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Editorial

Editorial: the Question of Publication

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There is a question confronting every Silpakorn PhD student: am I researching to add to the world's knowledge or am I on a mission to make people (or governments) change their ways?

The Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism (AHMT) program at Silpakorn University differs from some others in Thai universities in claiming to be “international”. This implies an intention – almost an obligation – to engage in a scholarly discourse beyond the national or the regional. The media for such engagement are typically international conference attendance and publication.

The obligation to commit to international scholarly publication, however, sets up a dilemma for many candidates in the program, as most approach their PhD studies from a decidedly local agenda – they are mostly *ajarns* (lecturers) from university programs in tourism planning or management, less so in the narrower field of hospitality management, occasionally in heritage interpretation and management. They will subsequently go on to train undergraduate students, also sometimes masters students, who will then proceed to work in Thailand's tourism industry. While this is undoubtedly a gross oversimplification of the career focuses of the AHMT candidates, it serves to highlight the simple fact that candidates' attention is likely to be upon a local agenda more than one linked to an international discourse and the advancement of knowledge.

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This tension of potentially opposed agendas certainly emerges in the course of the students' research and subsequent dissertation writing. So, a project might be concerned with a specific town or village, or perhaps with a locale in a larger city (say, a district of Bangkok), perhaps a palace or a group of temples. The student will engage in some historical research, perhaps an ethnographic study, maybe a survey of some tourists; the scholarly task is the production of new knowledge; however, the student is also likely to wish to engage with a more practical question: how can this place or this tourist activity be managed better? From my experience both as a research supervisor and as an editor of dissertation material for conference and journal publication, I must conclude that neither agenda – neither *the production of knowledge* nor *the critique of policy and management* – proves unproblematic for Silpakorn students. They struggle with the dilemma.

It is useful here to look at the two sides of this dilemma.

1. Reading and the production of knowledge

The production of new knowledge – the scholarly task of a PhD – generally fails for most students because they fail to engage with old knowledge. At the most basic level, they do not read the international academic journals in their respective fields.

Thus they simply do not know the current state of the discourse – where are the controversies and the disagreements, what is the latest thinking, what do we know and what don't we know?

Here, of course, an inhibiting factor is language. It is an inhibitor, however, from which there is no delivery, as English is effectively the international language of academic discourse. To state it bluntly, the students face a task that simply will not go away.

2. Critical engagement and the critique of practice

When it comes to that more practical issue of 'better policy' or 'better management', there is again generally failure. Too often a dissertation or a paper emerging from it will end with 'recommendations' – things that someone or other 'should do'. This someone is usually unspecified, and the recommendation will be couched in terms like

“the authorities need to protect these ruins”, or “there needs to be better education”, or perhaps “more toilets”.

The inhibiting factor here is not language but something more deeply cultural. This *farang*'s undoubtedly ignorant observation is that political critique in Thailand is overwhelmingly personal, that is about individuals, even though material interests may underlie the calumny. Such critique, for the most part, is *not* about ideas or policy options but about people whom one does not like.

I have long argued in vain for Thai PhD students to engage critically with such issues as the history of heritage policy in Thailand, the politics of budgetary allocations for heritage programs, etc. However, the idea of such critique is altogether too confronting, for that is to address issues that are deeply embedded in the culture.

Publication

In present times, the PhD *degree* is a necessary ‘ticket’ for a teaching position in a university; however, it is little more than that. Advancement in an academic career is far more dependent on one’s publications.

In considering appropriate venues for publication, it is useful to identify a continuum in these, from:

1. Internal/local seminar papers ... These range from internal departmental seminar series to papers at local conferences. They are useful for testing ideas on a hopefully critical but supportive audience.
2. Papers in international conferences, also locally published journals ... There are abundant opportunities for these although you will variously be subject to peer review for both the abstract and the paper itself, also for inclusion in any published proceedings from the conference. Many Thai universities have their own internal or semi-national journals for this purpose.
3. Chapters in edited books with international publishers... These are dependent on invitation from the intended editor; their incorporation into the book will still be dependent on the editor’s decision and normally also on peer review.

