

# THE RENOVATION GUIDELINE TO PREVENT THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE DEFACEMENT IN THAI TEMPLES CASE STUDY OF WAT PHOTHARAM, SUPHANBURI PROVINCE, THAILAND

**Dr. Supakit Mulpramook**

*College of Architecture, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand,  
E-Mail: supakit.mu@ssru.ac.th, Smulpramook@yahoo.com*

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the defacement of architectural heritage in Buddhist temple in Thailand which affected to the tourism industry in Thailand. There are about 40,717 temples around the country of which 33,902 are in current use, most of the architectural heritage in old temples are in bed condition and need to be conserved or renovated to preserve the significance, the architectural heritage and tourism purpose. Temple's conservation and renovation at tourist locations not only increases temple income and that of the nation, but also furthers tourist understanding of Buddhism.

In present, the defacement of architectural renovation is one of big problem in Thai temples because of the improper methods. Thus, the researcher is interested in determining the influencing factors on the tourism potential of temples. Knowledge of these influencing factors can improve temple management to be tourist attractions. In the present study, the influencing factors were evaluated against the tourism potential of temples in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Defacement, Architectural Renovation, Thai temple, Architectural Heritage

## INTRODUCTION

Even though Thailand is an agricultural country, the major revenue comes from tourism. In 2016, the revenue from tourism was 2.51 trillion baht and was 10.93 percent higher than the total tourism revenue in 2015. It is expected that the revenue can increase by 8 percent in 2017 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Office of the Permanent Secretary, 2016). Although Thailand has many tourist attractions, religious places/temples are considered as cultural and historical attractions are the most admired. Royal palaces, museums, and historical parks are secondary, alternative choices (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2013). In spite of the many interesting temples, tourists always travel to the same places. One of the top popular temples is the temple of the Emerald Buddha. Moreover, a lot of temples have historic and archaeological value but they are not well-known by Thai and foreign tourists. These beautiful Buddhist temples could be developed into tourist locations. As a result, the temple renovation at tourist locations not only increases temple income and that of the nation, but also furthers tourist understanding of Buddhism.

After a report of historical temples being painted gold triggered an uproar on social media, the Culture Ministry's Fine Art Department is warning people to stop unauthorized painting of national heritage monuments as it violates the law. Social media users expressed shock and dismay that ancient Thai temples were being given a make-over with a coat of gleaming gold paint, damaging national heritage and violating laws aimed to protect and preserve the nation's birthright.

In the temple of Lao Thong has the same gold painted. Phra Somdej Prabudha, the abbot of Wat Lao Thong In the same way, in the year 2016, there was a volunteer group called "the wayfarers" to renovate the church in a very dilapidated color, which began to peel off. The agreement was reached between the villagers and the monks that they would have to reconstruct by changing roof tiles and old decayed wooden frames. I told him to leave the church as its original color of Chad. But in the past, they did not have the staff of the Fine Arts department to provide care or draw up the wrong rules from the Visual Arts department. Just know when the villagers told me that on the page of the Fine Art department. What do you do with this old site? But now there are no employees from the relevant authorities to contact me.

Until the Provost Anukul Wisit (Preecha Paya Vorothe), the abbot took the position until 2558 there was a volunteer group called "people sharing" with employees of Krung Thai Bank. At the time, the temple is very poor maintained. The permission to renovate has been consulted between the abbot and the villagers and reached to agreement. It was good for him to help with the renovation since this church has almost collapsed. There are officers from the Ministry of Fine Arts Suphan Buri No. 2 came to the church said that this is more

than 100 years old private institutions and it cannot be restored due to the disorder of the Fine Arts Department. What if I have to apply through the Fine Arts department? The temple and people, however, do not know this church. How old and more important is that the Fine Art department has never visited or informed them about the laws or regulations. There are private agencies to renovate this historic site and sharing in the social world appears to be a problem. An immediate action is required to renovate hundreds of historical temples painted in gold across the Kingdom, said, the Fine Arts Department

#### **What is architectural Renovation?**

An architectural renovation describes the process which material, historical and design durability of mankind's built architectural history is prolonged to last longer and to be able to sustain difficult conditions or to be kept sustainable, in general.

