

มรดกวัฒนธรรมและการท่องเที่ยวสุโขทัยในมุมมองสากล

Sukhothai Heritage and Tourism: An International Viewpoint

จตุรงค์ โพคะรัตน์ศิริ¹ และ จุฬวดี สันทัด²

Jaturong Pokharatsiri¹ and Chulawadee Santad²

^{1, 2} คณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์และการผังเมือง มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ จังหวัดปทุมธานี 12121

^{1, 2} Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Thammasat University, Pathumthani 12121, Thailand

¹ International Council on Monuments and Sites - International Cultural Tourism Committee (ICOMOS-ICTC)

E-mail: jaturong@ap.tu.ac.th¹, chulawadee@ap.tu.ac.th²

Abstract

The paper concludes the process of a research-based and international collaboration of ICOMOS-ICTC and partners in Thailand, including Thammasat University, ICOMOS Thailand, TCEB and DASTA Thailand. The process during 2012-2015 could be divided into three parts: rethinking on the master plan, identifying the value of destination and initiating the capacity building projects. Firstly, the multidisciplinary study of tourism planning at the Sukhothai World Heritage Site in Thailand revealed a number of challenges, especially the differences of the international policies, government's master plan and community's identification of values on the cultural heritage destination. Secondly, eight problematic issues of the site were identified from a participatory research and international cultural tourism experts' workshop. Thirdly, in search for sustainable and new tourism products, some built environment related projects were carried out to improve the aspects of value interpretation.

Keywords

Sukhothai World Heritage

Cultural Tourism Expert

Historic Urban Landscape

ICOMOS

DASTA Thailand

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ได้สรุปกระบวนการทำงานบนพื้นฐานการศึกษาและวิจัยร่วมกันของเครือข่ายองค์กรระดับนานาชาติ คือ คณะกรรมการวิชาการด้านการท่องเที่ยววัฒนธรรมของไอโคโมสสากลกับหน่วยงานที่ร่วมมือกันในประเทศไทย โดยเฉพาะ มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ สมาคมไอโคโมสไทย สำนักงานส่งเสริมการจัดประชุมและนิทรรศการ และองค์การบริหารการพัฒนาพื้นที่พิเศษเพื่อการท่องเที่ยวอย่างยั่งยืน โดยกระบวนการในช่วง พ.ศ. 2555-2558 สามารถแบ่งออกได้เป็นสาม ส่วน ส่วนที่หนึ่งเป็นการศึกษาแบบสหวิทยาการถึงการวางแผนนโยบายการจัดการท่องเที่ยวของพื้นที่พิเศษแหล่งมรดกโลกสุโขทัย ซึ่งได้แสดงให้เห็นความท้าทายหลายประการโดยเฉพาะความแตกต่างกันระหว่างนโยบายระดับสากลกับแผนแม่บทเพื่อการพัฒนาของรัฐ และการนิยามคุณค่าโดยชุมชนท้องถิ่นเกี่ยวกับแหล่งมรดกวัฒนธรรม ส่วนที่สองเป็นการนิยามปัญหาในประเด็นของพื้นที่ซึ่งถูกระบุด้วยกระบวนการวิจัยแบบมีส่วนร่วมและการฝึกปฏิบัติการร่วมกับผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการท่องเที่ยววัฒนธรรมในระดับสากล ส่วนที่สามมุ่งค้นหาผลิตภัณฑ์การท่องเที่ยวแบบใหม่และยั่งยืนด้วยการนำเสนอโครงการด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมสรรค์สร้างที่เกี่ยวข้องกับประเด็นปัญหาดังกล่าว เพื่อนำไปสู่การปรับปรุงการสื่อคุณค่าความหมายของพื้นที่

