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DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS “SUAY” OR “GUI” ELEPHANT SANCTAURY

PATTRAPON VETAYASUPORN: DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINE FOR SUSTAINABLE ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF “SUAY” VILLAGE IN SURIN PROVINCE

THESIS ADVISOR: PROF. ROSS KING, 325 PP.

Social and economic changes in the global economy after the 1960s have brought radical change in the ecology and the culture of “Suay” or “Gui” and their elephant’s life. Evolution of the culture of elephant is an indicator of socio-economical transformation. We must not degrade this cultural identity by modern forms of economic and social development. Elephant and “Gui” should be acclaimed as one of the country’s cultural ambassadors that announces the cultural diversity of Siam to the world. The mission is to adapt the “Gui” and elephants to a new way of life which integrates to myth, resource base and contemporary lifestyle, through activities and communities that can lead to learning and understanding of the culture of “Gui” and elephants in Siamese society. This study has, also, attempted to uncover the hidden truth about the relationship between elephants and their mahouts and to address their problems by following three steps of analysis: survey of historical documents and images to understand the place of the elephant in the Thai psyche; analysis of the elephant problems from secondary sources and primary materials, and analysis from survey and interviews. An Elephant Sanctuary is proposed as part of a suite of policies and programs to address the present problems. An eco-cultural design solution has been suggested for an Elephant Sanctuary, and a survey conducted to test likely reception of the idea. Hopefully, in the future when the public starts to realize this importance, the future of the Gui’s elephant will be brightened and the elephant’s problems will be solved correctly. By this approach could be the final task to strengthen the culture of elephant and “Gui” and to let them shine their great cultural value and, then, the Siamese elephant of the “Gui” will be classified as the symbolic creature of the outstanding elephant culture, and will be treated as an ambassador of Siamese culture which is currently struggling to survive under the radical changes of the globalization. Within this new meaning and approach, the Siamese elephant is no longer an Asian elephant but the “Gui’s” elephant related to rituals, culture, society and environment and also symbolizes the past glory in the glory of making of the ancient Siamese empire.

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