

REVITALIZATION OF THE SENSE OF PLACE AND THE PROTECTION OF NORMALITY FOR LOCAL TEMPLES IN THE CONTEXT OF IN-SITU IN THE NORTHEAST, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT:

Despite local people's frequent visits to the local temples having historic sites, close attention is seldom paid to the existence of the sites. This research was a qualitative research study based on the theory of Genius Loci by Norberg Schultz in the context of in-situ concept, conducted on four local temples (Wat) in the Northeast of Thailand. From the perspective of 'in-situ', the study found the historic sites in these local temples in a dilemma where conservation or renovation was performed with a lack of scientific and rational guidance although the temples still play important roles in the local people's daily life. The in-situ concept was not abided during the restoration and revitalization processes under the negotiation and conflict of multiple discourses. The historic sites were not integrated with other building and surrounding landscape, especially the extending boundary. The four elements: "atmosphere, belongingness, culture, and aesthetics" were thus weakened or became ambiguous and embodied in the sense of place. When the historic sites are revitalized based on the concept of in-situ under the protection of normality in everyday life, the sense of place should be perfectly represented through popularizing of the conscious conservation of cultural heritage and strengthened negotiation of multi-social forces. This is an alternative way of safeguarding cultural heritage in order to strengthen the aesthetic and cultural value of historic sites in local temples.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the viewpoint of tangible cultural heritage, some ancient temples (Wat in Thai) in Thailand are well protected and listed on the World Heritage Inventory. These ancient sites, especially in Ayutthaya and Sukhothai provinces, basically reflect the sense of place in the overall process of conservation; their original space is protected in terms of the architectural form, pattern and volume, which can generate the sacred sense of worship, belongingness, and identity among the people who visit the place.

In fact, some local temples in the Northeast of Thailand also retain small historic sites while their importance is often inferior to those famous temples in the region, such as Khmer stone sanctuaries of Prasat Phimai or Prasat Phanomrung. Compared with some modern buildings in the temples, these historic sites still retain the evidence of changes in history and times of the locality. Some relics still play an important role in people's daily life because they are parts of the landscape of the whole temple and social lives of the locals. Owing to their non-famous feature, they were not given enough attention from all parties involved, especially when considering the restoration of historic sites to their original state and integrating them with the surrounding landscape, which can be seen from the lack of scientific and rational guidance in planning and construction. When unique characteristics of historic sites are overlooked; the emotional attachment from ancient times of local people, in regard to the relics, is stripped off.

In addition, even if some historic sites are renovated and maintained, local architects or craftsmen do not comply with the principle of in-situ concept in the process of restoration. Finally, the architectural practice causes its in-situ beauty as an important factor of the sense of place, to be destructed in these temples.

Meanwhile, historic sites are the cultural heritage left by their predecessors. Some relics still provide a deep sense of place attachment to local people, and thus should not be neglected even if they are not well known. An important issue lies in the fact that architects should consider how to make the sites achieve a maximum social and aesthetic function at present when the locals attempt to protect, use and develop them.

Therefore, in the context of in-situ, the study aims to investigate the existence of historic sites of local temples in the Northeast of Thailand, to study the existing problems when the historic sites are restored or revitalized, and to elucidate the discourse of multi-social force to influence the protection of normality for the local temple with historic sites.

The study strives to put forward how the sense of place is reconstructed through integrating with the surrounding landscape based on the context of in-situ in the local temple so that the sense of place can be more prominent on the aspect of natural ecology, historical and cultural value of historic sites in local temples in the contemporary Thai society.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of architectural phenomenology initially formulated in the 1970s and reached a certain scale in the 1980s and 1990s. However, architectural phenomenology earlier appeared in the field of human geography, mainly concentrating on the relationship between humans and the environment. The sense of place (*Genius Loci*) is a concept of architectural phenomenology that Norberg-Schulz (1980) traced back to the Roman period. The Romans viewed the site as complex natural and artificial elements, and the sense was the “guardian deity” possessed by the independent body (like the ancient fetishism in which all things are spiritual). At the same time, the “poetic human dwelling” that German philosopher Martin Heidegger put forward, became the philosophical source of the sense of place. Through exploring the building itself, Norbert-Schulz viewed the sense of place as the core content of architectural phenomenology. He argued that the discussion about architecture should go back to the site and the most fundamental experience should be acquired from the sense of place. He integrated the space and characteristics into the building, emphasized the orientation and identity of the building, while the memory, value, and experience (social attributes) and places (material entities) interacted with each other in the living space which was composed of the building, and demonstrated the unique disposition that was the sense of place. Norbert-Schulz (1985) articulated in other research that dwelling implied the establishment of a meaningful relationship between human activities and a given environment.

