

International Sustainable Development Studies Institute
สถาบันการศึกษาการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนนานาชาติ

Experiential Learning Workbook

An Introduction to Chiang Mai and
Thai Culture

Fall Semester, 2021



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Urban Chiang Mai Observations

Purpose

The goal of this exercise is to being to make sense of the city of Chiang Mai, understanding a bit more about its urban development, contemporary issues with planning and development, and an overview of the general life of the city.

Assignment

Chiang Mai city is 700 years old, with an ancient moat around the “old city” as well as temples hundreds of years old. At the same time, Chiang Mai is a thoroughly modern city, with a thriving cafe and arts scene, along with shopping malls and traffic jams. Part of what makes Chiang Mai interesting is this layering of the old and the new, with modern high tech alongside ancient temples.

This exercise is one of observing and recording what you see in the city. It will draw on your experiences day-to-day, as well as on organized field studies in the city. You will need to spend some time exploring the old city on your own to learn more about the city, the area around where you live and study, and more.

1. **TRAFFIC:** Spend some time watching the traffic on a major road (such as the highway into the city) as well as on a smaller road in the old city. What do you notice in terms of the mix of cars, scooters, buses, and more? How are most people moving around the city?

2. WALKABILITY: Do you see sidewalks? If so, where? Are the sidewalks clear and easy to navigate? How do vendors and others use the sidewalks and/or the roadside when there are not sidewalks? Write down as well as draw what you see.

3. MIXED USE: Draw a map of the streets and sois (lanes) between your apartments and the ISDSI campus. What buildings are there? What kinds of shops, stores, housing, etc., do you observe? Label everything with your observations.

Urban Mixed Use: Street Vendors

Purpose

Understand how multiple activities in the same physical space vary over time.

Assignment

The use of the street for street food and other informal economic activity is a pervasive part of Thai and Chiang Mai life. In this assignment you will need to observe and map out how the street changes throughout the day. You will map out in detail from the student apartments along the main street up to the corner of the street where you turn to go to ISDSI (the corner with Pizza Company on the corner).

Draw a map and label the following:

- What is being sold?
- Who are the customers?
- How are things sold — to eat there or take away?
- Any additional observations?

(Maps start on the next page)

Morning: 8 AM Map of Vendors and activities

- What is being sold?
- Who are the customers?
- How are things sold — to eat there or take away?
- Any additional observations?

Mid-day: 12 PM Map of Vendors and activities

- What is being sold?
- Who are the customers?
- How are things sold — to eat there or take away?
- Any additional observations?

Evening: 7 PM Map of Vendors and activities

- What is being sold?
- Who are the customers?
- How are things sold — to eat there or take away?
- Any additional observations?

Lanna History and Folk Museum

Purpose

The purpose of this field study is to understand Lanna / Northern Thai culture and history as distinct from the history of Siam / Central Thai history.

Assignment

Several distinct but related museums in the heart of the old city are built around the “three kings” monument and plaza. These museums tell the story of the history of Lanna (Northern Thailand), Chiang Mai, and Northern Thai handicrafts and folk art.

1. Summarize the history of Lanna and Chiang Mai as presented at the museums. What is described as important? Why? What is distinctively “Lanna” about this history?

2. What is the relationship of Lanna / Chiang Mai to the Central (Siamese) Thai state?

Choose two exhibits you find interesting and describe them in detail (sketching as well as word). How do these help you understand Lanna and Chiang Mai culture and history?

Exhibit 1:

Exhibit 2:

Patara Elephant Farm Field Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to better understand the challenges of elephant conservation.

Activity

Patara Elephant Farm is recognized as an extremely successful breeding programs for Asian elephants. Their focus is on working with their own elephants as well as helping others to maintain the health of their elephants with the larger goal of elephant conservation. Their tourism program is designed to help educate people about elephants, as well as to correct misunderstandings about elephants and elephant conservation.

Pay attention and ask lots of questions!

What are the goals of Patara?

What are some of the key challenges they describe in elephant conservation?

Who are the people working with elephants at Patara (who are the *kwan* or mahouts)?

How can you tell if an elephant is healthy?

What are some of the things they do to keep their elephants healthy?

Describe what it is like interacting with elephants.

What is their skin like?

What noises and vocalizations do you hear? When/why?

What are the elephants doing with their trunks? Why?

How are the elephants interacting with each other? With people?

Temples

Purpose

The purpose of this is to understand temples (*wats*) in Chiang Mai as both architecture as well as places of spiritual practice.

Assignment

Select three temples to visit and describe the following:

- Who kinds of people do you see there?
- Draw a map of the temple grounds. What commonalities do you see and what differences between the different temples?
- What are the buildings at the temple? What is their purpose? Sketch or draw the differences.
- Why are there spaces and places that women cannot enter? What are they and why?
- Are there murals, paintings, sculptures, carvings, or other artwork inside or outside the temples? What are they and what do they represent?

