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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Final Report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of collaborating Thai researchers and Institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of the research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methodology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayutthaya Archaeological Park actual problems</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalls</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local participation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Management and Issues</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Photo report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Ket</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khun Paen house</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not identified.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vihara Mongkolbophit</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phra Si Sanphet - Ancient Palace</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phra Ram</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Ratchaburana</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chao Sam Phraya Museum</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phong</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Klong alignment</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Langkhadum</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Nok</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Mahathat</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chantharakasem National Museum</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Borom Phuttaram</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Luang Chekrud and South Western Park</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pra Chedi Sri Suryiothai</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Wora Pho</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Worachetthuram</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wat Lokayasuttha 107
Wat Thammickarat 113
Wat Lang Ka 117
Wat Suwan Dararam 121
Wat Worachet 123
Wat Phutthai Sawan 127
Portuguese Settlement 133
Wat Chaiwattanaram 137
Wat Ayodhaya 145
Wat Kudi Dao 149
Wat Maheyong 155
Wat Yai Chaimongkhol 159
Japanese Village 165
FINAL REPORT

FOREWORD
Most of the work has been done between October 2009 and June 2010. In a cursory visit to Ayutthaya on 12 March 2011, I have noticed that some implementations have been done, which are duly described here. Therefore, some changes from the preliminary report have been inserted.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
I gratefully acknowledge the authorization of the Fine Arts department for conducting my research in Ayutthaya historical park. I also acknowledge the kindness of Mr Phattarapong Kaongern (Ayutthaya Historical Park Office), for information regarding the historical park.

I also dutifully acknowledge the liberality of Dr Pornchai Mongkhonvanit, President of Siam University, for the grant that has allowed the completion of this research.

LIST OF COLLABORATING THAI RESEARCHERS AND INSTITUTIONS
Thai researchers: Dr Chollada Mongkhonvanit and Siam University. Institutions involved: Fine Arts Department, Thailand
OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

What is heritage and what is its value? As declared in the UNESCO Declaration of cultural diversity, article 7:

“Heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity and to inspire genuine dialog among cultures.”

The objective of the research was about a valorisation of Ayutthaya historical park as whole, with a special focus about tourists and archaeological interpretation.

A definition of interpretation has to go back to Tilden:

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentations to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. 'To be at its best it will require a separate program'.

As for the concept of cultural tourists, this is one of the earliest definitions:

1) The culturally motivated tourists: person selecting the holiday destination following his interests in cultural facilities. Tourists highly motivated to learn and they will spend days in a particular destination. A Survey of 1993 in Europe, demonstrates that this is just a minority of the market share (5%).
2) The culturally inspired tourists: special cultural themes will attract this group; they will visit well known sites of culture, major exhibitions and festivals. They travel around and pick up experiences in many places, and never stay long in one place. With this type an element of mass tourism is evident when visiting places such as Venice, Athens, Canterbury etc. All want to see the same places, and mainly because of this kind of cultural tourist, visit management policies become an important issue. According to many forecasts, a growing number of travellers belong to this type of ‘culture consumer’.
3) The culturally attracted tourist: the tourist, while holidaying at a coastal or mountain resort, sees an occasional visit to a city or historical site in the hinterland– a visit to a museum, church or monument- as a welcome diversion in the holiday programme. The destination is not chosen because of these facilities, but once there these opportunities may be enjoyed very much. Because more active holidays are currently getting fashionable, it is very likely that this pattern of cultural pastime will spread. Particularly for this group of tourists, cultural attractions need to be packaged, marketed as part of an arrangement and embedded in a lively urban environ-

Later definitions are existing, but do not certainly modify the concept, only smoothing some edges.4

The TAT statistics highlight the high numbers of visitors to Ayutthaya. While the figures as given by the Tourist Authority of Thailand demonstrate a high number of tourists’ visits to the archaeological park, only one third of them is staying in Ayutthaya overnight, as many of them are there for a one day excursion from Bangkok.

The proximity to Bangkok is certainly a factor, as it has been already remarked in the original Master Plan from Chulalongkorn University:5

“6. With only 72 kilometres from Bangkok, Ayutthaya becomes a pass-by or a one-day trip tourist attraction area instead of being a major destination.

There are also other points from the Master Plan to consider:

“2. There is a lack of varieties in tourist attraction sites in Ayutthaya. Although Ayutthaya has plenty of tourist areas, almost all of them are historical and architectural sites. There are very few attraction sites that are natural beauty, e.g. water falls or caves.

3. There is no visual symbol approach as well as the entre-port of landmarks of the city to create the welcome striking of arrival in the great ancient town. Therefore, Ayutthaya will not attract and impress tourists by any landmarks at the entrance.

4. In comparison with other historical towns such as Sukhothai and Rattanakosin, historical and architectural assets in Ayutthaya are not of such high impression as those in both towns. The difference is more apparent when it compares to such ancient towns abroad such as Nara in Japan or Rome in Italy. Tourist attractions sites in Ayutthaya need renovation and maintenance.

[...]

8. There is a lack of comprehensive public relations system, both at national and provincial levels.”6

The referred points are certainly valid, while I may question the relevance of natural resource as attractions or the absence of a landmark as entrance. Even in Sukhothai, there is no landmark entrance, but only the moat surrounding the old city itself. And such a moat is not even very notable, as far as you enter from the Eastern Gate. Point 4 is partially valid, as lot of work has been done in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sukhothai or Bangkok may have more impressive buildings or landmarks, but such absences do not lessen Ayutthaya tourists’ experience.

As I have recently (December 2010) visited Sukhothai archaeological park, the maintenance there certainly is superior to the one present in Ayutthaya in 2009-2010. While we will discuss later the aspect of renovation, it is certain that no much work has been done in the last 20 years within Ayutthaya Historical Park after the registration of the ancient town in the World Herit-


age List. Differently from Sukhothai, I have also noted that Ayutthaya had only the Master Plan done by Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, while Sukhothai had both UNESCO and Social Sciences, Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute Master Plans. Sukhothai has been also the research target of various foreign institutions, mostly Japanese, cooperating with Thai scholars, and its buildings have been extensively restored before the park itself was opened, as well as other restoration activities have been going on in more recent times.

The presence of Western visitors, opposed to the number of internal visitors to Ayutthaya, highlights the difference approaches present for the site itself. As for Thai visitors, the visit to the ancient capital is essentially for merit making. Therefore Ayutthaya cultural heritage has been partially set up with this specific in mind. Vihara Phra Mongkhool Bophit, Wat Phra Main, the various personal offerings of monk’s statuettes present almost everywhere in the park respond to this specific exigency. As for the buildings, the Asian concept of living buildings should be considered. A Buddha statue without head, or a wat without roof are not appreciated by the Thais in their religious visits. In such way, the restoration of Vihara Phra Mongkhool Bophit should be intended, in the spirit of the Nara declaration, paragraph 5:

“The diversity of cultures and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind. The protection of cultural and heritage diversity in our world should be actively promoted as an essential aspect of human development.”

For foreign visitors instead, a visit to Ayutthaya is a more complicated issue. As most of the foreigners seem to come for a daily visit, with only something in the region of ⅓ actually staying overnight, the experience to Ayutthaya is quite limited to a visit that some guide books or hotels may have

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advertised as a must to do. One of the most recent works about the city highlights the problem of not having anything interesting after sunset and this should be considered by those responsible for Ayutthaya tourist promotion. They also come from a cultural background where the old buildings are not touched, but kept in the pristine conditions following directives issued in the 1964 Venice Charter. The fact is however that Ayutthaya art and architecture are far from their cultural background, as there is not any teaching about South-east Asian art in the Western world, apart from very specialized University courses. Thus, any visit to the monuments present there will be essentially conditioned by the amount of information as present around the monument itself, other than eventual tourist handbooks or manual. Such ability to retain, inform and entertain the tourist is not of minor account. If a tourist is unable to understand the essential features of a monument, the time spent to admire it will be considerable short, limited to a cursory visit of various parts of the monument itself and (s)he will not investigate any further and will see any of those monuments as they will be seen as essentially similar.

Thus, the scope of this investigation was checking the amount of tourist information (how could a tourist be “educated”, the range of such entertainment [educational entertainment]) present on site, which also means within the range of the site itself (tourist booths, ticket office, tourist shops).

The specific target was the historical park in its entirety, but with special focus on buildings belonging to the Ayutthaya period, and if possible, not further restored or adapted for a new use. This has eventually left out some of the monuments, due to their being new structures, or heavily restored (such as Pridi Banomgyong’s monument or Wat Na Phra Main). As the intention to study the archaeological park as unity, the island of Ayutthaya, and sites immediately surrounding the island itself have been studied. The list follows this report.

Research methodology
The methods of the research are essentially based on books about Tourist Interpretation. The essential questions were as follows: how can an archaeological site “speak” about its past? How can an extraneous reality be made actively participant in someone’s education and entertainment?

Thus, the research methodology is centred on the analysis of the interpretation material as present at the historical park at the moment, its actual limitations and virtues, and how the information could be improved in the short and long term. While preliminarily the research was focused on Western visitors, the aims then has been extended to any foreign visitors to the archaeological park itself. As expert in archaeology and museology, but completely uninformed about Ayutthaya historical heritage and park, I wanted to see the park completely free from previous scholarly research and extensive archaeological preparation. I have seen the park with the same sort of armamentaria a normal cultural tourist would visit Ayuttahaa, camera and a tourist guide. In my case, the tourist guidebook has been the joint book by Charnvit Kasetsiri and Michael Wright, Discovering Ayutthaya, bought on my first visit to Ayutthaya.

(13) Naraphong Charassri, “The role of performing arts in the interpretation of heritage sites with particular reference to Ayutthaya World Heritage Site,” PhD dissertation (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 2004), 1. The new activity of the floating market opened on 2nd May 2010 can possibly attenuate this sensation.
With such preparation, the archaeological park has been visited completely anonymously, as a normal tourist coming to see Ayutthaya. Therefore, no special permissions for taking photos have been asked nor free admission to the archaeological park searched for.