Architect Seamon (1985) revealed the overall significance of the use of the phenomenology to discuss the living world. Later, architectural phenomenology has gradually been applied to many research fields such as humanistic environment, architectural landscape, urban planning and so on. From the late 1980s to the early 21st century, a set of architectural theory has formed in architectural phenomenology to be used in architectural design. New approaches begin to integrate an organizing idea with the programmatic and functional essence of a building. Rather than imposing a style upon different sites or pursued irrespective program, the unique character of a program and a site becomes the starting point of an architectural idea. In addition, many world-class architects such as Tadao Ando (2003), and other architects such as Yifu Tuan (1977), profoundly studied the relationship between human and nature, and man and architectural space with the help of phenomenology and Heidegger's philosophy of architecture, which greatly promoted the people's cognition of the building place, and influenced the design theory and practice today.

Architectural heritage is an important part of intangible cultural heritage. For cultural heritage, multi-disciplinary dialogues have been carried out. Kirshenblatt (2004), for instance, considered that all heritage interventions – like the globalizing pressures they were trying to counteract – change the relationship of people with what they do. She pointed out that the continuity of tangible cultural heritage would require attention – not just artefacts – to persons, as well as to their entire habitus and habitat, understood as their living space and social worlds. Harrison (2005) believed heritage was a mark or statement of at least two kinds of identity: one being national or collective, and the other being individual. The attribution of heritage firstly embodied the individual or the place of home, but the appeal to a collective and individual ‘heritage’ took on an added momentum. Smith (2011) put forward the argument that all

heritage was intangible. Certainly, many local communities, mountains, frescos, temples, canals, and other tangible physical features were endowed with intangible meanings.

Smith (2006) articulated that heritage was also a discourse. She discussed the authorized heritage discourse (AHD), and argued that AHD mapped out the authority of expertise through the idea of inheritance and patrimony. Heritage, according to AHD, was inevitably saved for the rhetoric of the “future generations” that undermined the ability of the present, unless under the professional guidance of heritage professionals, to alter or change the meaning and value of heritage sites or places. Obviously, AHD plays an important role in safeguarding heritage. As far as the architectural heritage occurs in the rural society, AHD usually refers to the guidance of local authorities or experts and scholars. However, for most parts of heritage that could not be included in the view of AHD, lack of the guide of AHD, or inappropriate guide from the authority; the sense of place would be weakened or destroyed.

‘In-situ’ is a Latin word, later being widely applied to various research fields. In-situ is easily confused with “authenticity” which means original, true, non-replicating. The explicit statement in the 2019 Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (OGIWHC in short) is to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes including form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; internal and external factors.

However, for the protection of architectural heritage, the new changes happened in the application of the concept. For example, the recovering and reshaping of the original cultural spirit in the region of East Asia is emphasized to be effectively inherited through the reconstruction of cultural place in order to stress the “authenticity” of culture. In fact, in OGIWHC, in-situ is mentioned as one of the criteria that nominated properties contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity from the point of view of science or conservation.

There is a little difference between “in-situ” and “authenticity” that the architectural research underlines. In-situ not only includes the architectural form but also involves the complexity of the natural environment, cultural landscape, specific production, lifestyle, traditional customs, unique national cultural psychology, value orientation in the specific region. These factors are irreplaceable and not replicating. Therefore, the study of in-situ in architecture is a method to study the characteristics of the architecture that the natural, social and human environment is considered as part of the building as cultural heritage.

In general, people generate emotional attachment by fusing memory, value and experience and history as a complex in a space, where buildings reveal the essential relationship between human existence and the creation of space. In a local temple with a historic site, the sense of place is a kind of emotional attachment and a higher pursuit of the living environment, living space and social responsibility for local people in daily life. Therefore, it is necessary to study and concretize the sense of place in the local temples with historic sites from the multi-angle of views in north-eastern Thailand.

3. METHOD AND MATERIALS

A building is a pattern to give people “the foothold of existence”, and a concretization of existing space. After combining with the activities of people in the building, the sense of place as the unique disposition is presented. As for the local temple, historic sites need to be protected or restored owing to their cultural and historical value, while new buildings are generally built owing to the lack of clear guidance. Before people could not integrate the historic sites with the new buildings around them to transform into the harmony landscape, the emotional attachment of local people would be weakened, and the sense of place would be not well touched and perceived. Thus, the study selects four local temples with the historic sites as case studies and conducted the fieldwork in the provinces of Khon Kaen, Nongkhai and Roi-et (Table 1, Figure 1), adopts the qualitative method, mainly placing emphasis on participant observation and in-depth interviews to explore the existing status.

