

The Impact of Religious Tourism on Buddhist Monasteries: An Examination of Nine Temples in Ang Thong

Panot Asawachai¹

panot.asawachai@gmail.com

Abstract

In this research, the impact of religious tourism development on the cultural heritage of sacred Buddhist places is analyzed through an examination of nine temples in Ang Thong and their communities. The research considers strategies that might permit religious tourism development while conserving the cultural heritage significance of the places. The research methodologies of this research is conducted by using literature research, field observation, in-depth interview and participatory research.

A review of tourism impacts by assessing and studying nine sacred temples' cultural heritage is undertaken to develop a practicable approach to promoting and managing tourism sustainably.

The research is found that tourism brings positive and negative impacts on Buddhist monasteries and their communities. The major positive impacts are contributions to local development in transportation infrastructure, generation of income and employment, and promotion of local culture. The major negative impacts are inequality of income distribution, seasonal jobs and commercialization or commodification of Buddhism.

Cultural heritage education and conservation awareness is needed by abbots, monks and communities. It should be strictly applied as a policy. Moreover, the qualification of selection of monk for the Samanasak must be revised and ability in constructing and promoting material things in the temple compound should not be considered. Furthermore, abbot, monks, host communities, the government sector,

¹ Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism, Silpakorn University

tourists, media and the voluntary sector must be involved in safeguarding the culture heritage significance of the nine sacred temples and their communities in order to manage the tourism more sustainably.

Keywords: Tourism Impact, Religious Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Buddhist Monastery

Background and significance of the problem

One of the most important manifestations of heritage tourism today is travel for spiritual or religious purpose. Religious tourism, or pilgrimage, in fact is the essential motive for some of the world's largest tourist gatherings, and many destinations expect almost entirely upon it for their economic well-being. Many destinations such as Mecca, Jerusalem and Bodhgaya attract huge numbers of tourists every year that travel to see religious sites. Religious tourism refers to various forms of travel undertaken exclusively or dominantly for religious motives (Rinschede 1992; 1999, pp. 197-221). Religious tourism is one of the fastest emerging tourism segments in Thailand, also known in Thailand as Buddhist tourism. This niche market not only brings international tourists into Thailand, but also rises domestic travel and contributes significantly to the local

economy. Ang Thong is a small province in the central part of Thailand. Almost all of the Ang Thong area is low plain with two important rivers, Noi River and Chao Phraya River, crossing the province. The name « Ang Thong » means « golden bowl » as its location is fertile basin similar to a water and rice bowl of the country. The province's prosperity is evident in its exquisite Buddhist art – architecture, sculpture and painting – some traces of which have remained until today. As Ang Thong used to be an essential frontier outpost of Ayutthaya Kingdom, Theravada Buddhism from Ayutthaya Kingdom spread to Ang Thong as Ayutthaya was essentially a capital of Theravada Buddhism.

At present, Ang Thong is a famous destination for Thai chronological study and travel for religious motives for both Thais and foreigners because there are more than 200 magnificent and interesting Buddhist temples in this

province. In 2010, “Paying Homage to Nine temples in Ang Thong” launched by the provincial administration in cooperation with Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) These nine temples are Wat Chaiyo Worawihan, Wat Khun Inthapramoon, Wat Pamok Worawihan, Wat Tonson, Wat Mahanam, Wat Thasutthawat, Wat Siroi, Wat Khian and Wat Muang are the main tourist attractions for religious tourism in Ang Thong. The reason for selecting “Nine” is Thais pronounce the number “nine” as “Kao” which is a homophone of the word “Kao” which means to step forward and to progress in Thai language. Therefore, Thais believe that paying homage to nine sacred temples within a day will bring

prosperity to their lives. However, these temples are not located close to each other. So, the possibility of paying homage to these nine temples within a day is difficult. Therefore, in 2012, Ang Thong’s tourism board and Ang Thong Provincial Administration Office campaigned a day-trip to three monumental Buddha statues of three sacred temples (three of the nine) with the slogan “Big, Long, Win”. These three temples are Wat Muang, Wat Khun Inthapramoon and Wat Chaiyo Worawihan. The slogan refers to life as “big” for your work growth, “long” for your life long and “win” for your success in work career. This can be proved that Ang Thong nowadays is promoted to be a destination for religious tourism.



