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DEVELOPMENT

THIRACHAYA MANEENETR: KHMER TEMPLES OF NORTHEAST
THAILAND: A PROPOSED PLAN FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.

THESIS ADVISOR: PROF.WILLIAM R. CHAPMAN, D.Phil, 301 pp.

This research is aimed at studying the Khmer temples of Northeast Thailand in order to propose a plan for tourism development. Seven Khmer temple sites were chosen, located in four provinces in the northeastern area of Thailand. These include Nakhon Ratchasima, Buriram, Surin and Si Sa Ket Provinces; and the temple sites of Prasat Phimai, Prasat Phanom Rung, Prasat Mueang Tam, Prasat Ta Muean Group, Prasat Si Khoraphum, Prasat Sa Kamphaeng Yai and Prasat Phra Wihan.

From this study, the researcher attempted to use the concept of cultural tourism as a key in the conservation of the value and significance of the architectural heritage and cultural landscape of Khmer sites. The cultural tourism approach also attempts to take into account both tangible and intangible values surrounding the sites for sustainable tourism.

The objective of the study is to promote the significance of Thailand's Khmer sites with a view to improving accessibility for visitors. The aim is to provide the local community a well managed interpretation and conservation program for each important site and highlight their unique characteristics in a way that will help preserve them for future generations. A further aim of this study is to better present the Khmer sites of Northeast Thailand as part of a cultural panorama and to create a management plan for cultural tourism and sustainable tourism development. The study also accentuates a program of conservation enlisting local communities and the tourism industry to promote site protection and a better understanding of cultural heritage.

In terms of tourism, the information derived from this research will be used to develop an appropriate management program that is best suitable to visitors, with the purpose of facilitating their ability and opportunity to discover new knowledge about Khmer arts and culture in Thailand. This will help visitors to develop a better understanding and appreciation. Furthermore, this research can also help find solutions to some of the existing problems among visitors to Thailand and the affect they have on local residents by fostering improved cooperation among all involved stakeholders i.e. local authorities, central government agents, local residents and visitors, in order to manage the local cultural heritage appropriately for its sustainable existence throughout subsequent generations.

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