There are many ways and forms as to how one could possibly conserve or attempt to conserve architectural heritages such as rehabilitation, restoration, reconstruction, and preservation. Not all countries recognize all 4 and use them, some countries like Canada only recognize preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration.

But before using all of these methods, why do we need to conserve? Architectural heritages such as the Great Pyramids are required to be preserved due to the inescapable side effects from natural disasters such as earthquakes or storms or even simply the change in temperature causes. Not only does the environment effect such important historical landmarks, but the three most prominent factors affecting them, including the environment, pollution and tourism.

### **OBJECTIVE**

- Analysis of temples used for sustainable cultural tourism in Thailand.
- Physical evidence of the lasting cultural and architectural heritage of Wat Photharam
- Consideration of the impacts of defacement in architectural heritage to tourism
- Consideration of the significance of the cultural heritage Wat Photharam
- The cultural significance of Wat Photharam for the local community
- To propose the guideline to prevent the architectural heritage defacement in Thai temples

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research methods and sources can be broken down into the following components:

#### **Documentary research**

- Collection of published information on Thai history and architectural history, especially that of religious architecture
- Non-systematic observation of the behavior of local communities that are involved in Wat Photharam as a comparison
- Review of available literature pertaining to cultural or sustainable tourism
- Study of all documents relating to places and activities in Wat Photharam from both primary sources and secondary sources, such as diaries, local documents, ancient photographs, maps, reports and related studies
- Collection of the original and ancient information (primary sources) on Wat Photharam from national archives

#### **Site research**

- Site survey of Wat Photharam to gather general information of the existing physical landscape and its architectural heritage. Photographing and mapping the site
- Interviews with members of the local community, stakeholders, visitors and local government
- Assessment and analysis of potentials through a review of existing literature.
- Informal analysis of the needs and attitudes of local communities in order to find ways to manage sustainable cultural tourism
- A study of the relationship between communities and their cultural sites by means of a review of their culture, tradition, lifestyles, beliefs, and local knowledge, again based primarily on interviews

## **About Wat Photharam**

Wat Photharam, Suphan Buri, did not register the ruins of the Golden Temple before it had been deteriorated. Faithful people helped to restore dedication. Hope is the first golden temple with the city of U Thong.

From the case of socialists and architects including old lovers have shared and criticized. The restoration of Wat Photharam Suphanburi was ruined with the golden color and without permission from the Director-General of the Visual Arts department. That is illegal and it has already been done for 2 years (read previous news by 2 years! Netizens hijacked the art department to check the gold paint over the archaeological site).

The fan page of Wat Phattharam has given an explanation about the temple that the temple was informed by faith. Among the faithful participants asked to restore the offer of Buddhist worship in Buddhism. The purpose of painting the entire gold. The restoration team thought it would be a beautiful temple of gold. Twin city, U Thong The uniqueness of the neighborhood.

The temple was considered as the ancient temple of Wat Photharam, which was used until the year 2567, and when the new temple was completed in 1967, a prayer ceremony to remove the ancient temple to use the new temple and later it has been used as residences. From the monk novices to the temple in 1997, very dilapidated. The temples and shrines were used to leave the temple.

Until mid-year 2557-2558 having a group of people to offer refurbishment and it was painted gold back to the first golden temple with the city. The temple is not registered with the Fine Art department. The temple was given to the devotees of faith to be restored as a Buddhist worship. I do not think it will destroy the archaeological site. Thinking of the faithful coming to recovery, it would be better to lower the temple. It was completed in the year 2559, spent in restoration for 1 year with 6 months and was celebrated gold. The event took place in April 2016.

However, this triggered a controversy last week after a report on historical temples being repainted raised an uproar on social media, prompting the Culture Ministry's Fine Arts Department to issue a warning last Wednesday. Consent from the Fine Arts Department is required before any historical monuments or sites in Thailand can be refurbished.

## **RESULTS**

Immediate action is required to renovate the hundreds of historical temples painted in gold across the Kingdom, the Fine Arts Department said early this week.