Fig.1 Map of Ang Thong province Credit by <https://thai.tourismthailand.org>

However, the rapid growth of domestic mass tourism in Ang Thong, along with the modernization and urbanization of the local communities, has been a significant source of problems. Tourism plays a vital role in generating local revenue in Ang Thong, but it also has adverse impacts on the cultural heritage values of the temple. The temples' local communities are enjoying tourism activities while being less and less concerned about their local heritages. The other concern about generating local revenue is its negative results toward the contexts and fabrics of the temples and their heritage, both tangible

heritage and intangible heritage. The local communities continue to expand tourism industry into their areas by converting their agricultural lands and temple sites for tourist parking or new commercial activities. Moreover, they have gradually developed their local settings including village, markets, temples or old buildings into new tourism forms corresponding more to emerging new needs of tourists and visitors. Consequently, the cultural heritage sites and natural resources have all been exploited in order to attract tourists. Furthermore, village abbots, monks and local communities often fail to see

the value of local Buddhist art and architectural styles. Instead they encourage their replacement with new buildings and they replace natural greenery with artificial materials and surfaces. In other words, the local communities and their local temples are now in the process of transformation for tourism. Under this influence the cultural heritage and environment assets are converted into economic commodities and putting the community's spiritual welfare at risk.

Objectives

1. To determine the positive and negative impacts of religious tourism development on cultural heritage significance and value of nine sacred temples in Ang Thong.

2. To consider policies that could assist in safeguarding the cultural heritage significance of nine sacred temples and their communities to manage the tourism sustainably.

Research Questions

How can religious tourism in nine sacred temples in Ang Thong be managed to assist in safeguarding the cultural heritage

significance and their communities for creating sustainability?

Scope of the study

1. The area of study covers five districts in Ang Thong where these nine sacred temples are located. The scope of the study includes the assessment of these nine sacred temples' cultural significance and values. This involves observing and exploring transformation of the fabrics of temples and also local communities relating with them.

2. The scope of study focuses on the evolution of nine sacred temples through the periods of time and impact of religious tourism development in both positive and negative impacts, and the cultural heritage management for sustainable tourism of the temples and their communities.

Expected results

1. To explore the impact of religious tourism development on the cultural heritage of sacred Buddhist places through an examination of nine temples in Ang Thong and their communities.

2. To consider strategies that might allow religious tourism development while

maintaining the significance of local heritage places.

Related concepts

The concepts related to this research divide into three main parts consisting of: (1) Concept of religious tourism and Religious sites as tourist attractions and (2) Threats to sacred places and management approaches.

1. Concept of religious tourism and Religious sites as tourist attractions

The meaning of “Religious tourism” defines as “various forms of travel undertaken exclusively or dominantly for religious motives. Pilgrimage is just one of the forms religious tourism may take. Others include attending religious conferences, festivals, conventions, etc.” (Rinschede 1992; 1999, 197-221). The religious sites have been pointed out that they not only attract pilgrims, but also ordinary travelers who appear to visit these places for various reasons such as to experience cultural heritage, history, identity and memory, and aesthetical density. So, religious sites serve not only as tourists but also as visitor attractions (Rotherham 2007, 77).

2. Threats to sacred places and management approaches

When the religious sites are used as the tourist attractions, another issue is that of commoditization. Daniel Olsen (2003, 99) claims that the transformation of religious into tourist sites “changes the meaning of sacred sites from that of worship and contemplation to that of leisure”. Religious sites in terms of visitor attraction that can provide some kind of administrative structure in place for the management of visitors. The administrative structures in place such as public relations officers, information officers, visitation officers, guide tours secretaries, etc. are needed to create to meet the demands noted by tourism (Hanna, Marris and Lefley 1979, 90).

Several strategies for controlling visitor flows employed at sacred sites and those strategies are considered as Cultural Resource Management. Apart from types of available means of transport and vehicle management to the sites, visitor flows at the sites and within the buildings are influenced or controlled by means of zoning, entrance fees and pay perimeters (Woodward 2004, 178-79). Other techniques include queue controls, temporary closure or diverting visitors to other sites, forcing all visitors into guided tours, restricting or increasing visiting times, establishing visitor centers, shortcircuiting

walking distances, and specially designed visitor flow routes (Shackley 2001, pp. 55-75).

