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SAYAMOL CHAIRATUDOMKUL : CULTURAL ROUTES AS HERITAGE IN THAILAND
: CASE STUDIES OF KING NARAI'S ROYAL PROCESSION ROUTE AND BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINT
PILGRIMAGE ROUTE. THESIS ADVISOR : PROF.WILLIAM S. LOGAN, Ph.D., ASST.PROF.PIBUL
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This research aims to study the cultural routes concept and use it as a tool to enable the conservation of the Buddha's Footprint Pilgrimage Route in Thailand, as well as to enhance the visitor's appreciation of the heritage sites along the ancient route. The study of the cultural routes concept also aims to suggest appropriate interpretation strategies for raising the awareness of the young generation and visitors, so that they will gain experience from travelling on this route of faith. The results of the study reveal that it is necessary to improve the understanding of cultural routes concept and their significance by using an integrated interdisciplinary approach. This will promote both understanding and cooperation among all people regardless of nationality, for the best result in terms of cultural heritage preservation. In this research King Narai's Royal Procession Route was also studied, but it was found that this is a heritage trail not a cultural routes. The main difference between a cultural route and heritage trail is that cultural routes fosters a better understanding of cultural heritage and do not consider as a single unit, but rather as a system of components and seen 'as a whole'.

The process of developing the Buddha's Footprint Pilgrimage Route into a cultural route has followed the ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes in the identification of cultural heritage. This process leads to the understanding of the significance of the route as a whole. It shows that this pilgrimage route is distinguished in having heritage significance and authenticity, which reflects on the beliefs and faith people still hold about the Buddha's Footprint. Currently there are several monuments and sites along the pilgrimage route. Some parts of the original route cannot be seen due to the present development; however, some parts are well cared for by local authorities under the supervision of the Fine Arts Department. Importantly, the local communities have formed a volunteer group, to be responsible for maintaining and taking care of heritage sites along this pilgrimage route.

Additionally, in order to promote the right understanding about the cultural routes concept, the researcher was involved in participatory action research (PAR), covering a training session and a young interpreter contest, in order to disseminate knowledge of the pilgrimage route's significance and to raise awareness among stakeholders. The findings of these activities indicated that the community members were active parties who gained more knowledge and understanding towards pilgrimage route's conservation. Besides, they felt very proud and were aware of the value of their cultural heritage, which can be seen in their 'Hospitality Host Group' focusing on taking care of the heritage. Regarded as an important tool for conserving heritage sites, the Hospitality Host Group played a major role in raising awareness among young generations and visitors. The interpretation strategies were then proposed, allowing young generations and visitors to connect to the authentic aspects of the whole Buddha's Footprint Pilgrimage Route. The key value of conducting conservation activities through cultural routes in Thailand's context lies in the cooperation achieved. The participation between all levels must be increased by considering the participation that provides benefits to the stakeholders. Opinions of the stakeholders on the cultural routes concept indicated that the cultural route has major role in stimulating cultural tourism of the pilgrimage route. As a result, an educational program should be held in order to encourage local communities and young students to articulate the values they see in their heritage, to conserve those values, and to be aware particularly of the value of their sacred heritage.

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