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The Cultural Tourism Management under Context of World Heritage Sites: Stakeholders' Opinions between Luang Prabang Communities, Laos and Muang-kao Communities, Sukhothai, Thailand.

Kunkaew Khlaikaew ^{a*}

^a*Department of Tourism and Hotel, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Muang District, Phitsanulok Province 65000, Thailand*

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research is to study opinions of stakeholders from Luang Prabang communities, Laos and Muang-kao communities Amphoe, Muang, Sukhothai Province, focusing on the cultural tourism management under context of world heritage sites. The results from the study illustrated that there are 3 types of stakeholders who are involved in cultural tourism promotion and policy formation: 1. Government agency of Luang Prabang and Sukhothai such as, the Heritage House which is responsible for the management of the tourist attractions and town's patrimony in the country under the supervision of UNESCO but for Thailand there is the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Ministry of Sport and Tourism and Fine Art Departments. 2. Entrepreneur includes not only, hospitality, restaurant, and tourism business, but also entertainment business and tourism training business. They are considered to be parts of the support in enhancing cultural tourism to promote the impressive services for visitors. 3. General public understood and agreed with government management. However, the public insisted to participate in preservation of national cultural heritage under the "Live World Heritage Town" concepts and management of UNESCO which Lung Prabang has been protected by these heritage sites since 1995 but Sukhothai has been protected by the heritage site since 1991.

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1. Introduction

There are many tourist attractions in ASEAN countries which have been officially registered as World Heritage

* Kunkaew Khlaikaew. Tel.: +66-55-267-103; fax: +66-55-267-103.
E-mail address: kulkaewtourism@hotmail.com

Sites. Luang Prabang city, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), was the first one of its country which was registered in 1997 as Luang Prabang is dominant from other places. It is distinguished by its nature, society, art, and architecture. Its nature is remarkable because it is surrounded by two rivers passing by the city, and it is situated near by Kong River and surrounded by valleys. Being with nature, the people's life style here is still as simple as the one of the country's life, and it has the features of an agricultural society. Moreover, Luang Prabang has so many exceptional characteristics that it was registered as a World Heritage Site from UNESCO so the number of tourists who have been visiting here, is always increasing. It is the good reason why Luang Prabang can still keep its identity and maintain cultural tourist attractions until now.

For Thailand, the cultural tourism is recognised among Thai people as they focus on the knowledge about culture, custom, life style and many interesting parts of wisdom. The number of people who visited Sukhothai province are 784,555; domestic tourists and 191,956 are those of foreigners. (Statistics Office, The Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2011). Sukhothai Province, Thailand, was the first capital of Siam between the 13th-14th century (around 18-19 of Buddhist era). The city possesses a large number of exquisite edifices that represent the beginning of Thai architecture. The great civilization which had been developed in the Sukhothai kingdom was influenced from the old tradition and culture of the rural area. That had been mixed into Sukhothai's art. The evidence is the Sukhothai Historic Park which is situated at Muang Kao Sub-District, Muang District, Sukhothai province. It is in the east; 12 kilometres from the province, at Lan Ta Pak area and rectangular in shape. There are city walls with the zigzag of three level trenches. In the west, you can see Pratak Mountains, in the east, there is Mae Lam River which flows to Yom River which is about 12 kilometres away.

Nowadays, Sukhothai Province and Kampangeth Province are deserved as The World Heritage Group. They are ancient cities which have the evidence of the prosperous civilization in the past. All reflect the image of Sukhothai which literally means "Dawn of Happiness". It was the origin of the Thai history which became the important state of South East Asia between 18th-20th century of Buddhist era. They are protected and developed to be The Historic Parks and registered to be the World Heritage Site in 1991 with the standards of outstanding universal value. There are two criteria for selection that meet the standard, the first one is the site must represent a masterpiece of human creative genius and another one is it meet the third criterion that the site needs to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared. Lotus bud shape stupa characterises the Sukhothai architectural arts. Moreover, the sculpture of Buddhist disciples walking with their hands clasped together in salutation represents the success of the first era of Thai art. Muang Kao Community (ancient community), Muang district, Sukhothai province, is the nearest community to The Sukhothai Historical Park. Its people have a simple life although they are in the city area. Some areas are the rural community. They still have the agricultural life style. They are outstanding in architecture, society, culture, art and language, all are interesting. However, this community needs the guidelines of development for the cultural tourism management. If the private and public sections, including all people brainstorm together in order to promote Muang Kao Community to have the tourism sources or to set tourism activities at the same old place, the community can become the lively World Heritage, the number of tourist will increase, the community can get more profit. There will be more tourists for the accommodation in Sukhothai. The cultural tourism can alternate the old area of cultural tourism to be the new interesting tourist attraction so that in the future, it can be comparative to Luang Prabang city, Lao People's Democratic Republic.

2. The purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to study the policy on the cultural tourism management under context of World Heritage Sites in the opinions of stakeholders, from Luang Prabang communities, Laos to apply to Muang-Kao Communities, Amphoe Muang, Sukhothai Province.

3. Research Methodology

The secondary data was performed by studying data related to the cultural tourism management, the tourism of Lao People's Democratic Republic. The data related to the tourism of Muang Kao Community, Muang district, Sukhothai province by studying the document research such as published media, internet, books, documents and