



Values and Potentials of Living Heritage Sites: Case Studies of Buddhist Stupa in Thailand for Listing as UNESCO World Heritage Sites

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Abstract

Thailand has various tourist attractions with both natural and cultural heritage sites, along with five properties on the World Heritage List. In order to explore the nomination strategies to nominate properties to UNESCO's World Heritage List, this case study focuses on four Buddhist stupas in four eminent cases in four regions of Thailand which are registered as historic sites by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand: 1. Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan in Lamphun Province; 2. Wat Phra That Phanom Woramahawihan in Nakhon Phanom Province; 3. Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan in Nakhon Pathom Province; and 4. Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. This study applies a combination of qualitative methods in assessing cultural heritage significance, authenticity, and integrity of the sites, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

The objectives of this research are: 1) To contribute to the body of knowledge of cultural heritage significance of the Buddhist stupas in Thailand, 2) To analyze the potential significance of cultural heritage proposed to join the World Heritage List, and 3) To identify strategies to control, manage and deal with any threats for nomination to the World Heritage List effectively and appropriately. Research reveals that these Buddhist stupas have potential to be nominated as a serial nomination of cultural heritage on the World Heritage List because of cultural values for national and international levels such as historical value, aesthetic value, social value, spiritual value and the enduring respect of Thai Buddhists to Buddhism through cultural heritage practices and traditions over time. The results of this paper also offer recommendations of a new strategy for Thailand in the process of nomination.

Introduction

Many state parties¹ have tried to nominate their properties to the World Heritage List in order to make potential benefits from World Heritage status, such as providing an opportunity for the state and for the local

community to celebrate the property as one of the most important natural and cultural places on Earth. Thailand has various tourist attractions with both natural and

¹ 'State parties' are countries which have adhered to the World Heritage Convention. They thereby agree to identify and nominate properties on their national territory to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, n.d.).

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cultural heritage sites as well as five properties in the World Heritage List.

The present study focuses on four Buddhist stupas which are: 1. Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan in Lamphun Province; 2. Wat Phra That Phanom Woramahawihan in Nakhon Phanom Province; 3. Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan in Nakhon Pathom Province; and 4. Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. The reasons why these 4 stupas were selected are: 1) They are all represented in cultural heritage sites registered by the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture of Thailand; 2) They are all related to intangible cultural heritage of four other eminent cases in four regions: Northeast, North, South, and Central Thailand; and 3) They are all living stupas where the community still continue their cultural activities. Buddhist monuments are scattered throughout Thailand, varying by age and arts, but these 4 stupas are also notably included in the book Chom Chedi ('Admire Stupas' in Thai) published by the country's (Fine Arts Department, 2000).

The study's interest is *cultural heritage values*; ultimately, however, values can only be understood in terms of cultural significance. Accordingly, the differences manifested in these four different sites and their practices will be especially interesting for cultural heritage values. This study also outlines opportunities and strategies related to their significance, proposing them onto the Tentative List of the World Heritage List, as well as dealing with associated threats effectively and appropriately via a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

The World Heritage List includes 1,121 properties forming part of the cultural and natural heritage which is considered as containing 'Outstanding Universal Value' by the World Heritage Committee. These include 869 cultural, 213 natural and 39 mixed properties in 167 state parties, and there are 1,720 sites from 178 state parties in the tentative lists in 2019.

International interest in World Heritage sites often provides a stimulus for international cooperation and joint efforts to ensure the protection of the property (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, & IUCN, 2011). Being on the World Heritage List is an opportunity for every country, and Thailand is one of the state parties aiming to nominate potential properties to obtain such opportunities of long-term protection, conservation and management of the property. Thailand's seven sites on the Tentative List include: the Kaeng Krachan Forest

Complex in Phimai; the ensemble of Phanom Rung, Muang Tam and Plai Bat Sanctuaries; Phuphrabat Historical Park; Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan in Nakhon Si Thammarat; Phra That Phanom, its related historic buildings and associated landscape; the ancient town of Si Thep; and the monuments, sites and cultural landscape of Chiang Mai, capital of Lanna. The Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex has been nominated as natural heritage. Nominated properties of cultural heritage in tentative lists of Thailand are related to Buddhism and represent the respect of living Buddhists along with their beliefs of the past.