"Unauthorised painting of ancient buildings and national treasures violates the law. We will require complicated technology and conservation experts to remove the paint and return the monuments back to their original glory," Saneh Mahaphol, director of the Department of Conservation Science at the Fine Arts Department told The Nation. Over the past few years, a group of Buddhists called "Puen Ruam Thang" ("Companion") took it upon themselves to "renovate" historical temples by covering daubing gold paint provided by the TOA Paint Company on their faded-exterior.

### **The Renovation Guideline**

To Prevent the Architectural Heritage Defacement in old Thai Temples building the Renovator must follow the guideline below:

- 1) All Renovation plans should to be consulted with conservation expert.
- 2) All Renovation plans have to be approved by the department of Fine Arts first to be legal.
- 3) Educating people on correct renovation methods could help solve this problem sustainably.
- 4) Consult the proper conservation method to the Department of Conservation Science at the Fine Arts Department.
- 5) The conservation method and painting must follow the conservation regulation to prevent the defacement.
- 6) Collection of the original and ancient information (primary sources) of the old building and follow the original one to prevent the defacement.
- 7) Site survey must be done before starting the renovation project.

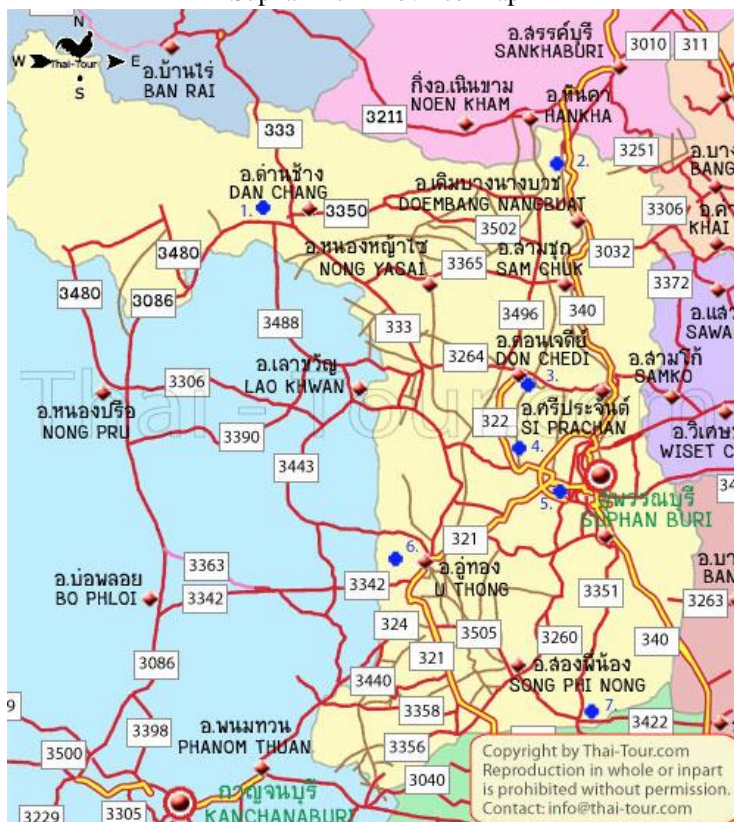
Figure 1

Before and after Renovation work of Architectural Heritage in Thai Temples.