Name of Temple/ Province	Historic Site	
	History	Main body
1-Wat Chaisri/ Khon Kaen	A.D 1865	Ubosot (Sim), murals, Buddha statue.
2-Wat Phra That Bang Phuan /Nong Khai	1st and 3rd century A.D, a Lao-style stupa in 1560	The Lao-style stupa, Ubosot, the pond of Naga serpent, the ancient stone inscription, Buddha statue.
3-Wat Phochai/ Khon kaen	Approximatel y A.D 1865	Ubosot (Sim), Buddha statue.
4-Wat Kuphra Kona/Roi-et	11th century	Three brick Khmer religious stupas, a boundary stone wall, intel’s embossment.

Table 1. The existence of the local temple with a historic site or historic building.

The study mainly considers the following criteria to choose the local temples:

Firstly, the sites have more than 100 years of history. Secondly, there are similar problems of integrating with new modern temple buildings and landscape around them. Thirdly, historic sites show different states in daily life under the negotiation of multi-discourse during the process of maintenance, protection, and development. Through follow-up fieldwork of these above-mentioned temples from 2010 to 2019, the study investigated the existence of these temples and the impacts on the formation and promotion of the sense of place under the context of in-situ. The theoretical framework is as follows (Figure 1).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The restoration of three-dimensionality of the historic site with the lack of in-situ in local temples

The three-dimensional structure of space is a concrete representation of the sense of place. For local temples, the three-dimensionality is composed of the historic sites and temple buildings, as well as the surrounding items. In-situ of historic sites is an important prerequisite to ensure the uniqueness of the three-dimensionality of these local temples.

At Wat Kuphra Kona (Figure 2), there are three east-facing brick Pagodas lying on a north-to-south axis, standing on a single sandstone foundation. The central Pagoda was renovated in 1874 with the plaster and cement, so its appearance and roof have considerably changed. The foundation of red laterite brick of the northern Pagoda still exists, but the upper body has collapsed. The lower foundation is retained in the southern Pagoda. To protect its exquisite embossment, the temple committee built a pavilion on it in order to prevent sunshine and rain from eroding the embossment. The corrugated-iron roof is rusty because of sunshine and rain. In front of the southern

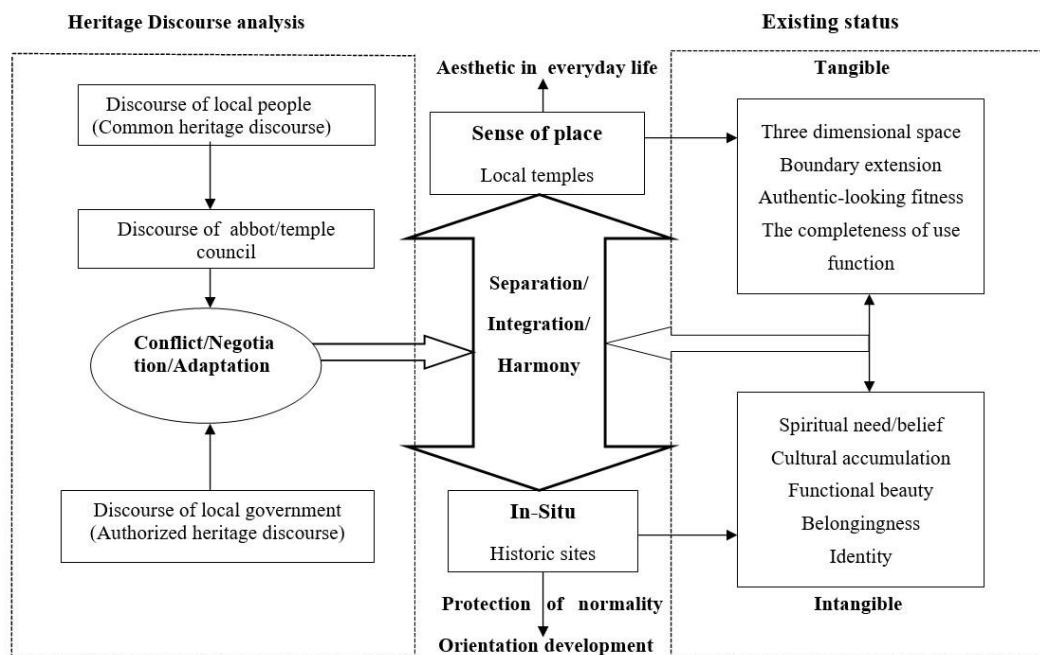


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the sense of place and in-situ in the local temple with the historic site.