Thailand is situated in the heart of the Southeast Asia, sharing borders with the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to the north, Cambodia to the east, Myanmar and the Indian Ocean to the west, and Malaysia to the south. Buddhism is the national religion and the professed faith of 95 percent of the population. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and others are embraced by the rest of the population (Board, 2000).

According to the processes of nomination and inscription of properties on the World Heritage List at the core of the World Heritage Convention, state parties have a critical responsibility to the Convention. These responsibilities cover three key areas: preparation of Tentative Lists, preparation of nominations, and effective management of properties that are inscribed to protect, conserve and manage their Outstanding Universal Value ('OUV' in abbreviated form) (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, & IUCN, 2011). Thailand already has several cultural heritage properties with both 'Living Cultural' properties and 'Relic Cultural' properties with the potential to nominate to World Heritage status, however, the following key points regarding nomination and inscription of properties on the World Heritage List should be focused on to identify potential and strategies:

Kirdsiri, Muangyai, & Jitsuthiyani (2013) found that there are several cultural heritage sites that contain high multidimensional value for the communities where they are located. However, since all cultural heritage sites not only fragment in various and different locations but most are also limited in size, the direction to propose their OUV in a way that shows their 'Shared Values' can be a guideline for proposing them to the World Heritage Lists as a 'serial nomination' and accordingly their existing potential and various kinds of value will be run together, enhancing their more obvious OUV.

Furthermore, a serial nomination for the inscription of the World Heritage List will be appropriate due to the

properties being located in different areas, although with some connection, such as their same historical-cultural group, same type of property which is characteristic of the geographical zone, or same geological, geomorphological formation, or same biogeographic province which contains the series with significance (UNESCO, n, d). According to the process of nomination and inscription of properties, many state parties therefore have succeeded to list their serial properties in the World Heritage List, with the following cases as examples:

According to UNESCO (2011), the Longobards in Italy, Places of Power (568–774 A.D.) are included on the World Heritage List. These comprise seven groups of important buildings (including fortresses, churches, and monasteries) throughout the Italian Peninsula. They demonstrate the achievement of Germanic migration from northern Europe and development of their own culture in Italy in the 6th to 8th centuries.

Another example in the World Heritage List are Bursa and Cumalıkızık. These are the Birth of the Ottoman Empire, which is a serial nomination of eight component sites in the city of Bursa and the nearby village of Cumalıkızık, in the southern Marmara region of Turkey. The site reveals the establishment of an urban and rural system in the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century which represents the key functions of the social and economic structure of the new capital (UNESCO, 2014).

As mentioned previously, a comparative analysis and serial nomination may be used to apply for encouraging cultural heritage sites that share the same values, such as their historical-cultural group. This research focuses on the cultural heritage of four Buddhist stupas in four regions in Thailand where Phramahathat (The Great Stupa) and Phrathat (The Stupa) are located and their regional representative to identify their significance as they have been important sacred monuments in the past. Aksrondit (2002) states the role and symbolism of stupas in Southeast Asia that have been invented for symbolic functions based on the concept from Sri Lankan Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism is the majority of practice of Buddhists in Thailand, and Theravada derives from the conservative school of early Indian Hinayana. This tradition, as codified in ancient Sri Lanka, is still being practiced in Burma, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia.

Thailand has several stupas which expanded in every region of the country. These stupas contain key significance that relate to ongoing social interaction with

the sites. Furthermore, the same or reproduced form of chedi (the Thai word for Thai stupas) was based on or imitated from Phra Borommathat Chedi, and can be found in many important chedis across many regions in Thailand (Chuvicien, 2012). This may be an example of a series related to chedi in other regions where culture becomes significant. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge of cultural heritage significance related to Buddhist stupas in four regions where Phra Mahathat (The Great Stupa) and Phra That (The Stupa) are located.