Research methods

This research is focused on qualitative method. The method also aims to investigate the why and how of decision making on the specific issues. In this case, research methods of this research would be carried out by literature research, field observation, in-depth interview and interview / focus group meeting / participatory research.

1. Literature research: The researcher had conducted a thorough literature search from books, academic journal, research reports, government data, daily newspapers and Internet. The research would focus on topics relevant to the study.

2. Field observation: The research had made an inventory of cultural heritage significance that had relevance to religious tourism at these nine sacred temples and their communities by observation and photographic recordings.

3. In-depth interview: This was undertaken with the abbots, monks, leaders of local communities, government organizations'

officers, academics, private-sector operations, visitors and people working in architecture.

4. Interview / focus group meeting / participatory research: The research approached local residents in the communities that are nearby the temples to solicit their personal opinion about the cultural heritage significance and values of the temples.

Results

1. The impacts of religious tourism development

The impacts of religious tourism development on cultural heritage significance and value of nine sacred temples in Ang Thong will be discussed in the following pages:

1.1 Economic impacts

The particular importance in relation to economic impacts are considered as positive effects which are the following:

- contribution to local development in transportation infrastructure;
- generation of income and employment.

In the case of promoting religious tourism in Ang Thong, the provincial administration has contribution in tourism development and support infrastructure

service especially in transportation system and road construction to facilitate in accessibility for the local people and tourists. The local people can receive this benefit as the contribution in transportation infrastructure makes them conveniently in travelling as well. This contribution is also considered to positive impact to the local farmers in terms of reducing in transportation costs as most local farmers formally had to take their products to sell at the market in the city center of Ang Thong. But, this contribution in transportation infrastructure especially in road construction provides access between the retailers and farmers. There are four local markets which are famous for selling local agricultural products and these four markets are located at four temples which are the market at Wat Chaiyo Worawihan, the market at Wat Khun Intrapramoon, the market at Wat Muang and the market at Wat Pamok Worawihan.

The another sample of the contribution to local development in transportation infrastructure is to build the Mahaphutthaphim Bridge crossing the Chao Phraya River at Chaiyo District. The Mahaphutthaphim Bridge was built in 1996 for facilitating the local people who live along the Chao Phraya River in Chaiyo and Muang Districts and also the people who are from the

other provinces. This bridge facilitates the tourists who want to visit Wat Chaiyo Worawihan as well. The contribution in transportation infrastructure also takes places at Wat Pamok Worawihan, Wat Muang and Wat Mahanam. The provincial administration has repaired the main road which names Tha Rua - Tho Praya Road since 2015 for facilitating the locals and tourists who come to visit Wat Muang. Pamok - Phong Phaeng road has been constructed since 2014 for facilitating the local people of Pamok District and bringing more convenience to access to Wat Pamok Worawihan. Repairing a public thoroughfare behind Wat Mahanam in 2010 is for facilitating the local community to access Wat Mahanam.

Moreover, the temples is directly gained benefits from tourism. As the number of tourists has increased continually since the past few years, the temples have received much income especially from donation and rental fees. For the rental fees, some temples such as Wat Muang and Wat Chaiyo Worawihan have allowed the locals to rent the temple's lands for opening shops and restaurants. Consequently, this can be really helping in developing and renovating for the temples. Some temples of the nine have been transformed much from its original state as local temples for the communities into the

temples developed for religious tourism purpose. In this aspect, the occupations of the local people tend to be changed and have more various types than former ones in the past. It is very obvious that the new kinds of occupations are aimed to support the outside visitors rather than local residents. These new kinds of occupations are created to respond with increasing number of visitors who want to make merit during their paying homage to these nine temples. These new kinds of occupations are (1) Selling sacred objects and amulets (2) Selling bunches of flower, candles and joss sticks and (3) Selling fish and birds for releasing. These positive impacts are considered as generating income to the locals and temples and also generating employment to the locals.

