

48056951:MAJOR: ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM
KEYWORD: ATROCITY HERITAGE, INTERPRETATION, 'DEATH RAILWAY'

APINYA BAGGELAAR ARRUNNAPAPORN: INTERPRETATION
MANAGEMENT OF ATROCITY HERITAGE, CASE STUDY: THE 'DEATH
RAILWAY' OF THE RIVER KWAI AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

THESIS ADVISOR: PROF. GREGORY J. ASHWORTH, Ph.D. 250 pp.

This research aims to study an interpretation of atrocity heritage of the 'Death Railway' in which the nature of atrocity heritage is discussed widely as a background. One of the issues is heritage dissonance, which is characteristic in atrocity heritage due to different users: the victims, perpetrators and bystanders. Thus, in the interpretation of atrocity heritage the question 'Whose interpretation?' remains critical. As interpretation is a means to reveal the cultural values and symbolic meanings of the heritage, it plays an essential role in assisting the visitor's learning process. However, we need to be cautious not to allow the interpretation to diminish the visitor's experiences. This process of experiencing heritage is considered of prime importance by the researcher as heritage interpretation.

Several important issues emerge from the study. The first issue is the nature of the heritage as a share-contested heritage and a heritage of dissonance. It is a heritage that shares several contestations from several owners that claim the heritage. The second issue is the political implications of the heritage, both for Thailand as the residence for the heritage, or the bystander, and Japan as the perpetrator. The third is the characteristics of the heritage as a cross-cultural heritage, where different users from different backgrounds interact, exchange ideas, and add meanings and values to this heritage. The fourth is the nature of the heritage as an extra-territoriality; several nations have put a claim of ownership on it. The last issue is the commodification and commercialisation of this atrocity heritage which also involves the issue of heritage authenticity. As regards authenticity, a strong argument is made to challenge the thinking that its existence, or absence, affects the experiences of the tourists.

In the process of atrocity heritage interpretation, there is a rising concern about how certain aspects of marketing and interpreting atrocity heritage tourism products and sites should be managed to meet the visitor's expectation, whilst maintaining the authenticity of the place. In the case of the atrocity heritage of the 'Death Railway', if territoriality, sovereignty, nationalism and the state need no longer be inextricable, there are many possibilities for a more inclusive, pluralistic and overlapping structure, identity and sense of place, all of which could be validated through heritage interpretation. As a result of extensive studies and research four alternative approaches for interpretation, to minimise the dissonance and complications of the heritage, are suggested. In conclusion, the establishment of interpretation to use in museums and sites for this atrocity site will help to preserve these memories, and, possibly, through an awareness of the catastrophic effects, help to prevent or at least to minimise other atrocities.

International Program in Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism, Graduate School, Silpakorn University Academic Year 2007

Student's Signature

Thesis Advisor's Signature.....