Objectives

1. To contribute to the body of knowledge of cultural heritage significance of the Buddhist stupas in Thailand
2. To analyze the potential significance of cultural heritage proposed to join the World Heritage List
3. To identify strategies to control, manage and deal with any threats for nomination to the World Heritage List effectively and appropriately

Conceptual framework

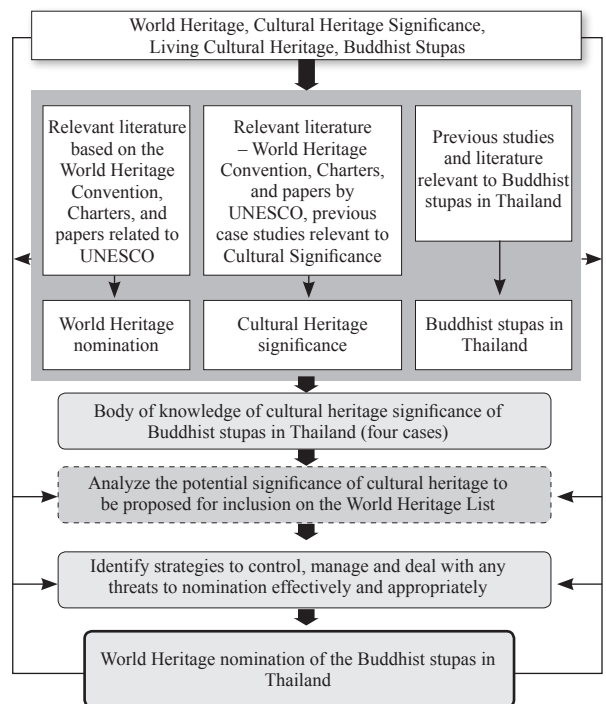


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Research methodology

The research question is ‘Do the Buddhist stupas in Thailand have potential to be nominated in the World Heritage List, and how to deal with any potential threats appropriately?’ The research methods are based on a qualitative method in applying assessment of cultural heritage significance, authenticity, and integrity of the sites by reviewing heritage charters, previous research literature relevant to World Cultural Heritage, World Heritage papers by UNESCO, as well as recommendations of advisory bodies related to evaluation of world cultural heritage. In order to find out the nomination strategies to nominate properties to the World Heritage List, this case study is focused on four Buddhist stupas in four eminent cases in four regions of Thailand: the Northeast, North, South, and Central Thailand, which are registered as a historic site by the Fine Arts Department. Research dealt with data collection procedures, which covers a literature review of secondary data in the UNESCO website, public libraries and local authorities.

A documentary analysis was employed to examine secondary information such as history records, structure plans, visions and regulations, policies, issues, statistics and trends of development of World Heritage Sites. The documentary analysis is derived from statements and descriptions that were gathered from government publications, local articles, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Charters, related reports, journals and previous research of the case study sites. The supplementary information includes internet sources related to the conservation and legislation of World Heritage Sites and associated case studies. Site visual observations have been adopted as a tool to describe and explain the historic characteristics of the Buddhist stupas, any containing relics, and identifies the elements of character and how the history of the site is expressed in its plans and topography, archaeological potential areas and in its architectural and landscape character.

Moreover, to analyze the potential significance of cultural heritage proposed for the World Heritage List and to identify strategies, SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is employed as a tool to assess the current situation, and both internal and external dimensions which includes strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Buddhist stupas. SWOT analysis is a strategic planning framework used in evaluation, with internal dimensions including organizational factors and external dimensions including environmental factors (Gürel, 2017). ‘Strengths’ is an

internal factor of the property that will be an advantage to nominate the property, whereas ‘weakness’ is a disadvantage and could be a difficulty to deal with. Ideally, it should include a plan for improvement as well as a management plan. ‘Opportunities’ is an advantage from an external factor where the property can gain benefits of protection as well as nomination. Finally, ‘threats’ is an external factor that can be an obstacle for the property to gain nomination.

Both primary and secondary sources were data sources; primary sources are observation and data collection to understand the current situation such as management and activities of the site; secondary sources are derived from the National Library and National Archives of Thailand, the local libraries, internet websites, and relevant documents by UNESCO which focus on world heritage, cultural heritage significance, living cultural heritage, and Buddhist stupas.

Results

The research results are divided into two parts:

1. The body of knowledge of cultural heritage significance of the four Buddhist stupas in Thailand

Cultural heritage significance of the Buddhist stupas in Thailand have several values for national and international levels. All of the four sites have historical value, aesthetic value, social value, and spiritual value.