คำสำคัญ

มรดกโลกสุโขทัย

ผู้เชี่ยวชาญการท่องเที่ยววัฒนธรรม

ภูมิทัศน์เมืองประวัติศาสตร์

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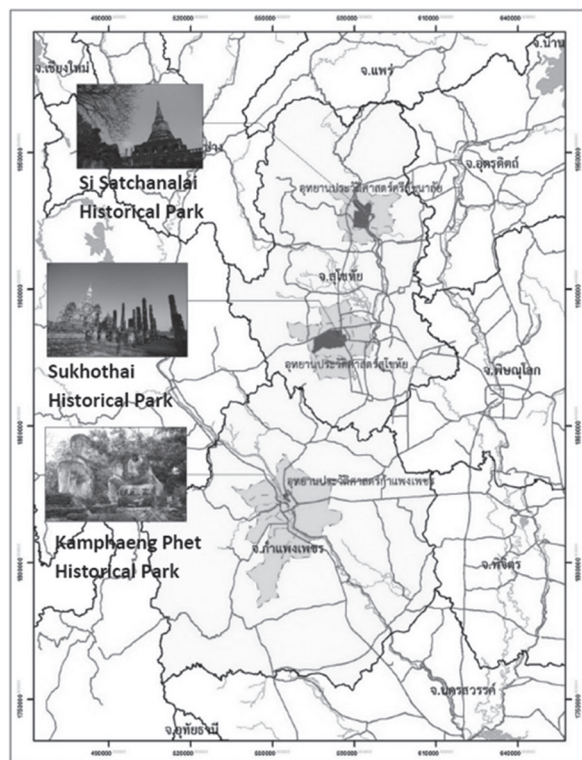
1. Introduction

In 2012, the author was appointed by the dean of Faculty of Architecture and Planning at Thammasat University (APTU) to assist on the inquiries from a central government agency, Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration, or DASTA which already signed a MOU with Thammasat, on the tourism development plans and projects for one of the DASTA's designated areas of Sukhothai World Heritage Site. Having been an expert member of the scientific committee of ICOMOS on cultural tourism since 2008, the author asked to see the full detailed master plan of Sukhothai from DASTA (which was ready in hands for Cabinet's approving of annual budget) and decided to approach a step backward – to seek out the true needs from the community's level that meet the international advices on cultural heritage management. With DASTA's agreement that the initiation would create international and national networks of tourism and heritage alliances, as well as a participatory working process with local groups of stakeholders, a team was set up and explored the site with a whole new perspective.

2. Rethinking the Sukhothai tourism master plan

The identified core area of Sukhothai is far more complicated than other DASTA's designated sites in Thailand (which mostly are the whole province or an island); in fact there are three core areas in two provinces, Sukhothai and Kamphaeng Phet, in which the two historical parks – Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet – situated about 70 kilometres away, north and south respectively, from the Sukhothai Historical Park. The Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage (WH) in 1991¹. The three entities have their own distinctive characters and histories; however, the site management of the central government's Fine Arts Department (FAD) has not

much been dealing with the intangible values of the place. DASTA has tried to manage the three sites as one, yet promoting diverse tourism activities linked to a number of surrounding communities (Figure 1).



Source: DASTA and Tesco Ltd., 2012, pp. 5-17 – 5-31

Figure 1. The three entities of Sukhothai World Heritage (declared as historical parks), with surrounding DASTA's designated areas (highlighted in light grey)