However, religious tourism at these nine temples also provides the negative impacts to the local as well. The particular problems in relation to economic impacts which are the following:

- inequality of income generating;

- seasonal character of jobs

Inequality in income-generating means it results in fewer employers requiring fewer workers. In the case of nine temples in

Ang Thong, income generating from religious tourism is not equally available to the locals as the locals who have the close relationship with the temples only can get the benefits. This inequality in income-generating is happened at Wat Chaiyo Worawihan, Wat Muang, Wat Ton Son and Wat Si Roi. This problem causes the negative impact on the opportunity in career which is only available to the specific groups of people who have relationships with the temple.

The economic problems that are involved with seasonal character of jobs are job insecurity which means the job is usually with no guarantee of employment from one season to the next. Even though these nine sacred temples can be visited all year around, most tourists like to visit the temples when there are some significant annual festivals for paying homage to the Buddha images. There are five significant annual festivals for paying homage to the Buddha images of five sacred temples (five of the nine) in Ang Thong. These annual festive can be summarized as following:

- Paying homage to Somdet Phra Sri Mueangthong festival at Wat Tonson in March;

- Song Kran festival and paying homage to the reclining Buddha image festival at Wat Khun Inthapramoon in April;
- Paying homage to Luang Por Maha Phuttha Phim festival at Wat Chaiyo Worawihan in October;
- Paying homage to the reclining Buddha image and Buudha's footprint festival at Wat Pamok Worawihan in October;
- Loy Krathong festival and paying homage to Luang Por To festival at Wat Siroi in November.

Although the provincial administration in Ang Thong promotes the religious tourism to the public but, just a few groups of people can receive the benefit of promoting religious tourism in the province. Ang Thong is still not the main tourism destination in the central part of Thailand. Until nowadays, Ang Thong is known as an agriculture province and the main income is from the agriculture products.

2. Socio-cultural impacts

This concerns with positive impacts on promoting the local culture of the host population in which culture can be used and

even packaged to promote to the tourists. Cultural attractions of Ang Thong which are in relation to religious tourism include handicrafts, local folkdance and local history of the area.

As Ang Thong province is an agriculture province and the main income are from the agriculture product so there are lots of OTOP (One Tambon One Product) which made from/by agriculture products. There are many popular examples of OTOP products in Ang Thong such as Court Doll at Ban Bangsadet where The Ban Bangsadet Court Doll Center is located inside Wat Tha Sutthawat, Pamok District. The drum-making village at Pamok District is also famous for domestic tourists to visit after visiting Wat Pamok Wotawihan and Wat Tha Sutthawat. For the another interesting local handicraft in Ang Thong, there is one village which is named "Ban Bang Chao Cha". This village is located in Pho Tong district and it is not far from Wat Khun Intrapramoon. This village is a bamboo handicraft producing village. Nowadays, the products of Ban Bang Chao Cha always improve to the needs of the market and meet the standard for export.

For local folkdance, Likay is a form of popular folk theatre in Ang Thong.

Normally, Likay is always performed during the temple fairs. Especially, “The Likay Ang Thong” is the most famous folkdance which is performed at Wat Chiyo Worawihan and Wat Khun Intrapramoon annually in the festivals of Paying Homage to Luang Pho To, Wat Chaiyo Worawihan and Paying Homage to the reclining Buddha image at Wat Khun Intrapramoon.

For the local history, Khun Rong Palad Chu monument at Wat Si Roi reminds the important local history to the tourists. Khun Rong Palad Chu is one of the famous local heroes the Wiset Chai Chan district who grouped up and led four hundred sword-fighters under the name “Kong Attamat” to accompany the royal army from the capital during the royal army’s settlement at Kui Buri of Prachuap Khiri Khan. His group received a command to obstruct the Burmese army at Wa Khao Bay in 1759 when King Alaungpaya of Burma invaded Myeik which was a part of Ayutthaya Kingdom at that time.

