

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THAILAND AND VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to 1) study the management of cultural heritage in Thailand and Vietnam and 2) compare the management practices of cultural heritage in both countries. The methodology is qualitative research, with data collected from documentary reviews and semi-structured interviews with five key informants. The results show that the management of cultural heritage sites in the two countries differs significantly due to their unique civilizations and varying management policies. Thailand's civilization, influenced by India and the Khmer Empire, developed into distinct national Thai arts and culture. Cultural heritage in Thailand is closely tied to elite groups, particularly Buddhist temples, which were often built by the monarchy and dominated the cultural heritage landscape. The Fine Arts Department is the responsible institution for cultural heritage governance. Buddhist temples have become critical assets in the tourism industry, with local communities benefiting from the commodification of these sites.

In contrast, Vietnam's historical development was heavily influenced by China for much of its history. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam's government holds the authority to register community cultural heritage under policies of "Folklorization" and "Exoticization." The Vietnamese government has successfully secured funding for restoration projects from European countries and UNESCO. However, Vietnam also has Cham castles from the ancient Champa kingdom, one of the oldest civilizations in Southeast Asia. A challenge

remains, as the Cham ethnic group is a minority, and many Vietnamese people are not well-acquainted with Cham castles. If the Vietnamese government provides more support for preserving Cham castles, and if the Thai government can balance the benefits among various ancient sites, managing cultural heritage in both countries could achieve greater success and sustainable development for local communities.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage Management, Thailand, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Thailand has seven of world heritage sites, combined with 4 cultural sites and 3 natural sites. Cultural sites were 1) the Historic Town of Sukhothai and its Associated Historic Towns and 2) the Historic City of Ayutthaya, registered in 1991. 3) Ban Chiang Archaeological Site, registered in 1992, and 4) The Ancient Town of Si Thep and Associated Dvaravati Monuments, registered in 2023. Natural sites were 1) Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries registered in 1991. 2) Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, registered in 2005, and 3) Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex, registered in 2021. (UNESCO, 2023) Vietnam has eight world heritage sites, with 5 cultural sites, 2 natural sites, and 1 mix of cultural and natural sites. Cultural sites were as follows: 1) The Complex of Hue Monuments was registered in 1993. 2) Hoi An Ancient Town was registered in 1999. 3) My Son Sanctuary was registered in 1999. 4) Central Sector of the Imperial

Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi registered in 2010, and 5) Citadel of the Ho Dynasty registered in 2011. Natural sites were 1) Ha Long Bay – Cat Ba Archipelago, registered in 1994, expanded area in 2000 and 2023, and 2) Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park, registered in 2003, expanded area in 2015, and mixed site was Trang An Landscape Complex registered in 2014. (UNESCO, 2023) Vietnam registered places to become world heritage sites after Thailand, but today, Vietnam has more world heritage sites than Thailand; the central area and southern areas of Vietnam have the Champa civilization remaining, plenty of groups of Brahmin-Hinduism temples that are impressive the oldest and perfect places in Southeast Asia; moreover, these ancient Brahmin-Hinduism temples will become world heritage sites in the future, so the researcher is interesting to study on this topic.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study cultural heritage management in Thailand and Vietnam
2. To compare cultural heritage management in Thailand and Vietnam

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pohngjit (2018) study “Risk of Ayutthaya Historical Site and surrounded area: delist from World Heritage” result shows that the main factors that risk of Ayutthaya historical site were change and development of governance and economy, area invasion, not resemblance of each concept of each official to develop Ayutthaya province and conflict between Fine Arts Department with the other official, local municipal, private sector and merchants in historical area.

Thongchan et al. (2013) study “Problems concerning legal enforcement on Archaeological sites, artifact, and sacred places: case study on Ayutthaya Province Island” results show that the law governing archaeological sites and artifacts

of Thailand in 1961, including 2nd Amendment in 1992 is an instrument of Fine Arts Department to manage ancient sites and artifact and sacred places in Thailand and local governments have authority to manage archaeological site and artifact which located in each province. In Vietnam, the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992 Law on Cultural Heritage 2001 separated consideration between tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage, and the manager of each ancient site depends on the Ministry of Culture.

