

FRAUNHOFER CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY IMW

REPORT

HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Projects that seek to transfer knowledge and technologies to support cultural heritage management with the aim of supporting sustainable development need to recognize that such management is always a set of dynamic practices emerging from both: historical and cultural contingencies of a place as well as global discourses, resource flows and standards. This report creates the basis for such understanding in the context of the URGENT project (<https://www.imw.fraunhofer.de/en/research/innovation-acceptance/projects/YOU2.html>) by understanding the meanings of cultural heritage, as well as the approaches to management and its history in Thailand.

We first describe various dimensions of heritage management in Thailand. Compared to many other countries, Thailand has a long history of heritage management and conservation. From the mid-19th century onwards there was a change in the aim of conservation from religious piety to national pride as the state took over responsibility for the protection of cultural heritage. Despite the dominance of governmental agencies in heritage management, especially the role of the Fine Arts Department, community participation has seen an increase in the past decades. One of the most established non-governmental organizations working in the field of cultural heritage management is the Siam Society, which has listed a number of short-comings in the approaches to heritage management in Thailand, including lack of policy frameworks to guide activities and an overly centralized approach that ignores local diversity. But Thailand also features excellent examples of heritage management ranging from successful involvement of local community as in the case of Lopburi town to the preservation of intangible heritage as in the case of the Shadow Puppet Show at Wat Khanon.

2 INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CONTEXT

Cultural heritage as a manifestation of distinctive culture and locality reflects and symbolizes the achievements of people in the past. It includes those human-made environments and ecosystems, which are deemed valuable and irreplaceable. At international scale, charters, conventions and recommendations guide the identification and documentation of cultural heritage for the purpose of safeguarding and management, for example the Athens Charter, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, and the 1996 ICOMOS principles for recording monuments, buildings and sites, amongst others (Petti, Trillo, & Makore, 2020). Broadly speaking, there are two types of cultural heritage: tangible and intangible (for an overview of the historical development of definitions see text box 1).

Cultural heritage is defined as tangible if it is touchable and expressed in permanent, visible material structures, such as ancient sites, monuments, architecture, buildings, groups of buildings, local urban sites, old towns, historic sites, archaeological sites, historic landscapes, cultural landscapes, ancient objects and various forms of art (ICOMOS Thailand, 2019). In 2003 the UNESCO added the convention for safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (Petti, Trillo, & Makore, 2020). According to this convention, intangible heritage includes oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, as well as traditional craftsmanship (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>). The 2003 convention also considers the interdependencies between intangible and tangible heritage and explicitly recognizes that “communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity” (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>). These considerations are essential to cultural heritage management, which aims to understand culture not only in terms of material products or the grand monuments of power, but as “the repeated ways we interpret our behavior and that of our extended families, our long-term neighbors, and the people we consider to be like us, as the way otherwise random beliefs, practices, rituals, assumptions, and ways of speaking are “geared into one another” (King, 2019, p. 327).

Cultural heritage is both symbol and maker of cultural diversity. One of the main contributions of 19th and 20th century anthropologists was the recognition that we need to speak of cultures in the plural and not in the singular to emphasize that human history is not a one-way street, universally traveled (King, 2019; Geertz, 1998); indeed that the diversity in cultures is a natural and necessary phenomenon rooted in direct and indirect relations between societies with one another (Lévi-Strauss, 1998). Culture is what makes a given society different from others, but also what makes it meaningful to itself. As such culture is itself an instrument that people use to value each other’s and their own actions (Douglas, 1966). Therefore, creating, selecting and preserving cultural heritage are closely associated with the maintenance and development of social identities through time; and “cultural heritage intersects with manifold issues at cross-cutting scales, including issues of history and time, materiality and property, ‘soft power’ and ‘cultural policies, universalism and particularism, nation-ness and border crossing, wealth and

poverty, tourism ..., responsibility and authority, community and recognition, ruins and hope" (Dominguez, 2017, p.120).

Text Box 1:

The threefold process of extension of the concept of heritage at international scale according to Vecco (2010):

1. Through time new objects were given the statue of heritage and "the monument is no longer considered alone, but also in its context" leading to an integral approach towards heritage.

2. "The selection criteria of cultural heritage have also changed: while initially the historic and artistic values were the only parameters, other additional ones have now been added: the cultural value, its value of identity and the capacity of the object to interact with memory."

3. "From a purely normative approach, of an objective and systematic nature – the recognition of cultural heritage of an object depended on its being included on a list – one went to a less restrictive approach ... based on the capacity of the object to arouse certain values that led the society in question to consider it as heritage."

This was also a further step towards heritage no longer being defined solely on the basis of its material aspect, eventually making it "possible to recognise intangible cultural heritage ... as heritage to be protected and safeguarded. This acknowledgment of the importance of immateriality and orality can be interpreted as a step in the direction of overcoming a Eurocentric perspective of heritage, accepting cultural diversity as a source of enrichment for the whole of mankind" (p. 324).

