with the French missionaries, Constant Jean Prodhomme and Francis Xavier Marie Guego, who travelled from Bangkok to Ubon with the purpose of spreading Christianity; therefore, this historical information gives significance and values to the simple building. This can be seen as another dimension of the place which should be considered beyond the physical features.

After Christianity in Ubon had stabilized, the second cathedral was built in 1895 (see Figure 4a & 4b). Father Georges Dabin, the cathedral's abbot at that time, considered the first cathedral to be too old and inappropriate to express the glory of God so he decided to build a new cathedral (Costet 2006, 519–520). This time, the cathedral was built in a Western architectural style, although it did not exactly follow the style of cathedrals of France or greater Europe. The design, in fact, was influenced by the French missionary memory combined with the skill of local artisans. The building was made with brick walls, wooden pillars and covered with roof tiles to a rectangular plan with one bell tower. This second cathedral was significantly larger than the former church building.

This incident also indicates that the Christian population was growing in this area. The new architectural style represented a European identity – the place where Christianity came from. This cathedral introduced the Western style of architecture to Ubon Ratchathani. In addition, it was built just two years after the Franco-Siamese treaty was signed in 1893, so it represented a significant part of history that contributes to the Ubon urban landscape nowadays. From documents, evidence has been found that the Western architectural style became popular and many buildings were built in the Western architectural style in the first area of Ubon settlement and also the neighbouring area



FIGURE 5A & 5B The third cathedral in Modern architectural style, built in 1965
(SOURCE: LALIDA BOONMEE)

of the cathedral; for example, the first Ubon Ratchathani City Hall (built in 1918), the second monastery of the Congregation of the Lovers of the Cross of Ubon Ratchathani (built in 1933) and the row houses (built in 1913) in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception were designed in the Western architectural styles.

In the twentieth century, Father Morris Brisson, the cathedral's abbot from 1958 to 1968, felt that the second cathedral had become dilapidated, so he decided to build a new one, which was located approximately 30 metres to the west of the old cathedral. The third cathedral was built in 1965 (The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception 2011, 24–25) in Modern architectural style (see Figure 5a & 5b), featuring a paraboloid concrete roof, constructed for the first time in Thailand. The building was designed by Mr. Krisda Arunvongse na Ayudhya, who was a famous modern Thai architect (Tiptus 1996, 780). The design applied religious symbolic elements, for instance, the cross on the top of the roof, stained glass in the entrance doors and the bell tower.

After the third cathedral's construction had been finished, the area where the second cathedral once stood was preserved as an open space that belongs to Jesus. This space is important and sacred for the Cathedral. It indicates that the architectural style did not have to represent the place where Christianity came from; rather, its values are perceived in the meaning reflected through the religious symbols. Furthermore, the third cathedral also expressed modernism which was popular in Ubon society at that time, influenced by Bangkok via modern architects and methods of communication – especially, the railway and airport which connected Ubon and Bangkok.

In recent times, the cathedral's building has been changed once again. Father Andrew Wittaya Ngamwong, the cathedral's current abbot, expressed his concern that the third cathedral was old and had deteriorated due to structural problems, particularly the concrete roof. The abbot himself initially decided to renovate the building but the final decision from the head of the



FIGURE 6A & 6B The fourth cathedral in Contemporary architectural style built in 2013
(SOURCE: 6A: LALIDA BOONMEE, 6B: THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION)



FIGURE 7 The existing elements layered in the cathedral area in 2018
(SOURCE: LALIDA BOONMEE)

Diocese of Ubon Ratchathani was to replace the old building with a new one on the same location. The fourth cathedral was built in 2013 (The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception 2014, 31–39) in the Contemporary style that combined the concepts of Modern architecture with the Western architectural style of the second cathedral (see Figure 6a & 6b). The façade was designed with a gable structure and the building features bell towers of the same proportion as that of the second cathedral.

The changes which brought back the style of earlier periods show that the stakeholders wished to reestablish the significance of this place by using the image of the cathedral as an important key for communicating with people. The historical style represents the identity of the place where Christianity was first established in Thailand. It should be noted that some architectural elements, for instance, the gable roof and two bell towers, are similar to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Chanthaburi. These similarities indicate the relationship between these two churches although there is no record in the archives of Ubon Ratchathani cathedral on the issue. Furthermore, the physical characteristics imply that the leading stakeholders intended to bring



FIGURE 8 The existing elements of the third cathedral
(SOURCE: LALIDA BOONMEE)

back the significant historic aspects to the building. In spite of the changes, elements of the third cathedral have been preserved to remind people of the former building. The cross from the rooftop and the stained glass from the entrance doors have been kept in the Office of the Rector. Also, the bell tower still remains as an important symbol of Christianity.