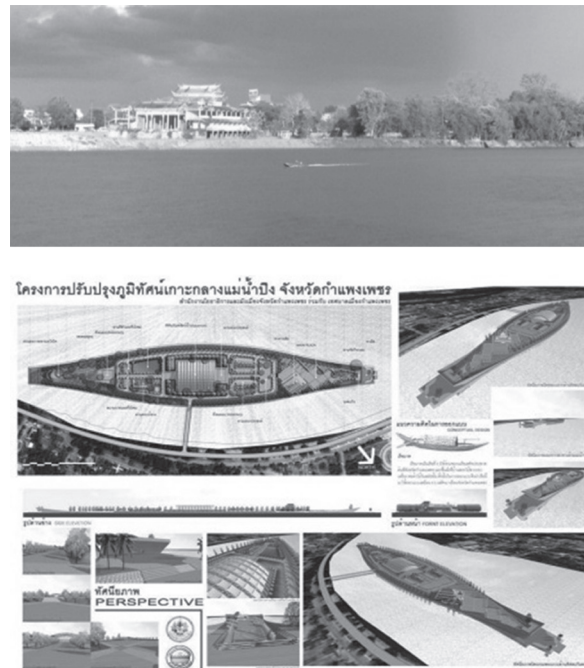
Parts of the tourism master plan of DASTA Sukhothai (as we call its branch office) were laid out and emphasised on the premises of major attractions, namely the ruins and archaeological sites, suggesting extensions on infrastructure building and so on. The other part was to create a so called “knowledge management” of cultural resources with the community members and local stakeholders, which would be the core objectives of DASTA on preparing and supporting of the supply side; whereas Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) works on the promotion and marketing and Department of Tourism, on the rules of conduct for tourism businesses (and, in some cases, facility construction on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports).

The DASTA's Sukhothai tourism master plan suggested to drive 134 projects, classified under 5 strategies, within 10 years (2013-2022) on the total budget of 1,762.9 million baht (approximately 50.6 million USD). Those strategies were: conservation of the values of historical parks and WH (31% of the budget); sustainable development and conservation of the values of cultural tourism in WH towns (43.5%); development of tourism facility and infrastructure (4.5%); capacity building for investment promotion and competition of tourism market (16%); and development of knowledge, network and participation of all sectors in tourism management and administration (5%). Whereas those 33 projects from the first strategy were drafted out for the sole responsibility of FAD (and its historical park offices); about 40% from the rest of the projects were prepared for DASTA's workload itself, and less than 20 out of 134 projects were designed for the local government's responsibility (DASTA and TESCO Ltd., 2012, pp. 5-17 – 5-31).

The budget proportion suggested, firstly, that the status quo of DASTA was of the central government (a public organisation under supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister), intending to closely coordinate with the central government agencies (and through their regional branch offices) more than the local government bodies and, secondly, that about one-third of the projects were dedicated to construction works (or feasibility studies). Three projects were created with an outstanding budget of 100 million baht or over. Among these, the prevention of riverbank erosion at Si Satchanalai Historical Park (150 million baht) was deemed as urgent; whereas the establishment of 'research and development centre for sustainable management and administration of historical parks and World Heritage towns of ASEAN' (100 million baht) was ambitiously set out to be fulfilled in 2016 (ibid, pp. 6-18 – 6-31).

One of the projects, the construction of cultural and natural tourism centre at the river islands of Kamphaeng Phet (100 million baht), could hardly be seen as achievable (set out for 2015-2016) because

of the chronic legal and political issues which left some abandoned structures at the site from 30 years ago). Most of all, such project was planned as one of those 89 projects with expectation of monetary returns; whereas the other 45 projects were expected some non-monetary returns to define their sustainable outcomes (ibid, p. 6-33) (Figure 2).



Source: Author (top, taken on 11 June 2014) and <https://www.facebook.com/rakkamphaeng/photos/a.205018769621658.41333.146082892181913/205019192954949/?type=3&theater> (bottom, accessed on 10 November 2017)

Figure 2. Previous attempts to transform the abandoned structures at the river islands in Kamphaeng Phet (top picture) include a design by the Department of Publics Work and Town & Country Planning (bottom picture)

3. Identifying the issues with locals and experts

Following the DASTA's strategies, ICOMOS-ICTC Workshop and Sukhothai International Cultural Tourism Expert Symposium entitled 'Living Heritage: Creative Tourism and Sustainable Communities – Education, Interpretation and Management' was organised in October 2013 by the research team from Thammasat University, DASTA and TCEB (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau), in collaboration with ICOMOS-ICTC and ICOMOS Thailand, and co-hosted by many local partners and stakeholders in

Sukhothai. The workshop had 20 international experts, mainly from ICTC and ICOMOS Thailand, divided in three groups and studied the issues of protection zone, eco-museum and tourism facility by participatory process (Figure 3), including site survey and group interview with local informants, such as TAT Sukhothai, historical park offices, local governments, town planners, entrepreneurs, hoteliers, craftspeople and farmers. It also had another 17 international experts divided into three groups and explored the real and hand-on experience of agrarian heritage, pottery and cycling (Pokharatsiri & Santad, 2015, pp. 124 – 131).



