

CREATING CULTURAL TOURISM PHOTOGRAPHY AND DIGITAL MEDIA: CASE STUDY OF SUKHOTHAI HISTORICAL PARK PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

In 1991, the historic town of Sukhothai and associated historic towns of Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The historical park is one of the most iconic archeological places in Thailand. In 2016, ASEAN National Tourism Organization (ASEAN NTOs) launched the VisitASEAN@50 Golden Celebration 2017 tourism campaign to promote the objectives of commemorating the 50th anniversary of ASEAN.

This project is a collaborative learning between the Sukhothai Tourism Association and Department of Communication Arts, faculty of Business, Economics and Communication, Naresuan University. It examines the historical traces and physical characteristic and practical usage of the community's local wisdom in the area around world heritage site. The photographs and digital media are then produced in order to reflect relationship between contemporary local communities and the historic towns. The result of this study shows that the photographs and digital media can be created in three themes including, learning Buddhism art, walking through community way of life, and finding ancient civilization. It can be implied that the images and digital media for cultural tourism represent distinguished characters and identity of tourist attractions in Sukhothai Historical Park.

Keywords: 1) Sukhothai Historical Park 2) Historic Towns

1. Introduction

Southeast Asia countries is one of the most various cultural perspectives, religious, and believes. Sukhothai Historical Park has a unique relationship between its people and the landscape. This study focuses on documenting, researching and creating cultural photography and digital media. It examines the historical traces and physical characteristic and practical usage of the community's local wisdom in the area around world heritage site. The photographs and digital media are then produced in order to reflect relationship between contemporary local communities and the historic towns.

2. Objectives

1. To examine the historical traces and physical characteristic and practical usage of the community's local wisdom in the area around world heritage site
2. To create cultural tourism photography and digital media in order to reflect relationship between contemporary local communities and the historic towns.

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3. Theoretical Framework and Review Literature

1. The historical traces and physical characteristic and practical usage of Sukhothai and associated historic towns of Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet
2. The Cultural Landscapes
3. Landscape Photography
4. Postmodern Tourism

The regional values of cultural landscape in Southeast Asia and South Asia are explained in Cultural Landscapes and Asia: Reconciling International and Southeast Asian Regional Values, where Ken Taylor writes that “Cultural landscapes that have evolved in Southeast and East Asia reflect beautifully the interaction between people and their environment not simply as a tangible cultural product but as a result of cultural process with associated intangible values.”

The relationship between local people and their surrounding environment is one of the scenery at the Sukhothai Historical Park, it can be interesting tourist attractions.

According to the Cultural Landscape Foundation, “Cultural landscapes are landscapes that have been affected, influenced, or shaped by human involvement. A cultural landscape can be associated with a person or event...” Therefore, the people who live in the area of tourist attractions play significant roles in shaping the images of cultural landscapes and create identity and image representation of their landscape. “Collectively, cultural landscapes are works of art, narratives of culture, and expressions of regional identity.” There are several types of cultural landscape, categorized by their design principles (Designed Landscapes), a variety of natural and cultural resources (Ethnographic Landscapes), a historic event, activity, or person (Historic Sites) and landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped those landscapes (Vernacular Landscapes). As Emily Goldthorpe point of in A Changing Topography : Culture and Nature in New Zealand Landscape Photography that “the work of photographers in New Zealand from 1865 to the present day reflects and responds to issues surrounding landscape. The study is examining in on images of altered or manipulated places that the relationship between our culture and our environment.” The research also explores changing attitudes to landscape and photography and how the attitudes have influenced the production of landscape photographs.

In “Does the composition of landscape photographs affect visual preferences?” Svobodova, et al. suggests that the composition of landscape photographs according to the Golden Section, or the Rule of Thirds, and the position of the horizon in the photograph expressively impact the recognized beauty of the represented landscape scenes. They also point out that “placing positively identified landscape elements at the intersection points of a grid based on the Rule of Thirds enhances positive evaluations of entire landscape scenes.”

4. Learning Buddhism Art



Fig. 1: Walking Buddha, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018

Sukhothai Buddhist art describes to the various representations of religious images, visual mythology, and symbols descending from the diverse Buddhist communities establish around the historical park. Sukhothai art displays distinctive forms and characteristics exhibiting the cultures and people's way of life.

