

Developing the Interpretation of the Ancient Settlements: the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Japanese, in Ayutthaya, Thailand

พัฒนาการการนำเสนอข้อมูลในแหล่งท่องเที่ยวหมู่บ้านโปรตุเกส หมู่บ้านฮอลันดาและหมู่บ้านญี่ปุ่น
จังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาคือนำเสนอแหล่งท่องเที่ยวทางเลือกหมู่บ้านโปรตุเกสหมู่บ้านฮอลันดาและหมู่บ้านญี่ปุ่นที่มีหลักฐานบ่งชี้ของอาณาจักรอยุธยาด้านความสามารถในการค้าแลกเปลี่ยนระหว่างประเทศในอดีตจนถึงปัจจุบันการศึกษาเพื่อสืบค้นหลักฐานมุมมองรูปแบบการดำเนินชีวิตของทั้งสามชนชาติที่ได้รับแรงจูงใจจากสยามจนกระทั่งตัดสินใจตั้งรกรากวิถีชีวิตของสามชนชาติและสิ่งทีพวกเขาได้เรียนรู้จากสยามในยุคนั้นสามารถสะท้อนความเข้าใจอันดีของพื้นฐานประวัติศาสตร์อีกทั้งได้มีการเฉลิมฉลองความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศไทยกับประเทศโปรตุเกส(500ปี)การเฉลิมฉลองความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศไทยกับประเทศเนเธอร์แลนด์และประเทศญี่ปุ่น(400ปี)และได้ร่วมกันสร้างศูนย์ข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อให้เป็นที่ศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์ความสัมพันธ์อันยาวนานของประเทศไทยและเป็นสถานที่ที่ท่องเที่ยวการศึกษาสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวทั้งสามแห่งนี้ทำให้เกิดคำถามกับการนำเสนออดีตและอธิบายปัจจุบันของหลักฐานในการตั้งรกรากเป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพโดยการสังเกตและสัมภาษณ์ผู้เชี่ยวชาญและผู้เชี่ยวชาญและรวบรวมข้อมูลทางการศึกษาจากงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องในอดีต

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าแหล่งมรดกโลกอยุธยา มีลักษณะโดดเด่นกว่าเมืองอื่นโดยการนำเสนอแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่เต็มไปด้วยซากปรักหักพังซึ่งไม่มีผู้คนอาศัยและใช้งานโบราณสถานเหล่านั้นแต่นักท่องเที่ยวทั้งชาวไทยและชาวต่างประเทศส่วนใหญ่บ่อยครั้งจะจ้องมองและถ่ายรูปมากกว่าที่จะเข้าใจความหมายของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวตั้งนั้นในกรณีของอยุธยานั้นช่องทางที่สามารถสื่อสารและกระตุ้นให้นักท่องเที่ยวเข้าใจและตระหนักในการสนใจข้อมูลมากขึ้นและตระหนักถึงความสำคัญของโบราณสถานและมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมเนื่องจากมีข้อมูลประวัติศาสตร์ความทรงจำมากมายเกี่ยวกับอยุธยาซึ่งเชื่อมต่อกับความหลากหลายของชุมชนที่ตั้งถิ่นฐานอยู่ เพราะอยุธยาเป็นเมืองค้าขายและเป็นเมืองนานาชาติอย่างไรก็ตามยังมีการควบคุมการตั้งถิ่นฐานของชาวต่างชาติและมีความยินดีต้อนรับซึ่งอยุธยาเป็นจุดเริ่มต้นของความผสมผสานของชนชาติไทยที่มีความหลากหลายทางชาติพันธุ์สืบทอดจนถึงสมัยธนบุรีต่อเนื่องมายังสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์จากประวัติศาสตร์ไทยชี้ให้เห็นถึงการเปิดกว้างในการหลอมรวมผสมกลมกลืนของความเป็นชนชาติไทยในยุคปัจจุบันของประเทศไทยนั้น ยิ่งเพิ่มความหลากหลายของชนชาติไทยมากขึ้นซึ่งเป็นผลมาจากกระบวนการผสมผสานมาตั้งแต่ช่วงสมัยอยุธยาหมู่บ้านโปรตุเกสหมู่บ้านฮอลันดาและหมู่บ้านญี่ปุ่นจึงเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่น่าสนใจและควรประชาสัมพันธ์ให้นักท่องเที่ยวไปเที่ยวมากขึ้นเพื่อลดความแออัด และขีดจำกัดการรองรับของโบราณสถานในเกาะเมืองอยุธยา