Managing cultural heritage is therefore always a context-specific effort that cannot rely fully on standardized procedures and value systems. Nevertheless, the term "management" itself performs a certain homogenization of various approaches, to some degree, because the term shifts into focus a modernistic approach based on ideas from "scientific management" that emerged around 1900 to remove inefficiencies in industry. These ideas developed into "management science" during the post-World War II era in North America and Europe, and were subsequently transferred from industry and private sector to the public sector during the era of New Public Management since the 1980s (Hatch, 2011; Hendry, 2013). Counting and accounting, and procedures based on scientific methods, are essential characteristics of managerial approaches. The importance of benchmarking, indicator development and related data production in the field of cultural heritage has received further impetus through inclusion of cultural heritage protection within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as target 11.4. Within this framework the management of cultural heritage becomes linked to other developmental efforts in the context of Goal 11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities". Rather than being viewed as a separate management domain, cultural heritage management is now, at least at the international policy level, associated with efforts to provide housing and basic services, foster participatory planning, provide access to green spaces, and to strengthen national and regional development planning as reflected in some of the other targets under Goal 11.

In sum, projects that seek to transfer knowledge and technologies to support cultural heritage management with the aim of supporting sustainable development need to recognize that such "management" always consists of a set of dynamic practices

emerging from both: historical and cultural contingencies of a place as well as global discourses, resource flows and standards.

INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL
HERITAGE IN CONTEXT

3 CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND

3.1. Culture and cultural heritage

Three pillars play an essential role in the culture of Thailand: the Buddhist tradition, the monarchy, and a rich diversity that stems in part from Thailand's openness to change, and to adapt and absorb outside influences, sometimes brought forcefully in times of war and occupation, sometimes through trade and communication with surrounding regions and peoples (Grossman, et al, 2017).

Although **Buddhism** is not the official state religion, its beliefs, values, and rituals are widely present, not only in the way of life of hundreds of Buddhist monks, who are members of Thai society, but are also an integral part to most people's daily lives and family traditions. But Buddhism, mostly of the Theravada school, has mixed with **other belief systems** in various ways, perceivable, for example through the widespread belief in spirits, the Hindu deities Brahma, Ganesha, and Garuda, as well as Chinese influences like the Guan Yin Goddess of Mercy. Five percent of the Thai population are **Muslims** (mostly in the south), **Christian** (in the central regions) **and animists** in the hills. The monarchy has been and continues to play an important role in cultural heritage protection (Grossman, et al, 2017). Many of the protected monuments are Buddhist temples and stupas, for instance the great temples in the ancient protected cities of Ayudhya and Sukhothai (Grossman, et al, 2017).

The **monarchy** has endured for about 750 years. While early kings of the present Chakri dynasty strengthened sovereignty and stabilized the kingdom, the 19th century witnessed modernization efforts and an expansion of government bureaucracy under King Mongkut (Rama IV) and King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), sometimes known as the "Revolution from Above" with strong centralizing tendencies in governance until 1932. At that time the absolute monarchy was replaced with a constitutional monarchy, an era during which King Bhumibol Akylyadej (Rama IX) encouraged the transformation of the monarchy into an agent of change and fostered NGO-led institutions and activities to find solutions to social, economic and environmental problems in Thailand (Grossman, et al, 2017). Attesting to the important role and influence of the kings on cultural heritage in the context of national identity is, for instance, one of Bhumibol's "most ambitious education projects, a massive Thai-language encyclopedia for students,[that] was intended to 'transfer knowledge culture and ethics for the next generation'" (Grossman, et al, 2017, p. 211). Despite challenges in the course of modernization and globalization, the monarchy continues to play an essential role in Thai society as a "bearer of tradition, culture and national identity" (Grossman, et al, 2017, p. 208).

The former secretary general of the National Culture Commission and former permanent secretary of the Ministry of Culture, M.R. Chakrarot, once said that "Thai culture [...] is a **culture that has evolved from centuries of acceptance of foreign cultures**. Very little of Thai culture today is our own, except one might say the language, but even with that there were influences [...]. Many of our customs can have their origins traced to ethnic minorities in the land or sometimes way outside of the land" (Grossman, et al, 2017, 220). This kind of adaptability through the merging of various influences is reflected in the history of landmarks in heritage. For instance, during the period of mid-1300 to mid-1400 under the Sukhothai kingdom, was famous for its ceramics and Buddha images, but also witnessed the development of the Thai alphabet based on

Khmer-Sanskrit models. Court arts and traditions of the following period of the Ayudhya kingdom in present-day Thailand were also influenced by Khmer traditions from the Angkor Empire (Grossman, et al, 2017). Fast forwarding to the present, the emergence of heritage from change and adaptation of foreign influence stands in somewhat paradoxical relationship to the current fears and debates over heritage preservation in the face of globalization. But such debates are indicative of mounting pressures on tangible and intangible heritage due to a perceived loss of interest in the past among new Thai generations (Grossman, et al, 2017).

In the Thai context, cultural heritage describes the “creative work made by people of the nation, which is valuable cultural property that has been handed down from past generations, being testimonial to the historical development” (Thailand Charter on Cultural Heritage Management, 2019, p. 2). Cultural heritage is appreciated as a means to preserve collective memory and shared traditions, for its economic value, especially in the tourism industry, as a way to stimulate, but also represent innovation and transformation, its capacity to promote unity and tolerance, and to gain knowledge and insights into the past (ICOMOS Thailand, 2019). In line with international level, Thailand also recognizes the basic categorization into tangible and intangible cultural heritage with the latter having been added to preservation activities in more recent times.