1.1 Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan in Lamphun Province is a historic site that reflects both tangible and intangible heritage, with ancient building techniques, methods, design, materials, and local wisdom of Lanna styles in Thailand. The principal stupa at Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan was built to house the hair of the Buddha and the present compound, founded by Hariphunchai King Athitayarai, dates from B.E. 1440 (Suthitham, 2010). The layout and setting of the cultural heritage sites reflect the concepts and traditions of ancient or local people, demonstrating their use of the land and construction methods. It represents an association between history, traditional beliefs, and the ways of life of people. Hariphunchai is the northernmost area where Buddhism influence from Lavo is demonstrated through Chamma Devi Princess, a type of area and architectural style. It was also a Buddhism center of the area in the past. *Song Nam Phra That* or *Pad Peng* traditional ceremony is an annual festival at Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan in order to pay respects to the Buddha on Visakha Puja Day, a day to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and death

of the Buddha.

1.2 Wat Phra That Phanom Woramahawihan, its related historic buildings and associated landscape (on the Tentative List since February 2017), is situated in Nakhon Phanom Province in the northeastern part of Thailand, west of the Mekong River. It was registered as an ancient monument by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand for conservation and protection under the *Ancient Monuments Act* in 1935 (Fine Arts Department, 2000). Wat Phra That Phanom has the most ancient Buddhist stupa in the northeast of Thailand and in the West of Mekong River basin. It contains the Buddha's breastbone relics and was first constructed as a square brick structure with intricate carvings reminiscent of the Cham or ancient Khmer style sanctuary (Saisingha, 2012). In August 1975, the high and top-heavy stupa, seated on the ancient crumbling brick base, collapsed in a week-long rainstorm. The 1975-1979 restoration was conducted under the supervision of the Prime Minister of Thailand with the full blessing of His Majesty King Rama IX, as well as the donations of Thai Buddhists. In addition, it is a historic site that reflects the layout and setting of the cultural heritage sites of the concepts and traditions of ancient or local people, representing an association between history, traditions, beliefs and ways of life of people.

1.3 Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan in Nakhon Pathom Province (on the Tentative list of Thailand since 2018) shows historical evidence from the Dvaravati period or about a thousand years ago as the first Buddhist settlement in Thailand. The most significant event in the current Rattanakosin era emphasizes the historical value of Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan, the largest stupa built in the reign of King Rama IV. It has played ongoing important roles involving Buddhist activities to this day, including worshipping the Buddha's relics and Phra Ruang Rojanarit (a large standing Buddha), Buddhist daily activities, and Buddhist Holy Day activities (Makhapucha Day, Visakha Puja Day, Asalha Puja Day, Buddhist Lent Day, End of Buddhist Lent).

1.4 Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province (on the Tentative List since August 2012) is located in the town center of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in southern Thailand, where there is an ancient town situated on the main sand berm. It was registered as a historic site by the Fine Arts Department, and in 2010, the Conservation and Development of Rattanakosin and the Old Town Committee (2001)

(Announcement of Nakhon Si Thammarat Old Town, B.E.2553) encouraged Nakhon Si Thammarat Old Town as a cultural heritage area that inherited great long-term cultural prosperity of the nation. It typically describes history classified into three periods: 11th Buddhist Century in the legend of Phra Borommathat Muang Nakhon Si Thammarat, 14th-15th Buddhist Century with the stupa built in the Srivijaya period, and 18th Buddhist Century influenced by Ceylon in the Polonnaruwa period, where the second-most ancient center in modern-day Sri Lanka originated.