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Abstract

In the province of Ayutthaya, Thailand are various groups of foreign settlements that had been in Ayutthaya, Siam, from early in the 15 century until the 17 century. The focus of the present work is on three of those ancient settlements, respectively of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Japanese. The research was into the vestiges of these settlements, as they are testament to the significance of Ayutthaya in global trade in that era and to Siam's tolerance – almost unique in that age – towards foreign presence. The study is to search for evidence of the views and practices of these three groups of immigrants who were attracted to the old Siam and eventually decided to settle there. The opportunistic processes of these groups and what they had learnt about Siam would benefit the understanding of Siam herself. The political, economic and social views, in turn, can be interpreted for better understanding of the historical background, while the descriptive details will be able to give the general public some knowledge of the sources of identities and how people learnt and what they experienced in this diverse society. Linked to this objective is the question of how to depict the past and delineate the present traces of these settlements. The methodology comprised direct observation, interviews with present experts and new immigrants, participant observation of tourists/visitors to ascertain their views on the historical background of each period and each settlement. Documentary sources and secondary sources from previous studies are also consulted.

Ayutthaya is distinguished from other cities in that it is represented mostly in ruins that have no part in present everyday life, though strongly encompassed in the tourist gaze, both domestic and international. That gaze can too often be merely of the picturesque rather than critically, inquiringly through 'the mind's eye'. So in the case of Ayutthaya there is an argument for a regime of interpretation that can encourage transition from superficial tourist to the enquiring and reflective traveler. There are diverse memories of Ayutthaya, in part linked to the diverse communities that resided there. Ayutthaya was primarily a trading city and to a considerable extent cosmopolitan. However, there were always attempts by the government to segregate the foreigner communities. Nevertheless, the foreigners were tolerated, even on occasion welcomed. This is a beginning of Thai/Siam integration, where the diversity found in Ayutthaya persisted into Thonburi and then beyond. Therefore, a lesson to be drawn from the history of the foreign communities in Ayutthaya-Thonburi-Rattanakosin-Bangkok is that Siam-Thailand history is one of progressive integration and hybridization. The diversity of identities in modern Thailand – and the increasing diversity – is the result of a long process that can be traced very clearly back to Ayutthaya in the 1600s, even further to the 1400s.

Keywords: PORTUGUESE, DUTCH, JAPANESE, ANCIENT SETTLEMENT, DEVELOPING INTERPRETATION

Introduction

In the province of Ayutthaya, about 60 kilometers north of Bangkok, are three groups of foreign settlements that have been in Ayutthaya, Siam, since early in the Ayutthaya epoch. What seems to be critical is the need for the vestiges of these settlements to be retained, especially as they are testament to the significance of Ayutthaya in global trade in that era and to Siam's tolerance – almost unique in that era – towards foreign presence. The task for the author is to research how to depict the past and delineate the presence of the traces of these Portuguese, Japanese and Dutch settlements. Remnants of these three foreign settlements are located in Ayutthaya along both sides of the Chao Phraya River that runs south through present day Bangkok towards the Gulf of Thailand. Visiting Ayutthaya today, one will find the Portuguese Church on the West bank of the river. On the East bank though not exactly opposite is the Japanese village grounds; while also on the West bank but north of the cemetery grounds by about one kilometer is a ship-yard run by a Thai family on the archeological site of the Dutch settlement.

Methodology

About the international involvement in the past history of Siam might help to explain the present. Original sources can be no more than documentary as historical personalities are beyond direct access. Interviews with present experts and new immigrants, other tourists/visitors are intended to learn their views on the historical background of each period and on each particular group. The phenomena that are found will be discussed widely in terms of both tangible and intangible aspects of the heritage of the nation. Observations such as visiting sites are part of the data collecting process and are intended to support various views in the discussion. Sources of knowledge from secondary study in theories and literature reviews are also to be incorporated in the analysis.

A view of history should be used merely as a background to allow the readers to comprehend the stages of the epoch at different times. Comparisons on charts will help identify and assist in understanding the relationships of each period in the story of Siam and the three groups, in terms of both events and phenomena.

The search will attempt to interpret various myths and stories that relate to the three groups in the local Siam milieu, and the views that Thai people generally held about the (expatriate) immigrants (because they stayed permanently). There will be interpretations to give better understanding regarding Thai views of others, though personal feelings and biased opinions will be avoided. A comparative study is intended of the history, survival and the

subsequent display of the Portuguese, Japanese and Dutch remnants in present-day Ayutthaya.