Tangible cultural heritage

Tangible cultural heritage is defined in the Act of 1961, a law that remains in force until today and is based on the first comprehensive Act on Ancient Monuments, Objects of Art, Antiques, and National Museums in 1934. It recognizes three types of tangible heritage, namely: 1) ancient monuments (immovable property that is useful in art, history or archeology due to its age or characteristics); 2) antiques (archaic moveable property, both natural or human-made, or part of ancient monuments that is useful in art, history or archeology due to its age or characteristics); and 3) objects of art (things produced through craftsmanship that are considered valuable in the field of art) (Sakulpanich, 2013, p. 88).

A large number of tangible heritage sites and monuments have their roots in Buddhist traditions and religion. Historically, the construction of Buddha images, stupas and temples were considered important to acquire merit and spiritual awards (Kraikriksh, 2013). Thailand has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The ancient city of Sukhothai and associated historic towns in Kamphaeng Phet provinces, as well as the city of Ayudhya were declared in 1991. The Ban Chiang Archeological Site followed on the list in 1992 (Grossman, et al, 2017).

Tangible cultural heritage has come under threat in recent decades especially due to development activities and “locals have had to fight to preserve their districts whether in cities or the countryside” (Grossman, et al, 2017, p. 218). Government policies have helped, for instance the landmark case of the Fine Arts Department when it designated 20 percent of the island, on which the old city of Ayudhya is located, as National Historical Park in 1976 (Grossman, et al, 2017). Such cases also mirror the international trend of a more contextual conception of tangible heritage, where not only individual monuments are considered, but the landscape around them or entire districts are included following recommendations of the Venice Charter. This was also the time when the Fine Arts Department introduced the “manicured lawns and flower beds that have since become a fixture of Thai historical sites” (Kraikriksh, 2013, p. 28).



Image 1: Sukhothai Historical Park, Wat Mahathat
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/azwegers/45294214671>

Intangible cultural heritage

So called intangible cultural heritage is not present in a materially permanent form. Such heritage includes various forms of knowledge, meanings, beliefs, skills, norms, and traditions, that persons or communities have created as part of their lives and which have been transferred from one generation to the next until the present (ICOMOS Thailand, 2019).

In comparison to tangible heritage management, which has been institutionalized and pursued for a long time, the pursuit of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is a fairly new phenomenon in Thailand. Intangible cultural heritage has so far not been included in government programs and plans. Until recently “cultural heritage” referred exclusively to the monumental and built remains of cultures or, alternatively to natural heritage (Baedcharoen, 2016; Heritage Tourism in Chiang Mai). The term “intangible heritage” has, however, been introduced recently into public discourse through the Thailand Charter on Cultural Heritage Management.

The extension of the conceptualization and description to include intangible heritage emerged from attention being paid to the dramatic arts, languages and traditional music as well as to the informational, spiritual and philosophical systems upon which societal creation is based. This also includes oral traditions, arts and crafts and even gastronomical traditions that are rooted in place (Baedcharoen, 2016). Since 2013 there have been efforts of Thai officials to participate in meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee

for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/thailand-TH?info=mandates-and-participation>).

In 2018, the UNESCO inscribed the Thai “Khon Mask Drama” as the first Intangible Cultural Heritage Item to the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/khon-masked-dance-drama-in-thailand-01385>).

Khon performances – which involve graceful dance movements, instrumental and vocal renditions and glittering costumes – depict the glory of Rama, the hero and incarnation of the god Vishnu, who brings order and justice to the world (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/khon-masked-dance-drama-in-thailand-01385>).



Image 2: Khon Mask Dance Drama – Office of Cultural Promotion Thailand Source: Fraunhofer IMW

For 2019, the traditional Thai massage “Nuat Phaen Boran” was nominated. There is already a backlog of cultural practices to be added to the list in Thailand. For 2020 “Nora”, a dance drama from southern Thailand is planned to be nominated. On the national level there are more activities that are worth mentioning. The chief of the Office of Cultural Promotion, Chai Nakhonchai, announced that the committee for national heritage registration had considered 102 items this year and would be able to announce at least 50 items as part of Thailand’s national heritage in seven areas (<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Thailand-moves-to-protect-its-intangible-cultural--30208772.html>). These areas include the performing arts, craftsmanship, literature, sports, social rituals and festivals, knowledge and practices about nature and the universe, and language (<http://ich.culture.go.th/index.php/en>). There are also efforts to integrate intangible cultural heritage at post-graduate levels in higher education across the Asian Pacific region (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/news/intangible-heritage-and-higher-education-00155>).