Therefore, the purpose of the research was of establishing the best possible experience in a World Heritage Park, also including other problems harming the tourist experience. The fact that the historical park has to be improved quite drastically has been noted in various Thai dissertations. Apart from a PhD specifically dealing with the problem of interpretation, the absence of activities and festivals has been discussed. Another Master dissertation has been submitted specifically dealing with the problem of marketing and tourists staying longer at Ayutthaya itself. Those researches have been used as basis for further research and study. Aphivan’s dissertation and her joint article has some values for my discussion, but the limits imposed by the author have left some gaps.

**Ayutthaya Archaeological Park actual problems**

Ayutthaya was the capital of Siam from 1350 up to 1767, alternating long period of independence to sporadic rule by Burma. The last conflict with Burma led to the destruction of the city in 1767. The history of the site from a scholarly point of view is more recent. The beginnings of the Twentieth century saw a progressive interest toward Ayutthaya ruins, with Rama V being one of the first to order restorations. During 1950s, a series of archaeological discoveries, both by chance, as due to illegal diggings by thieves, as well as by excavations led by the Fine Arts Departments brought to the foundation of the Chao Sam Phraya Museum, and at restoration, finalized and culminated with the inscription of the Ayutthaya Historical Park in the registry of the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1991, at the Fifteenth Session held at Carthage, between 9th and 13th December. The criteria used for Ayutthaya registration was selection criteria iii:

> “to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.”

Within this background, the project starts from a personal experience at Ayutthaya in 2008, at the time of a visit with a group of future tourist guides. The first impression was about the great extension of the park, and about the actual problems a tourist guide was going to meet whenever they had to explain what a visitor had in front of their eyes.

Buddhist art and culture, as well as Khmer and Ayutthaya artistic features are not part of the “normal” tourist’s cultural formation; the main concern was what they could understand of it.

As the archaeological park extends over various hectares and sites, my investigation was about the interpretation of each site, and how they could be improved in order to improve tourist presence and improve understanding of Thai culture.

Over the extension of the project, the entire island of Ayutthaya has been visited in various times. While the initial idea was of having any monument investigated and studied, the extension of the archaeological park and some logistic problems have made such enterprise difficult.

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(17) Suwanna Thuraphan, “Tourists’ Behavior and Satisfaction to Historic City of Ayutthaya, the World Heritage Destination (Thailand)” (Bangkok: University of Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2008).

to achieve. In any case, the list of monuments as given in the book by Professor Charnvit Kasetsiri has been used in order to choose the major archaeological structures. The book in question has been also used as a sort of guidebook, in order to highlight achievements and problems for any interpretation of Ayutthaya historical park. The scope was an analysis of the archaeological feature of most of the sites, the actual conditions, and their actual visibility and interpretation.

Interpretative material, here intended as guide books, is lacking. The most useful can be considered the volume co-written by Charnvit Kasetsiri and Michael Wright, used by me as a tourist guidebook.19 The book gives a lot of information about the history of the city and its rulers, as well as the various personalities dealing with the Ayutthaya court. Such a mastery is laudable, as the work has been done by one of the foremost scholars of the Ayutthaya Period.20 Yet, as the description of the temples is given, there are gaps relative to the parts of the various temples, and most of all, no drawing or plan of how the temple was originally looking like. The Tourism Authority of Thailand printed a guidebook, which may serve as introduction to the different parts of the city, but certainly not apt to being more than introductory.21

As the guidebook should be focused on help for interpretation, two books can be here presented as useful, one found at the Chulalongkorn University Main Library and the other during my visits in Ayutthaya.22 The former has the interesting reconstructions of various temples (Wat Phra Ram, Wat Mahathat, Wat Ratchaburana, Wat Maheyong, Mahaprasat Throne Hall, Wat Phra Si Sampet and others). At Wat Mahathat, a copy of the prang from this book was stuck on the temple itself. The latter presents reconstructions of temples and buildings, which differ from those in the previous volume. While the former is not actually present at Ayutthaya, the latter can be found in some of the ticket booths (I have bought my copy at the Chao Sam Phraya Museum). Yet, all these books do not answer the simple questions such as: what was the shape of the building, what was the function, what are the representations present in that stupa? What are/were the artistic features of the monument in question?

From a logistic point view, the absence of maps giving some more information than a simple list of names is lacking. The Ayutthaya Provincial Administration Organization releases a tourist map of Ayutthaya, where the buildings are certainly mentioned in order, but no further specification of their importance or relevance is given.

There are maps present at the entrances to the various temples. They may explain the location of a particular ruin within the complex, but nowhere help the tourist understand the particular function of it. As already referred in the preliminary report, new entrance boards will be supplied for the various monuments. Depending on the material, the fate of those boards is doomed like the ones already existing. Extreme heat, rain and humidity will destroy them in very few years. The other problem is certainly the model those boards should have and the actual contents. A textual description does not make justice of the actual building itself. I understand that tridimensional reconstructions will be provided in a near future, possibly in the TAT building still under refurbishment. As I am informed through the newspapers about it, I believe that those reconstructions will be similar to that present in the Ramkhamkaeng Museum in Sukhothai Historical Park and Sukhothai Information Center.

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19 Charnvit Kasetsiri and Michael Wright, Discovering Ayutthaya (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation, 2007).


21 Tourism Authority of Thailand, Ayutthaya Historical City Park (Bangkok: Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2000).

As for the archaeological site itself, the temples and structures are under different entities (Fine Arts Department, temple jurisdiction, and other stakeholders), the enterprise for a coordination of the various activities is almost impossible. The ticketing is not homogenous, as the Historical Study Centre is not part of the Fine Arts Department, so a new ticket is required, and the same is for Wat Yai Chaimongkhol and the Japanese Village. While the Japanese Village is quite nice, and pedagogically quite evolved, its isolation from other tourist attractions make it virtually unexplored by tourists.

I understand that the Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, originally thought to be at the Japanese Village itself, has been funded by the Japanese government. It was a success at the beginnings of 1990s, when the park was opened. Yet, its actual contribution to a better explanation of Ayutthaya as whole is quite limited.

There is a serious shortage of TAT guides in Ayutthaya, as I have never been approached and asked whether I need one. In Wat Mahathat I have seen guides explaining to some of the visitors, but many of them seem to be employed through hotels and not available in other ways. As I compare Ayutthaya with Sukhothai, I may say that the TAT guides at Sukhothai are present and visible, with their own badges and touring around. As the UNESCO office in Bangkok has worked particularly hard to establish guidelines for Guides to World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia, such absence in Ayutthaya is quite disconcerting.

Almost nowhere, with the exception of Wat Phutthai Sawan, I have found the labelling as help, but many of them were certainly puzzling. Some of them do not have a good level of English, and this is not the major point, but the information given raises more questions than answers.

Just as example, referring to the sandstone head of Lord Buddha embraced by a bodhi tree in Wat Mahathat, the inscription reads (misspellings included):

“All that remains of this sandstone Buddha image is part of its head, while the body has disappeared. The head is in the style of the Ayutthaya period. It lies beneath a bodhi tree beside the minor vihans.”

Anyone reading this label will be left to wonder what the Ayutthaya period style for the Buddha statue actually was and what is different from an earlier or later period for instance, as well as what is a minor vihan. It might be understood that the building on the back is a vihan, but what was the actual function of it is not said. As noted by Moscardo, people adjust their experience in base to what they already know. The problem is sometimes the interpreters have different beliefs or the interpreters overestimate the capacity of the tourists to understand the information presented.

As for the restoration, many temples have been massively restored in the last couple of decades, if not earlier, as the restoration bricks show. The fact however, that those bricks are marked with the new date, but in any case similar for colour to the original ones will create many prob-

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lems for their identification in the next few years. As many new bricks have their original mark worn out, it will be virtually impossible to know whether a piece of wall is essentially a new restored wall, or an extant one. At this stage, I wonder why a slightly different colour has not been chosen for the new bricks, so they could be distinguished from the old ones. As the Nara document has been mentioned, what I assert here is that the reconstruction has been done excessively, giving somehow a distorted vision of the ruins themselves.

The problem of the restoration is essential for Phra Mongkhol Bophit. As the temple has been massively rebuilt, the original conditions of the temple before the restorations are shown in photos taken at the beginnings of the twentieth century CE and placed inside the temple, but a visitor can be left wondering how the temple looked like in Ayutthaya times. Moreover, the different aspect of Phra Mongkhol Bophit and the other temples with prangs should have been explained, somewhere in the plaque sited in front of the temple itself, which just gives only the history of the temple itself.

The temples themselves can be a source of cultural enrichment, as two different concepts of “living” heritage are opposed each other: the Asian one, whereas the monument has to maintain certain characteristics and appropriateness in the daily use, with a Western concept of heritage as immutable in the times. This should be extensively discussed in a preliminary stage for any modern interpretation issue.

As I go around Ayutthaya, what I see at the moment is a series of detached monuments, without a link between them, link that exists in many cases. As I visit Phra Mongkol Bophit, somewhere should be said about the discovery of Buddha found inside the shoulder of the main Buddha image in the temple, now kept at the Chao Sam Phraya Museum. It would establish a cultural link between objects and would give a hint to any visitor to see the museum.

Archaeology is a very interesting activity, and I talk by personal experience. But archaeology in many cases has been the expression of a cultural elite, who could pursue their interests without much concern about money.27 This has led to look anything out of this very restrict circle of “pure” scholarship as essentially contaminated and unworthy to be followed.28 Or that heritage and preservation are two opposed concepts, which cannot go together.29 Heritage has been con-


(28) See also the critique by Henry Cleere, “Introduction: The Rationale of Archaeological Heritage Management,” in Archaeological Heritage Management in the Modern World (ed. Henry Cleere; 1989; repr., One World Archaeology; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 16: “As Davis (ch. 27) cogently points out, archaeological heritage management is distinct from the discipline of archaeology. Even though a high proportion of archaeology graduates make career in heritage management, there has been no formal training courses in this specialty until comparatively recently. During the 1970s many US universities began to introduce postgraduate courses in cultural heritage management, but few countries have followed their lead. The best example is probably that of Italy, where recent reforms of university studies have resulted in a bifurcation of students into research or heritage management at an early stage in their archaeology courses. D’Agostino rightly draws attention to the dangers of such a system, which runs the risk of the ‘devaluation’ of archaeological heritage managers compared with research archaeologists. [...] This situation is directly attributable to the failure so far on the part of archaeological heritage managers to recognize that the vocation that have chosen is a profession in its own right, of equal standing with research or teaching in social terms. Until they do so, these feelings of resentment and injustice will persist, to the detriment of heritage as much as its managers.”

