

Thailand Charter on Cultural Heritage Management

Principles and Rationale

Thailand has a long history that can be traced back to several ten thousand years since prehistoric times to the present, as seen in cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, which are the foundations of Thai society that has steadily developed until the present day.

Thailand's cultural heritage is diverse, created on the bases of beliefs and faith in religions of various ethnic groups, which have been related to and coexisted with other groups of Asian people peacefully and harmoniously, indicating the civilized nature of the Thai people. Nevertheless, development and changes in economy, society, and technology of today's world have put our cultural heritage at risk of being damaged physically and non-physically, that is, to the values of the heritage. To have Charter on Cultural Heritage Management, therefore, is an important issue on national level.

In the past, general people have understood that heritage conservation was the responsibility of the government carried out by the Fine Arts Department, Department of Religious Affairs, Office of Contemporary Art And Culture and National Office of Buddhism, with certain level of collaborations from academic institutions and people who were interested, which was insufficient for covering the required works on conservation. Furthermore, there have not been incentive measures for owners of cultural heritage to encourage them to conserve their property, therefore, a large number of cultural heritage sites have been demolished or devalued due to lack of understanding. It is, therefore, greatly necessary for cultural heritage sites in Thailand to have guidelines for conservation and management that cover a greater diversity, based on participation from all concerning parties, especially, people who live in the sites, as well as respect for equality of human rights. People of our nation must share responsibility in protection, conservation and transfer of our cultural heritage to live as sources of learning to future generations, as stated in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand : policy on decentralization and the expansion of the field of cultural heritage.

Category 1 : Concepts

Thailand Charter on Cultural Heritage Management is the guidelines for management of cultural heritage sites in Thailand, which serves all concerning parties, based on the following concepts :

- 1.1 The Charter focuses on cultural heritage sites in Thailand, which have been created based on beliefs and faiths in religions; and a diversity of ethnic groups who have coexisted peacefully and harmoniously. These are the principles of management, which have to be carried out based on studies of the past and present in all dimensions.
- 1.2 The Charter emphasizes the process of participation, with the first priority given to the stakeholders in the area where the site and related cultural heritage are located, while considering the human rights. Regular meetings and discussions are greatly encouraged.
- 1.3 The Charter concerns mainly on tangible cultural heritage, however, the values of related intangible cultural heritage must be an issue of concern in order to be able to conserve and transfer the cultural heritage of each specific society while maintaining the diversity of local cultural identity.
- 1.4 The Charter promotes a thorough dissemination and exchange of knowledge on cultural heritage.

Category 2 : Terminology

2.1 Cultural heritage

Meaning : creative work made by people of the nation, which is valuable cultural property that has been handed down from past generations, being testimonial to the historical development. This includes man-made environment and ecosystem that is valuable and irreplaceable. It is the symbol that reflects the achievements of people in the past, a manifestation of outstanding culture and local identity that has been handed down from past to present, and worth transferring to the future.

Cultural heritage can be categorized into 2 types namely, tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage

a) Tangible cultural heritage

Meaning : cultural heritage which is tangible, that is, touchable and visible i.e. ancient sites, monuments, architecture, buildings, group of buildings, local urban sites, old towns, historic sites, archaeological sites, historic landscapes, cultural landscapes, ancient objects and various forms of art.

b) Intangible cultural heritage

Meaning : cultural heritage which is intangible that is, untouchable and not physically expressed i.e. knowledge, meanings, beliefs, skills, norms, traditions, that persons or communities have created to be part of their lives and have been transferred from one generation to the next until the present.

Cultural heritage sites are, therefore, tangible heritage, which comprises immovable cultural properties which are inseparable from intangible cultural heritage.

2.2 Monuments and Sites

Meaning : immovable property, both in forms of building and place, which, by age, or structural characteristics, or evidences of its history, or objects found inside; is beneficial in terms of art, architecture, culture, history, archaeology, education or society.