Pagoda, a winding house was built for the monks for the sermon. Within the eastern corner of the historic site, a concrete building is used to store the unusable items for monks near the eastern entrance: a new golden stupa with Laos style was built in the right front of northern Pagoda. All of them are not-harmonious with the Khmer style of the historic site. The spatial pattern of the historic site has been disrupted because of the inappropriate protective way. In addition, some old sandstone lintels are scattered on the ground or piled up on the side of the eastern entrance, but their surface was carved the new coarse pattern of Thai-Lao style which is now not in accord with the original one, the beauty of in-situ is already seriously destroyed. In general, the three-dimensional structure is not rational and feasible in the integrated layout of the whole temple. Although the historic site of Wat Kuphra Kona retains the original foundation and architectural styles of the Khmer period, the sense of place is difficult to deeply perceive after the restoration because of the lack of in-situ.

4.2 The lack of dialogue and interaction of the boundary extension of the historic site with other buildings in the temple

Boundary forms a segment and interval with the outside world in order to make a closed three-dimensional space. As for the local temple, there are two boundaries: the historic site and the temple's boundary. In fact, the boundary is divided into two parts: the concrete boundary which is composed of the wall foundation of the historic site and the enclosure of the temple; the intangible boundary that includes the symbol of the historic sense, identity of historic sites, a religious activity and social behaviour in the temple at present, which is separated from social and living behaviour outside of the temple. Thus, a difficult problem is put forward on how to integrate them because the two parts are not isolated entities and exist in the same three-dimensional space.

For Wat Kuphra Kona, there is a gorgeous forest that separates the temple's enclosure. Because of the good ecological environment, a troupe of monkeys lives there as home, which forms a local unique scene. Inside the temple, there is a wall relic with ancient sandstone and four gopurams which encircle the three red sandstone pagodas as the inner boundary. The western gopuram is basically intact. Its Intel was carved with exquisite pattern which depicts the deities, but the two cement lions with modern style stand on both sides of the entrance; a white concrete dormitory for the former abbot was built close and next to the boundary and destroyed the in-situ of the inner boundary. In fact, the boundary of historic sites is not well interacted and integrated into the space of the temple even if it remains relatively intact.

For Wat Phra That Bang Phuan (Figure 2), the historic sites are scattered in the whole space of the temple. The tangible boundary is not comparatively intact, but has disappeared. Other modern buildings are distributed in the space which has been created by the historic site. The negotiation and interaction were neglected during the process of boundary extension of the site. Therefore, the layout is in disorder and unsystematic when the inner boundary of the site extends outside to merge with new buildings of the temple. As a result, the three-dimensional space is not harmonious in vision and space, and in turn affects the representation of the sense of place.

4.3 The weakness of identity and belongingness in the atmosphere of the place

Rose (1995) pointed out that the sense of place is not entirely the result of one individual's feelings and meanings, although it may be very personal; rather, such feeling and meaning are shaped in a large part by the social, cultural and economic circumstances in which individuals find themselves. Society is the premise for the existence of a sense of place. Leaving the society, the sense of place will be meaningless. Massey (1993) argued that place is not static and in no way relates to the Heideggerian view of Space/Place as Being. He claimed that place is not an immutable thing. Rather, the place is a social product and therefore there is no static ontological nature of the place.

The sense of place is a similarly ephemeral, unfocused and intangible experiential character that is closely related to the atmosphere. Pallasmaa (2014) stated that atmosphere is an exchange between material or existent properties of the place and the immaterial realm of human perception and imagination. Yet, it is not a physical "thing" or fact, as it is derived from human's experiential "creation". People generate certain emotional awareness through repeated actions and complex connections with the architectural environment. Because of the different time and spatial dimensions in people's social activities, there are different contents and levels presented in the atmosphere of a place. Thus, it is simple for people to acquire strength and promote identity and belongingness by infusing the time, space and social activities in the atmosphere.

In the study, the perceived atmosphere of a place, as the existence of reality, is created by the space of the building and historic site, human activities and the surrounding environment in the local temple, and intuitively represented according to the social function. Ross (1993) believed that the place is made and remade every day; and at each instant, it is modified by men's actions. That is to say, the sense of place is more than one's feelings about a place, in fact not natural but naturalized. Feelings are subjective and are not only personal but also social. The place, as the production of human beings and living space, not only possesses a visible material entity but also has the attribute of social life. We can, indeed, speak of the atmosphere of a place, which gives it the unique perceptual character and identity in social life. The historic site of the local temple becomes the overarching and special entity for the formation of the atmosphere for local people. People enter into space, take part in activities, produce the comprehension and sentiment based on the atmosphere, and then generate a sense of identity and belongingness. Identity and belongingness are important traits for the sense of place in which an internal resonance is generated between people's feelings and the place.