3.2. Cultural Heritage Policies and Institutions

In Thailand the institutionalized management of cultural heritage is the responsibility of two major departments of the Ministry of Culture: The **Fine Arts Department (FAD)** and the Office of Cultural Promotion. The Fine Arts Department is a centralized government body consisting of, among others, the Office of Archaeology and National Museum. The FAD is mainly responsible for tangible heritage preservation and management (Lertcharnrit, 2017). Especially the Office of Archaeology plays a critical role as it is the key agency working on the restoration of ancient monuments and archaeological sites (Fine Arts Department, 1990). The competence of the FAD was constituted in 1961 through the Act of Ancient Monuments, which authorized the FAD to “register as heritage only ancient monuments, antiques, and objects of art” (Stent, 2012, p. 3). The competence of the FAD deliberately excludes intangible heritage (as well as some of the tangible heritage). The **Office of Cultural Promotion**, on the other hand, is responsible for intangible heritage management, even though an actual management guideline for intangible heritage does not exist (Lertcharnrit, 2017).

Another important governmental agency in cultural heritage management is the **Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP)** (<http://www.onep.go.th>). The ONEP is responsible for the cultural landscape of old towns, and the nomination of World Heritage Sites (both cultural and natural sites) and hosts the Cultural and Natural Environment Management Bureau (<http://www.onep.go.th/nced/oldtown>).

The **Crown Property Bureau (CPB)**, the agency that manages the wealth of the monarchy consisting of land corporate investments and other assets, also plays a role in heritage preservation (Grossman, et al, 2017). Since 1997 it has preserved hundreds of the kingdom’s architectural sites, including temples, palaces, and hotels, projects which also served to educate the public and as learning projects for parties interested to learn how to restore their own properties. Cultural heritage management through the CPB goes beyond ancient monuments as many of the buildings restored and preserved through the CPB are still fully functioning and in use, including palaces and residencies, shop houses and commercial buildings, as well as offices and public service facilities (Grossman, et al, 2017; Pimonsathean, 2013).

Besides government bodies, there are several non-governmental organizations which focus on the management of heritage in Thailand. **The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage**, itself founded in 1904 by Thai and foreign scholars, in turn set up the Siamese Heritage Trust (Stent, 2012, p. 1-3). In its early years, the society’s emphasis was on the preservation of knowledge about Siam from oral and written sources; and only later it began to focus also on the preservation of natural and human-made heritage, including residential buildings, parks, bridges, murals and ordination halls (Kerdchouay, 2013). Accordingly, the focus of Siamese Heritage Trust still lies on more than just the preservation and conservation of individual buildings, but seeks to establish and maintain a more contextual approach described as “a broader program of knowledge building, advocacy and raising awareness in society at large of the importance of cultural heritage protection. This approach recognizes that without broad social awareness of and support for cultural heritage, saving a small number of individual buildings will be of little avail” (Stent, 2012, *Siam’s Threatened Cultural Heritage*, p. 5). “Raising awareness” relates

especially to community culture, intangible culture and minority culture. The society also maintains a large collection of textiles and wood carvings (Kerdchouay, 2013).

The second important NGO is the International Council on Monuments and Sites Thailand (**ICOMOS Thailand**). ICOMOS is a professional association that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world. Now headquartered in Paris, ICOMOS was founded in 1965 in Warsaw as a result of the Venice Charter of 1964, and offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites. ICOMOS Thailand developed a “Thailand Charter on Cultural Heritage Management” (2019), which contains principles, values, a master plan and concerns of cultural heritage management. That within the “Principles for Conservation” (ICOMOS Thailand, 2019, p. 7-8) only 1 of 15 recommendations is related to intangible heritage illustrates the general neglect of the latter, however. The charter mainly focuses on tangible cultural heritage, although the values of related intangible cultural heritage should be of equal importance to ensure the conservation and transfer of cultural heritage across generations while maintaining the diversity across cultures and local cultural identity.

3.3. Challenges in Heritage Management

Different authors and organizations have worked on the identification of weaknesses and inefficiencies within the architecture of cultural heritage management. Especially the Siam Heritage Trust plays an important role in formulating constructive criticism of the current system and in identifying areas for improvement in the present system. The trust detects ten concerns, which are principal obstacles to effective heritage protection in Thailand (Stent, 2012). The authors of this report have added information to each of the principle obstacles based on additional literature (indicated through references).

1. Inadequacy of the legal framework: The 1961 Act on Ancient Monuments, Objects of Art, Antiques, and National Museum sets forth a restrictive and outmoded definition of cultural heritage, namely ancient monuments, antiques and objects of art. The law centralizes all heritage protection power with the FAD in Bangkok, does not devolve power to local governments, and does not empower communities to protect their own heritage. It also does not recognize intangible culture, vernacular culture, community culture, cultural landscapes and other aspects of cultural heritage set forth in UNESCO charters, to which Thailand is a signatory. As a centralized government body, the FAD also excludes local authorities as it “focuses on the protection of ancient monuments and archaeological sites under the sole responsibility of a national organization [...] and the power to register something as heritage has not been devolved to local authorities” (Stent, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, the Thai Act on Ancient Monuments merely states that sites representing the history and culture should be protected; however, there are no specific regulations or guidelines to explain how this should be approached and implemented. The country falls within the jurisdiction of multiple international charters, but there are no specific offices or government officials that are designated to enforce these particular sets of legislation. Thus, the implementation of the plans within the country is difficult (Abercrombie, 2014).