2.3 Conservation

Meaning : all the processes of looking after a place to retain its values. Conservation of each cultural heritage site may be carried out by means of protection, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, or rehabilitation. Conservation method has various levels depending on situation and other factors affecting each case. Implementation may use one method or several methods combined, which should include the conservation for the purpose of renewed use, and for the purpose of continuing the existence of the property.

2.4 Authenticity

Meaning : authenticity which is expressed in its true characteristics, having specific identity, being a qualitative factor that indicates the value of the cultural heritage, verifies the integrity of scientific information. Authenticity may be considered in terms of creativity, material, craftsmanship, setting and use.

2.5 Integrity

Meaning : completeness of all elements of the cultural heritage that have integrated together in forms of structure and elements of its setting, which are related as parts of the heritage which is culturally valuable.

2.6 Historic landscape

Meaning : cultural heritage site which is categorized as elements of landscape architecture i.e. gardens, open lands, waterscapes, and vegetations, which are beneficial to the public from the points of history or art. This type of heritage normally and originally comprises plants, therefore, it is considered a living heritage, that is, the heritage that is perishable and revivable. The features of historic landscape reflects a sustainable balance between seasonal cycle and growth and decay of nature, and the desire of artists and craftsmen who aim to maintain the original state of the landscape to last forever. The term is applicable to both small gardens and large public parks, and both the orderly designed sites or natural-featured sites, as well as other types of open space design.

2.7 Cultural landscape

Meaning : natural topography on which human has created change. It indicates the relationship between man and nature that reflects way of life, beliefs, faith in religions, which have evolved into a timeless identity.

2.8 Vernacular built heritage

Meaning : built object that has resulted from beliefs and uses of a specific locality or region. The heritage reveals the beauty that expresses a diversity of culture in the community that has been related to the location based on cultural and environmental characteristics, including the effects of different climate. The construction techniques are handed down through generations, and having efficient application of building systems and original craftsmanship.

2.9 Cultural heritage management

Meaning : the process of protection and management of diverse elements of cultural heritage in order to maintain its values for creating understanding and awareness in its cultural significance, with consideration on conformity and appropriateness to the changing situation of the society.

Category 3 : Values and Evaluation of Cultural Heritage Values

- 3.1 Cultural heritage is valuable, therefore, the evaluation of its values is an important step in the conservation process, which aims to prioritize each site and to find appropriate means in conservation and management that would bring about the highest benefits to the society.
- 3.2 In conservation of cultural heritage, it is necessary to consider the outstanding values of each specific cultural heritage site in the aspects of i.e. aesthetic, archaeology, history, education or society, for planning on preservation of the most outstanding values while conserving the less important values appropriately.
- 3.3 Cultural heritage in the categories of ancient monuments, ancient objects, and valuable art objects, or those which have been registered as ancient monuments, ancient objects, or art objects by the Act on Ancient Monuments, Ancient Objects, Art Objects and National Museums; must be strictly protected according to the law.
- 3.4 Cultural heritage sites, which have been evaluated to have national or local level of importance, should be registered in order to be protected accordingly.

Category 4 : Management of Cultural Heritage

4.1 General Principles

1. Policy on management of cultural heritage must be regarded as one of the nation's core policies.
2. Efficient planning for cultural heritage management must be carried out.
3. The government must have efficient financial measures for promotion and support of all levels of cultural heritage management.
4. The government must have measures for encouragement, award giving, and commendation to persons or activities that involve conservation of cultural heritage.
5. Development of cultural tourism management and local development must be appropriately integrated. The use and maintenance must be inseparable issues in cultural heritage management.
6. Knowledge base in cultural heritage must be managed.
7. Efficient and correct methods of conservation must be observed and practiced.
8. Real participation in all steps of conservation process by all parties must be aimed for in order to achieve a sustainable result.