(29) This position has been criticised by Bella Dicks, Culture on Display. The Production of Contemporary
sidered something between a disgrace and a necessary nuisance, never for what really is: a way to increase interests about a culture and a source of income for the research.

Ayutthaya needs the money from the government, but it cannot live only with that, as it is enough for salaries and in order to keep the park in the actual conditions, without any further improvement. A strong tourist plan would reinvigorate the park, and bring some more revenue to the park itself. As it is at the moment, the attention toward the tourists is completely absent, in spite of the fact that the numbers visiting the park are quite consistent, in spite they are not increasing.

As the historical park is actually used, there are many areas that are not visited at all. I have been throughout the island, but in Sri Nakakharin Park, the monuments there are virtually unexplored. I understand to give importance to Wat Mahathat or Vihara Phra Mongkol Bophit. But within the island itself there are contradictions, as Wat Ratchaburana and its very interesting paintings in the treasure chamber are much less visited. But the valorisation of the archaeological park should also have been focused to raise attention to other parts of the park itself as well. Going out of the actual island, I have actually visited Wat Chaiwattanaram, Wat Phutthai Sawan, Wadi Kudi Kaeo, Wat Ayodhaia, Wat Maheyong, the Portuguese and the Japanese settlements. Apart from Wadi Kudi Kaeo and Wat Maheyong, I have not seen any foreign or indigenous tourists in the other occasions.

It is fair to say that for the foreign settlements you really need a car, as they are not easily reachable with the bicycles you rent, and going out from the island itself requires some sort of vehicle, as the itinerary may take a while and the heat can be a big obstacle for going around by bicycle. But the simple fact they were without visitors raises more objections than praises: if the archaeological park cannot be developed in its full extension, it was much better to cover a small area under the UNESCO World Heritage status. What I am saying might be a sort of concept brought to the extreme, but it is more than a sensation than after obtaining the World Heritage status, the entire park has not been developed any further. As I will never stop to say, reaching the World Heritage List is not the final act of a process, only the starting point.30

This also brings to the transportation problems. There are obviously bicycles and motorbikes to rent and the local tuk tuks available. In no case however, those services are of some help to improve the vision of the park itself, as they do not have any input where the tourists should be carried, but just follow what the tourist has already chosen. Having a heritage park of those dimensions requires some ways to help the tourist going around and visiting without problems.31

The original Master Plan as presented by the University of Chulalongkorn has still its validity now. The problem is that it has not been fully implemented. The reasons for it can be of various genre, and I am not in the position to discuss them. But the Master Plan included landscaping and improvements to the city plan. There was also the idea of dividing the city in various tourist tours, so any section could be visited with different methods of transportation. At the Seventh Seminar on the Conservation of Asian Cultural Heritage, Mr Prateep Phengtako referred about the progresses in the implementation of the park itself, once the various offices and ministries had given their approval.32 But no much can be actually seen as implemented.

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Visibility (Issues in Cultural and Media Studies; Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), 135–36.


(31) From Naraphong Charassri, “The role of performing arts in the interpretation of heritage sites with particular reference to Ayutthaya World Heritage Site,” 11–12, I understand that a project of such genre had been already proposed, but it was rejected for its costs.

If this is about interpretation and restoration, the issue about personnel is quite serious: there is a general lack of motivation in the personnel on duty to the various temples. While I understand that it can be very hot staying in the ticket boots for long hours, the job is certainly not difficult, and some more responsiveness and ability to deal with visitors should be offered. Asking if you are interested about a printed guide of the temple, or just saying that there is multiple day pass available does not require a big effort. A welcoming attitude should be essentially more rewarding for the tourists, as well as fill the days of the wardens a bit better.

This also implies level of security and attention to the object exposed. As it has been already mentioned in my preliminary report, the disappearance of objects from Chao Sam Phraya Museum in November 2009 did not look appealing as far as security concerns are the focus. Whichever way the robber entered or stood in the museum, the lapse of controls before the museum closing seems to me quite evident.

I have also to say about rubbish. I have found rubbish in the back of Wat Borom Phuttaram—documented in the preliminary report and found still there in March 2011—dirt and not exploded fireworks in the back part of Wat Mahathat. Those temples are in the island itself, and should be completely cleaned and not obstructed by such visions. Dirt and rubbish also raise health concerns, which should not be.

Some points about ticketing should be said. For a Western visitor remains difficult to explain the different in pricing, as in Europe, a Thai and a European would pay the same amount of money to go to see the Louvre Museum for instance, unless you are in a protected category (senior citizen, unemployed, and student under a certain age with a demonstrated international student card). And the British Museum in London is free to anyone, British, European and Thai without difference.

Still about ticketing, there is something strange in the way the ticketing has been subdivided. When I buy a multiple day ticket, I would expect to be able to enter in any of the parts of Ayutthaya. Thus, I do not understand why I have to pay for the Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, Wat Yai Chaimongkhol and the Japanese settlement. I was quite amazed by the fact that I had to pay for entrance there, while I had supposedly paid the 220 baht multiple day tickets for being sure that I could enter everywhere. Obviously, they are not part of the Fine Arts Department, but this should have been explained somewhere, maybe on the tickets themselves, what the multiple day tickets gives and what it is excluded.

The prohibition of taking photos in Thai museums is one of the most difficult regulations to swallow, however. Usually, you are asked of not taking photos for copyright reasons, otherwise no one will buy the museum catalogue where those objects are exhibited, or afraid that the flashlight may damage the paintings. For Chao Sam Phraya and Chantarakasem museums, there are virtually no painted objects, apart from architectural gilded elements, or Buddha statues. Therefore the problem of the flashlight disappears. Moreover, there is virtually no English language catalogue of the Museums themselves —there are in Thai language— in spite of the fact that there are the Wat Mahathat and Wat Ratburana treasures in the Chao Sam Phraya Museum. So, no catalogue can be sold. Thus, the protection of photo copyrights is not the right answer either. I have been told that photographs may expose the illustrated object to the risk of illegal antiquities hunters, as they will show the photo to eventual customers somewhere in the world.

The danger of stealing on someone else's commission may be true, but the same fact that

html (date of retrieval: 9 March 2010).

(33) The books in question are: Fine Arts Department, A Guide to Chao Sam Phra Ya Museum National Museum (in Thai; Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 2005); Fine Arts Department, Gold Treasures of Ayutthaya in the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum (in Thai with English summary; Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 2005).
Chao Sam Phraya Museum was deprived of various artefacts even with the prohibition in action demonstrates that it is not working anyway.

I would be keener of having a photo permit to be paid for, which will make the museum slightly richer, with all the precautions for fragile objects anyway.

**STALLS**

Since my last visit the stalls from Phra Mongkhol Bophit have been repositioned on the southern part of the temple itself. They are not at the entrance of Wat Phra Si Samphet as it was during my earlier visits, and this is helping to keep the place in a quiet environment. The stalls are still in the car park of Wat Mahathat however.

In March 2011, I have also visited the floating market and elephant village on the eastern side of the island. I have to say that this kind of business may help the local economy, but the fact that it is owned by a private company actually limits the impact on local economy. For the actual impact over longer stays of tourists, only time can say about it.

Also the idea of a sort of Tram Park at Ayutthaya, which I understand it has been now stopped, was never going to improve the visits to Ayutthaya as whole, but only of (very) few specific parts. Existing means of transportation can be more useful, or can be implemented with less distress for any parts involved.

**LOCAL PARTICIPATION**

As just discussed about the tram I wonder the level of local participation in decisions concerning the park. I have more than a feeling that certain encroachments between public monuments and private property, which I have documented in one case, but many more are present, are sometimes due to the fact that the locals feel they receive orders from above, without any consultation from them, as well as they do not feel proud of their own heritage. At the level of local economy, I have not seen anything that I could relate as advantages of having the park in itself. The locals of course are the main work force as gardeners, cleaners or builders, for restoring the damaged buildings, or managing the ticket boots, but no input from them seems to be accepted or at least required for the way the buildings in the park are managed.34

As it was already asserted in 2001, both governmental and tourist agencies should promote a development of tourism within the local communities, at the same time participating in the decision making, therefore benefic to tourism and heritage altogether.35 The main scope of it is making the local communities proud of their own heritage and contemporarily getting the re-

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wards for such attention.\(^{36}\) The case of Ko Kret in Nonthaburi province could serve as example of positive attitude and input by local population.\(^{37}\) A possible improvement of the advantages to locals, in ways through which income generated by the park would somehow employed to help the local economy would bee more than welcome by the people of Ayutthaya. It has been written recently (23rd\(^{6}\) July 2010) that some of the people of Ayutthaya would like to take care of the park within the local community. As the conditions of some of the wats are certainly in disarray, I would accept any contributions by local inhabitants to safeguard what is their own heritage, other than Thailand’s and the world’s. This may also an incentive against stealing boards and other objects from the temples themselves.

**Improvements**

What I propose here is a holistic approach, which will serve the interests of the Fine Arts Department, as well as local stake holders.\(^{38}\) The improvements I propose here are both structural and specific to certain parts of the park.

There are two global issues involved. Firstly, an appreciation of their own past by Ayutthaya inhabitants. I have read that modern people in Ayutthaya do not know their own past and what surround them.\(^{39}\) While I can speak only indirectly about it, if there is anything true about such situation, this is a serious shortcoming, which paired to the lack of participation, seriously undermines the actual existence of Ayutthaya heritage.

An Ayutthaya historical park centre should be built. As the actual Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre is substantially an external institution, a new centre entirely funded and controlled by the Fine Arts Department should be created or the Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre should become part of the Fine Arts jurisdiction.