Salemink(2013). study “Appropriating Culture: The Politics of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Vietnam” results show that after Hue, Hoi An, and My Son became world heritage, Vietnam became well-known as one of the old civilizations, the culture was interesting, and tourism expanded, but the cultural heritage policy, Vietnam state did not blend together, each of local area had cultural heritage competition by interest.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

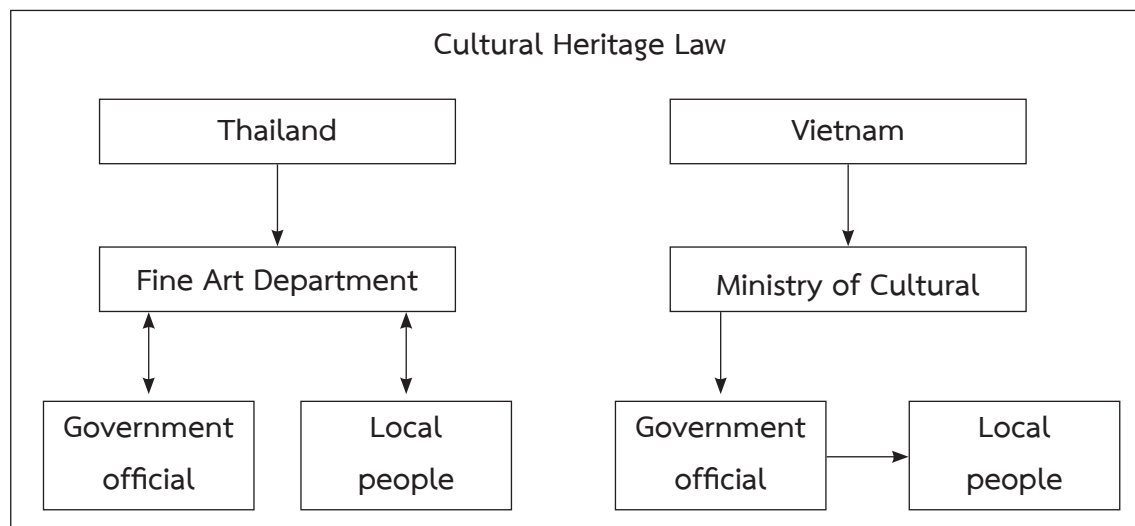


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is qualitative research divided into 3 steps: 1. Collect information, 2. Check information, and 3. Analyze information.

1. Researcher collected information from documentary reviews. The primary sources include 1) the document concept of cultural heritage management, 2) the document of theories and concepts of area management, and 3) the document from the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture project to the government to sustain cultural heritage. Secondary sources such as 1) related documents and research of ancient sites area

administration, 2) articles, magazines, and newspapers correlated with cultural heritage and the cultural landscape of Thailand and Vietnam. Besides, the researcher used semi-structured interviews, 5 of the key informants were academicians who were specialists in Thailand and Vietnam's cultural heritage and observed the area surrounding the world heritage sites in Thailand and Vietnam. The researcher observed the cultural landscape of Vietnam in 2022, had a connection, and used online contact with key informants in 2023.

2. The researcher checked information using external and internal

criticism and verified information using triangulation.

3. The researcher analyzes information by interpreting for grouping information, analyzing the continuous situation and unceasing activities, analyzing the information composition, and comparing both similar and dissimilar information. Next, a time frame for historical analysis is presented by descriptive analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Cultural heritage's management of Thailand and Vietnam

Thailand

Thailand received both of India and Khmer civilization over a thousand years. Siam has had its own style of art and culture since the Sukhothai Kingdom, including surrounding towns such as Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet. Ayutthaya Kingdom was the splendid former capital city of Thailand. Ayutthaya has been the world's center of commerce and connected civilization between the Eastern world and the Western world from 1350-1767 A.D. Ayutthaya developed true national Thai arts and culture. (UNESCO, 2009) Ayutthaya cultural forward to Thonburi Kingdom and Rattanakosin Kingdom as Bangkok's capital city. In the reign of King Rama IV, the Thai government

was indeed important to cultural heritage for the purpose of showing European imperialists that Thailand had a great civilization in the past and must not be claimed as a colony. The restoration project occurred all over the important ancient sites, especially in the former capital areas of Thailand (Suteerattanapirom, 2005), as the first time the government led the Thai people to participate in taking care of cultural heritage. Thailand had never been a colony; however, when influenced by European countries, King Rama V hired European advisers and received Western technologies to develop countries. In 1957, at the age of 2,500 years, Buddhism and Bangkok bicentennial was established in 1982 (Niladech, 2003). At that time, restoration projects of ancient temples occurred in Thailand, especially in the central capital of Thailand, which received projects from the Fine Art Department. In the post-colonial era, Thailand had a close relationship with the USA, but at the same time, Thailand tried to set up "ASEAN" in 1967 to stimulate cooperation between Southeast Asian countries to deter powerful nations from intervening in the region.