2. Missing Priorities: There is no policy to decide which sites of cultural heritage are prime targets for conservation and to prioritize sites according to a specific order. The national resources for conservation are limited in terms of both personnel and budget.

This makes the lack of clear priorities on how the resources are to be used even more problematic.

3. Deficiencies of governance: Government agencies do not effectively use what limited powers they have under the heritage legal structure, do not enforce compliance with heritage laws, and are plagued with bureaucratic rigidity. The FAD has identified 8,000 buildings for registration as monuments, but processes only a hundred or so per year, meaning that taking care of its backlog will already require several decades. As mentioned above, to its credit, the FAD has attempted to initiate legal action to demand compliance with its designation of the Supreme Court building as a heritage site, but it was thwarted by other parts of the government, while the Rattanakosin Committee, established to oversee heritage planning for the entire district, has been silent on this and other issues.

4. Failure to recognize intangible and vernacular culture: The Thai official approach to cultural heritage protection focuses almost exclusively on the protection of ancient buildings, and does not recognize that traditional ways of life, traditional livelihoods, oral traditions, folk customs, and other inheritance from the past all form part of the fabric of national cultural heritage, as valid and meaningful as palaces, temples, and archaeological sites.

5. Official narratives: Officially sanctioned historical and cultural narratives that reinforce the power of the state and support established descriptions of national identity skew the formulation and implementation of cultural heritage conservation policy, not only at the national level, as described by Chatri Prakitnonthakan in his essay “Rattanakosin Charter: The Thai Cultural Charter for Conservation”, but also at local levels, as explored by Alexandra Denes (Denes, 2012).

6. Suppression of diversity: A related problem of equal magnitude is the official downplaying of cultural diversity in favor of the mainstream “Thai” culture, resting on the triptych of “nation, religion (Buddhism), and king”. As part of Thailand’s successful program of nation-building over the past century, regional cultural variants, ethnic roots, minority groups, religions other than Buddhism, and non-indigenous cultural influences have all been de-emphasized. Local communities in the provinces have been conditioned to believe that, if they build temples in their communities in the styles that their ancestors developed, then they will be looked down on by officials – they will be seen to be “provincial”, so better to adopt accepted Bangkok Rattanakosin styles. Another aspect of the diversity question concerns borders. It is problematic to delimit cultural heritage by modern nation-state boundaries. This became clear in the Trust’s panel discussion on the Muslim contribution to Thai cultural heritage.

7. Lack of community consultation and participation: Just as community heritage is not properly valued in Thailand, so communities are rarely consulted or involved in decisions regarding their own heritage, or involving historical sites that are located within their communities, nor are they encouraged to become involved in a meaningful way in conservation and protection of heritage.

The relatively high standard of heritage preservation in the town of Lopburi is a rare example in Thailand of successful involvement by the local community and of a constructive dialog between the authorities and the citizens on heritage issues. The local community has always been seen as a major player in the heritage tourism sector and its management. However, it competes with other powerful stakeholders, especially the

national government and its agencies and multinational players in the tourism industry. As Timothy and Boyd (2003) have noted, “selective representation and interpretation examples can also be found in developing countries where the elite or the power groups decide what and whose heritage to include or discard,” especially groups in the national government (Baedcharoen, 2016).

8. Professional deficiencies in heritage conservation: One major problem are the deficiencies in the professional quality of the work of those charged with the stewardship of the nation’s heritage. Foremost among these is the failure to create an accurate, accessible database of the nation’s heritage. This was a major problem after the 2011 floods that severely damaged many monuments. Those charged with repairing the damage and undertaking measures to protect against future floods, and major international donors prepared to assist in the effort, found that there was no reliable database to use as a reference for developing plans. Inauthentic reconstruction is another important area of technical deficiency connected to this field. Furthermore, the problem has the rat-tail of low-quality contract work. Currently technicians that repair or rebuild historical sites are lacking in appreciation for the value of cultural resources. There are few well-trained archaeologists working in government agencies, most of them received only basic training and have limited experience in doing archaeology. They often face problems because, many times, they are assigned to carry out work for which they are not trained. That results in restorations that disappoint local people and scholars, as monuments get deformed and lose their local sacred meaning. Workers, on the other hand, just want to finish their work due to constraints of money and time (Lertcharnrit, 2017).

9. Quest for tourist revenues leading to inferior conservation: In Thailand, tourism is the single largest earner of foreign exchange. Groups within government and private sector, who push forward the tourism agenda, are therefore more influential than conservation advocates from government and civil society. Heritage conservation therefore generally loses out to the commercial interests of the promoters and providers of tourism services. The Tourism Authority of Thailand has plenty of financial resources and political support, but underestimates the lure that well presented cultural heritage can have for tourists as Pitsuwan (2012) describes in the essay “Tourism and Heritage: A Tense Relationship” .

10. Poor condition of Thailand’s state museums: The poor condition of the state museums, including both the National Museum and provincial museums are interpreted as indicative of the low importance given to the presentation of cultural heritage in Thailand.