The new Ayutthaya Centre should be pushing toward an evaluation of the actual archaeological park as whole, not only the most conspicuous parts, which are reached in any case. But the Fine Arts department needs a new approach to the problems. It should assume the role of being the unique tutor and information provider of the park. There are many structures, which work as almost separate entities (Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, Japanese Village, the Ayutthaya historical park under the control of the Fine Arts Department). And this is not the way Ayutthaya park should work. The model may work in Bangkok, where different cultural establishments, sometime in competition, can survive without problems. So, the Fine Arts Department should acquire any other structure involved with Ayutthaya archaeological heritage, as well as propose a long term planning, say at least for the next five years. But it should also be open to anyone who has the ability of keeping Ayutthaya alive. For this reason I have talked about a


\(^{(38)}\) The benefits of a holistic approach are various, but I can limit myself to stressing that a general plan would avoid over budgeted expenses, as different agencies deal with the same heritage, cf. Dallen J. Timothy and Gyan P. Nyaupane, “Protecting the Past: Challenges and Opportunities,” in *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Developing World: A Regional Perspective* (ed. Dallen J. Timothy and Gyan P. Nyaupane; Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobiliy; London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 31.

central organisation, which should be in any case flexible enough to match new exigencies or situations that may come. Thus, involving various scholars working with the Ayutthaya period, as well as Heritage specialists and the local population, a general rethinking of the park should be offered to the public.

The main scope of the new Ayutthaya Tourist Centre would be of informing the visitor about the history of the city, providing major reconstructions of the temples, plans of the city, and other educational and shopping products (replicas, books). A bookshop would be certainly a welcome addition, selling books illustrating the history of the place, as well as souvenirs and replicas of some of the most important objects.

The question of merchandise would make many scholars see it as something against any academic concept, but I would like to remind that major incomes are needed to the historical park in order to keep it as it is, and I do not mean improve it. In any part of the world, Culture by its own cannot survive with the income generated by ticket sales and many museums are in deficit. Merchandise is a necessity, and many important museums make use of it. I just mention here the British Museum in England, and the Metropolitan Museum at New York. They sell everything, from books to neckties, all the products connected with artistic objects present in their collections or there exhibited. In this case, the merchandise as present at the Chao Sam Phraya Museum is not enough. First, because what is on sale is somehow unrelated to Ayutthaya (I have personally bought there a guide to Bang Chiang discoveries). A replica of some objects found in the crypts of Wat Mahathat or Wat Ratchaburana would be acceptable, as long as those replicas do not touch religious issues or can create moral obstacles.

Various itineraries focused about different sectors of the city should be proposed (religious, political, foreigners in Ayutthaya). Religious: as many Thais go to Ayutthaya as merit making, such aspect should be developed, also offering various temples for it. But a development of the various areas should be proposed. Some attempts of anastylosis, full reconstruction of a (secondary) temple, with UNESCO permission, should be attempted, in order to improve the interpretation issues as said above. How much interpretational issues for tourist should go together with an extensive archaeological research about each Ayutthaya structure is certainly a question I cannot answer, but I believe that a research of this genre is also a good point for eventual future researches.

Moreover, a visual reconstruction of a temple will help more than a thousand words. While certainly Ayutthaya should not become a sort of Disneyland, as the issue of authenticity should be kept in any case, this is a path that it should be undoubtedly followed. I can even suggest eventually where: in the large archaeological area in the south western part of the island itself. The atmosphere there is certainly apt for it, as one reconstruction of a temple would not spoil the landscape but would valorise the area, as it is actually not visited at all.

As various itineraries will be proposed, the use of various ways of transportation through the archaeological park with settled times would help in order to visit less explored areas of it. An easy way of transportation would be a sort of cultural train on wheels, which working in cooperation between the Fine Arts and Tourist information centre, would go around the city and the tourists can buy a daily ticket for a certain amount, and using it as much as they can during the day. So I can go out at Wat Ratchaburana, and after I finished the visit, get another train in order to go to Wat Yai Chaimongkhon. The train in itself would be an attraction, and painted/camouflaged in a certain way (steam engine or something similar), will be perfectly in style with the monuments, or at least not excessively in disagreement. As I go around, the actual ticket boots should be refurbished and given a more tourist friendly approach, such as having pamphlets and publications relative to that specific monument, as long as it is possible. A cart train has been now implemented, reaching Wat Phra Si Samphet, Vihara Phra Mongkhol Bophit and Wat Mahathat. I consider it as first step toward a major integration of the whole park, as many other
sectors are still not visited, I may just give Sri Nakakharin Park or the Wat Maheyot, Wadi Kudi Daeo as further places to be considered.

Another urgent task if the establishment of a group of guides trained and licensed by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and resident in Ayutthaya, who can be easily contacted, also waiting for tourists at specific temples or relevant buildings. This task is as urgent as the points mentioned above. Without a group of local guides, nothing is possible, also raising the level of awareness about the historical park in the local population. Preparing a tourist guide does not require more than four months, and with the benefit of the licence, as well as the promotion by local and national tourist agencies, the economic profit for the guides, and the image return for the historical park in general would be enhanced.

Together with the creation of a group of guides, a web site dealing with the history of Ayutthaya, promoting the place, giving a lot of updated information about events, hotels and obviously the culture of Ayutthaya should be established. The TAT web page devoted to Ayutthaya is not the best in promoting the city itself. The web site should provide any historical and/or archaeological information about Ayutthaya matching also the various levels of interests and ages. A private web site is already in place, giving a lot of information about Ayutthaya heritage. This genre of information would be great for anyone involved, and what are required are essentially a good programmer, and the necessary Internet bandwidth. Such web site will help any tourist who wants some preliminary information before coming to Ayutthaya. In this case, the technological or economic problem is not substantial, as computers are now cheap and any investment in it awarded in a short time. The main investment will be the time needed for creating it.

Still regarding the information in the digital age, at the Ayutthaya tourist centre, a tourist should be able to pay a deposit for an iPod or something similar, in which the entire Ayutthaya itinerary should be recorded, with reconstruction of monument in its original shape, the history of the monument from its origins to the actual restoration. The cost of such machines is rapidly decreasing, and the renting of them would also justify some more expenses for foreign tourists or anyone interested about them. Digital information is part of the normal life now, so it would not be only a toy to play with, but a real educational tool. I appreciate now the fact that Narrowcasters has placed an audio guide for Wat Mahathat, Wat Phra Si Sanphet and Wat Chaiwatthanaram. Yet, again, this can be considered only a first step, as other temples need to be included in it, at least Wat Ratchaburana, Wat Phutthai Sawan. As the service has been recently implemented, I cannot comment about the quality of the archaeological explanations present in it.

As last point, the cultural relevance of the city should be valorised much more than it now. The close proximity to Bangkok may make Ayutthaya suffer for the short time visits done by actual tourists, but it also fair to say that the focus of TAT is not certainly centred to sell Thai heritage as one of the major tourist attractions. Phuket, Pattaya and Krabi are the usual places for it. While this is not strictly a Fine Arts Department problem, pursuing the road of beach

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(40) http://www.ayutthaya-history.com for the website.

(41) This attitude was already criticised by World Tourism Organization, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development. A Report on the International Conference on Cultural Tourism (Madrid: World Tourism Organization, 2001), 5. As noted by Suwanna Thuraphan, “Tourists' Behavior and Satisfaction to Historic City of Ayutthaya, the World Heritage Destination (Thailand),” 141–42, TAT should provide activities to make the tourist stay longer, as they do not spend more than half a day for the destination. It also should provide a conservation of cultural and tourism resource with the environment. A development of the characteristics as well as being part of the cultural destination should be done. TAT should find links with hotels in Bangkok to promote and persuade tourists to visit Ayutthaya as well as providing free transportation. Word of Mouth is an interesting strategy, and TAT should make more understanding to the local people and experienced tourists in persuade everyone be the host of the destination, enhance welcoming and service approach and transport the destination to be one of the famous tourist spot together with retain and
entertainment also implies a loss of Thai valour, as beaches offer a quite standardised image and facilities, mostly of Western inspiration. But Thai culture should be exported as well, not only the one linked to the Thai smile, if it still exists. From a pretty historical point of view, the way Thai history is presented (the famous “Three Kingdoms”) is only a simplified way to explain Thai history, also highlighting the importance of Bangkok in the process. But it is an asserted reality that the Three Kingdoms existed, not in the way of development, but somehow in competition between each other.

In any case, as far as I can see, two different sites are worthy to be followed for their tourist approach. The first is the Portuguese settlement, as the actual archaeological discovery is explained with posters hanging from the roof. In its simplicity, it gives some ideas of the church, the burials present in them, and the way the discovery was done. There is nothing really pointing out to how the actual ancient structures looked like, but at least, the actual remains are quite well matched by an archaeological explanation of the burials and their contents.

From a didactic point of view, the Japanese settlement has various ways of explaining the actual relations between Ayutthaya and Japan. It suffers however for the lack of material: in spite of some reconstructions, there are no ancient objects or archaeological elements present on site.

A functional approach to the site should see a sort of merging of both. In itself, the approach to the public as present at Wat Phutthai Sawan is quite interesting, and the only example for Ayutthaya, where some of the architectural features receive a brief explanation, which helps the tourist identify some of the features.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AND ISSUES

While primary in many circumstances, I have postponed a discussion of the archaeology of Ayutthaya until the last. The buildings are suffering, most for the raise of the subsoil water, as well as the frequent inundations happening during the year. There are evidence of subsidence, attested at Wat Phra Si Samphet as well as Wat Chatthaiwanaram. Some elements are on the verge of collapse, unless some further consolidation is attempted.

Some of the archaeological restorations done in the past with concrete and/or cement are not up to modern standards, as they create the wrong impression of restoration (I give the example of Wat Ratchaburana and the restoration of the prang for instance). An overall plan of intervention is needed, and lots of funding need to be invested. But the management needs to think globally, as the area covered by the park is huge, and very often intersecting with the private sector, therefore creating conflictual situations.