Commercial Buddhism

This is seemed to be the most serious problem which is happened from religious tourism and it is considered as a negative

socio-culture impact from religious tourism. Commercial Buddhism means the commercial activities which are related with the belief and faith in Buddhism by making money from selling materials or symbol icons which are represented Buddhism’s faith. Moreover, it is included the way to spending money that is interacted between Buddhists and monasteries through the religious events and religious ceremonies. Commercial Buddhism brings wealth and richness to monks and monasteries. Commercial Buddhism is a cause of art and cultural destruction of Nine temples in Ang Thong also. As the result, the temple spends money from the donators by constructing the new and modern buildings on the temple compound. The new structures normally are not well designed to harmonize with the ancient buildings inside the temples. Also higher or larger scale buildings have been constructed and taken away the temple charm. This problem can be seen from Wat Muang, Wat Tonson and Wat Khun Inthapramoon in Ang Thong. The unique characteristics of local style structures in many temples in Ang Thong have been replaced by the standard form of central Buddhist monastery by National Office of Buddhism or buildings that are not properly designed by

architects or well-constructed by contractors. As a result, the new buildings devalue traditional buildings remaining in the temple grounds. Nowadays, it is difficult to find buildings that are local style in temple areas in Ang Thong. This is because both the abbots and host communities are interested in new style of buildings and they always demolish ancient structures because they are outdated and too small. Thus, they have destroyed the cultural significance of ancient buildings and replaced with new buildings that are always colorful and unattractive.

Roles of stakeholders in safeguarding the cultural heritage significance of nine sacred temples and their communities

There are five key stakeholders in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances notably by abbots, monks and host community, government sector, tourist, media and voluntary sector.

1. Roles of abbots, monks and host community in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances

Abbots, monks and host community are in the heart of most responding for conserving the cultural heritage significances of nine sacred temples which would be in danger of serious degeneration because of

inappropriate restoration and management. First of all, the abbots and monks who live on the temples that contain the cultural heritage also need to change their attitude from thinking of themselves as owners of the temples to thinking of themselves as custodians of temples that are part of the country's national cultural heritage and the property of all Thai people. Moreover, the abbot of the temple where is registered as national historic monument has to ask permission to the Department of Fine Arts and work closely with expert architects and community to safeguard the cultural heritage. On the other hand, the abbot of the temple that is not register as national historic monument can be also able to consult and work closely with the Fine Arts Department before taking restoration the old buildings inside the temple compound.

Secondly, abbots and monks should emphasize more in teaching the Dharma to the local laypeople as good members of the society. This is because many abbots and monks nowadays emphasize on merit-making, commercialization of Buddhism, heaven and hell, and the “superstition magic of the amulets’ practiced by many monks. This will

cause misuse of Buddhism and lead to social problems later.

Last but not least, the temple should support educational, economic, and socio-cultural spheres in the communities for social good because this role can create a close relationship between Buddhism and the Thai way of life that they are rather disappeared from the Thai way of life nowadays. Moreover, this close relationship can create a sense of belonging to the abbots, monks and communities to safeguard the cultural heritage.

The important role of host community is related in the idea that the host community should be actively involved in conservation planning and should perhaps be a part of the local tourism industry and its activities. The meaning of paying proactively an important role in creating an aspect of conservation policy and tourism policy in protection the cultural significances and their environment is to suggest what the acceptable limits to change are for their community. Moreover, this role should take place as early as possible in the planning and development of tourism in areas to try to reduce the negative impacts of tourism which are due to inappropriate development and the attraction

of unsuitable forms of tourism and to maximize the benefits to the community. In this case, the benefits should be used for public good rather than for private gain. The benefits for public good can be in the form of visitor attractions such as local museum and handicraft center.

2. Roles of public sector in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances

Mahatherasamakom (Council of Elders) should work closely with the Fine Arts Department in preserving the heritage buildings inside the temple compound especially the temples that have the cultural heritage values. Due to the fact that the demolition of old structures can be found in many temples and in temples which are unregistered by the Fine Art Department. To preserve ancient monuments, antiques and objects of art within living temples which are not registered for protection, there should have an announcement from Mahatherasamakom to the abbots of each temples about the rules on ancient monuments. This announcement must be appeared and made as a rule on the Sangha Act as well. The rule must aim to protect the ancient monument within the living temples.