4.2 Principles for Master Planning

a) Master Plan

1. Master plan must be made as a framework and guidelines for implementation, which must be based on a thorough and inclusive study of all information involved. A master plan should comprise : objectives, goals, means of practice and methods of practice; and should also clearly define the responsible body, and plan for all involving works i.e. archaeological and historical study, restoration work, land use plan, interpretation, education, knowledge base organization, financial plan and management plan, etc.
2. The making of master plan should cover both short-term and long-term periods, and should be revised and evaluated regularly.
3. The master plan must be integrated with urban or local development plan, in order that it is practical for use in legal process, however, in case the urban or local development plan has certain defects, the master plan should point out such defects and provide recommendations for revision or correction of the development plan.
4. The making of master plan or other management systems must always be based on the concept of Sufficiency Economy in order to achieve a sustainable development.

b) Implementation Plan

Implementation plan must follow the master plan, it should be inclusive and practicable, and must be revised according to the current situation before the actual practice is carried out.

4.3 Principles for Knowledge Management

a) Information Making

1. A database on cultural heritage sites in Thailand must be made by correct scientific method, and must be quality information, which have been verified and certified by experts.
2. Original knowledge base should be collected and organized systematically in form of the knowledge base for education and research, information should be connected and regularly updated.
3. Evaluation and prioritization of importance of cultural heritage sites must be carried out with public participation. Study, training and evaluation should be encouraged to be practiced continually.
4. All activities, which affect or cause changes to the cultural heritage site physically, must be recorded in forms of i.e. documents, photographs, drawings, models, etc.
5. All steps of cultural heritage conservation process must be studied and researched in order to obtain the correct and broad understanding on the cultural heritage site.
Conservation of cultural heritage is a multidisciplinary work that requires an integration of scientific standards of all involving professions in order to apply the knowledge to the conservation of each specific site appropriately.
6. The cultural heritage sites which are not threatened should be studied and information should be collected and made into reports. Archaeological study should avoid disturbances to existing evidences unnecessarily. Some parts of the site should be left intact for future study in order to achieve further study purposes. The excavation of all area of the site should follow a thorough and careful plan, which is subsequent to the correct prioritization of importance.
7. Study on affecting factors to the cultural heritage and archaeological site must be carried out. This must be the responsibility of investor in each development project, and the project must be carried out by means that have the least effects on the cultural heritage. In case that demolition, disturbance, or change must be made to the cultural heritage, archaeological survey, excavation and information collection must be carried out; and the effects must be thoroughly studied and recommendations for reduction of

effects must be provided, in form of a complete report, before actual implementation of the development project.

8. Measures and mechanism for maintenance, protection and development of knowledge base must be provided.
 - a) Information Dissemination, Interpretation and Presentation
 1. Procedure and means for dissemination of knowledge and knowledge base must be provided efficiently, widely, and thoroughly, for all target groups, all ages and all levels of understanding.
 2. Convenient access to sources of information, which include knowledge base and knowledge source, must be provided.
 3. Interpretation and presentation must be promoted for all cultural heritage sites, and must be considered as a process in cultural heritage management.
 4. Public forum should be provided for seminars and discussions for interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage.

4.4 Principles for Conservation

1. Conservation of cultural heritage sites, which are categorized in high level of significance and are rare, should aim to preserve their authenticity by making the least correction. Means of conservation should be only protection from deterioration, preservation, consolidation, and avoid disturbing original existing evidences and should not build new structure over the original.
2. Cultural heritage sites which are places of worship should be conserved without alteration of features, colours, shapes and forms, in order to prevent devaluation of the original values or sacredness.
3. Conservation of cultural heritage sites which are still in continual use, new construction or addition of necessary elements may be done to serve the functions, which are not necessarily in the same style as the original, however, the new elements should be harmonized with the original, and should not devalue the original.
4. A thorough study should be carried out in order to investigate that the cultural heritage site to be conserved has undergone how many times of previous corrections or restorations. Such treatments were correct or incorrect, and in which dates do such treatments belong. The new conservation may not follow any certain pattern, but must have a process for determination of the most appropriate pattern, so that the cultural heritage site still retain its values and its level of significance.