The actual participation of Ayutthaya in the competition for the World Expo 2020 may give the impression to push for more economic income, but to what expenses for the archaeological heritage? The infrastructures needed for the Expo, how can be inserted in a geologically fragile environment as it is the old city of Ayutthaya? While I understand that the projected World Expo will not be in proximity of the archaeological park, I do not see any advantages for it in the short and in the long run. There has been concern about the stalls around Vihara Phra Mongkol Bophit as threatening the Heritage status, but a World Expo will more noxious than that, at development of the destination. TAT should promote appropriate event or festival to symbolise the historical and cultural of Ayutthaya, as the one event is not related to Ayutthaya history. TAT should provide more channels to give information of the Historic city in exhibition in domestic and international fairs and through Internet and websites. TAT should push more for local handicraft souvenirs.

least for an archaeological point of view. I also wonder what will happen with the structures needed for the Expo itself but then reduced as cathedrals in the desert, which will remain unused after the World Expo is finished. While archaeology should never prevail on the interest of local population, I certainly believe that damaging the landscape for an exhibition which will only last for a year, in the long run will spoil the atmosphere that many parts of the archaeological park are still able to instil in the visitors.

A quite recent study by the Global Heritage Fund, gives the example of Ayutthaya as how looting can seriously damage an archaeological site, and a photo from Wat Mahathat is shown. The robbery in the Chao Sam Phraya Museum has been already discussed above. I am not in a position and willing to discuss the issue any further, but as long as local inhabitants do not see any advantage for having “old things” in their backyards apart from selling them to an antique dealer, the park itself will not improve any further. Therefore, we go back to the same point: education. The Fine Arts Department should educate the local population about the importance of the objects present at Ayutthaya, at the same time reinforcing the fact that there are laws forbidding destruction and looting. Together with the stick however, the carrot should be given, as their cooperation will give benefits to both Historical Park and inhabitants.

Thailand in general and Ayutthaya in particular has lots to offer about cultural heritage, but the threats to it are also extremely high. With local and global participation, the possibility of having a world class heritage site, joined with a development of tourist industry focused on Ayutthaya past, will certainly be a pride for the city itself and its inhabitants.

(43) I refer to http://globalheritagefund.org/onthewire/, where some of the dangers about Ayutthaya archaeological heritage are described. I also refer to the article in the Bangkok Post on 17th January 2011, also reported in http://www.ayutthaya-history.com/PressFocusHP.html.


(45) Global Heritage Fund, Saving Our Vanishing Heritage, 64 Appendix B.
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PHOTO REPORT
INTRODUCTION
In the following pages, the temples and historical buildings actually visited during the research period are presented.
Each building is introduced by the name and a photo, as well as some other details relative to the actual exhibition of the material, in case of museums, or the actual problems inherent with the architecture, interpretation of the various architectural parts or historical material.
Only the conditions of the historical park are analysed and studied. Some studies about some of the temples are integrating this section, but more discursive and analytical discussions have been the focus of previous pages.
WAT KET

Actual conditions
Mixing of various headless Buddha statues, plus fragmentary elements.
The brick structure is preserved, but no decoration is present.
No explanation of the function of the structure. The temple needs some major improvements, as well as a better exposition of the objects reduced to fragments.

Improvements
At the entrance, a reconstruction of the temple would be a nice extension to it. As it is a conglomerate of various objects, a focus on distinguishing the various classes of objects should be a must. What is a *sema* is not known in the West. Moreover, the western concept of an archaeological site is completely different from the Thai usage and interpretation of it. In the Western world, an archaeological object is not actualised and worshipped, but stays as it is.

Photo description
The various statues are broken. Are they actually placed in their place of discovery? I believe not. So, what are the criteria for the actual placement?

1987 Master Plan
“The ruins of Wat Ket are in good conditions” (pp. 4-38). No further discussion given. The position of the temple is given on pictures 4.23 and 4.24 at the south of the Khun Paen house.

Actual conditions
As the temple is not actually integrated into the Master Plan, no differences can be highlighted.

Date of visit
29th October 2009
As for the statues above, two different features can be highlighted: first and foremost, the broken conditions of some of them should give space to some restoration. Secondly, the presence of an image of a Buddhist monk should be pointed out in order to denote the importance of the temple in question, as well as all the temples in general, as living places of worship.

Many of the statues are actually missing of their heads. A better visualisation is needed.
The actual clustering of a *sema* with other objects does not give any meaning to the object itself.

The top of the stupa needs some cleaning from the weeds growing on its bricks.
Actual conditions
Teak house. The house is quite well preserved, but the labelling is quite short. The English language of some of those labels is quite unidiomatic and presents grammatical mistakes. A detailed map, giving the complete usage of the house is missing.

Improvements
Map of the house and its functions should be provided.

1987 Master Plan
According to the plan, the house hosted the Fine Arts Department offices in the past. With a budget of 2 millions baht, the house would be part of a terminal and tourist service center.
As for the area, only some swamps are mentioned as damaging the area, apart from the shops around Vihara Phra Mongkol Bophit, “which degrade the potential of the area.” (page 4-38).
The planned improvements consisted in:
1) Office section for the Fine Arts Department
2) Public relation section with information services, maps and model displays, also including historical assets and toilets
3) Service station, storage and machines.
4) Open space including an open court, main entrance, parking lots and garden.

Differences
There is not nos. 1), 2), 3) and 4). The office of the Fine Arts Department is gone, and the house has been possibly restored after in 1990s, before becoming part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. The problem relative to the shops is still there, possibly moved to different area of Vihara Phra Mongkol Bophit.

Date of visit
29th October 2009
As now the teak house is part of the tradition, but is not currently in use, the labelling should be: “A big family usually built a group of houses facing one another with the central hall in the middle. The hall was a multipurpose room. For example, it was living room, private room, and used for family gathering at supper, or serving for official functions.” As it is, the central hall does not give the idea of such multi functionality. As for living room, what did it look like with furniture?
The placement of the objects is certainly interesting, but what do not say how the food was cooked, or what kind of food was eaten at that time? The label should be: “Compared with the other rooms of the compound, the kitchen is the smallest. It is separated in order to prevent the heat and the ashes spread to the living quarters.”
NOT IDENTIFIED. BETWEEN KHUN PHAN HOUSE AND WAT PHRA MONGKHOLBORPHIT

Notes
As in the rainy season, the wat was flooded and I could not see a way to go closer. I did not find the name.

Actual conditions
The temple was completely flooded at the time of the visit.

Improvements
Drainage of the subsoil water. As remarked in websites such as Global Heritage Fund (http://globalheritagefund.org/onthewire/), the situation about the subsoil water is substantial.

Date of visit
29th October 2009
As it can be seen in these photos, the damage sustained by the buildings in the rainy season is substantial. There are many instances, where the raise of the water level, accompanied by the flooding of the Chaopraya river makes the conditions of the old city quite difficult. More examples to follow.
VIHARA MONGKOLBORPHIT

Actual conditions
The temple has been heavily restored, as it is possible to see inside the temple, where photos with the pristine conditions of the temple are present. The photos are dated at the beginnings of the twentieth century CE.

Improvements
The temple is in good conditions, as the restorations are quite recent. As standing monument, it is certainly impressive, but it seriously contrasts with the conditions of the surrounding buildings. It gives the wrong impression that it has survived the Burmese invasion and the time, but the image is certainly wrong.
A more clear vision of the temple, and its various building and re-building stages should be provided. About the vendors, a general rethinking of the importance and relevance of local participation should be connected and promoted by all the parties involved with Ayutthaya archaeological park. Where are the local tourist guides, what is the relevance of local people in any decision involving the park itself?

1987 Master Plan
Appropriate facilities should be provided (shops, restaurant and snack bars). They should be together in the main tourist service area and not degrade the scenery of the Vihara.

Differences
Vendors are still there, around the entrance of Wat Phra Siu Sanphet. The cars do not park in front of the Vihara anymore, but most of the landscaping around the temple needs still to be done.

Dates of visit
29th October 2009 and 11th March 2011
As it can be seen in older photos (see opposite), the Buddha statue has been massively restored in modern times. This should be said somewhere, also explaining why such a restoration has been done, in order to explain the different view of heritage in Thailand and Western countries.
The plate reads: “During the fall of Ayutthaya Kingdom in 1767, the roof of the Vihara was damaged by fire and the head and the right arm of the image were broken. Later, the image was repaired and the Vihara was completely restored again in 1956.

On 23rd March 1990, the Supreme Patriarch presided over a candle lightening ceremony in front of the image and announced that people could honour the image by covering it with gold leaf. H.M. Queen Sirikit auspiciously paid homage to the image and donated Baht 70,000 to the restoration fund. Henceforward, the Mongkhon Bophit Foundation undertook to cover the image with gold leaf in celebration of the 60th birthday of H.M. Queen Sirikit.”

The fact that the temple has been massively restored should be visually placed somewhere outside the temples itself, as the visitor can understand the history of the building. Photos have been placed inside the temple itself, giving the view of the previous conditions at the beginnings of Twentieth Century CE. But this is not enough for a visitor.
Actual conditions
The major problem of the entire complex is the mixed nature of it. Wat Phra Si Sanphet does not have any reconstruction of the temple part and its complexes, while the ancient palace has many structures almost completely invisible by now, as they are destroyed to the lowest levels. This creates the idea that the buildings more destroyed are also the most ancient, which is not the case. As the area is very big, even for just walking around, but anyone just stays in the temple area, without going around the site, so there is no one going to the ancient palace or the walls along the Northwestern side. Some of the restorations done about 20 years ago are already falling apart and some further restoration work is needed.

Improvements
More information of any genre is needed. A board illustrating the original conditions more than welcome.

1987 Master Plan
“Another problem is the lack of services such as sign boards and cut-outs that describe the history of every particular construction work.”(4-47)
Landscape should be improved and pedestrian routes planned. The Ancient Palace is discussed in a different part of the Plan. Only an improvement of the land use is noted.

Differences
While restoration has been done, as well as the landscaping the interpretation problem still exists.

Dates of visit
29 October 2009 and 11th March 2011
How much of the plastering is actually original?

Here it should be a graphic reconstruction of the building, at least in order to give an idea of what it looked like.
What was inside the niche above?
The marker should explain what are the functions of the different buildings, in particular their aspect once in use. A map listing placement of the various building will be a welcome addition.
It is difficult to make a sense of the various buildings, as most are destroyed almost to the foundations.
Some cleaning from the grass is also needed. Some of the walls were restored in the North-eastern part. As most of the actual restoration marks indicating the date are disappearing, this creates a false impression.
Some of the restorations are already falling apart
The tree roots are actually damaging the stupa.
Actual conditions
The temple has many different parts, but no plan of the building as whole. It is not possible to understand how the temple looked like.
Some of the labels/markers are not clear. The temple also needs some cleaning from the grass and vegetation.