11. Power of development interests: The draft of the Bangkok Five Year Masterplan, released for comment in 2012, reflects a submissive attitude on part of the Department of City Planning of the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority towards the power of development interests. In this document, height and other restrictions on development were lifted for areas of exceptional heritage value in the historic parts of the city stretching between the Chao Phraya River and the Krung Kasem canal. The draft plan suggested that planning officials of the city have scant understanding of the role of architectural and community heritage in a well-planned city. However, with the debacle of the Supreme Court building, the contextual landscape of the Grand Palace is threatened, and with the proposed new master plan, the thriving Yaowarat and Charoen Krung areas may soon fall under the wrecker’s ball. Despite the excellent reporting of

journalists such as Ploenpote Atthakor and Sirinya Wattanasukchai of the Bangkok Post, despite the resistance of local communities, and despite the protests of civil society groups working together under the banner of the Cultural Heritage Conservation Alliance, these threats to the city's heritage are materializing because the general public remains unaware, government bureaucrats lack vision and flexibility, and leaders in political office are not interested. Until the general public is made more aware of the important role that cultural heritage should play in a nation, and is motivated to take action, it can't be expected that the authorities and the political leaders will be more responsive to heritage values in the formulation of development policy.

To summarize the concerns mentioned by the Siamese Heritage Trust the major problems of the cultural heritage management lie within the centralized system that leaves all heritage protection power with the FAD in Bangkok, even though the FAD does not have sufficient capacities to process all identified monuments. Furthermore neither the government, nor the FAD devolve power to local governments, and do not empower communities to protect their own heritage. The Thai official approach to cultural heritage protection focuses almost exclusively on the protection of ancient buildings, and does not recognize that traditional ways of life are also critical to cultural identity and meaning. This becomes manifest in the official downplaying of cultural diversity in favor of the mainstream "Thai" culture, which rests on the tripartite of nation, religion, and king.

Furthermore heritage conservation generally loses out to the commercial interests of the tourism service providers. There have not been incentive measures for owners of cultural heritage to encourage them to preserve their property, therefore, a large number of cultural heritage sites have been demolished or devalued due to lack of understanding (ICOMOS Thailand, 2019). For instance, in the past the FAD estimated that approximately 10 percent (approximately 4,000-5,000) of the total number of monuments in Thailand is damaged (Voigt, 2008).

In addition to the above listed fields of concern different scholars have identified four general and closely related contemporary problems for (archaeological) heritage management. These problems are:

1. Looting: In many cases looters are asked to hunt for antiquities by middlemen – mostly merchants from Bangkok (Lertcharnrit, 2017).

2. Homogenization of Culture: With the rest of Thailand racing to reach economic levels of the world's more developed countries, its unique cultures are becoming more homogenized along the lines of mainstream Western culture. The Thai people have seen the prosperity of countries like the United States of America, and have come to look at them in an idealized light. While the presence of Buddhism keeps ties to native culture intact, this increased interest in the way other parts of the world live has perpetuated the problem of weak investments in cultural preservation (Abercrombie, 2014).

3. Modernization and Tourism: Globalization and modernization have become among the most debated subjects of heritage management. Many researchers consider the process of globalization as the motivator of economic development and cultural exchange. Modernity has always been linked to the growth of both the heritage sector and the tourism industry. In the 21st century it is now understood that globalization and modernity are complex and have no single source of origin. In Thailand, Asian globalization and modernity are as critical as Western variants. What cannot be disputed

is that globalized heritage and globalized tourism profoundly intersect in a historic city like Chiang Mai and, as such affect people's lives (Baedcharoen, 2016).

Despite the discouraging rendition of problems, awareness of the importance to protect heritage and the belief in the value of own cultural practices have been strengthened by Thai laws and policies since at least the late 19th century (Lertcharnrit, 2017). Especially, in the last decade cultural heritage has become more than an exclusive domain of the elite. It is now seen to have broad societal relevance and "cultural rights" have become an important part of the heritage conservation discourse (Stent, 2012). There are also more and more examples of success of bottom-up initiatives, like Chiang Mai residents saving the historic Wat Kate community. As Engelhardt et al. (2012) show in their essay on "Lessons from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation: International Best Practices in Thailand", there are several communities and institutions in Thailand that have undertaken conservation projects that meet the highest international standards for best practice.

The next two report sections on heritage management in Thailand provide an overview of both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

3.4. Top-Down Approaches to Heritage Management

Compared to many other countries, Thailand has a long history of heritage management and conservation. From the mid-7th to mid-19th century the reason for conservation was personal piety. During this period the construction as well as the restoration and repair of Buddha images, stupas and temples, were seen as providing spiritual awards and merits. Laws related to heritage preservation in pre-19th century times were sparse and promulgated to punish offenders for the destruction or robbing of Buddhist structures and sites, i.e. laws meant to protect from vandalism and robbery. Anniversary celebrations were often occasions for restoring monuments, for example the restoration of Wat Phra Si Rattana Sassadaram (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) on the 50th, 100th, 150th and 200th anniversaries of the founding of Bangkok (Krairiksh, 2013).