In the Northeast of Thailand, a historic site with a long history, mainly enabling spiritual identification and belongingness for local people, might become a more everlasting being. If the architectural heritage could be renovated or repaired based on in-situ, the belongingness and identification of local people could be further motivated. However, the reconstruction of its place should keep pace with the time and meet the demand of the locals in modern life. As for Wat Chaisri (Figure 2), the folkloristic atmosphere is formed by combining with the festival culture that centers on the Ubosot (Sim) with a vernacular style. Local people usually participate in those folk activities, acquiring more strong feeling of identity and belongingness.

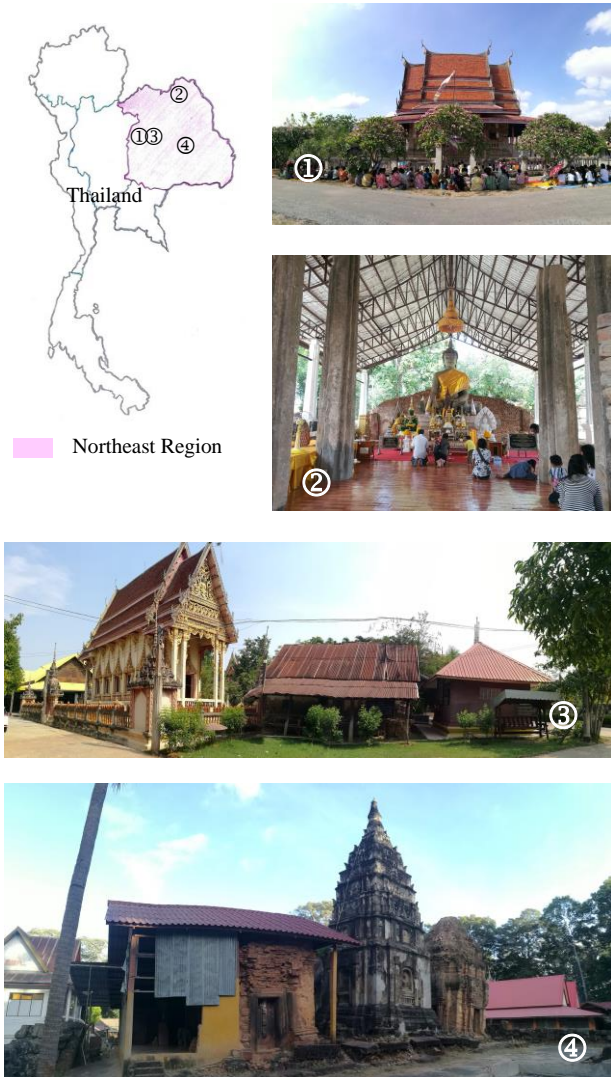


Figure 2. Locations and existence of the four temples.

- ① Wat Chaisri, Khon Kaen
- ② Wat Phra That Bang Phuan, Nong Khai
- ③ Wat Phochai, Khon Kaen
- ④ Wat Kuphra Kona, Roi-et

The historic site of the Wat Phra That Bang Phuan dates back to the 1st to 3rd Century A.D. There are several interesting relics within the complex, such as the temple boundary markers and an ancient stone inscription. The historic site was once appropriately renovated, and thus has been enabling important religious functions for the local people. There are, for example, the style of the five-head Naga serpent belonging to the Khmer period in the pond that is next to the collapse of the hall of Ubosot; and the terrace of a sinking mode providing access to the Naga serpent which is located in the center of the pond. The Naga serpent pond and other parts of the historic site form an atmosphere allowing local people to have the pious sense when they visit the temple to worship Buddha. However, the historic sites in the local temple are not well integrated with the building and the environment around them – even disordered in the same space. The relics were repaired with many modern materials, and the Khmer style was destroyed. When 20 local people of different ages and educational levels were interviewed, 85%

of them said they were happy to tell others they live in the community which is next to Wat Phra That Bang Phuan. They enjoy participating in some folk and religious activities at this temple. According to the interviewees, the landscape of the temple is comfortable and beautiful and full of historical meaning than other temples without historic sites. When asked whether the restoration of the relics influence this kind of feeling as people did not use the original or similar materials to repair them, 65% of them considered that these historic sites seem not old enough for this kind of restoration – the feeling of time is not powerful. 10% of them even said that sometimes they have no pride in the historic site because the bad restoration has destroyed the historical feeling as well as its aesthetic function. To a large extent, the identity and belongingness of the local people have been weakened.