Improvements
Placing a reconstruction strategic places, plus trying to reassemble some of the Buddha statues.
The general structure of the temple has been reconstructed. The complex is extensive in size, but quite disperse in nature. The architectural and archaeological features are very interesting, but the nature of them is quite difficult to ascertain.
The labelling present is too general and generalist.

Photo description
1987 Master Plan
There is no distinct entrance to the place and other buildings obstruct the area.

Differences
Most of the actual plan has been implemented.

Date of visit
29th October 2009
It shows the continuous adoration of Buddha images, which is a pattern already seen in other places in the archaeological park. While interesting, it should be better explained within the context itself.

It has the relief of a walking Buddha. As the head is officially gone, it is difficult to understand the original view.
These are fragmentary Buddha statues, but as they are placed, they really do not look like that.

This photo and the next one show that the building needs a good cleaning from grass and other intrusive vegetation.
As for the preceding photo, a reconstruction of the body of the Buddha statue should be attempted, in order to provide a better visual explanation of the visual complex.
Actual conditions
The temple needs a general new explanation of the various parts of the buildings, and clarifying which ones are the major temple features. The presence and existence of the treasure should be better marked.

Improvements
I propose a reconstruction of the treasure room as it looked like originally, plus more explanation of the paintings present in the crypt.
There is a very interesting head of a Buddha statue at Wat Ratchaburana, which would be worthy a reconstruction.

1987 Master Plan
1) Improvement of the parking facilities.
2) Improvement of the pathways, so tourists can go around.
3) Route linkage, in order to promote Wat Ratchaburana.
4) Information boards and landscape architectural service booths.

Differences
While seemingly all the implementations planned have been done, the information part is still inconsistent.

Date of visit
29th October 2009
The treasure rooms should have been better with a sort of reconstruction of the original objects in place. The photo do not make any justice to the pieces themselves.

Reconstruction of the original decoration and position of the treasure. (From Ayutthaya. Guide to Art & Architecture, Bangkok 2007, page 20)
The representation of the birds should be better given, as well as explained, as it is not clear from the photo what is about. For the crypt, I believe that it should more valorised. Nowhere is described the existence of the treasure or the paintings, and there are no markers indicating that the crypt is open. While obviously there is no treasure, the paintings of the level 1 (life of Buddha) and 2 (Chinese murals) are worthy to be seen. The only problem is even if you go down, then you do not understand what is about, also for Thai people visiting them. For the level 3, where the treasure was found, it has to be said that a sort of reconstruction of where the treasure actually was, and how it was placed would be an interesting addition, more than just placing the actual boards showing the objects kept in the Chao Sam Phraya Museum.

The actual signpost present at the base of the prang itself can be quite misleading, as it does not highlight the importance and relevance of the paintings present.
Both signposts do not really clarify the various parts of the temple itself not its history.
Some of the markers are quite obscure for their contents. As for Wat Mahathat, Wat Ratchaburana would benefit of a general reconstructive map at the entrance with more general explanation about the each structure.
A reconstruction of the presumable body the text belongs to would be nice and acceptable.

Of the original Buddha statue only the laterite is actually survived. A reconstruction of the original conditions, maybe close to the original structure, would be an adequate parallel.
As for these two photos, the complex is difficult to decipher. The complex should have more information about what is actually visible and what is the real significance of it within the entire complex.
Actual conditions
The Museum is quite well organised, but the information material is quite scarce. The building has been robbed of some of its objects in late November 2009. As far as I know, the objects have never been retrieved.

Improvements
A better information of the museum should be attempted for, as it is now, it is quite difficult to understand the importance of the objects.

Dates of visit
30th October 2009, 17th March 2010, 11th March 2011
Description of the Museum
Room I, central part.
The north side has various Buddha heads and images. The problem with many of them is the labelling itself. The actual labels are quite new, as they have a photo plus, what it is, date of the object, style and provenance.

REMARKS: as the objects are visible, why do you need the photo? You can put a number instead, in case there multiple images explained in a single label. There is nowhere a description of the various styles of (U-Thong, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya).
Some of the cases have quite good lightening, and the seem new, but some of the cases in the eastern corner is quite poorly lightened, and they do not have labelling at all.

The West side has a few Buddha images, some of them on load from a private collection. Two of them have Naga heads surrounding Buddha (more explanation is needed in any case).
The same is for the massive head on the right and left of the North. They are beautiful, but they should have more explanation about them, and the head a possible reconstruction of the statue as whole.

The south wall has wood carvings. What are they? Where do they come from, what was their architectural context? (update 11th March 2011): There is now a print out in Thai and English, explaining the function of the various elements. Somehow, the version is too long. As usual, style, date and provenance are given, but where is the ancient context? How can I imagine their usage? In this case, the labelling is too small, and awkwardly placed, so it is difficult to read. Funnily enough, between the images coming from the chest and shoulders of Phra Monggkhoh Bophit temple, there is a very lengthy description of various particulars. The fact itself might have been positive, but it does not make any sense, considering that other statues in the same casing do not have any information about them.
There is a quite distinctive gable, yet again how did it look like in their architectural context? What was its architectural function?
The image of Garuda from a royal barge is very interesting, but why there is long label in Thai, but a very short one in English?

SECOND FLOOR
Wat Ratchaburana Treasure
The description of the the entire treasure is quite general, there is no description of each object. The actual labelling is very difficult to read, as the room is lightened only to show up the objects, but not the labelling. So why bothering to put it?
The board at the entrance explains the history of the discovery. On the right hand side of the entrance there is a video showing the objects found. The video is done only by images, without further explanation, or showing their actual placement in the chamber after they have been polished, but not their placement at the time of the discovery.
On the left hand side, going from the Wat Ratchaburana treasure to Wat Mahathat, many of the objects shown suffer of no English labelling. In itself, those objects suffer much more than the ground floor of the absence of labelling.

Wat Mahathat Treasure
The exhibition is the same as for Wat Ratchaburana, but the lightening of the labelling is slightly better. The exhibition of the objects is quite well done, and the description matches quite well their contents. I still do not understand from where they came from, their position, and for Wat Ratchaburana, their actual shape.
Only the video out of Wat Mahathat vault explains where the objects cam from, both for Wat Mahathat and Wat Ratchaburana.

UPDATE 17 March 2010
BUILDING 2
First visit (17th March 2010)
The room is long, hot and old. The exhibition has some interesting parts, but there is no labelling. There are series of panels in the middle of the room, but they are in Thai. In large part, the images of the panels are from books. As far as I can understand, Building 2 is a mixture of various elements. There is Chinese porcelain, the skeleton of a European man, pre-Ayutthaya material. As it is, it is difficult to understand the reasons of such different material to be placed together. Maybe, the building is intended as a sort of a collection of people exchanging with Ayutthaya and what has been found there. Maybe, a Thai visitor can understand that, certainly not a foreign tourist. Moreover, a map is needed explaining that apart from the main building, there is also building 2 to visit. At the time of my visit, the guardians did not put a full light on the room, so it was very dark in some parts.

Second visit (11th March 2011)
The room has been re-ordered, giving an overview of Ayutthaya civilisation and life when the capital was at its best. The labelling is only in Thai though.

The exhibition is substantially the same as seen earlier. On the left hand side however, there are 4 new cases with Buddha votive statues (labelling still missing).

Security update: they put sensors on the cases.
Actual conditions
Building completely without inscriptions. The brick structure is quite well preserved. On the stupa (right hand side of the viewer), there is an image of a walking Buddha, plus some floral decoration around the same niche. No understandable functionality apart from the central pillared hall.

Improvements
A reconstruction of the temple as it looked like during Ayutthaya times.

Date of Visit
17th March 2010
Supplying some information about the position of the Buddha statues at the top of the stupa, as well as the meaning of those positions would be an asset.
ANCIENT KLONG ALIGNMENT

Features
Buddha image on the stupa, walking attitude. Bust of Buddha statue in front.

Improvements
Placing the Buddha bust in a better position.

Date of visit
17th March 2010
Actual conditions
No labelling. Nothing to say that is it. There is no image. It seems that the right hand side of the stupa had the original plastering fallen off.

Improvements
There is enough left of the building to attempt a virtual reconstruction. Pointing out the shape of the stupa, the usage of the different structures are some of the points. Also a good cleaning from weeds and grass will improve the overall aspect of it.

Date of visit
17 March 2010
A possible reconstruction of the vihara on a board to be put in front would be possible.
These parts seem to be fallen from the stupa. If they cannot be put back on place, possibly they should be taken out.
Actual conditions
A plaque in front has been taken off. Various heads of Buddha’s statues in sitting position. Extant plastering of the prang. Buddha images preserved and some decoration of the back of the prang.

Improvements
Some elements help for a (virtual) reconstruction of the complex in the original aspect.

Date of visit
17th March 2010
The original structures are difficult to understand for the original location.
Broken Buddha statues

Partial architectonic elements
This image is one of the very few images still with colour extant on it. It is a very interesting for showing the polychromy of those statues.
Actual conditions
The labelling in Wat Mahathat is practically inconsistent. Outside the temple, there are a couple of labels which explain the history of the building, plus a map explaining the various buildings. But once you are inside, there is no clear idea, if there is any scheme at all about the structure of the building itself.
What is ancient, more recent, what is restored, how did they look like in origin?
These questions are not explained and the visitor will leave without having a clear idea of that they have seen.
After having checked the main chedi, as the main chedi has collapsed, the ruins are quite relevant, but difficult to explain. The original plastering has gone lost for the main part, so there is not much left to be seen.
The main hall had rows of Buddha images around, as small statues were placed on the niches.
No labelling or sign marking signal the history of the building itself.
In some parts, it was quite dirty: fireworks exploded, but not taken off.
Vendor and stalls at the entrance.
Coaches, vans, taxis parked in front of the entrance, sometimes with the engines on.

Improvements
Better placing of the vendors, too invasive, boards need a better English version. Reconstruction of the original forms and shape of the various parts of the temple is a must.
Some of the temple structure have been restored with cement pillars. Those pillars should be taken off, to improve the view of the complex and provide a different kind of consolidation.
The temple needs a general rethinking of what can be achieved in order to improve the tourist experience, which will be quite limited, in spite of the extension of the complex itself.