After considering these transformations, the study found that the changes in architecture help explain the development of the historic urban landscape of Ubon which would have otherwise been lost. The architectural style reflects the factors which affected the development of Ubon city in different eras. It also expresses the architectural knowledge, artisans' skills, materials and construction technologies at that time. However, the antiquity value has largely been lost because each building was demolished to build the new one; however, this circumstance helps demonstrate that although the tangible value has changed, the intangible value has continued.

4 Insiders' Viewpoints on the Cathedral'S Transformations

Even though the cathedral's physical structure has changed, people in the Christian community still recognize its significance. They feel attached to a place that has been the centre of their beliefs and religious practices and which is perceived as a sacred place. Although members of the community are different in gender, age or lifestyle, they agree that religious beliefs are important parts of their community that still exist underneath the changes in the physical environment. Therefore, the transformation of the cathedral over the decades has only been physical but its role as a tangible icon of deeply held beliefs continues to define the cathedral's religious, social and functional value to people and community.



FIGURE 9A & 9B Religious practice at the cathedral and in the community
(SOURCE: LALIDA BOONMEE)

Opinions of these local residents are important in the understanding of the significance and values of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Such values may be perceived differently depending on the experience which each person has relating to the place. The social situation in the Christian community shows that people still appreciate and recognize the significance and values of their cathedral. Local Christians come to pray and participate in religious practices together at the cathedral and in the neighbouring area. They come to the cathedral every Sunday and on other significant religious days. The rituals and associated social activities have had a key role in shaping the belief and society from the past until now and there is every reason to believe that this will continue into the future. The activities, both inside and outside the religious boundary, connect people to the cathedral. This relationship affects the significance and values of the cathedral in spite of the several physical changes it has undergone in its history. The Cathedral remains an important religious and social space.

One important transformation for Christians in the current generation has been the replacement of the third cathedral with the fourth cathedral because the entire lifetime of each parishioner had been connected to the former building. The study methodology for this part was a focus group interview in order to get the most pertinent information. First of all, the author observed by participating the Christian religious activities which relate to the cathedral. Then, the author did semi-structured interviews with the Christians in the neighbourhood of the cathedral to learn their opinions on the transformation of the community. The process began by interviewing the priest and nun at the cathedral, who are the key informants to give information on the background of the cathedral as key stakeholders. In addition, the author used the snowball sampling process to find the next interviewees. The priest and nun recommended Ms. Khaisorn Thanasing, who is the daughter of an artisan who built the second cathedral. Khaisorn (70 years old) was born and has grown up in a neighbouring area. She is also one of the Cathedral Committee members.



FIGURE 10A & 10B The expression of Christians during religious ceremonies at dwellings
(SOURCE: LALIDA BOONMEE)

After that, Khaisorn recommended Mr. Phaisan Thongthua who is her relative. Phaisan (70 years old) is a former head of the community and a former committee member for the cathedral's property. Therefore, Khaisorn and Phaisan are primary stakeholders whose entire lives have been attached to the cathedral. Furthermore, Khaisorn recommended Mr. Montri Thanasing, her son. Montri (30 years old) is a representative of next generation in the Christian community. He grew up in this area until high school before moving to study in another province and came back after his graduation. Thus, Montri is considered a secondary stakeholder who has an indirect relationship with the cathedral. It is noticeable that stakeholders' age differences are factors which affect their emotional attachment to the cathedral's transformation.

The atmosphere of the interview was casual, so that interviewees were relaxed and open. The questions were open-ended, focusing on viewpoints of local people towards physical changes which had occurred in the community. The key question was "what are important matters which still remain in the community?". The result of the interview shows the significance of the cathedral which remains through the existing beliefs and is expressed by people's cooperation and participation in rituals and religious activities. These have been the foundation of the social strength handed down through generations and will continue into the future.

On the other hand, the interviewees were varied in their roles in the Christian communities, sex, and age. The opinions obtained from the interview, therefore, reflect their different experiences yet they have the same opinion on the values of the cathedral that, even though physical features of the community and the cathedral have changed, the beliefs and faith in Christianity have always remained, with the cathedral as a centre where local people communicate with God through rituals and religious activities.

In detail, the opinions of the interviewees show that beliefs are significant. Although they regretted the loss of the former cathedral building, they accepted the new environment because of beliefs which relate to their experience.