4.4 The ambiguity of cultural accumulation during the recurrence of the sense of place

The formation and development of architecture are closely connected with the national culture. In the historical development, a variety of architectural forms become the tangible carrier of culture. History endows these architectural forms with the cultural connotation, and cultural connotation in turn raises the level of aesthetic awareness. Architectural relics are from the past, while abstractive symbols are represented in the building materials, architectural form and style, and other physical forms. The distinctiveness of time and local characteristic was inevitably embodied in the architectural entity, which becomes the representation of the cultural accumulation, and promotes the recurrence of the sense of place based on in-situ in the modern society. Three aspects should be considered in the cultural accumulation of historic sites as follows: Firstly, the sense of the time should be focused, which reflects the characteristic of architectural materials, forms, and styles in those times. Secondly, the role and function of architecture should be stressed in a unique geographical environment in local daily life. Thirdly, the local attribute of the space should be highlighted, which is different from other architectural types.

Cultural accumulation is closely related to the inheritance and development of the historic site. In the Wat Kuphra Kona, the central Pagoda with sandstone brick was renovated in 1874, but the new building material and pattern covered the old one. The masonry structure of pagoda was covered with cement, and then the contemporary architectural pattern was used to redecorate the surface of the pagoda. The embossment of Buddha statue on the pagoda surface also adopted the style of the 19th century. After that, a similar situation exists in continuous restoration. Some old sandstone lintel and pillar scattered on the ground were carved with a new coarse pattern and figure in Thai style. The Khmer style has unfortunately disappeared. The pagodas are no more the witness of local history. The sense of history and time were lost in the architectural symbols during the process of cultural accumulation.

As discussed above, the sense of place is closely associated with cultural accumulation based on the principle of in-situ in the local temple. If the cultural connotation of historic sites is not highly valued during the conservation in such a temple, the attribution of time and local culture of the building are all reduced, and the recurrence of the sense of place will not be naturally presented.

4.5 The negotiation and conflict of discourse for the reconstruction of the sense of place in the local temple with the historic site

Society, as an organization, is maintained by the discourse, and different space just carries different discourse attribution. The sense of place is inevitably influenced by the processes of the interconnection and interdependence of social discourses and practices. For a local temple, the sense of place is highlighted in the restoration of the entity and the functional revitalization of historic sites for various purposes. The process closely couples with the conflict and negotiation of different discourses, including the local government, scholars and local villagers.

For some local temples with historic sites, the multi-discourses of heritage play a vital role in their development. There are different discourse statuses presented in the existing of these historic sites. The first case is the adjustment and negotiation of discourse, such as at Wat Chaisri. The local government, the abbot of the temple and scholars all hope to develop tourism to attract more tourists to visit the temple. Cooperation has been sought for organizing some activities in important festivals. The second case is the conflict of discourse, such as at Wat Kuphra Kona. The local government hopes to restore the historic site in the temple, but the community opposes the safeguard behaviour of the government because of the distrust due to the centralized conservation practice and discourse from the local government, which forms the trilateral game.

As for Wat Chaisri, the revitalization of the usage function of the Sim was conducted by authorized heritage discourse. The culture department of the local government placed emphasis on the folkloristic space of the place, cooperated with scholars to add some folk activities in the place since 2015 and promoted through various mass media before the Songkran Festival. Since then, the mayor of the local government has visited the temple to preside over the opening ceremony every year, which is held on the lawn next to the Sim. Participants are able to appreciate the traditional costume contest, local game performances, and Sia Kror ceremony. In 2015, four groups came to join the activity for the first time. The local government supported villagers to make Gratong Gao Chong (nine-sectioned banana leaf bowls) as a sacrificial kit for visitors. The villagers positively and enjoyably made the Gratong actively participated in the blessing ceremony. In the next couple of days, traditional games for children were held at the same place. In addition, the authority added some games of central Thailand into these folk activities, which presented an “excessive” performance and became a new image to serve tourism. Traditional customs and folklore were deliberately “set” in the festivals, not only through the advocacy of the government and publicity by mass media, but also the attention and intervention of scholars. The transplantation, integration, and re-invention of folklore have been applied to the reconstruction of the atmosphere. However, the atmosphere was created by the lack of in-situ.

For Wat Kuphra Kona, before the middle of the twentieth century, local villagers built a pavilion with a simple pattern to protect the heritage from weathering. Later, the government’s Art Department placed emphasis on safeguarding the historic sites in the temple, with the hope that the monks and their cubicles would move out of the temple. The negotiation did not go well regarding the resettlement. Thus, in the past, every time officers prepared to clear up buildings around the historic sites, local people would spontaneously gather in the temple to prevent the government from any restoring action. As for the discourses of local people, they worried that parts of stone castle would be

torn apart, added or substituted by new materials or taken away to Bangkok and kept in a storage room or a museum which the locals would never have a chance to see it again.