Date of visit
17th March 2010
Wat Mahathat is situated on the east of the Royal Palace. In the Historical Records of the Royal Secretariat, it is mentioned that after the completion of the battle from the north in 1392 B.E. King Ramathai lived once back to the capital. He happened to see on the evening Mr. Young and the victory over the enemy while he was walking at Phayao Phet Phra Yod. He decided to order the young to seal the position. After that, he established Phra Mahathat with 79 roi (18 meters in height and 3 via 0.6 meters) and named the temple “Wat Mahathat.”

As mentioned in the Historical Records of King Prasit, it was noted that Wat Mahathat was built during the reign of King Ramathai of 1392 B.E. It is a 23 Wat (160 meters) high building. The Prang (the central stupa tower) of the temple was built of lime before it collapsed in the Guwih during the reign of King Phra Phruang. It was not restored with the reign of King Phra Phruang in 1770 B.E. This temple was thus be restored and measured the height as 55 m (180 feet) resembling brick, timber, and plaster. However, after mere cultivation of the temple, presently all that remains is much basic.

In 2440 B.E. the E-W Area Department excavated the western main at Wat Mahathat, and found a statue containing many artistic pieces. Among them, particularly the image of Buddha, which was well preserved in the shrine and brown stone. In the crystal statue, a small golden image was found containing the gallery, precious stones, golden rings, golden Buddha images, and other ornaments.

The dates following the Western calendar should be put in brackets

Most of the text is practically illegible
The contents are similar, but not the same of the boards earlier. It includes a nice plan of the entire temple, but it is quite useless, as it should be also inside the temple itself.

The buses and the vendors are placed too in proximity of the temple itself.
Having any kind of vehicle and motorcycle waiting for the passenger partially spoils the atmosphere.

Selling products is one of the very few involvement of local population in dealing with their own heritage.
The original signpost of the Buddha head has quite a few moot points (see preliminary and final report about it)

The problem of Wat Mahathat is that its importance can be hinted by the greatness of the precinct, but its actual importance and role during the Ayutthaya period is nowhere highlighted. Moreover, the main problem is the relation of the various parts as whole, as it is possible to see in the following images.
The photo highlights the problem of how sustaining falling structures from a total collapse. The way it has been done here is not really up to modern archaeological standards. A more appropriate way would be a total consolidation of the zone, through pumps that lower the subsoil water level, and then trying to stabilise the wall itself.

The usual sign posts present in the archaeological park. While it is worthy to reinforce the rules about what the tourists should do, this kind of labels are of no help for people trying to discover the main functions of the temple.
It would be quite nice supplying an explanation of positions of the Buddha, what actually represents the position, if the iconography can serve to explain the date of this part of the building.

Some more information about the main stupa and its history should be supplied, also saying that a treasure was found there.
For the section here given, the main problem is explaining why the central court was surrounded by Buddha images. Something similar can be found at Wat Chai Wattanaram.

Usage of the building?
What is the building?

The reasons for those stones to be in the front part of the temple is not clear. If they are for possible reconstruction it might be acceptable, if it is only for storage, the placement is not that appropriate.
Actual conditions
The museum itself is well kept, the objects are not amassed in the rooms but there is a display criterion behind.

Pavilion 1
Objects of Rama IV. In the central room, there is the throne room. A better reconstruction as giving an idea of how the objects were used would be nice.

Pavilion 2
Main Room
The information material is appropriate, but a major didascalisation of the objects would be better. You can provide a small guide book if possible.
The exhibition of the objects is right, there is no crowded effect and each of the pieces can be studied or observed without feelings overwhelmed.

Building 5
The rooms are listed following the numbers given in the museum brochure.
Room 3.1 needs more explanations, what is a sema, how is its employed in Thai art?
There are inscriptions, why do not you provide a translation?
Room 3.2 It is Chinese art and pottery, but some more explanation will be appreciated, both for Thai and foreign visitors.
Room 3.3. The military exhibition is nice, but where are the cannons from?
Room 3.4. The importance of Buddha’s footprints, what do you put inside the cupboards. You put Buddhist manuscripts, but what are those manuscripts?
Room 3.5. More explanation about the objects present is needed.

Dates of visit
17th March 2010
Second visit 11th March 2011
Actual conditions
The main ubosot has a statue Buddha. The main ubosot has still the walls, but not the roof. On the back of the main ubosot, there is dirt, and on the right hand side of the viewer, the road passes very close. The labelling is still quite poor. It has be to be said, that the temple is quite nice. No one goes there, so it is quite silent, and there is also shade. In its actual conditions, the temple would be optimal for a reconstruction, at least for giving an idea of it.
Any mural decoration is absent, apart from some stucco on the facade, top of the entrance, as well as under the ubosot, and under the external ledge of the windows. A small ubosot contains the fragmentary seated statues of Buddha.

Improvements
More explanation, plus a major cleaning of the complex in general.

Dates of visit
24th March 2010 and 11th March 2011 (second cursory visit)
I understand that the word written in Thai language on the aboard is quite offensive.

The various board do not help to describe the function of the building itself.
At the time of my visit, rubbish was present (and still there on 11th March 2011).

The road is quite close.
The proximity of the temple to the road can be seen in the photo.
Actual conditions
The zone has many architectural features, set up in complete isolation, but virtually unexplored. A physical reconstruction of a temple would be a great experience, as well as serve for a valorisation of the zone itself.
For Wat Luang Chekrud in specific, the temple suffers for the presence of the road in its proximity, as well as that electric pylons are placed in front, which spoil the tourist experience.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
The temple is in proximity of an electric pylon, and there is an electric cabin, both impeding the visibility of the entire complex. Moreover, the road comes quite close to the building itself.
What are the structures for? What was their function in Ayutthaya Period? This is the zone where I propose a reconstruction of a temple for didactic purposes.
**PRA CHEDI SRI SURYIOTHAI**

**Actual Conditions**
The building has been massively restored, so it is not clear how much of the original building is still preserved in their actual representation. The importance of queen Suryiothai may be known for Thai visitors, but not for foreigners. Moreover, as the chedi is actually not open, the only thing to see is the shrine of the queen, with the statue devoted to her.

**Date of visit**
24th March 2010
This label is very difficult to read, as it is burnt by the sun. This can be the fate of many labels in the park, if the same material and the same ink is used for new labelling.
Actual conditions
No information about structures and reconstruction of the area. As it is, it looks only as another temple to be seen, but there are some other interesting features to be considered. First of all, the nature of the temple itself, with its square base for the prang. The marker is quite not informative, as there are many names not enough information.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
No information about structures and reconstruction of the area.
Actual Conditions
No indication of the importance and relevance of the building, as well as no discussion of what a sema is. Some information about the style of the Buddha statue kept inside the ubosot, which is at least intact, should be supplied.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
No indication of the importance and relevance of the building, as well as no discussion of what a sema is.
No information given regarding the Buddha statue, and what is the specific function of the building, what is even the name of the structure itself.
What is the sema?

The big marker gives the information about the wat in general, specifying the structures, but not proceeding to a real identification.
Actual conditions
As the marker has been stolen, even the name of the building is gone, apart that there is no board saying anything about the history of the building. The actual placement of the temple is between Wat Worachetturam and Wat Lokayasuttha.

Improvements
Putting at least the board back

Date of visit
24th March 2010
As the bases of structure are not identified, they remain mute.
Actual conditions
What strikes the eyes here is the difference between what the actual remains of the temple are, a completely spoiled structure, and the completely surviving Buddha on the back. Was the Buddha statue restored? If so, when?
At the time I have visited the temple, there were a couple of buses full of foreign tourists (quite possibly German speaking). They came out from the buses, they took some photos, they continued roaming around for another ten minutes, some of them annoyed by the vendors and the sight, just taking a couple of photos. Some of them sweating were back in the buses after a few minutes. And after a while, they left again. While this kind of tourism certainly exists, the organised trip cannot be abolished, I have also to say that I may understand their feelings. If they visited Bangkok before Ayutthaya, they had just seen the Reclining Buddha in Wat Pho, so for them it was not a relevant experience to have seen another Reclining Buddha in Ayutthaya, on sunny midday on March.

Improvements
The only possible improvement I can see as feasible is of supplying more information about the history of the building itself. As the place is quite by its own, the place setting should be enhanced, possibly locating the vendors further from the Reclining Buddha and not allowing buses and coaches to stop in front of Buddha statue.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
As in other circumstances, the marker originally present on the brick bases has been stolen, leaving the temple without explanation.

What strikes the eyes here is the difference between what the actual remains of the temple are, a completely spoiled structure, and the completely surviving Buddha on the back. Was the Buddha statue restored? If so, when?
The board does not explain anything about the wat itself or the Buddha statue, but giving generically a map of the island.
As restoration has been done, the use of the same colour for the bricks will render difficult to distinguish original from the reconstruction.
Many structures, but no much can be actually understood...
Actual conditions
While the temple can be certainly proud of the Buddha head now kept in the Chao Sam Phraya Mu-
seum, the only markers present on site are only in Thai.
The temple is certainly to be recommended, as it is one of the few having a lion-based stupa, a unique
feature in Ayutthaya. But the actual place is a bit spoiled for the absence of any actual information

1987 Master Plan
1) The environment and landscape architecture should be improved.
2) An entrance from Wat Phra Si Samphet should be provided.
3) Monks’ residence should be arranged.
4) Pathways should be given.

Differences
No. 4 is still missing.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
As it is possible to see here, the structure is still quite well preserved, but the photo reveals the close proximity of the modern buildings, which somehow spoil the atmosphere.

What is the function of the lion-based temple within the complex?
Many structures, but connection not clear. The original shape and appearance of the main temple is also not clear.
Actual conditions
While this stupa is just one of many placed around the city, the plot of land where it is sited reveals more than ever the conflict existing between the Historical Park and private developments. The prang is completely surrounded by private property, which somehow compresses the view and spoils the building.
Razor wire surrounds the stupa in order to avoid that private cars park on it, the marker has been stolen, and the Thai boards remark the private poverty of the surrounding walls.
The marker giving the temple information is not informative.