The rule must declare, before ancient structures or their parts will be repaired, modified, altered, demolished, added to, destroyed, removed or excavated for anything or any building within the temple compound will be constructed, the abbot of the temple or the monk who is in charge of taking care ancient monuments must present a report to the Fine Art Department first. With the report, pictures including brief information of the ancient structure and its parts and the new construction plan must be presented together to the Fine Art Department. After the permission, any activities can be processed. Moreover, any abbots or monks who violates or do not follow this rules, the senior monk's leader will have the power to penalize as be reasonable. Moreover, The Fine Art Department may be the most important people in educating and providing the knowledge of cultural heritage conservation to the abbots and monks. This is because a large number of Thai cultural heritage is contained in Buddhist temples, thus it makes sense for the Thai Fine Arts Department to conduct training for abbots, monks and host communities.

3. Roles of tourist in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances

The problem of religious tourism in nine sacred temples in Ang Thong which is caused by the tourist is based on tourist's behavior. First of all, creating the awareness-raising in cultural heritage management should be the first message of responsibilities of the tourists to educate the tourists who travel to the monasteries that contain the historical buildings. The other message to educating Thai Buddhists who want to make merit during their visiting the temple is to educate them that giving is not the only way to make merit but ten ways to make merit are also the ways to make merit without giving material gifts. The other message to educating Thai Buddhists who want to make merit during their visiting the temple is to educate them that giving is not the only way to make merit but ten ways to make merit are also the ways to make merit without giving material gifts. In this case, tourists can be educated by monks, media and also tourist guide.

4. Roles of media in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances

The media plays an important role in educating tourist, shaping tourist behavior and raising awareness of issue relating to saving the cultural heritage significances and sustainability. Normally, the media that

involves in creating sustainability can divide into two types:

- Travel media, which are considered to directly influence or impact to the tourists such as guide books, travel programs on television, and tourism-related internet websites or social media.
- Non-travel media, which indirectly influence or impact to the tourists such as news programs on televisions or newspapers.

The role of both travel media and non-travel media should be focused on educating and drawing tourist's attention to cultural heritage management and ethical issues which are related with environmental, economic and social dimensions in sustainability. Moreover, both of them should present a growing interest in the concept of saving cultural heritage significances to the public.

In addition, an interesting trend in consumer behavior nowadays is directly beneficial to the promotion of cultural heritage conservation through the media is the

growth of conservation and volunteer holidays where tourists spend their holidays working on conservation or aid projects in cultural heritage conservation. For example, “Watbundanai project”, this project is raised through the social media and its objectives are to draw upon knowledge of temple development in designing temple landscape in urbanism, giving importance to historic temples to the country, and the influence of the revival of temples in the city.

5 Roles of voluntary sector in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances

The voluntary sector, in this content, consists of four groups:

- The professional bodies have their roles in increasing interest in the subject of cultural heritage conservation. Some examples of professional bodies are ICOMOS Thailand Association and the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage
- Voluntary trusts, this is a group of private citizens who get together to achieve a purpose of cultural heritage

conservation, without any making a profit from their activities such as Kon Luk Ang Thong Club and Kon Rak San Chao Rong Thong group. Voluntary trusts also play a positive role in the development of more sustainable forms of cultural heritage conservation.

- Industry pressure groups such as the World Travel and Tourism Council and UNESCO. In this case, The industry pressure groups can play an important role to a large amount of research on sustainability in cultural heritage conservation, providing necessary knowledge in cultural heritage conservation, and rewarding or incentivizing any organization that can make in heritage conservation.
- Public pressure groups such as architectural heritage concern groups in Chiang Mai which support the activities that maintain the concept of

architectural heritage conservation in Chiang Mai. These public pressure groups play their role for promoting and supporting the conservation of valuable architectural heritage to the locals for making them foreseeing the values of cultural heritage significances.

Conclusion

Promoting religious tourism into these temples can be also provided negative impacts. Inequality of income generation and seasonal character of jobs are two potentially negative economic impacts. More profoundly, commercial Buddhism introduces potentially negative social impacts that can cause many following problems especially devaluation of cultural heritage. The cultural heritage sites and natural resources within the temples precincts have all been damaged in order to attract tourists - by turning sequestering the temple sites and agricultural lands for tourist facilitaties such as tourist parking, areas for new commercial activities and modernization of culturally significant buildings to attract the tourists' interest.



Fig.2 and 3 The pictures show the problem of adding and alteration to the ancient buildings of Wat Pamok Woravihan. Source: Panot Asawachai, 2015.

