

# Cultural Tourism Management Model In The Case Of Ai Khai Wat Chedi. Chalong Subdistrict, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

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## Abstract

Cultural tourism is an exchange of cultures, traditions and beliefs, aims to study the situation of cultural tourism management, development of cultural tourism management model and assess cultural tourism management model by research and development (R&D). The research area was Wat Chedi, located at Village No. 7, Chalong Subdistrict, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. The research was conducted into 3 phases: Phase 1; studied the situation of cultural tourism management of Ai Khai Wat Chedi, Phase 2; drafted and developed cultural tourism management model and Phase 3; assessed innovation with OKR (Objective and Key Results) technique.

The results showed that 1) temples and people in the community cooperated in tourism management 2) cultural tourism management in 3 eras: the first era; abandoned temple era (in the past) people believed in Ai Khai, traditions and way of life, the second era; revival era, people brought beliefs, traditions and ways of life to revitalize temples and the last era; development era, people applied beliefs, faith and sacredness to develop temple infrastructure and restore traditional culture, 3) innovation assessment found that there was a process of managing with belief, faith and sacredness including culture and traditions of each era.

**Keywords:** Cultural tourism management, Ai Khai Wat Chedi, Tourism management in 3 Eras

## Introduction

The tourism industry plays an important role in the economic development of Thailand. The government, therefore, placed importance on competitiveness enhancement steal market share of the world tourism market by formulating marketing strategy to attract more tourists from around the world to travel in the country. Tourism is a part of economic development; therefore, the National Tourism Policy Committee has prepared the Twelfth National Tourism Development Plan (2017-2021) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2015),

which conform to the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021). At present, Thailand's tourism industry generates the main income in the service business and generates enormous economic growth for the country.

Therefore, cultural tourism is a product that generates income for various countries. The preservation trend of local culture is the most obvious positive which caused by the growth of cultural tourism that gives priority to conservation and building awareness of local communities, reviving lost traditions, preserving ancient monuments, including

developing handicrafts that all of which encourage local people to proud of oneself culture and have attentiveness to conserve and develop of cultural heritage by working together as one.

Cultural Tourism in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province: the information from Tourism and Sports Office, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, found that the number of tourists in Nakhon Si Thammarat province has increased every year. In 2016, there were 3,565,814 tourists, increased 3.82% from 2015 of which 97.71% were Thai tourists and 2.29% were foreign tourists, resulting in tourism revenue in 2016 amounting to 14,465 million baht, increased 6.07% from 2015. The average cost per tourist per day was 2,027 baht. In the past year, the province has tried to create an incentive for more tourists to visit continuously. By the provincial development plan 2018-2021 focuses on the development of a city to change to the destination of cultural tourism and source of learning, study culture.

Ai Khai Wat Chedi is located at Village No. 7, Chalong Subdistrict, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, used to be an abandoned temple for more than 1,000 years. At present, only an old abandoned Chedi left in the area of Buddhist temple until around 1957, Wat Chedi was renovated, having monks stay permanent, being a place of ministering for villagers in the area and nearby and it is enshrined Buddha image named "Pho Than Chao Wat", an old Buddha image that has been around since the time it was an abandoned temple. Ai Khai Wat Chedi or Ta Khai Wat Chedi is a wood carving in the shape of a child, aged about 9-10 years old, located at a pavilion in Wat Chedi, whom the villagers believe to be a sacred spirit living this Wat, be respected and worshiped by villagers from neighborhoods near the temple to the provinces, from their faith to believed that "entertains requests for help and blesses those who worship him", especially in matters of fortune and trade favoring (Khamrop

Koetmeesap, 2013; Mohamed & Patwary, 2020).