Figure 2

Suphan Buri Province Map





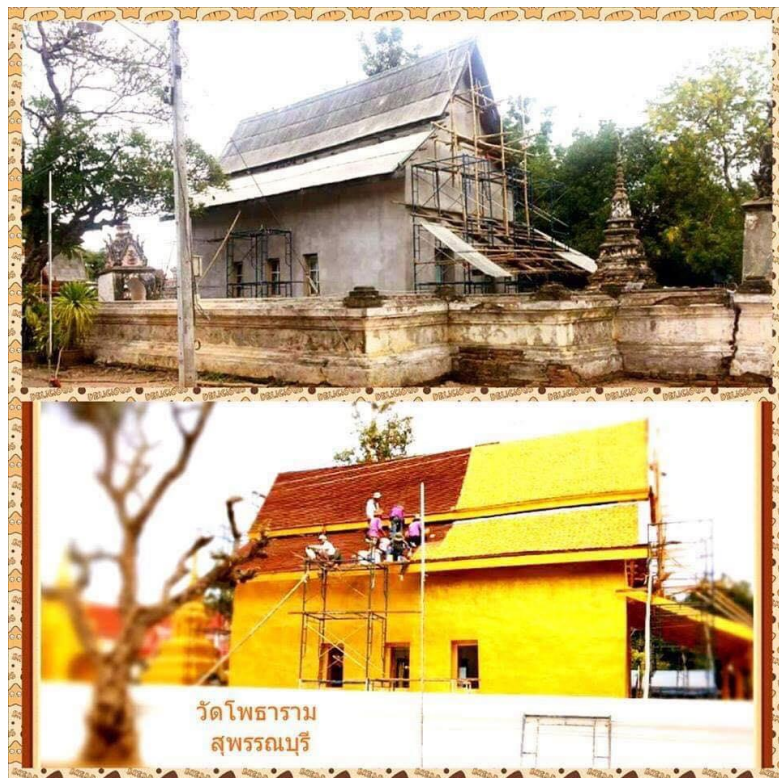
**Figure 3**

The original old building in Wat Phocharam, Suphan Buri Province before renovation



**Figure 4**

Before and after Renovation work of Architectural Heritage in Wat Phocharam, Suphan Buri



**Figure 5**

Unauthorized painting of ancient buildings and national treasures violates the law after Complete the renovation works.



### **CONCLUSION**

The care of Buddhist monasteries in Thailand can conflict with international approaches. Throughout Thai history, Buddhist monasteries have been repaired and restored as an act of piety. Interventions often involve the removing of original elements and replacing them with new ones, or the demolition of a structure and rebuilding without regard for its historical or archaeological values. The attitude of the Thai towards monastic architecture is based on Buddhist belief. It can be concluded that material representation of the fabric is not considered as important as the continuity and identity of the spirit of the place. It is, therefore, necessary to identify the spirit or the essence of Buddhist architecture if traditional repair and restoration are to be continued in order that the essence can be maintained or re-created.

The influence perceptions which have had a high impact to Traditional Thai Architecture are eye contact, ear contact and body contact. Local traditions in each region of Thailand produce different classical Thai architectural styles but the same common character. Details can be classified as follows:

Traditional or classical Thai architecture is an example of the perfect integration of the spiritual, human needs, traditional technology, social organization and religion. Thai people not only created their unique architecture but also created the rich culture of Thai lifestyle in areas such as dress, music, and food. Those combinations can be well explained as a sentiment unique to Southeast Asia. Globalization has created rapid change. At every single minute, many new technologies or inventions occur. These affect lifestyle, culture and also architecture. What kind of architecture will be appropriate to contemporary needs beyond ancient Thai discovery? Questions relevant to this would be

To renovate the old buildings in Thai Temple, the renovator must strictly follow the regulations and laws to prevent the defacement in Architectural Heritage and to promote the sustainable tourism of Thai Nation.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for invaluable help throughout this research.

### **REFERENCES**

- [1] Buranasomphob, Trungjai. 1985. "Living Thai in Contemporary House", *House Magazine*  
Bangkok: National Housing Authority
- [2] Buranasomphob, Trungjai. 1978. Design Criteria for Tropical Architecture in Thailand 3rd ed.  
Bangkok: Numaugorn Press.

- [3] Chongchairuk, Ruethai. 1998. *The Thai House: History and Evolution*. Bangkok: *River Books*
- Moore, Elizabeth., Stott, Philip., and Sukhasvasti, Suriyavudh. 1998. *Ancient Capitals o Thailand*. Bangkok: *River Books*.
- [4] Panichpant, Vithi. 1998. *Lanna Thai: Art and Design of the Northern Kingdom*. Bangkok *River Books*.
- [5] Patton, Michael, Quinn. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park: *Sage Publications*.
- [6] Panin, Ornsiri. 1997. *The Central Region Vernacular Architecture: The Final Reports of the International Conference on Conservation and Revitalization of VernacularArchitecture 13-15 May: 37-58*. Bangkok.
- [7] Panin, Ornsiri. 1996. *Culture and Architecture: the Final Report of the International Seminar.Culture of the Southeast Asia-Similarities in their Ways of Living 26-28 June: 16-26*. The Royal River Hotel, Bangkok, held by the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Education,Office of the Priminister.