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PORAMET BOONNUMSIRIKIJ : SPIRIT AND PLACE : THE PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS VALUES THROUGH BUDDHA IMAGES AT WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN THAILAND. THESIS ADVISOR : PROF. WILLIAM CHAPMAN, Ph.D., 179 pp.

In Thailand many of the most significant images of Buddha can be found at World Heritage Sites such as Sukhothai and Ayutthaya Historical Park. The values of the Buddhist image are not only artifacts or antiques but also the symbols of Buddhists' worship to Buddhism. The process of creating and upholding Buddha's image involves many steps, for example the utilization of craft arts and consecration ceremonies in order to produce a beautiful statue or monument that is highly respected for many centuries. Therefore, the history of Buddha image art was reviewed.

The deterioration of the Buddha image like other artifacts can occur for many reasons and restoration work has to be done. Meanwhile the preservation bodies of international organizations such as UNESCO and state parties like the Fine Arts Department of the Royal Thai Government have been issued and developed regulation. There are charters to follow, specifically the preservation of World Heritage sites. Most of them mention only the exterior values, while the spiritual value of the heritage is forgotten. From the re-examination of these criteria, they are totally separated to the tangible heritage which mostly cannot fit to the Asian context, including the Buddha image. This dissertation recommends the need to preserve the spirit value or intangible values inside the tangible heritage monuments and sites, and that the draft of the Thai Charter should be adopted and explored by the international bodies of preservation.

Moreover, the restoration and preservation of these icons currently uses the 'Cultural Process' from the Fine Art Department in Thailand. The process mainly starts with research from archeologists and arts historians. However, the knowledge management process is more effective and can reduce the steps in the 'Cultural Process'. It can utilize the international organizations' knowledge and use the local community to collaborate and figure out the proper management plan and process of restoration for the image of Buddha. The study's final goal is to create a new vision of 'Cultural Process' that will provide a better solution for the future preservation management of the Buddhist icon.

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