As the *New World Encyclopedia* asserts on its *Buddhist Art*. (2016), "From the thirteenth century, Theravada Buddhism was introduced from Sri Lanka around the same time as the ethnic Thai kingdom of Sukhothai was established. The new faith inspired highly stylized images, with sometimes very geometrical and almost abstract figures."

The Walking Buddha for example, is one of the 4 distinctive posture of Buddha image in Sukhothai ear (sitting, standing, walking, and reclining). (Fig. 1.)



Fig. 2: Phra Ajana, Wat Sri Chum, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018

The important distinguishing characteristics of Sukothai Buddhist art features included a flame aureole, the hair arranged in fine individual curls, an oval face, high curving eyebrows, downward gazing eyes, hooked nose and a gentle smiling expression. The upper body included broad shoulders and a small waist. Robes were hung diagonally across the body and were completed with a zigzag edged mantle at the tip that extended down to the navel.

In general, Sukhothai style Buddha Images demonstrate idealistic of superhuman characteristics. Most commonly the Buddha images would be seated in the Subduing Mara called “the attitude of subduing Mara” (Maravijaya) posture on a plain base.

This idea is explained in *Visualizing the Evolution of the Sukhothai Buddha* where Sawitree Wisetchat (2012) writes that “by blending from a very masculine and physically powerful face of the Pala style to the Sukhothai style, the Buddha is seen to transform into a delicate and more abstract form that has lost some of its individuality to be replaced with calm serenity and ideal form.” (Fig. 2, 3, and 7)



Fig. 3: Wat Sapan Hin, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 4: Wat Sri Chum, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 5: Buddha Making, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 6: Wat Sapan Hin, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018

Walking Through Community Way of Life

The way of life of people who live around the Sukhothai world heritage site have been interacting with their heritage environment. The communities develop traditional art and crafts, also tourist activities suitable for their local wisdom and economics. The works potentially turn into income-generating activities. In “*Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns*” on the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO website writes that.



Fig. 7: Sakalok Making, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018

“Sukhothai was a unique state in terms of political and administrative systems which were remarkably moderate for the time, based on the patron-client relationships, powerful social and religious institutions, and codified laws. The kingdom’s diverse economic system was based on agricultural production, but also depended heavily on industrial exports, especially of high-quality ceramics. Together, these features made Sukhothai a flourishing time and place, known in Thai history as a Golden Age and “The Happiness of Thai” or “The Dawn of Happiness.” (World Heritage Convention, UNESCO)



Fig. 8: The tender invention, Konkanok Ouantakop, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 9: The wood creator, Praphatson Phomyu, Sukhothai, 2018

One of the popular tourist activities in Sukhothai is “walking tour and cycling tour through communities around the historical park. The tourists will be able to experience local people’s way of life by gazing at the beautiful scenery and participating in local cultural activities.



Fig. 10: Praphatson Phomyu, , Wat Tra Phang Thong, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 11: Praphatson Phomyu, , Wat Tra Phang Thong, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 12: Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 13: The dawn, Achittaphol Yookaew, Tra Phang Thong Market, Sukhothai, 2018

Searching for Ancient Civilization

The Kingdom of Sukhothai is recognized with the invention and development of many of the unique identifying characteristics of Siamese (Thai) culture, many of them attributed directly to the King Ramkhamhaeng the Great. As part of his determination to establish Theravada Buddhism, the King of the Sukhothai introduced masterpiece of artistic creation. The many example of “ being the place of pioneering achievements in architecture and art, language and writing, religion and law, the historic towns of the Sukhothai Kingdom were home to accomplished innovators in hydraulic engineering.” (World Heritage Convention, UNESCO)



Fig. 14: Worship, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 15: Perfect Picture, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018



Fig. 16: Relation, Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai, 2018

5. Conclusion

Even though, the images of cultural tourism photography can be created through three themes including, learning Buddhism art, walking through community way of life, and finding ancient civilization. The images and digital media for cultural tourism symbolize distinguished characters and identity of tourist attractions in Sukhothai Historical Park. It can be suggested that several of the key elements that produce tourist attractions is the historical background of the landscapes and people who live around them. Most of cultural tourism photography at Sukhothai Historical Park can be historical sites, communities, and local wisdom, they become recognizable photos among tourists.

6. References

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