(Pages for each temple start on the next page.)

Temple 1: _____

- Who kinds of people do you see there?
- Draw a map of the temple grounds. What commonalities do you see and what differences between the different temples?
- What are the buildings at the temple? What is their purpose? Sketch or draw the differences.
- Why are there spaces and places that women cannot enter? What are they and why?
- Are there murals, paintings or other artwork inside or outside the temples? What are they and what do they represent?

Temple 2: _____

- Who kinds of people do you see there?
- Draw a map of the temple grounds. What commonalities do you see and what differences between the different temples?
- What are the buildings at the temple? What is their purpose? Sketch or draw the differences.
- Why are there spaces and places that women cannot enter? What are they and why?
- Are there murals, paintings or other artwork inside or outside the temples? What are they and what do they represent?

Temple 3: _____

- Who kinds of people do you see there?
- Draw a map of the temple grounds. What commonalities do you see and what differences between the different temples?
- What are the buildings at the temple? What is their purpose? Sketch or draw the differences.
- Why are there spaces and places that women cannot enter? What are they and why?
- Are there murals, paintings or other artwork inside or outside the temples? What are they and what do they represent?

Buddhism and the Monkhood

Purpose

To understand more about Thailand's dominate religion, Buddhism, and its role in Thai society.

Assignment

Through a talk with a Thai monk students will have an opportunity to ask questions and learn about Buddhism. Ask questions and record your observations.

What are the core teachings of Buddhism?

What are some of the rules monks have to follow?

What is the role of monks in the community and Thai society?

Religious Diversity in Chiang Mai

Purpose

While Buddhism is the dominate religion in Thailand, it is not the only religion that is practiced in Thailand and in Chiang Mai. The goal of this assignment is to understand several of the key religious communities in Chiang Mai in the neighborhood of Wat Kate.

Assignment

You will be visiting and meeting with several different religious traditions. Ask lots of questions, being respectful of each of the traditions you will be interacting with.

Observe and record the following for each religious community on the following pages.

1. What is the religion / place you are visiting called?

Who are you talking with?

What is their role?

How do they describe their religion and religious practice?

How do they relate to other religions and religious leaders in the neighborhood?

What is their role in the community?

2. What is the religion / place you are visiting called?

Who are you talking with?

What is their role?

How do they describe their religion and religious practice?

How do they relate to other religions and religious leaders in the neighborhood?

What is their role in the community?

3. What is the religion / place you are visiting called?

Who are you talking with?

What is their role?

How do they describe their religion and religious practice?

How do they relate to other religions and religious leaders in the neighborhood?

What is their role in the community?

4. What is the religion / place you are visiting called?

Who are you talking with?

What is their role?

How do they describe their religion and religious practice?

How do they relate to other religions and religious leaders in the neighborhood?

What is their role in the community?

Market Study

Purpose

The goal of this study is to compare and contrast different markets in Chiang Mai.

Assignment

This assignment can be completed during the field study of Chiang Mai and markets as well as on your own. Be detailed in your descriptions of the markets you visit, being sure to describe what you observe in as much detail as possible.

How do markets differ from malls or supermarkets?

What roles do markets play in Thai society if they also have mini-marts, supermarkets, and malls?

Baan Haw Market / Kat Isalam

What is being sold in this market? Where is it from?

What type of prepared food is sold? Be specific. Buy and try different foods and describe them.

Who are the vendors? Where are they from? (Ask them!)

Who are the customers? What are they buying? Are any particular things really popular? What are they?

Wororot Market / Kat Luang

What is being sold in this market? Where is it from?

What type of prepared food is sold? Be specific. Buy and try different foods and describe them.

Who are the vendors? Where are they from? (Ask them!)

Who are the customers? What are they buying? Are any particular things really popular? What are they?

Boriboon Market

What is being sold in this market? Where is it from?

What type of prepared food is sold? Be specific. Buy and try different foods and describe them.

Who are the vendors? Where are they from? (Ask them!)

Who are the customers? What are they buying? Are any particular things really popular? What are they?

Traditional Thai Houses

Purpose

Learn about traditional vernacular architecture and regional / historical / cultural differences.

Assignment

We will be visiting a collection of traditional Thai houses next to the Chiang Mai University art museum. Choose one house to sketch and label and describe its functions and uses.

Street Food

Describe and try 3 different kinds of street food

1. What is it called in Thai? Ask the vendor to write it down for you in Thai!

Describe it — is it sweet, savory, hot, cold, etc.

How does it taste? How would you describe this to someone who has never had it before?

2. What is it called in Thai? Ask the vendor to write it down for you in Thai!

Describe it — is it sweet, savory, hot, cold, etc.

How does it taste? How would you describe this to someone who has never had it before?

3. What is it called in Thai? Ask the vendor to write it down for you in Thai!

Describe it — is it sweet, savory, hot, cold, etc.

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