5. The moving of cultural heritage site or parts of cultural heritage site should be avoided, as it is considered a violation of cultural heritage conservation principles, unless a careful and thorough consideration has been made and concluded that it is the last means for protection of the site from damage or being stolen. The cultural heritage site or parts of the site must be moved to be preserve in a safe place, the move must be legal, and a replica of the removed site or parts must be made to be installed in place of the original ones, including interpretation measures for public understanding because the objectives of cultural heritage conservation is to use and retain the cultural heritage site in situ sustainably and appropriately.
6. Reconstruction or revival of cultural heritage sites due to present request must be carried out by design and decision-making that have resulted from process of thorough study on the original design and location of the site, so that the reconstruction would not lead to misinterpretation and distortion of information and values of the cultural heritage site.
7. Conservation by means of reconstruction, which serves to explain and interpret, should follow the information and evidences which have been studied, analyzed and interpreted rationally and have been publicly approved, and should allow for future corrections.
8. Conservation of vernacular built heritage should consider developments or unavoidable changes and cultural identity that has been handed down in the community. Addition to original structure or new building in the local community should respect cultural values and original characteristics which are harmonized with the cultural and natural environments. Means of implementation should be : research, documentation, information collecting, encouraging the continuity of building systems and local craftsmanship in all levels. New materials, which do not alter the expression of features, textures, shapes and forms, of the original structure and materials, may be used.
9. Conservation of cultural heritage in the category of historic districts, communities and towns is necessary to develop and improve the site according to the present way of life, and should integrate the government's policy and all levels of urban planning into the project.
10. Preservation of originality of cultural heritage site in the category of historic districts, communities and towns must not neglect archaeological and historical investigations in order to obtain knowledge on history of the site i.e. town plan, land allocation and communication network, relationship between buildings, open spaces and green

areas, both natural and man-made, features of buildings, and the various uses of the originals.

11. Conservation of cultural heritage site in the category of ancient remains, which is valuable in terms of art, history or archaeology, should aim to preserve it as original after excavation, however, measures for prevention from deterioration must be provided.
12. Historic landscape comprises cultural heritage sites that include living plants, therefore, continuous maintenance is greatly necessary. The features must be maintained by regular replacement of living plants and long-term planning. Revival of the site must be based on existing evidences by archaeological studies or from credible documents which have been examined and approved by experts; and respect to the continuous levels of development of the site. The revival may be carried out partially, focusing on the area which is near or related to the culture of its location, in order to reveal the intention of design that is related to overall landscape of the area.
13. Conservation of cultural heritage of any group must consider the way of life of the community that is harmonized with the setting and cultural landscape as important complementing elements that affect the existence and change in values and unique characteristics of cultural heritage.
14. The process of conservation of setting and cultural landscape should be carried out from the organization of regulations, laws, and specific regulations; as well as providing efficient conservation plan and management plan, demarcation of serial sites and buffer zones around the cultural heritage site or other measures for preserving cultural values and unique characteristics of the site, and the limitation of effects from area development.
15. Intangible cultural heritage is considered the part that creates values and meanings, as well as being related to the tangible cultural heritage, therefore, integrative consideration and conservation measures should be made for both heritage types.

Category 5 : Participation

5.1 Cultural heritage sites are properties of all people in the nation. Local community and people have rights and duties to participate in conservation and management of cultural heritage, especially by safeguarding and supervising that the sites are not trespassed, damaged, devalued, or functionally damaged.

5.2 Governmental units have duties to promote and support all parties to participate in planning, policy making, safeguarding, decision-making, supervising, in conservation and development of cultural heritage i.e. development and dissemination of knowledge base, building understanding, building responsible conscience, especially the encouragement of the mobilization of cultural heritage conservation network in all areas.

5.3 Participation process must truly cover all steps, and from all parties involved.

5.4 Important mechanism of efficient participation is the management of knowledge base and building understanding to create preparedness in participation based on respect in wisdom and diversity of cultures.