Thailand joined the convention concerning protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage from UNESCO on September 17, 1987. (UNESCO, 2023)

In 1991, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng were registered with the World Heritage. These three places excited Thai people about the expanding tourism industry, and the Thai government was motivated to send another site; in 1992, Banchiang became a world heritage. Actually, Ancient sites in Thailand have been protected by law since 1961, under the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, 1961, as amended by Act (No.2), 1992, enforced by the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture. (Department of Fine Arts, n.d.) There are other laws from the Thai government, the Ratchaphatsadu Land Act, 1975; the City Planning Act, 1975; the Building Control Act 1979 as amended by Act (No.2), 1992; and the Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act, 1992. Moreover, the Kingdom of Thailand Constitution (1997) and the Decentralization Act (1999) empower the local community to have a duty in the conservation and management of cultural landscapes.

In Thailand, cultural heritage was important related to the king and monarchy; although, in 1932, absolute monarchy changed to constitutional monarchy, the political regime was focused in Bangkok, and former capitals reflected

the king and monarchy, such as Ayutthaya, Sukhothai, Si-Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet; especially, ancient palace, ancient royal temples, ancient royal route and royal ceremony. Moreover, kings and monarchies have built Buddhist temples since ancient times, so temples were one of the dominant cultural heritage. Temples reflected royal power; King Bhumibol Adulyadej (King Rama IX), the longest reign in Thailand who assured and protected five religions: Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Brahmin-Hinduism, and Sikhism, interpreted that churches, mosques, and Brahmin Temples were also important cultural heritage.

Priority of Buddhist temples always comes first, especially temples in Ayutthaya, the world heritage area; even the temples outside the world heritage area attracted tourists very much such as the Nakhon Luang Castle building in 1631 A.D., purposed for the Ayutthaya king to rest in the way to respect the Lord Buddha's footprint at Saraburi area. Nakhon Luang castle merged with the Buddhist temple area; this temple has many important ancient artifacts such as four of Lord Buddha's footprints, a moonstone rock, which historians believe is a thammachak or wheel of the law, a Ganesha statue sitting on a human skull. (Nakhon Luang District Governor, 2021)



Figure 2 Ganesha statue sitting on the human skull at Nakhon Luang Castle, Ayutthaya, Thailand (Researcher, 2023)

It seems the other kinds of ancient sites did not have the opportunity as temples until the “Tom Yam Kung Crisis” or financial crisis occurred in 1997; falling of the monetary sector led to business close that happens all over Thailand; this crisis led Thai people to look back to “sufficiency economy,” theory of the King Bhumiphol Adulyadej, people realized of their hometown, some people come back to their countryside, cultural heritage & local wisdom starting to “commodification”. Commodification means changing culture to be products for sale; actually, the royal development project focused on cultural products for many decades to try to help local people, ethnics people, and periphery people to earn money. In the early 2000s, the Thai government continued projects to help small enterprises as “One Tambon

One Product” or “OTOP,” meaning one community, one product, to stimulate the grassroots economy.

Vietnam

Vietnam had a close relationship with China for over a thousand years. Cham ethnic people successfully resisted China and built the Champa Kingdom in 192 – 758 A.D. (Fine Art Department, 1999). Cham people received civilization from India with the Hindu religion. The holy lands of Champa Kingdom were My Son Sanctuary and Po Nagar castle after Champa Kingdom was influenced by Khmer since 1190 A.D., and it was evident that the Champa King supervised My Son Sanctuary until 1470 A.D. Unfortunately, almost all of My Son’s stone inscriptions were lost, and there was no information on My Son Sanctuary until 1885 A.D. (Fine Art Department, 1999). The French

army discovered groups of Champa Castle in the deep jungle of My Son Mountain, so the European academicians traveled to the My Son area. In 1980, the Vietnamese government collaborated with the Polish government to restore the ancient Cham site under technical control from Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, Polish architecture. (Fine Art Department, 1999) This project occurred at My Son Sanctuary between 1981 and 1996; the Champa Kingdom had many castles, such as Bang An, My Son Sanctuary, Dzung Long, Bang It, Nhan, Po Nagar, Hoa Lai, Po Klong Garai, Po Rome, Po Dam, and Po Sainu (Phu Hai). Champa castles will be on a tentative list and will be a world heritage site in the future.