Source: Author (taken on 7-9 October 2013)

Figure 3. The workshop had 20 international experts, divided in three groups and studied the issues of protection zone, eco-museum and tourism facility by participatory process.

After spending the first few days exploring the site, the leaders of those six groups came to conclude and to raise issues regarding the sustainable tourism development of cultural heritage place of Sukhothai. The international expert roundtable discussion was closely following in the same day, joined by the heads of UNESCO Bangkok's cultural unit, Romualdo del

Bianco Foundation's Life Beyond Tourism (Italy) and Community Based Tourism Institute (Thailand) among other ICTC and ICOMOS Thailand experts, debating the raised issues on World Heritage, tourism and local community (Session 1; seven experts) and heritage interpretation and local empowerment (Session 2; another seven experts), with other participants from the workshop and members of local communities among hundreds of audiences (*ibid.*).

The working method of participatory workshop and roundtable discussion through a case study approach was habitually embedded with the characteristics of qualitative research, i.e. field focused, using researcher as a key instrument of data collection from multiple sources, inductively and interactively analysing the data, focusing on participants' perspectives, employing emergent design of research process, and reporting with interpretative and holistic accounts through theoretical lens (Creswell, 2007, pp. 37-39). The participating experts were equipped with both the conventional and most recent arguments on cultural heritage management from years of working experience and ongoing knowledge exchange through the network of international organisations. At the heart of discussion there was, reflectively, the reference of 1999 International Cultural Tourism Charter, i.e. conceptualising the sustainable cultural tourism as indigenous-valued and community-based, creating cultural exchange and interpretation between visitors and host community, involving and benefiting the host community while satisfying the visitors, and protecting while enhancing both cultural and natural characteristics of heritage places (ICOMOS, 1999).

Some key conclusions from the workshop and roundtable discussion (APTU and DASTA, 2013a) (Table 1) were carefully merged into the eight highlighted issues of Sukhothai, previously studied by the research team from Thammasat and emphasised by ICTC experts submitted to DASTA prior to the workshop dates, and rearranged and published into a handbook entitled 'Sukhothai

Table 1. Eight identified issues of Sukhothai Heritage and Tourism, accompanied with some of the international cultural tourism experts' dialogue