Patthawee Wongsrikaew, a priest in his 30s, said that "...the physical change decreases the attachment, but the belief in God is not changed, ...I still pay attention to the cathedral's significance and values" (Patthawee Wongsrikaew, personal interview by author, May 20, 2018). In the same way, Khaisorn Thanasing, a woman in her 70s, said that "this community has the beliefs as its symbolical value. ...the change in the physical features does not matter to the appreciation of the significance because the beliefs are important ...and I feel familiar because I live here for a long time" (Khaisorn Thanasing, personal interview by author, May 20, 2018). In addition, Phaisan Thongthua, a man in his 70s, also stated that "the miracle which happened to my daughter when she was ill made me feel a deep faith in God. ...the change of the physical features does not change the belief and faith in the cathedral" (Phaisan Thongthua, personal interview by author, June 7, 2018). Apart from this, Montri Thanasing, man in his 30s, mentioned that this community is firmly attached to tradition, which has strengthened the bond between people and the cathedral. While the cathedral and buildings have changed, the thing that never changes are the beliefs" (Montri Thanasing, personal interview by author, June 8, 2018). These opinions indicate that the intangible dimension of the heritage is the factor that has preserved its significance and spiritual value.

Although the physical structure of the cathedral has changed, the sacred space inside and the symbolic elements continue to affect the people's mentality. Each time that the cathedral was replaced, the building and its land were consecrated in a sacred ceremony the day after the construction process had finished. This ceremony affected the sense of place for the cathedral. This intangible power has had an impact on people's perception of belief, so that precedence is given to this space, and shaped people's connection to the religious building more than the physical. Therefore, despite several changes to the cathedral's physical structure, people still connect to it and its role as the centre of religious practice is ongoing and uninterrupted. This belief and connection will ensure the significance and value of the cathedral into the future.

The Cathedral's transformation is a reflection of the requirements and beliefs of the stakeholders and affects the management of the building itself. It shows that the significance of sacred architecture is divided into two dimensions that depend on the rituals and symbolic elements. The first dimension focuses on the intangible while the second dimension focuses on the tangible. The first dimension is inside the space of the cathedral, which is designed and used as a sacred place; thus, whether the space is appropriate for ritual performance and worship of God is the most important issue. The second dimension consists of the symbolic elements which describe the religious building. The architectural style and elements are used to communicate to people that this is

a sacred building that belongs to God. In this case study, the stakeholders give priorities to the rituals beyond the physical, therefore, the architectural style can be changed as long as the sacredness of the place still exists.

Furthermore, elements which have been transferred from the former cathedral, especially architectural elements such as the bell tower and the cross, are symbolic elements which have meanings that directly relate to Christianity. These tangible elements are the identification of the space and functions of the place which is connected to God, therefore, they markedly enhance the cathedral's significance and values even though the physical appearance has undergone several periods of change.

These expressions show that beliefs that exist in the neighbouring area remain the most important matter, even though the physical elements of the community and architecture have changed. The new cathedral has been consecrated and it has now, in its turn, taken over the significant and valuable role of representing the community that will continue to shape people's beliefs and faith into the next generation. In addition, the Cathedral has not lost its connection to the old elements or the setting, which are significant and which allow people to experience the living history of this important local architecture.

5 Conclusion

According to the historic urban landscape approach, the significance and value of cultural heritage are considered or reconsidered beyond the physical environment. It supports considering the significance of the overall urban landscape through both tangible and intangible elements. This approach encourages the idea that urban elements which are transformed should be reconsidered as important components of heritage. Since they are a part of the city's attributes, people should be aware of their value in the same way as other important elements.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception reflects changes in perception of significance and values. Although the current physical structure is not the same as in the past, the building continues to serve as a sacred place filled with symbols and meaningful elements, so people appreciate its values. In addition, the ritual value is more significant than the shell of the building because the practices that are still performed in the new place reflect centuries-old traditions. People from generation to generation have been shaped by beliefs, thus the significance and values of the cathedral still continue in spite of the physical changes that have occurred in the past or which may occur in the future.

Thus, it is the beliefs that are the essence of the heritage and which express the antiquity of Christianity in Ubon; it is the belief that connects people with the place. Thus, the cathedral's significance and values have been transferred from the tangible dimension to the intangible dimension.

This issue points out that, in this city where so much physically has changed, there are intangible elements that are the core of significance and values of the place. Understanding of this concept should foster more enlightened overall ideas and be the basis for conservation and development. Hence, the consideration of heritage values in the dynamic city has to take into account intangible values along with tangible characteristics.

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