Each day, people will come to the temple to pray for blessing from Ai Khai. Those people have beliefs and faith in Ai Khai on the matter of "entertains requests for help and blesses those who worship him". It consists of many groups of people, such as villagers who pray for lost things and want it back, businessmen who pray for successful in business, people who pray for getting a good job or become a civil servant upon graduation, including gamblers who pray for having luck in gambling and people who ask Ai Khai to protect from dangers. But everyone, when entering the temple grounds, will not forget the matter of wishing them to win underground lottery and lottery. As you can see, there are a lot of lottery shop lined up inside the temple grounds because when they pray for blessing from Ai Khai so they expect to be lottery winners. People from both in and outside the area, people from other provinces and even foreigners who come to the temple to pray for blessing or asking something that they want to get. When those people received thing as requested, they will come to present offerings promised. Which the offerings thing to Ai Khai are chicken stucco, toys, military uniforms, slingshots, flavored drinks (red color), moon cake, long drum dancing troupes that are available in the temple grounds, Manora and firecrackers. Worshippers believe if use more things for offering repays, then will receive more successful, for example, offering things are millions of firecrackers, 2-3 meters tall glass chicken or chicken stucco, therefore, there is a designated area for lighting firecrackers which you can see firecracker fragments piled high into a small hill, indicates the belief and faith towards Ai Khai and shows the fulfillments of those who pray for blessing from Ai Khai. The tradition that Wat Chedi performs every year is Songkran Festival on 13-17 April of every year by holding a merit event which the temple committee will bring Ai Khai to be enshrined in the pavilion for the

ceremony. People watering the Buddha image and bathing Ai Khai, pray for blessing with belief and faith in Ai Khai Dek Wat Chedi. From belief and faith of people, causing each day a lot of people or tourists will travel to Ai Khai Wat Chedi, pray for blessing or asking what they want, resulting in creating career, income generation, and make the community's economy better. From the above phenomenon, the researcher asked a question "How does Ai Khai Wat Chedi have cultural tourism management model?", therefore, performed in-depth interview and held group discussion with 5 sample group who have relationship with Ai Khai Wat Chedi, namely temple committee/people in the community around the temple, accommodation providers, restaurants, shop sells offerings/offering repays and groups tour/tourists, which will indicates the cultural tourism management model of Ai Khai Wat Chedi according to beliefs and various contexts.

From the situation mentioned above, therefore, the researcher was interested in doing research on cultural tourism management model Ai Khai Wat Chedi to study cultural tourism management, to develop cultural tourism management model and to assess and disseminate cultural tourism management model Ai Khai Wat Chedi which they are importance that interrelated and should be given importance to the further development of cultural tourism.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is research and development (R&D), emphasizing participatory operational research. The researchers, informants, and research driving team will jointly plan a research strategy for action research, bringing the direct experience from people who drive a research to create timeline on a research action by taking the knowledge from the operation to develop periodically with spiral model technique, verify data with triangulation and focus group discussion together with relevant experts (Punya Lertgrai, Lunjakon Nillkan

2016), also bring experiences in tourism management and culture to create innovation of cultural tourism management model to promote cultural tourism.

1. Informants jointly drive research; informants are stakeholders who have a relationship with Ai Khai Wat Chedi in all 5 aspects, namely temple committee/people in the community around temple, accommodation providers, restaurants, shop sells offerings/offering repays and groups tour/tourists in Chalong Subdistrict, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, who have learned and developed the existing tourism resources by lesson learned, developed and built on cultural tourism management.

2. Determine the study group with purposive sampling technique. The researcher selected from stakeholders and people who have relationship with Ai Khai Wat Chedi. Cultural tourism management is considered a method that meets the research purposes. There were 21 informants who can provide appropriate information to manage group discussion (The Thailand Research Fund, 2006; Khan et al., 2022; Suleman et al., 2021) and those 21 informants jointly drive research. It is a main group in research and development to create innovations with meetings to take lessons learned and develop periodically with academics and experts in tourism and culture to brainstorm ideas and action plans including participating in the assessment of phenomena from research, verify with triangulation until gaining knowledge to do cultural tourism management model.