Difficulties may be encountered during the process of interview and empirical study, for example, inability to find historians who are helpful and involved in this precise field. In such situation, the author will need to find appropriate secondary sources.

Results

The residential experience and the tourist gaze:

Ayutthaya may be a city of the present; however, it is also to be seen as a realm of ‘sites’. These sites and the surviving stories of them represent foreigners’ views in the Ayutthaya period. There is no objective reality of old Ayutthaya. Rather, different people saw it in different ways. We have almost no evidence of everyday life from Thai perspectives. Nearly all are from foreign accounts, where inevitably there will be differences from a Thai reality. When we study from the foreigner’s account, from the viewpoint of the historian, and try to imagine the processes of thinking and the people’s identities, characters and races, we are at a loss.

Like present-day residents in other surviving ancient cities, the modern Ayutthayan lives in the midst of a history that might not often be reflected upon but which must inevitably frame memory, thought and ways of seeing the world and constituting knowledge. What distinguishes Ayutthaya from other such cities – Rome, Paris, London, Beijing, Shanghai, even Bangkok – is that Ayutthaya’s antiquity is represented mostly in ruins that have no part in present every-day life. In Ayutthaya there is an absence of a continuity of history – nothing to connect the world of the ruins with the present every-day world.

Is there thus a task for interpretation that can address Ayutthaya’s present denizens, in effect to enrich the residential experience? How might that be achieved? This is not a theme pursued in the present project yet it is a question that can validly be reflected upon. A suggested answer is that it is a role for *local* education – in a society with the richness of heritage of Thailand, it is surely clear that a task for school (and community) education is to deepen local knowledge and appreciation of local heritage and culture. A by-product of such education becomes a commitment to that heritage – to its conservation and study.

Then there are the visitors, where the task of interpretation is always different, to do with the fostering of a wider understanding of heritage at all its scales – local, national, world. Here we face the problem of the superficiality of ‘the tourist gaze’.

*The dilemma of the tourist gaze*¹

In Michel Foucault's sense of the word 'gaze', knowledge is paramount. The gazer is all-seeing, all-knowing, penetrating depths and layers to perceive a subject's essence.² Although John Urry's seminal *The Tourist Gaze* sees that gaze as marked by superficiality, kitsch and inauthenticity, he concludes his book by referring to Foucault's gaze:

[W]hat is now happening, as tourism develops into the largest industry worldwide ... [is that] almost all spaces, history and social activities can be materially and symbolically remade for the endlessly devouring gaze ... To return to Foucault, contemporary societies are developing less on the basis of surveillance and the normalization of individuals, and more on the basis of the democratization of the tourist gaze and the spectacleisation of place (Urry, 2002: 156).

Yet there is a sharp difference: Foucault's gaze is typically the knowledgeable, totalising gaze of the physician, Urry's is in the first instance the shallow gaze of the tourist. Can there be some transit across these?

There is a common distinction made between *the tourist* (gauche amateur) and *the traveler* (knowing connoisseur). However, this is increasingly a superficial, artificial distinction as the tourist also *reads* of the places observed (although there is also the absurdity of the visitor who comes with the sights they want to see pre-studied and memorized, thereby blinding them to the rest – capturing such sights through the lens of their camera rather than through their own eyes). The tourist increasingly defies definition, morphing from the consumer of the picturesque to the reflective student of nature, society and deep culture.

In the case of Ayutthaya, the task of interpretation is to facilitate that transit from the superficial tourist to the enquiring, reflective traveler. There are very few interpretations in concerning with people's lives, especially the dealing with Europeans settlements during Ayutthaya period along the banks of the Chao Phraya River (Narathorn Phungwong,2012:92).

Urry draws attention to Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of a postmodern class structure and specifically of a 'new petty bourgeoisie': "such classes are stronger on cultural than on economic capital and they provide much of the mass audience for ever-new cultural phenomena, counterposed to the taste of more traditional bourgeois and intellectual classes" (Urry, 2002: 80). The bourgeois are criticized (by what Bourdieu identifies as the new petty

¹ The following two sections are based on notes provided by R. King, October 2013.