Improvements
I refer to the discussion about local participation for the resolution of the problem of encroaching private and public properties, so the razor wire can be taken off. For the information marker, the usual advice of being more specific and more reconstructive.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
There are stability problems with the prang itself. While the prang may be similar to many others present in Ayutthaya, its survival and beauty are compromised by the setting.
This temple is an example of when the private property encroaches with heritage space. As there is a sort of conflict between the two zones, it is certain that the monument suffers for it. Where is the board originally placed in front of the monument?
WAT SUWAN DARARAM

Actual conditions
The temple has a quite nice interior datable to the middle Bangkok Period.

Improvements
Here as well as Phra Mongkhon Bophit, the main concern is the fact that the building activities of the various kings of the Chakri dynasty cannot let understand the original shape of the building. A nice way to approach the problem would be of doing a marker with the different stages of evolution of the building itself.

Date of visit
24th March 2010
As in many other occasions, the board at the entrance of the temple itself is not very instructive about the original construction and how many times the temple has been rebuilt or restored.
WAT WORACHET

Actual conditions
While the temple lies outside of the Ayutthaya island, being in the way to reach Ayutthaya, I devoted a stop to it. The building does not have any sort of information relatively to its history, and development.
No indication of the importance of the temple
When was it built?
There is no decoration apart from the front of the Ubosot, and one of the small prang in front.

Improvements
Some more information about the history of the building and stylistic features should be given

Date of visit
9th June 2010
The temple is certainly worthy the visit. As in all the other cases, however, the magnificence and extension of the building cannot be fully understood, as there are no explanations for the various structures.
As it can be seen in the photo above as well in the photo at the bottom of the previous page, the Buddha statue is now in fragment and it is difficult to appreciate style or original shape or dimensions.
Actual conditions
This is the only temple with labels specifying some of the temple features. The labels do not explain the dates of those chedis or vihara. At the moment, this is the best temple for giving information to the tourist. There are quite simple markers that show the various differences for the chedi. Those markers should have also some more words about what actually mean, but as the chedi is in front of them, they may sort out the meaning by their own.

1987 Master Plan
Consolidation of the temple and vihara, as well as the galleries. Improvement of the parking space in front of the temple.

Actual conditions
The directives seem to be implemented.

Date of visit
9th June 2010
Reducing angle Chedi
This temple is one of the very few that has a labelling of the various types of stupas, which can serve as proper explanation for each shape. I would add only add a few words more relative to the chronology (such as all the various shapes were in use at the same time, remarking specific features and so forth).
Wat Phutthaisawan is believed to be the Chiang Saen site, opposite to the North of Ayutthaya city island. It was constructed on the site on which King U Thong first settled, before establishing Ayutthaya as the Capital City. This site is called "Wang Lao" or "Wang Lee". After the new Capital City had been established, King U Thong then built Wat Phutthaisawan as a memorial for the site that he had first settled.

Nowadays, not much of this ancient site is still remains. For example, a large Pung (granite-made monument), and a Bucha (Buddha Image) were still remains. However, the site of Phutthaisawan (Phra Phutthaisawan) which was constructed in the Ayutthaya period, and the site of Phra Phutthaisawan is highlighted with remains depicting the Phutthaisawan inscription of the Buddha and Phutthaisawan inscription (Phra Phutthaisawan) in the Dutch of the East Thiriet to Ayutthaya. At present, most of these ancient remains are not very visible.

Within the large Pung, there is an image of King U Thong. This image was once in Chiang Saen. It was 1732 BCE, in the reign of King Ram I Phra Ramon (U Thong) who was the king of Ayutthaya in the Chiang Saen period. The image was found, and was then installed in Wat Phutthaisawan. Later the image was moved to Wat Phutthaisawan, where it is still remains at the present. It is now being held in the temple. The image was once installed in Wat Phutthaisawan, and it is still remains at the present site. The image was once installed in Wat Phutthaisawan, and it is still remains at the present site.

More description about original shapes and possible visual reconstruction will be appropriate for the main stupa.
PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENT

Actual Conditions
The Portuguese settlement is the one that at least has some explanation inside the cemetery section in the Dominican Church.
There are 3 dual language posters hanging from the roof explaining the history of the excavations and the main findings.
It remains to be justified however, the meaning of the two skeletons shown in two cases. Seeing better seems the only explanation as there are no labelling or further information.
The best between the various sectors of the archaeological park. The fact that it was (partially?) funded by the Gulbenkian foundation may have influenced the way the material has been selected and shown.
In any case, no problem for the actual exhibition, apart from the two skeletons.

1987 Master Plan
The Portuguese settlement was included in the original master plan. The improvement were focused on the making some of the structures protecting the skeletons and excavations permanent. While the Fine Arts Department was the responsible for the design, the planning was to be done in collaboration with the Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal.

Date of Visit
9th June 2010
As Westerner, I have an idea of what an old church may look like, but for an Asia visitor, a plan of a Christian church should be supplied on site, as they may not have an idea of what each room means.

The burials
The reason to expose a skeleton in such a way is not clear.
WAT CHAIWATTANARAM

Actual conditions
Substantially no information, but the temple is lit during the night time.
The temple has still some of its stucco decoration, and there are lots of Buddha images, some of them quite giant, placed at the corners, and in the middle of the precinct of the main prang, inside the small vihara.
The main prang has still part of its decoration, and most of it seems original. As usual, many of the bricks are new placed, but the labelling is worn, so in some years, you could not distinguish what is original from what has been reemployed.
The heads of the Buddha images in the hall along the river seem new, not original like the other fragments. There are also structural problems with the temple itself, which need to be assessed as soon as possible.
The presence of a diorama helps the tourist discovering how the temple looked like in origin.

1987 Master Plan
Consolidation of the parts, plus building a riverside dam

Actual conditions
The situation may be better for some parts, but the structural problems still exist.

Date of visit
9th June 2010
There are essentially structural problems for the temple, which seem to require some quite urgent intervention.
As the vault is still existing, and many of the Buddha statues still in place, it gives a very nice idea of the aspect of a temple during the Ayutthaya period. Some notes about the postures of the Buddha would be a welcome addition anyway.
The photo reveals the problems of this kind of markers as they are exposed to the natural elements.
The nice part of the temple is the presence of a diorama that explains how the temple looked like during the Ayutthaya times. At least, a visitor can have an idea of the complex in general. Some textual explanation of the various parts in the diorama would be welcome.
The board reveals a big discrepancy between the Thai side of the marker and the English side of it, and it is quite clear that the English version has been considerably shortened.
DESCRIPTION
The temple needs a better location within the complex itself. As it is preceded by a restored vihara, there is the contrast between the new and the old part. A description with the history of the temple itself and the various building and restoration phases will be a nice addition.

DATE OF VISIT
9th June 2010
The two stupa in the back of vihara contrast with the actual restorations of the vihara itself.
Some cleaning is also required to the bases of the stupas.
Actual conditions
The labelling is completely wrong, even if it much better than Wat Ratchaburana. You can have a quite good idea of the structure of the building and how the parts preserved looked like. As visitor I quite like the neatness of the temple, in spite of the fact that it is surely not as complex as Wat Mahathat or Wat Ratchaburana. As much as the eastern part of the Ayutthaya park, it is virtually not visited by foreigners. Apart from two American girls, the temple was virtually deserted.

1987 Master Plan
Weeds to be taken off, and consolidation of the ruins.

Actual conditions
As the temple is not actually integrated into the Master Plan, no differences can be highlighted.

Date of visit
9th June 2010
The board has its limits, as it uses many specific words (such as pagoda), which is assumed to know what is it.
A map of the temple itself is needed.
The explanation certainly clarifies what a ubosot is, but introduces a term ("Junk"), which is not clear from the context what actually means. A similar marker is also present for the Vihara.
The photo has various fragments of Buddha statues, but a better assemblage or reordering would be welcome.
WAT MAHEYONG

Actual conditions
The labelling is the same as Wat Kudi Dao (see the Ubosot for instance). The temple is well preserved and there are decorations, with elephants for one of the buildings. The main hall is well preserved in spite of the fact the Buddha image inside is without the head and the upper part of the body. The level of information in the English part of the text suffers of misspellings, as well as inadequate level of English language.

1987 Master Plan
Development in the area should be controlled. The swamp affecting the buildings should be put under control. Improvement of the pathways.

Actual conditions
The directives above seem to be integrated.

Date of visit
9th June 2010
These two photos show architectural elements and decorations, which should receive some supplementary information about it.
I am left wondering whether the spire fell off at the time of the Burmese attack on 1767, or simply fell after the invasion.
As I do not see any burning throughout the temple, I believe more about the latter hypothesis.
Some of the information as present on these two photos shows a level of information adequate as contents, but inadequate as level of English.
The temple is impressive, and the state of reconstruction is quite magnificent. Yet, the exact magnitude of the restoration is difficult to be established. Only from the Master Plan results clear that the Reclining Buddha in the Vihara has been restored.

1987 Masterplan
The site is not directly under the Fine Arts Department jurisdiction. In fact, even in 2010, the ticket to be paid is completely independent from the one issued by the Fine Arts Department. The Master plan proposed preservation and consolidation of the temple, not restoration or reconstruction (4-152). Improvement of the monks’ residences was proposed at the time.

Differences
Most of the plan has been implemented. The moot point is about how much has been really restored in the last 25 years.

Date of visit
9th June 2010
More explanation about the restoration phases of the Buddha image should be added.
As the temple is still in use in modern times, a map of what is actually recent or renovated will be useful. See also following page for other examples.
Other examples of boards to be changed.
JAPANESE VILLAGE

Actual conditions
The Japanese village is the best compound for the reconstruction of the life of foreigners in Ayutthaya. There is a video, as well as a cartoon telling the story of a samurai migrated to Ayutthaya and then serving at the court of Ayutthaya kings. The praise of the Village is the historical reconstruction as visually given by the various multimedia tools.
The only problem is that there is nothing to see apart from what is in the study centre, as there are no archaeological remains to show to the visitor.
The Japanese Village requires the payment of a fee.

Date of visit
10th June 2010
As the original settlement has disappeared, visual elements attracting the visitors are very few.