2. The potential significance of cultural heritage characteristics to be proposed for the World Heritage List

Table 1 SWOT Analysis of four Buddhist stupas in Thailand to nominate as World Cultural Heritage

SWOT Analysis of four Buddhist stupas in Thailand to nominate as World Cultural Heritage	
1. Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan (Lamphun Province)	
Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Properties are in the ancient town, and they have been registered by the Fine Arts Department and conserved by stakeholders. 2. Master of Lanna style stupa reflected into the neighboring area. 3. Record of restoration is clear.
Weakness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The restoration might have an effect on OUV of the site (Criteria i). 2. The growth of the city might be frozen from the nomination to become part of the World Heritage List.
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thailand has the National Commission for UNESCO² to support the site for nomination.
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many Buddhist sites on the Tentative List are increasing, and also the World Heritage List has the same OUV criteria for the properties. It may be hard to add a new one to the list in case of being a similar property.
2. Wat Phra That Phanom Woramahawihan (Nakhon Phanom Province)	
Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Living cultural heritage site with Buddhists in the area. 2. A record of donations for continuing restorations has been beneficial to identify the living heritage site. 3. Criterion (vi) is a possibility to nominate as well as the evidence of archaeology.
Weakness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ancient stupa collapsed in B.E.2518 from various factors. Architectural styles have been changing since from restorations. 2. The changing landscape of Wat Phra That Phanom at present might impact on the OUV of the site (Criteria i). The local community has built and adapted the area around the temple.
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thailand has the National Commission for UNESCO to support the site for nomination. 2. Buddhist activities as intangible heritage are an important part to encourage the site to maintain it in good condition.
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Operation Guidelines are concerned with authenticity, so to nominate with Criterion (i) might be an obstacle, as this site has changed and reconstructed over time, including due to natural disaster.

² The Thailand National Commission for UNESCO consists of key Thai government ministers and experts with the responsibility to drive implementation of the *Convention concerning the Protection of World Heritage (1972)*

Table 1 Continue

3. Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan (Nakhon Pathom Province)	
Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The property is always in good condition because it was registered by the Fine Arts Department and conserved by stakeholders. 2. It illustrates continuing development of a Buddhist stupa from the Dvaravati period to the current Rattanakosin period. 3. Original heritage site from the reign of King Rama IV with Outstanding Universal Value.
Weakness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phra Pathom Chedi is located in the central of Nakhon Pathom Province, so the local community may have objections to the nomination of this site. The growth of the city might be limited from the regulations of World Heritage status.
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thailand has the National Commission for UNESCO to support the site for nomination. 2. Study the community's concerns and participation of the area to increase understanding of the site by the local people.
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding of local people and stakeholders might consume a long time for the nomination progress.
4. Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan (Nakhon Si Thammarat Province)	
Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The property is always in good condition because it was registered by the Fine Arts Department and conserved by stakeholders. 2. Living Cultural Heritage site since the early 13th century CE as the center of Buddhism in the southern part of Thailand. 3. The long history of Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan is significant, as well as the evidence of archaeology. 4. The record for Criterion (vi) indicates possibility to nominate, with primary (historical photos, religious context, etc.) and secondary sources (analysis of continuity use, histories and commentaries, etc.) 5. The property has a similar style with the original stupa in Sanchi Stupa, India.
Weakness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a living site, restoration occurs. This may affect Criteria (i) in OUV because of the application of mixing cultures. Conservation efforts of each period brought changes to the plan and different architectural styles. 2. To clarify the buffer zone and conservation may take a long time to clear.
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buddhists have always paid respects to the stupa and they have been donating funds to maintain the site. 2. Thailand has the National Commission for UNESCO to support the site for nomination. 3. The site earned professional stakeholders in nomination to be in the World Heritage list. 4. Buddhist activities as an example of intangible heritage are an important part to encourage maintenance of the site in good condition.
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The location is situated in the old town area and has community, private and public uses. To nominate the property, a buffer zone needs to be identified, and this may affect the local community. 2. Many tentative lists from all state parties is increasing as well as Buddhist sites. As seen from the comparative analysis of Cultural Heritage nomination related to Buddhist sites in Asia, there are a lot of stupas listed for nomination. Once the World Heritage List has a similar property, it is hard to add a new property with similar characteristics.

Discussion

According to Articles 1 and 2 in the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972) heritage is defined for the purpose of the Convention as 'Cultural Heritage'

which are *monuments, groups of buildings, and sites*; if the cultural property meets one or more of the following criteria, it can be nominated properties in the World Heritage Lists. Those criteria are:

(i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

(ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

(iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

(iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

(v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

(vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).

In addition, the *Operational Guidelines for Implementation* specified that all properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List shall satisfy the conditions of integrity and authenticity.