² "Ellen's Reviews > The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies", <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/77694951>, accessed 30 April 2013.

bourgeoisie) for ‘elitism’, the working class for coarseness or lack of subtlety – that is, too close to ‘nature’, with insufficient distance or parody (Bourdieu, 1984: 7).

There is no single tourist gaze as such, Urry warns. It varies by society, social group, historical period, also with the individual’s experiences and expectations. The Japanese tourist will not be the Portuguese or the domestic Thai. Similarly there is no single heritage on which that gaze might fix: heritage, is inextricably linked to memory, thereby to individual experience though also to both compelled remembering and compelled forgetting; it is also linked to habit – to what Manuel DeLanda (2006) terms habitual repetition. Memory by its nature is both multiple and specific (Nora, 1996:3). It can also be counteracted, however, and the gaze destabilized.

The assembling gaze

The gaze ‘assembles’ the observed world into an always unstable, seeming identity ‘of the fleeting instant’. The elements thus assembled are characterized by their associations in the viewer’s mind’s eye, that is, by relations of exteriority.

There is accordingly instability in heritage-as-assemblage. So, however, is there always an instability in the identity of the observer of that heritage? So, Deleuze draws attention to the *multiplicity* of identities. There is a multiplicity represented in space – of exteriority, of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, of order. It is the multiplicity of individual persons.

The other type of multiplicity appears in pure duration: It is an internal multiplicity of succession, of fusion, of organization, of heterogeneity, of qualitative discrimination, or of *difference in kind*; it is a *virtual continuous* multiplicity that cannot be reduced to numbers (Deleuze, 1988: 38).

Identity thus shifts across various scales of duration – it is multiple (*we are each multiple*). An unstable personal identity intersects with an immanently unstable heritage. Thus there is a further assemblage – of the folding, unfolding, re-folding heritage object and the shifting memories and imaginings of the individual contemplating that heritage.

As the tourist gaze – or the traveler’s enquiring interrogation of their observed world – is multiple, so is heritage as assemblage. There is no *single* Ayutthaya. Our concern in this project has been with three ‘memories’ of Ayutthaya.



Figure 1 The settlement of (a) Portugal (b) Dutch and (c) Japanese

Portugal

The Portuguese site exhibits a few excavated walls although its most notable element is the pavilion that has been constructed over the excavated graveyard. This must be seen as a somewhat bizarre intrusion into Thai-Buddhist Ayutthaya – the idea of exposing and exhibiting human remains is completely alien to Thai practice and sensitivity; it might even be seen as grossly distasteful. While Thai-Buddhists will express great reverence towards relics of famous leaders and devout religious figures, these relics are never publicly displayed; rather, they will be both physically and symbolically protected in a *stupa* or other appropriate structure.

To understand something of this Portuguese graveyard display, it helps to note some aspects of Iberian (Portuguese and Spanish) Catholic Christianity. There is a preoccupation with death. It is reflected in the brutality of sporting displays (bullfighting, for example, which always ends in death), in religious iconography (blood and broken bodies graphically displayed in both painting and sculpture), in the cruelty of human punishment (the Spanish Inquisition which also involved Portugal) and in the display of human bodies (dead saints). So, in such a context, the human bodies displayed in the Ayutthaya pavilion may not seem so surprising, even though it

might be culturally insensitive in a Thai context. One might critically reflect that the ignoring of local (indigenous) culture is a continuation of Portuguese attitudes and practices of the colonising age when Portugal's goal was, in effect, the supplanting of the indigenous. The display and presenting of skeletons may have made the Thai feel fear.

A curious 'footnote' to the Portuguese memorial is the small Christian shrine at its entrance: this is in the form of a Thai (Buddhist) spirit house.

In view of the multiplicity of the tourist gaze and of heritage-as-assembly, the task of interpretation in this context is to *interpret difference* at a very fundamental level – difference in understanding of life and death in Portuguese and Thai cultures.

Netherlands

The site of the Dutch village is now industrial, as a boat building and repair yard. While it is simultaneously managed as an archaeological site, there is no interpretative display. Indeed the Dutch site is distinctive in Ayutthaya for its lack of demonstration (as observed in 2010).

The Dutch remnants in Ayutthaya need to be seen in two contexts. The first is in relation to the Dutch (VOC) presence in Southeast Asia more widely where the real focus of interest, in the present as in the past, is in the East Indies (the Indonesian archipelago). Alongside Batavia (Jakarta), Surabaya and the other Indies trading ports, the station and factory at Ayutthaya was merely a by-water. The second context is the present-day Dutch preoccupation with Southeast Asia as a domain of scientific enquiry, again focused principally on the Indies. Hence the Ayutthaya settlement is to be viewed essentially as a site for scientific excavation and analysis.