Issues of Sukhothai	Excerpts of international cultural tourism experts roundtable discussion
Heritage	"...questions are crucial on the locality...we also must welcome intangible cultural heritage to the site. This will be a broad advance – site managers and officials cannot afford such changes right now, and we need to break these big walls of the political and administrative climate right now to make a space for people to discuss these issues..." (Yongtanit Pimonsathean, President of ICOMOS Thailand)
Landscape	"...in Sukhothai, the landscape would be a part of the heritage relationships – the mountains, the reservoir...the irrigation system is something nobody is talking about...so if we talk about what are you going to interpret – how about ancient technologies and their relevance to contemporary life?..." (Patricia O'Donnell, ICTC-USA)
Architecture	"...we can expand the concept of museums to mini museums. A mini museum might be two shelves in a guesthouse and it is very tied to storytelling. It is a process of local people creating and exploring their own heritage. It can be done at the community level – small, not professional curated museums. Think small, think many..." (Randy Durband, ICTC-USA)
Tourism	"...tourism provides opportunity to present World Heritage to public, to generate funds for conservation, and to promote community and economic benefits...there shouldn't be a distinction between conservation and tourism...tourism should be a part of the WH nomination process from the beginning..." (Tim Curtis, Head of Culture Unit, UNESCO-Bangkok)
Historic site	"...everything we find out about the historic landscape can't be recreated. The landscape changes and evolves many times. If quarries at site are grown over and green, it's much nicer than quarries in use. How can research into past agriculture also inform current agriculture? This can have economic impacts and values beyond tourism..." (Aylin Orbasli, ICTC-UK)
Knowledge	"...I once met somebody living in a WH site. She said you can say nothing for us, about us, without us. I think that the WH sites are the most difficult landscapes on earth – there are so many uses. You have to find optimal use. Use the community to open up a vast area of knowledge, go away from mistrusting and start trusting..." (Torbjorn Eggen, ICTC-Finland)
Trade and industry	"...how do you interpret this vast profound information and feed it to tourists who have short times at this site? How can we use pre-travel and post-travel to communicate more information? You can see these places on TV. Pre-travel and post-travel shouldn't be seen as separate. They are a matrix or a complex web..." (Yuk Hong Ian Tan, ICTC-Singapore)
Creativity	"...how do you make the archaeological site seem alive and seem like you can slip yourself into and belong to that place? The future of heritage is digital future...developing countries are bypassing computers and accessing things through smartphones. People enter sites with more digital capacity in their phones than what the site itself has..." (Russell Staiff, ICTC-Australia)

Source: adapted from APTU and DASTA, 2013a; APTU and DASTA, 2013b, Annex 2

Handbook: Cultural Tourism Management of Sukhothai World Heritage' for wider distribution (Figure 4). The eight issues were identified as the new challenges for sustainable cultural tourism development of Sukhothai World Heritage and its surrounding communities; they dealt with heritage, landscape, architecture, tourism, historic site, knowledge, trade and industry, and creativity (APTU and DASTA, 2013b, Annex 2).

The heritage issue explored the misconception of cultural heritage which affected the place's interpretation, cultural memory and identity. The landscape issue examined the complex relationship of human, built and natural environment, which includes land use, traffic and activity. The architecture issue argued on the cross-cultural and periodic diversity of dwelling and settlement in historic urban

landscape. The tourism issue argued on the staged authenticity and community participation in cultural tourism management. The historic site issue commented on the physical and social control of public within the historic preservation area.

The knowledge issue raised concerns about the missing provision of community knowledge management and creative young generation at the local level. The trade and industry issue questioned the future of agro-tourism industry and facilitation to sustainable production and consumption of the region. The creativity issue highlighted the creative media and patrons to promote art and culture that blend the tradition with recent trend. The conclusion came in terms of recommendation to further match the finding issues with current strategies and framework of the associated agencies and other stakeholders.



Source: Author (top, taken on 10 October 2013) and <https://www.facebook.com/dastahistoricalpark/posts/652375451563138> (bottom, accessed on 10 November 2017)

Figure 4. Sukhothai Handbook, a publication summarising the project, including ICOMOS-ICTC Workshop and Sukhothai International Cultural Tourism Expert Symposium (top picture), was widely distributed in Thailand and presented to the former secretariat general of ASEAN, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, by the then deputy director of DASTA (bottom picture)

Parts of the conclusion were also written as an article entitled 'Dialogues on the Cultural Tourism Management of Sukhothai Historic Urban Landscape' (Pokharatsiri & Pimonsathean, 2014), submitted to and presented at the ICOMOS Thailand International Conference 2014, in a Special Session of Thailand's nine scholars sponsored by DASTA and together with the other three selected research papers of: a real-time 3D interactive interface for visitor information at cultural heritage site (Busayarat, Lopkerd & Suksawaddi, 2014a), intellectual property and product branding development by collaboration for creative crafts (Chuenrudeemol & Boonla-or, 2015), and Asian rural strategies for creative economy and tourism (Kaewlai & Janjamlah, 2014). The panel discussion during the session was very fruitful and proved helpful for the development of DASTA's future projects that would be more locally-appropriated in details.

