

48056963 : MAJOR : ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM
KEY WORD : CULTURE/ NATURE/ HERITAGE/ SUSTAINABLE TOURISM/ VALUE/
CONSERVATION

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HERITAGE VALUES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN KOH KRED, NONTHABURI PROVINCE.
THESIS ADVISOR : CORAZON CATIBOG-SINHA, Ph.D. 157 pp.

A study of the cultural and natural heritage features, as well as the perceived values of these features by the local community within the context of sustainable tourism, was conducted in Koh Kred, a tiny man-made island in the Chao Phraya River, located in Pak Kred district in Nonthaburi, Thailand.

The objectives of the study are as follows: (1) to determine and describe the cultural and natural heritage features of Koh Kred; (2) to determine the tangible and intangible values of these features as perceived by the local residents; (3) to assess the perceived changes in the cultural and natural features of the study area over time. The study also attempted to establish the relationships between cultural heritage features with natural heritage features in the context of the emerging tourism in Koh Kred. The study also determined the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the cultural and natural heritage of the island. Finally, some management recommendations on how best to conserve and/or integrate the site's cultural and natural heritage values in order to achieve sustainable tourism were made.

This researcher collected data, using qualitative research method and descriptive statistics, about the cultural and natural heritage values in the context of sustainable tourism. The questionnaire survey consisted of multiple choice answers and open-ended questions. The empirical data on the cultural and natural heritage features were derived from answers given by local residents, including the potters and the Buddhist monks (n= 100 respondents). Results were also derived from several in-depth interviews of some local residents. The majority (73%) of respondents (Mon, Thai, Mon-Thai ethnic groups) have resided on Koh Kred for more than 40 years.

The study identified and described the cultural heritage and natural heritage features of the island. The cultural heritage features consist of local house, cluster of pagodas of Wat Sao Thong Tong, Buddhist temple, Principal Buddha statue, long-tailed boat, Mon dancing, local cuisine, Mon pottery, Mon festival, Mon costume, declining pagoda of Poramai Yikawat temple, Khun Thep Phakdi building, and Mon language. The natural heritage features include the Chao Praya River, rubber trees, mud, natural landscape, and agricultural/horticultural crops. The linkages of these features with each, based on the perceived values of the local residents, were found to be positive. The integration of cultural assets with those of the natural assets is a crucial element in sustainable tourism, particularly in the maintenance of cultural integrity and natural resource conservation.

The local residents placed great importance to features related to religion, festivals including objects and activities linked to their religion, and pottery. Mon dancing and costume were ranked relatively low, and this may be due to the influence of modernization. The Mon language, however, seems to be considered more important than either the Mon dancing and costume. The natural heritage features on Koh Kred, notably the agricultural crops, the Chao Phaya River, and the natural landscape, were considered valuable.

The study explored the positive negative impacts of tourism. Management should address these impacts to ensure that the cultural and natural integrity of Koh Kred is maintained and should also implement, where appropriate, regulatory and rehabilitation measures. These measures will ensure the sustainability of tourism on the island for the benefits of the present and future generations.

Program of Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism Graduate School, Silpakorn University Academic Year 2008
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