It is worth noting that the present landowner is clearly interested in the heritage value of the site and has taken considerable efforts to collect information on its background and interpretation. This is a helpful tool for research.

Nowadays the Dutch settlement becomes more an information center based on grant money support from the Netherlands Embassy.



Figure 2 The Dutch Settlement Photograph by Kaewdang, P. December 8, 2013.



Figure 3 The Dutch settlement as excavation site. On the left hand side is a commemorative stele. Photograph by Kaewdang, P December 8, 2013.



Figure 4 The Dutch settlement as excavation site. On the left hand side is a commemorative stele. Photograph by Keawdang, P December 8, 2013.



Figure 5 The coffee shop in side the Dutch Settlement building. Photograph by Keawdang, P December 8, 2013.



Figure 6 The coffee shop in side the Dutch Settlement building. Photograph by Keawdang, P December 8, 2013.

Japan

The Japanese village site is in sharpest contrast with the Portuguese and Dutch. It is in a *modern* form of a Japanese garden with virtually no explicit references to the Japanese settlement of the past. It does, however, provide a setting for a small but sophisticated interpretation center which also functions as a museum, albeit with only a very limited collection of authentic artefacts. While this center has a focus on the Japanese role in Ayutthaya, it also covers those of the other trading nations that had a presence in Ayutthaya. It is also noteworthy that only the Japanese settlement is clearly designed to attract visitors, both Japanese and, more widely, international and local. It is also to be seen as an instrument of diplomacy and even propaganda.

The Japanese garden and center can be viewed in the context of Japan's post-World War II management of foreign relations, whereby 'gift and exhibition' are bestowed to recipient countries, especially those that had been subjected to Japanese WWII aggression. (A parallel case is the 1988 'gift' of a Science Museum to Canberra to mark the Australian bi-centennial celebrations.) The Ayutthaya gift is, significantly, a celebration of (advertisement for) *modern* Japanese culture, combining with Japanese history.



Figure 7 Timeline of The relationship between Thailand-Japan. Photograph by Kaewdang, P. December 8, 2013.



Figure 8 Japanese tourist listened information from tour guide. Photograph by Kaewdang, P. September 18, 2006.



Figure 9 Animal skin were famous export product that produce at Japanese Village. Photograph by Kaewdang, P. September 18, 2006.

Conclusion

The differences presented in these three sites can be summarized by a series of keywords:

Portugal : Archaeological; focus on the body, death; indigenous culture ignored

Netherlands : Archaeological; scientific

Japanese : Aesthetic; modern

Each can in some sense be seen as a reflection of the way in which each of these countries sees its place in the present world.

The sites and their differences can, in turn, suggest different modes for the presentation of physical heritage. In suggesting these modes, however, it is useful also to include the World Heritage Park and the line of old wooden shophouses in the city center. These modes might then be as follows:

World Heritage Park : A theme park: monuments presented as ruins. Authenticity is insisted upon, for example Phrasri Sanphet temple.

Shophouse rows : Living community: efforts are made to sustain lifestyles and practices.

Portuguese settlement : Archaeological: the focus is on the human relics.

Dutch settlement : Archaeological: the focus is on understanding physical form and plan and on industrial heritage.

Japanese settlement : Interpretation center and museum.

Ayutthaya was primarily a trading city. Like other such cities, it was to some extent cosmopolitan. However, there were always attempts by the government to segregate the foreigner communities. Nevertheless, the foreigners were tolerated, even on occasion welcomed. So was this a beginning of Thai/Siam integration? By contrast, the Chinese were even more integrated, to a degree that borders on fusion. By the Thonburi/Rattanakosin era, there was almost complete Thai-Chinese integration.

The diversity found in Ayutthaya persisted into Thonburi and then beyond. Therefore, a lesson to be drawn from the history of the foreign communities in Ayutthaya-Thonburi-Rattanakosin-Bangkok is that Siam-Thailand history is one of progressive integration and hybridization. That is, the diversity of identities in modern Thailand (Thai, Chinese, Sino-Thai, Mon, Lanna, Thai-Lao...) and the *increasing* diversity is the result of a long process what can be traced very clearly back to Ayutthaya in the 1600s, even further to the 1400s.

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