4. Towards the new tourism products

The consequences of the 2013 ICTC workshop were the fine-tuned sequel projects from DASTA, significantly adjusted from the original ideas in the master plan to greater benefit the local communities. Some findings, considered by many as insignificant or invaluable at first, were reassessed and negotiated by the research team to shape several better proposals for sustainable tourism development of Sukhothai, ready for DASTA to contact potential international resource persons and experts from the newly achieved list of allies and partners.

Some of the proposals were carefully customised by the ICTC experts who were truly experienced with the subjects, for example, a cycling master plan from an international expert who had both experience in cycling and landscape design of many historic towns, as well as an adventurous cycling experience of the Sukhothai site exploration during the 2013 ICTC workshop. Another example was a proposal from an anthropologist and museum expert to professionally document the intangible values of cultural heritage for several small community museums and to establish a network of eco-museum system at Sukhothai. Both proposals tackled the lack of Thailand's knowledge and professional skill to conduct a study or practice that was beyond our capacity for the time being (APTU and DASTA, 2013a, pp. 58 –91).

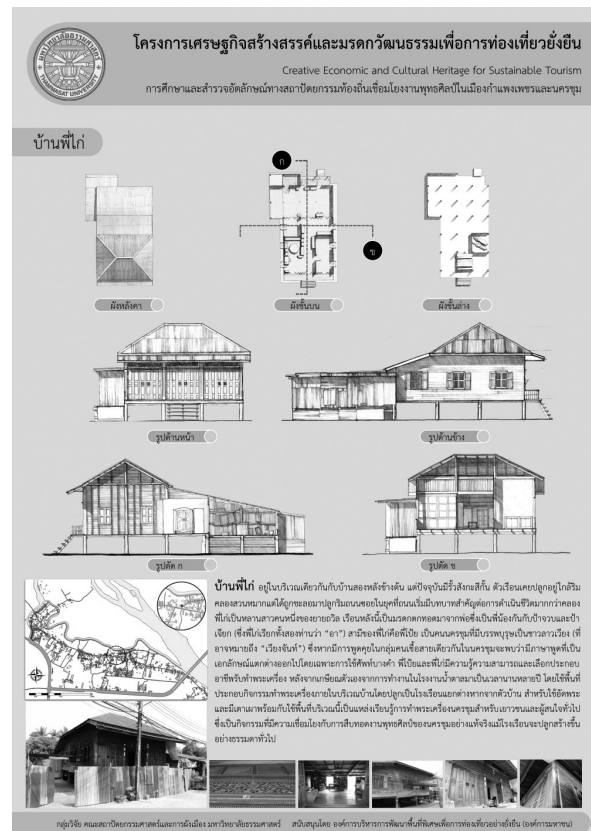
The most beneficial aspects of those proposals were their aims that not only want to expertly carry on with the outlined tasks but also to educate and work with local researchers and members of communities at every step of the process. The highest goal was to transfer the management of knowledge from international level – because it was World Heritage after all – that could be customised to the site wherein the locals had to live their everyday while preparing to interpret the best value of the place to visitors. Unfortunately those proposals were eventually turned down, neither because of the negotiated price

(which was a very affordable reduced price at this international level of expertise) nor the hardships at Sukhothai site (which was a real challenge, but experts genuinely expressed their willingness to help), but the political environment of DASTA and probably the Thai government itself that clearly looked at Thailand's tourism as a glass full of water.

The author, nevertheless, had worked on a few sequel projects for DASTA during 2014-2015. A small sector that the author, a professor in architecture and planning, chose to conduct was dealing with the built environment issues. Prior the 2013 ICTC workshop, there were two pilot studies from Thammasat University's researchers for DASTA Sukhothai, under the author's supervision, which focused on the design knowledge and technology as a tool for sustainable tourism development. They were: a real-time 3D interactive interface for visitor information, using a significant monument of Sukhothai WH (i.e. Wat Sri Chum ruins) as an example, and another project aimed to produce the real heritage gifts which involved the process of craft and lifestyle learning opportunity for visitors (Naksorn, 2013). The 2014-2015 three sequel projects had continued the aspects of value reassessment in the Sukhothai built environment, in search for the new (or redefined) values that had long been shadowed by the mainstream thinking of heritage as ancient ruins instead of the integration of social life and place