The old Sim of Wat Phochai temple (Figure 2), which is next to Wat Chaisri, has still not been restored because the government has not allocated any fund, focusing on Wat Chaisri instead. Some villagers who regularly went to Wat Phochai even expressed dissatisfaction in public during the Songkran festival of 2016. They worried that the old Sim of Wat Phochai would still be unknown and ignored. In addition, they considered their Sia Kror ceremony more original than the one conducted at Wat Chaisri. Moreover, the traditional schedule for Sia Kror at Wat Chaisri has changed in order to accommodate tourism. In addition, the old Sim is surrounded by other temple buildings, making the space more cramped. The villagers, however, do not agree to dismantle some of them.

Obviously, the discourse of the local government, the management concept of the abbots and the temple’s committees as well as local people influence and intervention in the restoration and revitalization of the historic sites in the local temples have brought about the complicated existing positions. Some are towards commercialization of tourism under the support of local government and local elites or scholars, but their revitalization does not abide the principle of in-situ. Some is caused from the lack of support from the government, temple committees or local people. As they have not been feasibly renovated or reused, they continue to be dilapidated. The orientation of discourse brings about impact on the integration of ecological and social resources, as well as the harmonious development of social and interpersonal relationships among villagers and vice versa.

4.6 The deviation of the functional beauty during the revitalization of the local temples with the historic sites

ional beauty is a special trait that embodies the sense of place in the local temples with historic sites. Allen Carlson (1997), as the founder of the “Environmental Aesthetics” who advocates viewing the human environment as the main field of everyday life and uses the perspective of natural ecology for reference, proposes an ecological method of architecture, places the building into everyday life to observe and study. According to his theory of the aesthetics of everyday life about the architecture, only those good buildings can maintain a harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment or landscape, which subverts the criteria that architects pursue the pure appearance and “functional adaptation” in the past.

In the discussion of the functional beauty of architecture, Parsons and Carlson (2008) advocate a challenging exception: an appreciation for the ruins as architecture. According to the concept of functional beauty, when people appreciate the functional beauty of an object, the object necessarily needs to possess the aesthetic characteristics of “looking fitness”. Although people may not focus on whether its practical function is complete or not, they use the criterion of formalism to appreciate its colour, shape and so on when they appreciate the ruins. The ruins look unfit for their function; even when it has a special expressiveness. The form of its damage is a strong hint for a normal designated function of the ruin in the past. Thus, the ruins can become a special cultural symbol of the passing history, culture, and life because of their looking unfit for the function to attract people. Thus, people can psychologically tolerate its function discomfort in vision and still consider them having the aesthetic quality.

For the historic site in the local temple of northeast Thailand, the function of historic sites is not exactly equal to the ruins. Because they still have parts of practical function in daily life, so the expressiveness of looking unfit does not transform into the defect of aesthetic quality. In-situ is more important in the aesthetic quality of them, it is performed in the birthplace of a building by combining with the specific age, natural environment, social conditions and other factors of the building. So, it is an important way for historic sites to maintain aesthetic perception through the appearance and function of looking fitness.

As for Wat Phra That Bang Phuan, local people used modern materials to recover the function of looking fitness of historic sites which, at the same time, is a disadvantage to the aesthetic quality of in-situ. In Wat Kuphra Kona, although the lintels of the southern pagoda still retain the exquisite embossment which depicts the deities of Hinduism, and Shiva on a bull is depicted in another fallen lintel; the temple committee built a pavilion with a corrugated iron roof to shade them. Some irrelevant building were also built around them in order to extend the functionality of the historic site. Around the historic site, the modern Ubosot and sanctuary place, dormitories of monks, and toilets were built with different styles, materials and colours. They are not harmonious with the whole historic site. In fact, the aesthetic quality of historic sites has absolutely been destroyed.

The architectural space is a basis and a carrier of the sense of place. The sense of place is the attachment and extension of the physical form of architecture. Finally, the two parts unify in the functional beauty in everyday life. At present, to pursue the looking fitness and functional completeness, the historic site has been renovated not according to the concept of in-situ, and other modern buildings are not in harmony with the style of the historic site. As a result, the architectural space is not perfectly integrated with the sense of history, lofty and cultural attribute of the historic site, and local people are not able to acquire enough functional beauty in daily life.

5. STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the sense of place needs to be represented through social activities, the conservation of historic sites in local temples should place emphasis on the dynamic protection of normalization, not at the level of static protection. This is also consistent with the concept of architectural heritage conservation in Western countries which emphasizes the preservation of the original form of the building and endows the building practical function and functional beauty as the core of conservation. Therefore, this study puts forward the development strategies and recommendations as follows:

5.1 To popularize the conscious safeguarding for the historic sites and strengthen the negotiation of multi-social forces

The temple council and the relevant sections of the local government should negotiate each other and solicit some advice from the scholars. They should seriously respect the ideas of villagers, then conduct the renovation of historic sites based on in-situ so that they could achieve more prominent social and religious function, aesthetic value and cultural characteristics.

5.2 To highlight the in-situ of place through the practice of “restoring it to its original state”

The principle of “restoring it to its original state” should be abided when the historic site is renovated in the local temple through using the appropriate architectural materials, form, colours, symbols with the historic sense based on in-situ.

5.3 To strengthen the aesthetic quality of the historic sites by integrating with the surrounding landscape

The renovation should not transform, deform or split the functional beauty of historic sites at will according to the modern aesthetic value. More importantly, it should be integrated and in harmony with the architectural landscape and the surrounding environment, in order to create greater aesthetic value.

5.4 To build folkloristic space on historic site relying on the authenticity and in-situ

A variety of architectural forms provide a place for intangible cultures, such as a festival, ceremony, and trigger the recurrence of the sense of place. The creation of folkloristic space is indeed a necessity for developing and implementing the architectural function. Meanwhile, it carries the representation of folklore and publicity of cultural significance. Folkloristic space should be built by depending on the authenticity and in-situ and serve local people in daily life, not only caters to the orientation of the tourism industry.

5.5 To enhance the belongingness and identification of the locals based on the conservation of normalization

Under the guidance of the normalizing development, the practical function of a historic site in the local temple should be revitalized via the reconstruction of physical space in daily life, and then by combining with the folkloristic space to create an atmosphere. Local people would be able to acquire more belongingness and identification, and hence further promote the sense of place.

6. CONCLUSION

The core of the sense of place is to explore the people’s feelings for the place. The sense of place does not only occur in a large space but in a small scope that the individual can perceive and profoundly recognize. As for local temples in Thailand, the architectural space, form, and style constitute the spatial characteristics of the place. The historic and cultural accumulation of the building generates a spiritual space that attracts the community residents to hold religious and social activities in a local temple with historic sites and then provides a subjective aesthetic experience for them.

The four aspects have been put forward during the reconstruction of the sense of place in the local temple with historic sites in this study: The first is to highlight the principle in-situ and local cultural accumulation of historic sites. The second is to achieve higher functional adaptation. This relies on the looking fitness of the historic site through the conservation of normalization and integration with the surrounding landscape. The third is to create the atmosphere by combining historic sites and other buildings with related social activities in order to satisfy the psychological requirements of local people. The fourth is to acquire the aesthetic pleasure of daily life, which is determined by the aesthetic perception of historic sites integrating with the architectural landscape in the place.

The four elements of “atmosphere, belongingness, culture, and aesthetics” are organically integrated in the sense of place, which has a very high guiding significance for the overall conservation of the local temples with historic sites. They are unified in the practice of the conservation of in-situ and rational planning of the architectural landscape in the local temple. The sense of place should perfectly present the unity of the four elements under the conservation of normalization.

At present, there is a dilemma that architectural space is reconstructed in a local temple with the historic site in the Northeast of Thailand. The concept of in-situ of the historic site is ignored to a large extent, which is not only embodied in architectural form and boundary, but also in the integration of the historic site and the surrounding environment. Historic sites are indeed an indispensable and inseparable part of the local temple. However, some historic sites keep the static development trend because of the lack of usage functions in everyday life; or some are renovated to strengthen its usage function without abiding the principle of in-situ. When the local people interact with architectural forms and landscapes in such a place, their identity, belongingness, the historic sense, and the aesthetic pleasure will be lacking or weakened. A high degree of unification of humanity, environment, and culture is hard to be achieved.

On the premise of stressing the conservation of in-situ, multi-discourses, especially from the local government, the scholars or local craftsmen should focus on all kinds of local temples with historic site, by rationally plan and layout for quality of architectural space, and then integrate or fuse pluralistic space system under the modern community life. This kind of practice may improve the living environment and quality of community and enhance the aesthetic of everyday life. Meanwhile, the practice plays a positive role in improving the regional image, provides empirical guiding to cultivate the local people to spontaneously respect the local cultural heritage, then scientifically and rationally reconstruct the sense of place in such temples. It also provides a new way for the conservation, planning, and development of the local temple with the historic sites in other regions of Thailand.

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