3. Operation data analysis: the extraction of management model by content analysis to be used as the basis for drafting cultural tourism management model, which will be considered together with data analysis results according to problems and solutions in cultural tourism management. Innovation model will be assessed in accordance with OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and

disseminated in cultural tourism area, Ai Khai Wat Chedi, and then returned to the focus group analysis and synthesis to summarize and process the research conducting.

## Conclusion

### Situation of cultural tourism management Ai Khai Wat Chedi

According to focus group, Wat Chedi is considered a spiritual anchor on dispelling the bad luck, unfortunate thing and sickness, wishing for fortune, win gambling, it is regarded as a place where people believe that when they pray for blessing, they get the fulfillment. People both inside the area and from other provinces travel to Wat Chedi to pray for blessing to have luck, fortune from Ai Khai which will hear the sound of firecrackers periodically due to offerings promised by people who have fulfilled.

Ai Khai Wat Chedi is tourism area, spiritual anchor also an area where people are interested in, visiting and taking pictures with various stucco such as two giant chickens in front of temple, which is 11 meters high. People believe that if they are taking photos with something that is identity of Wat Chedi, it considered peace, make life fulfil of hopes and fulfil of wishes what they pray for blessing from Ai Khai Wat Chedi.

Ai Khai Wat Chedi helps restore the economy for the community, encourages people in the community to be empowered and have hopes to invest in accommodation, restaurants, shop sells offerings/offering repays shop, creating careers, generating business income to nearby area and the economy in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

### The development process of cultural tourism management model Ai Khai Wat Chedi

Community boards and leaders have systematically managed by studying the problems that happened from many people and

group of people who believed in the sacred of Ai Khai and came to worship Ai Khai at Wat Chedi and travel within temple grounds. The management system uses lessons learned from circumstances to develop periodically with spiral model techniques and focus group discussion in order to be consistent with the context and respond to the goals and needs (Panya Lertkrai et al.: 2562) and manage a tourism system to respond tourists to be convenient, including tourist routes, parking, cleaning and place for firecrackers.

### Evolution tourism management model in 3 Eras

was caused by a number of tourists interested in history and evolution of Wat Chedi by evolutionary contents are as follows:

The past era (abandoned temple); Wat Chedi used to be an abandoned temple that is believed to have been built for over 1,000 years. At present, only an old abandoned Chedi left in the area of Buddhist temple until around 1957, the areas of Wat Chedi were allocated into zones both within and surrounding area of the temple. If tourists want to feel the past, they have to visit the points that are linked to the temple or pagoda, such as the remains of the old pagoda in the temple and the original construction area of Khao Ka Ancient Remains as well as the traditional culture that still persists, such as the tradition of worshipping Buddha image named "Pho Than Chao Wat", the tradition called "Hai Than Fai". Provide suitable people to work to issue an order and control and take responsibility for each zone and point, such as providing tour guides to describe the past to tourists that will make an understanding the history of Wat Chedi.

The revival began in the year 1957-1983, Faith in Ai Khai is not a religion but is community culture in the belief. The area of Wat Chedi was allocated into zones, both in the area within the temple and the area around the temple. In order to recognize the revival era, should go to visting point in the temple grounds, Ai Khai stucco (Takhianthong wood), place for lighting firecracker (original place),

wooden Wiharn that enshrines Ai Khai (original place) and Great Thuad Thiang monument, see traditions/culture, rituals based on beliefs/faiths, Buddhist activities such as Makha Bucha Day, Visakha Bucha Day, Songkran Day in April, and Bunsart of the tenth month (Chak Phra) on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the waning moon to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the waning moon of the tenth month. Provide suitable workers who can command, control and responsible for each zone and provide tour guides at each point to describe tourists about the revival Era.