From the mid-19th century onwards there was a change in the aim of conservation from religious piety to national pride as the state took over responsibility for the protection of cultural heritage (Krairiksh, 2013). Although since the 19th century cultural heritage management has gone through various changes, it is, overall, driven by a relatively top-down, centralized approach. The history since the mid-19th century is briefly summarized in the following paragraphs based on the 2017 article "Archeological Heritage Management in Thailand" by Lertcharnrit. The labels for each period have been added by the authors of this report.

Initial laws and royal interests (mid- to end-19th century): The history of heritage management took its course in mid-19th century with a focus on ancient ruins. In 1851 the first law (Proclamation on Temple Boundaries and Temple Looter) was issued under the reign of King Rama IV's. Besides the official act of lawmaking it was also the personal activities of the king, who encouraged small groups of the elite to conduct research projects and prepare museum displays, which contributed to heritage preservation as an increasingly shared value. King Rama V's extended these interests in cultural heritage to the international arena through visits to major archeological and historical sites in Europe.

Modern management and science (20th century): Heritage conservation, restoration and preservation was extended to include such tangible heritage as ancient objects and

art objects in addition to monuments and sites during the reign of King Rama VI at the beginning of the 19th century. During his reign, King Rama VI emphasized the role of the past as key instrument to build a national sense of belonging and identity in Thailand. Following this line of reasoning he convinced the people to be proud of their culture and the past. This was also the time when heritage management took on a modern, bureaucratic form under the auspices of the Fine Arts Department, established in 1911. The FAD continues its work until today, now as part of the Ministry of Culture. It has 13 Regional Offices throughout the country. In 1961 the Act on Ancient Monuments, Ancient, Objects, Art Objects and the National Museum was passed, which promoted a more scientific approach to heritage management, for example by introducing the use of the technique of Anastylosis, which has now become a widespread practice in restoration across Thailand (see also text box 2). Subsequent regulations continued to

establish more rigid procedures for the conservation of ancient monuments with clear guidelines, rules and definitions.

FAD's centrality and attempts towards community involvement (present-day):

Presently the FAD continues to serve as the only agent with the mandate of archeological heritage conservation. It manages all Thai cultural heritage sites, including the three on

Text Box 2:

Different methods and techniques in the top-down approaches to cultural heritage management in mid-19th & 20th centuries

19th – Century under Kings Mongkut (Rama IV) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V):

- Reconstruction and rebuilding had priority, instead of consolidation or preservation.
- Laws were sparse and focused on punishment of looting, destruction, damaging.
- Emphasis was on the maintenance of integrity of original materials.
- A modern socio-legal method of protection was introduced, namely that everyone living within four *sen* (160 meters) of a monastery was responsible for safeguarding heritage, for ex. by reporting vandalism.

20th – Century Modernism & Science:

- Reconstruction had priority, rather than preservation.
- Restoration was seen as “the act of putting back to former state” (The Bangkok Charter).
- Laws multiplied and focused on defining cultural heritage and identifying methods.
- Systematic state led surveys of cultural heritage increased, official declarations in international registries (of the UNESCO), and collection in museums became important.
- The Anastylis method was introduced, used for stone and laterite structures, but not for brick.
- Different approaches were introduced and use depending on use of a building (for ex. if still in use it can be changed/receive additions)
- There was an increasing use of combinations of conservation and archaeological research, land use planning, community development, resettlement of people and development of new landscapes and infrastructure, revival of festivities and tourist promotion (example: the ten year Sukhothai Historical Park Development Project)

(Distilled by authors of report from Krairiksh, 2013)

UNESCO's World Heritage list: the archaeological site of BanChiang, the historic town of Sukhothai and associated town, and the former capital city of Ayutthaya. Another important agency in the arena of cultural heritage is the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), because many of the ancient towns, sites, and monuments are tourist attractions. With a reorganization of the Fine Arts Department in 1974 and closer alignment of the Department's practices with the Venice Charter conservation projects also became more

transdisciplinary involving not only archeologists and artisans, but also historians, architectural conservators, engineers, and landscape architects (Krairiksh, 2013). State-sponsored renovation projects at ancient cities, for instance UNESCO sites, also carry benefits for local villagers and inhabitants. Although the renovation work is carried out mostly by experts based on specific technical and theoretical methodologies, villagers are hired for labor and benefit from selling goods and services. Frictions between official management approaches and local understandings and meanings of cultural heritage continue, often reflected in conflicts over the kinds of value that a site or building may hold to local community, on one hand, and officially authorized heritage managers, on the other. Despite the dominance of governmental agencies in heritage management, especially the role of the FAD, community participation has seen an increase in the past decades. For example, more than 1400 museums have sprung up across the country, with more than 500 classified as so called “local wisdom museums”.