However, Hwang, S. had a different opinion, *“Cham is a minority in Vietnam; although government support of Cham ancient site by the provincial government, I never believe that another Cham place will be the world heritage as My Son Sanctuary because Vietnamese people didn’t know Cham places and Cham tradition as well as walking to respect Perfume Pagoda Festival or lantern festival...”* (Hwang, S. Interviewed, 2023, 18 Oct.)

In the colonial era, Vietnam had a close relationship with France, was influenced by Japan in World War II, and became independent in 1954. Post-colonial, Ho Chi Minh became a communist



Figure 3 Po Klong Garai castle, Vietnam – **Figure 4** Nhan castle, Vietnam

(Researcher, 2022)

leader, making the U.S. unpleasant that lead Vietnam to become the battlefield of the Cold War that made north-Vietnam had a close relationship with USSR and China; when USA intervention of south-Vietnam, an air-based attack of the U.S. was devastated and destroy plenty of ancient sites, (Chuenboon, P. Interviewed, 2023, 23 Oct.) The Vietnamese government sent a letter to the U.S. government asking to protect ancient civilizations; however, the Cold War was over by the U.S. looser and armistice in 1972; after Vietnam reunited, the Vietnamese government stimulated the country to recover through education, culture, and tradition. Communism governance was started with a close relationship with China, Russia, and ASEAN. After Hue, Hoi An, and My Son Sanctuary were registered as world heritage, Vietnamese people became interested in cultural heritage with the expanding tourism industry and stimulated pride in national increasingly; moreover, international level perception of Vietnam as one of the countries had one of the oldest civilizations.

Vietnam's nation-state was not united; each community tried to send their cultural heritage competition, which needed support from the government and professionals to administrate the area

of culture, especially in the Doi Moi era starting in 1986. (Salemink, 2013) Community people want the government to ensure or register that the cultural heritage is valuable more than a historical or cultural part because it means the social seniority and politics of some families in the community.

Early 1990s, Vietnam government support religion, traditional, belief, and cultural; although, from the point of view of To Ngoc Thanh (Salemink, 2013) see government controlled cultural activities of general people, such as cultural community, ritual and ceremony with purposed to present nations cultural; although, government with socialism-communism, but did not deny that total community starting with political authority with win-win situation by government claimed community cultural heritage by the name of nation and cultural heritage become advantage for some group living in the community.

The complex of Hue monuments, the first of Vietnam's world heritage sites, was registered as a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1993. Hue refined to the king and monarchy that built conflict to communism government fair enough. Many supporters tried to register Hue, such as Thai Cong Nguyen, the former

director of Hue Monuments Conservation Center (Salemink, 2013). The situation gained sympathy for Hue. Hue was destroyed in the Cold War; Richard Englehardt, the cultural adviser of UNESCO of Asia-Pacific, gave self-support to Hue (Salemink, 2013), and Hue also gained international-level support from France and Japan to impulse Hue successful. Hue became a motivation for the Vietnamese people's committee working from every province to give the name of their cultural community heritage to the government to support their heritage. After Hoi An and My Son Sanctuary, the Champa civilization became a world heritage building that was the pride of the Vietnamese people and had a greatly developed tourism industry.

Further, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam adopted the Law on Cultural Heritage on June 29, 2001. The next one was adopted on November 11, 2002 (Nguyen, n.d.), "Decree on the Detailed Regulations to implement some Articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage." This law concerned the Vietnamese government's cultural heritage policy and practice following the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. UNESCO-registered cultural heritage means mankind's heritage that ceases conflict between internal groups in Vietnam.

Vietnam's government is interested in protecting and supporting the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic groups, but most Vietnamese think the ethnic culture is old and has fallen behind. Not surprisingly, the Vietnamese government practices because UNESCO connected cultural heritage as something that had a boundary that connected with ethnic groups clearly.