The development era since 1983, is a sacred era where Phra Kru Buddha Chetiaphimon or Pho Than Waen, the abbot of Wat Chedi who intended to develop and restore Wat Chedi. From the belief and power of faith in the sacredness of Ai Khai, nowadays, people come to Wat Chedi to pray for requesting what they want. Many people rumored by words of mouth about the sacredness of Ai Khai, causing the phenomenon of crowds of people both from domestic areas and abroad who belief and faith in Ai Khai and come to the temple to present offerings promised after their hopes fulfilled. It is believed that the more you offering to Ai Khai, you get successful better. The bigger chicken the better, the more firecrackers the better because the more will make more successful. The fulfillment from many people who pray for requesting thing from Ai Khai, caused Ai Khai phenomenon that created career and generate income to people in the community. Wat Chedi has been continuously developed by this era allocated areas into zone both area within the temple and the area around the temple. Visiting points within the temple that can tell it is in the development or sacred era, such as Ai Khai stature, point of offering repays/praying, new Wiharn, Chao Mae Takhianthong, point of sale food within the temple, point of sale lottery, multipurpose pavilion, Big Buddha Wiharn, Pariyathitham School, also divided space to be the

community's lung (Don Ta Plot), forestry plantation, cultivate, rice farming, fish farming, plant vegetables for sharing with people in the community. Manage places with the community such as visiting points, area surrounding the temple, emerging commercial district communities, hotels/resorts/homestays, chicken release grounds/chicken graveyards. For traditions, culture and rituals; it held Buddhist activities on important days such as Makha Bucha, Visakha Bucha, tradition of Hai Than Fai in January, Songkran tradition in April/watering the elderly/building sand pagodas, important days about the former abbot (Pho Than Tham), Bunsart of the tenth month (Chak Phra) on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the waning moon to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the waning moon of the tenth month. Provide suitable workers who can command, control and responsible for each zone and provide tour guides at each point to describe tourists about the development Era.

**Management of cultural tourism model and route:** Route of belief to faith and faith to sacredness. There are tourist routes in various important points of cultural tourism Ai Khai Wat Chedi divided into 3 routes are

1) Half-day trip (3 hours approx.), it is a trip to see attractions in the development era. This trip doesn't take much time, such as worship toward Ai Khai Wat Chedi or Ta Khai Wat Chedi which is well-known as "entertains requests for help and blesses those who worship him", visit and admire the beauty of the largest chicken pair stucco that located at in front of the temple, and visit chicken cemetery also stop by to buy seasonal fruits or souvenirs from the community shop.

2) One day trip, it is a trip to see attractions in all 3 Eras, such as worship toward Ai Khai Wat Chedi or Ta Khai Wat Chedi, visit and admire the beauty of the largest chicken pair stucco that located at in front of the temple, and visit chicken cemetery also stop by to buy seasonal fruits or souvenirs

from the community shop on both sides of the road.

3) 2 days 1 night trip, it is a trip to see attractions in all 3 Eras and can select accommodation as you like. In addition, it can travel according to attractions linked to whether it is mountains, waterfalls, and sea, such as worship toward the City Pillar Shrine that enshrines at Nakhon Si Thammarat, worship toward Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan, the symbol of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province that widely well-known, go to Ban Khiriwong, a village with clean natural atmosphere, go to Wat Chedi, a temple that has been known for its holiness, for example, when people pray for something, it will be fulfilled. Ai Khai Wat Chedi is well-known as "entertains requests for help and blesses those who worship him".

Assessment of cultural tourism management model usage; the researcher collected data on tourism phenomena according to OKRs (Objective and Key Results). The co-researcher, informants and the research driving team jointly determined the purposes or goals of the implementation according to the research plan and focused on key results, jointly determined both theoretical and phenomenal indicators, created management model in 3 Eras, created tourism routes and assessed tourism model from users. Therefore, the cultural tourism management model of Ai Khai Wat Chedi is a model that has been assessed both theoretically and phenomenologically in term of tourism connectivity, shops selling offerings, accommodation, and groups tour.