Of the three sequel projects, two explored the Kamphaeng Phet's historic settlements in both tangible (vernacular settlements and traditional houses, mostly missed out from the scene of Sukhothai WH heritage and tourism) (Pokharatsiri & Pimonsathean, 2014) (Figure 5) and intangible values (particularly the folk/modern history and everyday identified values, mostly neglected by the mainstream national historic preservation) (Pokharatsiri, 2014). The other project looked at the possibility of contemporary architectural design and usage, by infusing a parallel design experiment (i.e. a new Sukhothai Historical Park's visitor information centre

which was a project to be carried out solely by FAD in real life) into the student's design studio at Thammasat University, and an evaluation process through a group of involved architectural professors, a group of architects who formerly designed contemporary structures for the historical parks in the 1980s-1990s and the practitioners at the site (i.e. archaeologists who managed the historic parks and town planners) (Pokharatsiri & Suksawaddi, 2014).



Source: Author (based on Pokharatsiri et al., 2014)

Figure 5. One of the three sequel projects explored the vernacular settlements and traditional houses in Kamphaeng Phet, mostly neglected by the mainstream national historic preservation

Another sequel project under the author's supervision was a heritage documentation by 3D scanning and digital survey of three traditional houses in Kamphaeng Phet, in which the three houses were facing urgent threats of either abandonment/dilapidation or inaccessible by public/privately used (hence, a virtual museum initiation) (Busayarat, Lopkerd & Suksawaddi, 2014b). Several students' researches at the time were also encouraged to look

at the sites (i.e. Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet) with different perspectives to come up with new dimensions and research questions linked to the new and creative tourism products and sustainable tourism goals.

5. Conclusion

ICOMOS was the centre in this successful story. Whereas DASTA provided funding and opportunity for Thammasat University's research teams to conduct participatory studies with the local communities and stakeholders; ICOMOS-ICTC, in collaboration with ICOMOS Thailand, had brought the globally intellectual ability of knowledge and cultural resource management to Sukhothai. As a World Heritage, Sukhothai has inevitably faced many challenges from both heritage management (e.g. integration of intangible and community value to the historic site management and participatory heritage education at local level) and cultural tourism (e.g. value interpretation for new generations of visitors, community-based tourism in strictly controlled WH site, and so on).

For decades Sukhothai (or its development stakeholders) had not changed its mindset on heritage and tourism – sightseeing, mainstream ancient history, day-trip mass tourism – which left almost nothing to connect with the visitor's experience. Since the 1990s, international charters of ICOMOS (an official academic consultant body for the World Heritage Committee), as well as agendas from UNESCO, UNWTO and WIPO among others, have been increasingly focusing on the community's well-being in heritage places and destinations (Hall, 2000) ; nevertheless many of those ideas were originated, developed and practiced in the East (Fong, Winter, Rii, Khanjanusthiti & Tandon, 2012, pp. 40-41). Therefore, the recognition of intangible value at community level and its integration to WH management is and will always be the key to a successful sustainable cultural tourism development – less impact for the locals and more authentic experience for the visitors.

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Remarks

¹ See full details of the inscription, including the OUV (Outstanding Universal Value) description, maps and associated documents at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/574>.

² Hall, C. M. (2000). In chapter 5: Tourism planning and policy at the international and supranational level.

³ Fong, K. L., Winter, T., H. Rii, H. U., Khanjanusthiti, P., & Tandon, A. (2012); Particularly on the Nara document on authenticity (1994); China Principles (1998); Shanghai Charter (2002); Yamato Declaration (2004); Okinawa Declaration (2004); Xi'an Declaration (2005); Hoi An Protocols (2005) and Seoul Declaration (2007).

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