In this regard, considering policies that could assist in safeguarding the cultural heritage significance of nine sacred temples and their communities to manage the tourism sustainably have to be involved five key stakeholders which are Abbots, monks, and host community, government sector, tourist, media, and voluntary sector. In this case, Abbots, monks and host community are considered as custodians with the main responding for conserving the cultural heritage significances. The abbots and monks must have the awareness on the importance of cultural heritages which they occupy because this awareness will create a sense of belonging

that helps safeguard the cultural heritage. When they want to repair the ancient buildings which are registered as national monument or are not registered, the abbots and monks should consult the Department of Fine Arts and work closely with expert architects to protect the local cultural heritages. Furthermore, abbots and monks should focus in teaching the Dharma to the local people and tourists as good members of the society more than emphasizing them in donating their money for constructing and maintaining the buildings inside the temple compound. In addition, the abbots and monks should also support educational, economic,

and socio-cultural spheres in the communities for social good for managing the tourism sustainably.

The public sectors especially Mahatherasamakom and the Department of Fine Arts should collaborate preserve the heritage buildings inside the temple compound especially the temples that have registered as national historic monuments. This collaboration must be in the form of an announcement from Mahatherasamakom to the abbots of each temples about the rules on ancient monuments. The rules must identify that before ancient structures or their parts will be repaired modified, altered, demolished, added to, destroyed, removed or excavated for anything or any building within the temple compound will be constructed, the abbot of the temple or the monk who is in charge must report and present a report of construction plan to the Fine Art Department for monitoring. This announcement is the most important tool for preserving the cultural heritage. In addition, Mahatherasamakom (Council of Elders) must foresee the values of significances of cultural heritages in the temples and legislate a new policy in the Sangha Act that the abbot has duty to care for the values of significances of cultural heritages

in the temple that he occupies. Furthermore, the Department of Fine Arts should develop the land-use planning policy as a tool for achieving more sustainable tourism management in religious tourism. This land-use planning in monasteries is aimed to carry capacity of the temple compound and the temple development in terms of land-use conflicts between constructing a new building and conserving an old building. Normally, the land-use planning is in form of zoning or the allocation of specific areas for particular land uses.

The role of tourists in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances of these important places is secondary but also vitally important. Tourists should play their role as students of history and culture, educators and promoters of authenticity. The idea of educating tourists means the tourists should be wiser in making merit. Thai Buddhists should change their attitude of merit-making behavior. Ten ways of make merit in Buddhism as they are called “Punna-Kiriya-Vatthu Ten” should be educated to the tourists. For the duty of educating Thai Buddhists, this message must be sent from the abbots and monks to educate Thai Buddhists to create sustainability in religious tourism.

Roles of the media in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances are in educating tourist, shaping tourist behavior and raising awareness of issue relating to saving the cultural heritage significances of places and sustainable tourism at those places. One good example in this case which is related with the role of media is “Watbundanjai project”, this project is raised through the social medias and its objectives are to draw upon knowledge of temple development in designing temple landscape in urbanism, giving importance to historic temples to the country, and the influence of the revival of temples in the city. The activities of this project stimulate the tourists to spend their holidays on giving benefits to the temple development such as cleaning the temple compound, planting more trees in the temple and improving the temple landscape.

Last, there is a role of voluntary sector in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances. It is to increase interest in the subject of cultural heritage conservation and awareness raising or education the abbots, monks and host communities in cultural heritage conservation. In this case, the voluntary sector includes professional bodies such as the Association of Siamese Architects

under Royal Patronage, voluntary trusts such as a group of architectural conservation in Ang Thong, industry pressure groups such as UNESCO, and public pressure groups such as architectural heritage concern groups in the other province.

Recommendations

10.1 Application of the research results

These key players, in the form of abbots, monks, host community members, tourists, government representatives, and to a lesser extent the media and voluntary organizations, should be involved in the day to day problems of religious tourism and also should continue to play an active part in tourism planning and management in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances and to achieve more sustainable forms of tourism.

10.2 Recommendations for further research

More research on religious tourism management in safeguarding the cultural heritage significances should be conducted to promote sustainable tourism management.

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