In terms of World Cultural Heritage nomination strategies, cultural heritage has significance for people around the world, it is inheritance from ancestors which entails a uniqueness for its descendants. World Heritage Sites create national pride and contributes possible benefits and income as well as opportunities to people in that country. The symbol of World Heritage status attracts state parties to encourage their properties to be listed in the World Heritage List, and Thailand is no different. Furthermore, other main ideas from World Heritage nomination concerns the conservation of cultural heritage value that is shown in various relevant literature as the first idea of UNESCO after WWII – to help, to encourage, to assist World Heritage sites in order to safeguard its heritage.

The research results offer opportunities and strategies related to cultural heritage significance in order to encourage them to join the Tentative List for the World Heritage List, as well as the potential to deal with any threats effectively and appropriately and additional research recommendations.

The following summary results from the research are described as follows:

Cultural heritage significance of the Buddhist stupas in Thailand has several values for national and international levels. Research reveals that the World Heritage nomination of the Buddhist stupas in Thailand have the potential to be nominated as a serial nomination of cultural heritage because of cultural values for national and international levels such as historical value, aesthetic value, social value, spiritual value, and the enduring respect of Thai Buddhists to Buddhism through cultural heritage practices and traditions. Criteria (v) can be encouraged by the continuing of Buddhism in Thailand which concerns intangible heritage.

To deal with threats, a SWOT analysis of Buddhist stupas in Thailand for nomination as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites was applied for further understanding:

Strengths of Buddhist stupas in Thailand for nomination as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites are that: the Buddhist activities at the site are very important to encourage the conservation of tangible heritage, as religions or belief systems are the core of life, any form of living heritage is inseparable from the framework of the religion or the belief system of its society (ICCROM, 2003). Both social and spiritual values are directly concerned with intangible heritage in the spiritual identity, or the traditional knowledge, art and practices of a cultural group. Spiritual value may also be reflected in the intensity of aesthetic and emotional responses or community associations and be expressed through cultural practices and related places. This follows Criteria (v) and (vi) of the World Heritage requirements.

Weakness

To nominate the properties to the Tentative List, all heritage properties includes monuments, groups of buildings, and sites are necessary to identify outstanding universal value which contain at least one criteria. These are directly affected to clarify both authenticity and integrity of living heritage sites. There are no surviving sites in a hundred years, if they are not restored and rebuilt because people always use it in daily life. Moreover,

natural disaster has also affected some of the properties, as we can see from the case of Wat Phra That Phanom.

Threats

In nominating the four Buddhist stupas in Thailand as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, the major threats are concerned with the criteria for authenticity and integrity of properties, as they have been rebuilt and restored across various time periods, with changes to the structure and architecture. This situation might be against the criteria. Even though understanding of local people and other stakeholders might consume a long time for the nomination to progress, the optimal solution in each stage needs to be verified before moving onto further steps.

Opportunities

According to the cultural heritage significance of Buddhist stupas in Thailand, it demonstrates the origins of Buddhism in Thailand, and the importance of Buddhism for Thais, which continues to this day. Thailand is the second-highest ranking among 10 countries in Asia with the most Buddhists in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2015) and there are 64 million Buddhists or 94.6 percent of the population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). Thailand is not the origin of Buddhism however, but this particular lineage and spread of Buddhism in Thailand contains a long history throughout the country until the present day.

In further exploring Criteria (v) and (vi) for these four sites in Thailand:

Criteria (v): The sites have existed for a very long time and demonstrate particular ideas and manifestations of Buddhism.

Criteria (vi): Buddhism from India to Southeast Asia was spread from point to point, and these locations are often noted along rivers.

The regular rebuilding of stupas occur many times across various styles. However, Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan, Wat Phra That Phanom Woramahawihan, Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan, and Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan are the master models in different periods of time by Buddhists and indicate their beliefs, demonstrated by architectural heritage that appeared within Thailand, as well as through the donations from Buddhists, who have never ignored to rebuild the stupas across the ages.

There are various cultural heritage properties in Thailand pending to nominate onto the World Heritage List. To differentiate from other countries, the number

of Buddhists is a significant factor to Thailand, to identify and track the origins of Buddhism in Thailand and to connect the story and the way that Thais have maintained Buddhism. This is continuing to record history by the evidence from the past, such as documents and other objects.