Combined with intangible cultural heritage, continues to be practical and depend on cultural carriers; however, Salemink (2013) calls the effect of cultural policy "folklorization," which means some the cultural activities were decontextualized from the cultural community, with special meaning of social, economic, and ritual, and religion were re-contextualized of another society where people provide the meaning of aesthetics was an important criterion. Stimulated by the tourism industry and tourist gaze, the strange, immemorial, and attractive cultures or ethnic groups lead to "dollarization" and "exoticization,"; especially in Vietnam's central mountain area. Salemink (2013) calls appropriation to become "property" that does not belong to cultural carriers anymore; it belongs to national and cultural expertise that is controlled by the market. (Salemink, 2013)

Compare cultural heritage
management in Thailand and Vietnam.

Table 1 Compare the administration of cultural heritage in Thailand and Vietnam

Topics	Thailand	Vietnam
Civilization	India and Khmer	China, India and Khmer
Ancient Places	Buddhist Temples	Champa Castles
Decision Making Authority	Department of Fine Arts	Ministry of Culture
Policy	Cultural heritage was important relate to the king and monarchy	Government to ensure or registered community cultural heritage
Cultural Policy	“Commodification”	“Folklorization” and “Exoticization”
Responsible Institute	Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture	Vietnam Government through Provincial Government
Law	“the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, 1961 as amended by Act (No.2),”1992	“Decree on the Detailed Regulations to Implement some Articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage,” 2002
Sponsored for Restoration Project	Thai Government, UNESCO	Vietnam Government, European countries, UNESCO
Problem	Advantage of Buddhist Temples	Cham is minority.

Thailand received civilization from India and Khmer. Cultural heritage was important and related to the king and monarchy. Buddhist temples were one of the dominant cultural heritage. Cultural Policy was “Commodification”. Thai Government had decision-making authority through the Ministry of Culture, Department of Fine Arts, with “the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, 1961 as amended by Act (No.2),” 1992. Gain Sponsored for the Restoration Project from the Thai Government and UNESCO. Thailand had the problem of having more advantages than other ancient places in terms of Buddhist Temples.

Vietnam received civilization from China, India, and Khmer. Champa Castles were important ancient places. Vietnam Government had decision-making authority to ensure or register community cultural heritage through the Provincial Government with a “Decree on the Detailed Regulations to Implement some Articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage,” 2002. Cultural policies were “Folklorization” and “Exoticization”. Gain Sponsorship for the Restoration Project from the Vietnamese government, European countries, and UNESCO. Vietnam had the problem

with Cham being a minority in Vietnamese people’s opinion.

RESULTS CONCLUSION

Thailand and Vietnam are reasonably dissimilar. Management of cultural heritage in Thailand focuses on elite groups. Developed a national Thai arts and culture from the past forward to today. Buddhist temples important relate to the king and monarchy’s advantage for the tourism industry because most Thai people accepted and had a good opportunity for “Commodification” or change culture to be products for sale. However, Vietnam was divergent, beginning with the government registering community cultural heritage to become national heritage, leading to “dollarization” and “exoticization,” meaning culture became “property”. It did not belong to cultural carriers anymore. Vietnam’s cultural heritage management had a good opportunity from European countries that wanted to develop technology in archaeology and received a budget from UNESCO. It is win-win situation because Vietnam government cannot spend a large amount of money to preserve ancient places lonely.

In the part of law and regulations, in Thailand, Department of Fine Arts use “the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, 1961 as amended by Act (No.2),” 1992 as an instrument to manage cultural heritage resonant with study from Thongchan et al. (2013) law lead problem occurred between other government official that had responsible to cultural heritage in the area and another interest groups had problem with Department of Fine Arts. Vietnam adopted the Law on Cultural Heritage in 2001 and 2002; cultural heritage management was a top-down policy, and only the government had a decision following Salemin, O. (2013), which resulted that each local area had cultural heritage competition by interest.

In Thailand, Buddhist temples related to the kings and monarchy gained an advantage as the domination of cultural heritage; if the Thai government can balance the benefits to the other ancient places, there will be a successful and sustainable administration of cultural heritage in Thailand. In Vietnam, Champa castles are interesting because they are one of the oldest civilizations in Southeast Asia; however, today, Cham ethnics is a minority in Vietnam, and Vietnamese people don't know about Champa places as well; if the Vietnam government supports Champa castles, which are scattered in the many areas become world heritage, These Champa castles will attract tourists and sustainable earning money for the community.

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