3.5. Bottom-Up Approaches to Heritage Management

Community participation was initially spurred by the challenges encountered in top-down approaches described in section 3.4 and in light of rapid modernization and development. Especially during the 1960s individuals played an important role in the battle against destruction in the course of infrastructural and urban development and modernization (Krairiksh, 2013). One of the most established non-governmental organizations working in the field of cultural heritage management is the Siam Society. It is representative also of the diversity in bottom-up approaches to cultural heritage management and of its promotion ranging from letters of protest, to the initiation and maintenance of collections (textiles, wood carvings), the organization of performances and exhibitions, supporting student and study trips, organizing of national and international symposia and publications, and importantly, the close collaboration with several other institutions, including the Fine Arts Department from the government (Kerdchouay, 2013). According to the Baker and the Siam Society (2019) citizen participation received a positive impetus also through the 1997 Constitution, which recognizes the principle of citizen participation in the protection of their cultural heritage for the first time and through the 2007 Constitution, which confirmed these rights.

Citizens organize for conservation: the case of Lopburi

The relatively high standard of heritage preservation in the town of Lopburi is a rare example in Thailand of successful involvement by the local community and of constructive dialog between the authorities and the citizens on heritage issues. In 1974, a group of Lopburi citizens formed the Club for Conservation of the Antiquities, Ancient Monuments and Environment of Lopburi Province (hereafter called the “Lopburi Conservation Club”). The group included business people, teachers, military personnel and news reporters. These people had lost faith in the officials responsible for historic objects and sites, because these officials had allowed the sites to be encroached upon by housing developments and damaged by fortune hunters digging for amulets, and because the officials had no strategy to conserve these sites by educating the general public about their value. The Club was formed to help conserve the heritage of Lopburi more effectively.



Image 3: Annual ceremony to reinforce spiritual value at Wat Phra Sri Ratanamahathat, Lopburi

Source: Bhumadhorn, Phuthorn (2012): Long-term Strategies for Thai Heritage Preservation: Civil Roles in Lopburi Province. In: *Journal of the Siam Society* (Vol. 100), p. 69–81.

https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/pub_jss/article/view/158287/114670. p. 71.

Preserving traditional knowledge and skills: the case of Wat Pongsanuk in Lampang

Another aspect of renewal, that the Thai winning projects highlight, is how the conservation projects can serve as a forum for sharing local knowledge, thus valorizing and giving renewed meaning to bodies of knowledge which are central to the collective wisdom of each community. The involvement of local elders, “wise persons” and scholars in the awarded projects complements the role of conservation professionals in a seamless manner, with both groups enriching each other and passing along their respective skills and knowledge to the young generation. This method of working provides a locally nuanced alternative to the strongly technocratic approach, which may ignore indigenous forms of knowledge and values.

The restoration of Wat Pongsanuk in Lampang provides a case in point. The temple’s deputy abbot, community leaders and senior craftsmen worked alongside academics from Chiang Mai University, contributing local know-how and institutional memory about caretaking of the temple’s collection of Buddhist artefacts and buildings. While some knowledge has been lost – such as the production of ancient glass mosaics – other neglected skills such as traditional lime slaking and paper cutting for ritual objects was revived within the context of restoring the temple. The activities at the temple have turned Wat Pongsanuk into a learning hub for Lampang and nearby provinces. The documentation of such revived knowledge and its dissemination through networks of like-minded local communities and monks has led to a renaissance of Northern Thai buildings.



Image 4: Wat Pongsanuk

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wat_Pong_Sanuk_Nua_\(29671073610\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wat_Pong_Sanuk_Nua_(29671073610).jpg)

Community revival through old market conservation: the case of Suphanburi

Conservation can also serve as a mechanism for community revival using cultural resources as the driver for social and economic growth. The case study of Samchuk Community and Old Market District in Suphanburi showcases the potential of historic buildings and traditions as a basis for reversing the declining fortunes of old neighborhoods. Through the determination of local business people and civic leaders, Samchuk was transformed from an almost abandoned town on the verge of partial demolition. The town's strategy for revival was predicated upon the mobilization of its most salient and yet once overlooked assets: an ensemble of historic wooden shops and homes dating from its days as a prominent trading hub. Cashing in on the surge in nostalgia-driven tourism among Thai families and youth, Samchuk's market – featuring local delicacies, old-fashioned toys and housewares, and old-time shops – became a prime destination for weekend visitors wishing to experience days gone by. Young Samchuk people began to return home to help re-open and run family businesses which had been dysfunctional. Samchuk's success as a cultural tourism destination was singled out by then prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva as an example for advancing the creative economy at the community level by making use of available resources, and has since been widely recognized as worthy of emulation by other towns around the country.



Image 5: Sam Chuk Market

Source:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9a/%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%94%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%B5_001.jpg

Bringing intangible cultural heritage back to life: the case of Wat Khanon Shadow Puppet Troupe

Shadow plays are more than 1000 years old in Asia; and in Thailand date back to the 1450s. Wat Khanon, a temple in Ratchaburi province, counted over 300 puppets used in shadow plays, but, as elsewhere in Asia, the tradition faded out in the 1960s with the arrival of modern entertainment. In Wat Khanon the shadow puppet performance known as nang yai was revived in 1990 by an inspired abbot at the temple; and performs regularly again until today. The performances by a troupe of local youths are based on episodes of the Ramakien, the Thai adaptation of the Indian epic poem Ramayana, with 30 minute shows taking place every weekend. The initiative received the 2007 award for Better Practices in Communities' Intangible Cultural Heritage Revitalization by the UNESCO.

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