Table 2 illustrates case studies against recommended criteria

NO.	Name of Property	Status	Year	Property Type	Intangible Heritage	Tangible Heritage	Criteria						
							(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	
1	Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan, Nakhon Si Thammarat	Tentative List	2012	Cultural	Hae Pha Khuen That Festival	Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan main stupa	✓	✓					✓
2	Phra That Phanom, its related historic buildings and associated landscape	Tentative List	2017	Cultural	Phra That Phanom Festival	Phra That Phanom main stupa	✓	✓					✓
3	Phra Pathom Chedi, Nakorn Pathom Province	Tentative List of Thailand	-	Cultural	Phra Pathommachedi Festival	Phra Pathom Chedi main stupa, Kanthararat, (Buddha image from Dvaravati period)		●				●	●
4	Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan	-	-	Cultural	Song Nam Phra That Hariphunchai Festival	Hariphunchai main stupa, Suwan Chedi (Bagan and Polanauwa style)		●				●	●

(Legend: ● recommended and ✓ the criteria chosen in Tentative List information of the state party in UNESCO World Heritage Sites)

Moreover, due to the number of properties with potential to nominate, the process of nomination is very important to make a new strategy for Thailand:

- Establishment of a Tentative List Working Group of Thailand is necessary to find cultural heritage sites that are ready to nominate
- To review the heritage sites in the Tentative List of Thailand
- To evaluate the site with prompt effective management of properties to protect, conserve and manage.

All four Buddhist stupas in Thailand presented in this paper - Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Woramahawihan in Lamphun Province, Phra That Phanom, its related historic buildings and associated landscape in Nakhon Phanom Province, Wat Phra Pathommachedi Ratcha Woramahawihan in Nakhon Pathom Province, Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province-are protected and managed in accordance with the *Ancient Monuments Act* by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand and ordinances on cultural heritage protection enacted by the provincial governments where they are located. Therefore, development around the temples is strictly controlled, and there is little chance of the

temples being exposed to potential threats or negative environmental factors due to activities by outsiders. All four temples have continuously conducted ceremonies and monastic practices based on the Buddhist faith but also embraced diverse Buddhist beliefs. At the temples, monks faithfully carry on the tradition of meditation practice and this is also a part of spiritual practices.

Suggestions

1. This study has contributed towards the body of knowledge about the living heritage of four Buddhist stupas in Thailand for nomination as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites. Additional research in future could explore the spread of stupas in Thailand to further understand Buddhist stupas from its origin, studying both living and relic sites of stupas in Thailand and neighboring countries will clarify further the fuller body of knowledge linking history by timeline from site to site at the beginning of Buddhism in Thailand sustained until the present day.

2. The preparing for nomination process is the first important step to join the UNESCO World Heritage List, cooperating with all stakeholders such as private and public sectors, non-profit organizations, and local communities is necessary to continue the research to encourage sustainable development of all heritage sites, not only nominated properties but also other heritage properties. An appropriate management plan of heritage sites, known as the five 'C's from paragraph 26 in the Operational Guidelines will add to the effective management of properties. Strategic objectives are:

1. Strengthen the credibility of the World Heritage List;

2. Ensure the effective conservation of World Heritage properties; 3. Promote the development of effective capacity-building in state parties; 4. Increase public awareness, involvement and support for world heritage through communication; 5. Enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. These should be actioned in parallel with three keys of the nomination process: preparation of the Tentative Lists, preparation of nominations, and effective management of properties that are inscribed to protect, conserve and manage their Outstanding Universal Value.

3. In terms of community involvement, local people must participate in all processes of listing sites as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, especially in the education process. People should be educated and understand the effects of listing sites as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The consequence of this process is that local communities can understand how they can conserve, inherit and develop their value in cultural heritage. Afterwards, local people can decide together whether they need continuing support from UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In order to motivate sustainable development of their values on cultural heritage, further research about the study of cultural landscapes for community procedures for the purpose of educating the community to understand the cultural landscape should be done (Vessoontorntep & Dankittikul, 2014).

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