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INTERPRETATION/ WAT ARUN RATCHAWARARAM.**

**KANJANAPHORN POLPRATEEP: INTERPRETATION OF WAT ARUN
RATCHAWARARAM (THE TEMPLE OF DAWN): THE APPLICATION OF SUSTAINABLE
CULTURAL TOURISM PRINCIPLES IN AN INTERPRETIVE PLAN. THESIS ADVISOR:
DR. DONALD ELLSMORE, 226 PP.**

The interpretation of Wat Arun Ratchawararam (The Temple of Dawn), is the subject of a detailed analysis in the research presented here. This research concludes that Wat Arun Ratchawararam - a powerful symbol of Thai Buddhism and a highly recognised symbol of traditional Thai culture in the modern city of Bangkok - is poorly understood and poorly interpreted to the Thai people and foreign visitors alike. In fact the low standard of interpretation is working counter to the sustainable management of the place and is threatening its cultural heritage values. Qualitative research used in this research has revealed some important underlying values of the place and some important opportunities to change the method of interpretation in a way that will provide for more sustainable management over the long term.

Four research hypotheses were explored in depth and proved in this research. The first of these hypotheses is the architecture and fabric conservation at Wat Arun have been managed in appropriate way for authenticity. The second hypothesis is the architecture, fabric, cultural practices, cultural landscape, and cultural meaning are major cultural significance of Wat Arun. The third hypothesis is the existing interpretation at Wat Arun is a major issue to create visitors understanding and appreciation of Wat Arun. The latest hypothesis is Wat Arun has an effective interpretation program for sustainable cultural tourism. The information of Wat Arun which are history and background, physical characteristics, architecture, fabric, conservation policy, cultural practices and rituals, cultural meaning, cultural significance, the monastery's authenticity, threat and risk factors toward the monastery, and the existing interpretation were studied and analyzed comprehensively to verify the research hypotheses.

The research reveals that the first and the second hypothesis are reliable in that the architecture and fabric conservation at Wat Arun have been managed authentically and sustainably - the architecture, fabric, cultural practices, cultural landscape and cultural meaning create the perfect cultural significance. However, the third and the fourth hypothesis, regarding the interpretation and its effectiveness are opposed by the findings of the study. It can be demonstrated that the existing interpretation at Wat Arun does not assist visitors with an adequate or appropriate understanding and appreciation of Wat Arun. The existing interpretation program lacks effectiveness. It is not contributing to sustainable cultural tourism achievement.

All aspects of the cultural significance and their interpretation at Wat Arun have been examined in detail and considered in the formulation of a new interpretation strategy. From this an interpretive theme and key message of Wat Arun under the theme "Spiritual center" is offered as the central point of a new form of interpretation. Through this the four significances of Wat Arun would be explained to confirm why the monastery is indeed a "Spiritual center". Twelve sub-themes and key messages are designated as a framework for fundamental messages which will be told to visitors through a new interpretation program of Wat Arun. Seven opportunities to restructure and develop interpretation of the monastery are described comprehensively to provide for sustainable cultural tourism there. Finally, an interpretive plan is presented using five main communication tools and the means of their application for communicating the interpretive themes and key messages of Wat Arun and its architecture.

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