In term of area; the temple is the goal of peace, being sacred space. Ai Khai is spiritual anchor for tourists, whom travel to worship to Ai Khai and pray for what they want directly to Ai Khai and succeed, caused phenomenon of crowds of over a thousand of people visiting to pray for blessings from Ai Khai. Even though the temple prepared a lot of parking lot but it still was insufficient,

therefore, had to keep expanding. (The number of cars per day is 1,000 cars), the number of tourists per day is over 10,000 people.

In term of cultural and social; community cultural activities have been restored, having power to drive the annual Buddhist tradition that many foreigners and tourists participated the event, considered as a factor that stimulated the temple committees, community committees, and people in the community to realize how to drive cultural traditions to be stronger and found that the local food culture, consumables, souvenirs, local products have also gained attention and to play a role in supporting the community social activities to be strong.

In term of economic; the communities surrounding Wat Chedi have been positively impacted by a large number of tourists who come to worship and offering repays toward Ai Khai at Wat Chedi and continuously throughout the year, generated income and created careers that makes a lot of money. More than 265 shops selling stucco (chicken), offerings, toys, firecrackers, and Ai Khai as sacred object. In additional, there are also dozens of operators offering accommodations and resorts to support tourists. Due to many tourists, temple earned huge income from worshipping, making a wish and offering repays by tourists. The sacred of Ai Khai has led people to perform Kathin and Thod Phapa ceremony or religious activities several times a year.

## Discussion

Evolution tourism management model in 3 Eras: tourism regarding beliefs and special area, tourists will pay more attention to the origins and history of the relevant issues, phenomena and events that occurred in the past that concerning the results of worshipful and pray for what they need or that is called "Pledge" (praying with offering something) and after they get the fulfillment from their aspiration of the successfulness, the worship

and offering repays toward Ai Khai at Wat Jedi were made. When these things are widely discussed, make a lot of people interested in, therefore, evolution tourism management is a solution to fulfill of tourists demand who have faith before and a group of tourists who are just beginning to be interested in stories about beliefs, whom want to travel based on this approach. Tourism management on beliefs and faith; managers must focus on impressing tourists to increase their faith, make them feel that is peace, be impressed when come to the area. Therefore, preparation of factors related to beliefs, faith and sacred of the community is important that has a continual effect on tourism management in long term (Lunjakon Nillkan 2018), causing tourists to pay respect to Ai Khai according to its own faith.

Management of cultural tourism route and model: route of belief to faith and faith to sacredness. Cultural tourism route, Ai Khai Wat Chedi was divided into 3 routes, presenting 3 alternative travel guidelines for tourists to consider and fulfill of each tourists group demand. Activity route regarding cultural and tradition; tourist attractions are linked to natural attractions, emphasize access to primary and secondary target areas completely (Punya Lertgrai, and et al.: 2020). Tourist attractions related to local traditions can be connected, caused a variety of benefits, lead to learning, understanding the roots of community, being environmentally friendly, create a balance between resources, tourism, society, culture and the community members way of life, also cause learning, valuable experiences for visitors which is consistent with the concept of (Wanna Silpa-Archa, 2002: 26-29). Tourism resource management process; management generally consists of 5 elements, namely planning, organization, providing workers, commanding and controlling in tourism management to be effective which it is necessary to consider and implement based on management process.

## Suggestions

1. Government agencies should support beliefs tourism with a policy of supporting activities, rituals based on beliefs, annual rituals according to local traditions, as well as publicizing and facilitating tourists until they are confident and ready to travel.
2. Local organizations should support tourism activities for learning local cultural preservation by making people know about tourism in the dimension of learning local beliefs culture to encourage the local culture to be strong.

## Action Suggestions

3. Community organizations, local agencies should participate in promoting activities for cultural tourism based local beliefs and should bring knowledge, understanding of cultural tourism management to be applied to carry out project activities of the organization and adapted to its own area with a variety of cultural tourism potential.

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