4. Papers in international, peer-reviewed journals ... Such papers must be to a very high academic standard. They are difficult to write and difficult to get accepted. They will first be culled by the editorial board then subjected to what is often a very lengthy peer review process.
5. Authored books with international publishers ... One will generally have had considerable experience with journal papers before attempting a book. They will generally not be attempted by early-career researchers

It is worth noting at the outset, however, that in competition for academic appointments in prestigious universities, also in the assessment of academics for promotion in such universities and in the 'league tables' where universities are ranked in terms of academic excellence, weight is really given to categories 4 and 5 above. Chapters in academic books are 'okay', also papers in international conferences *but only if they are subsequently published in proceedings with an international scholarly publisher*. However, real merit attaches to 4. *Papers in international, peer-reviewed journals*, and 5. *Authored books with international publishers*.

In the following notes I will elaborate on each of these 'levels' of publication and the respective opportunities and difficulties that each presents.

1. *Internal/local papers*

Certainly write papers for local outlets; these are useful for testing ideas. Well established academics will participate in such venues in the course of their development of a more substantial piece of work – they have the advantage of 'focusing the mind'.

2. *Conferences, local journal publishing*

Attend conferences and present papers there. These have the advantage of wider exposure than the merely local seminars and conferences. They are frequently peer-reviewed and can lead to publication with international academic publishers.

There can also be some advantage in publishing in local journals, although these give you only limited exposure: in this category I would place outlets like this Faculty's *Na Jua*, also the *AHMT Journal*. Other Thai universities have similar vehicles where early career academics can gain experience in academic writing. There are also journals where you can write in the Thai language, thereby engaging a wider local readership.

3. *Chapters in edited books with international publishers*

Participation in an edited book is dependent on the invitation of the proposing editor; this, in turn, is dependent on your already established reputation. (I am currently negotiating publication of a book assembling papers from twelve of my past PhD students – ten from Silpakorn and two from Melbourne – tentatively titled *Defining Thailand: Heritage, Memory and the Tourist Gaze*. I believe that this is a direction that the AHMT program needs to take.)

An advantage for early researchers in this form of publishing is that you have an editor who can provide advice, guidance and editorial assistance.

4. *International journal publishing*

As observed above, a significant problem inhibiting Thai PhD students, in my observation, is the failure to engage with the international journals in their fields. I especially exhort students to regularly view some of the international journals in the tourism and heritage area. I would especially recommend the following:

Tourism Geographies
Annals of Tourism Research
Tourism Management
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research
Journal of Sustainable Tourism

You might also usefully view other journals not specifically in the tourism field but with a focus on research in this region:

SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in South East Asia
Journal of Southeast Asian Studies
Journal of Contemporary Asia.

The main points to be made here are (1) it can be very difficult to have one's work published in the international journals (conferences are much easier); (2) papers must be at very high academic standard to be seriously considered by the journals; (3) publication can be a very slow process.

There are also the so-called 'open access' e-journals, which are Internet accessible and of lower standard. They generally require authors to pay to have their work accepted and carry far less scholarly weight than the published journals. In too many cases they are simply 'scams' – you are asked to pay the journal simply to have your work considered, it is then rejected, and the journal promoter walks away with your money and you don't have a publication. I do not recommend these as an outlet for research, although they may assist early-career researchers.

5. *Book publishing*

The same warnings offered regarding international journals also apply to book publishing: (1) it is difficult to get work accepted for publication; (2) academic standards are very high; (3) the research and writing can extend over a very long time and publication can subsequently be a very slow process. Ultimately, however, this is a goal to which all academics should aspire.

The present volume

There is a decidedly surprising and even anomalous feature of this Issue 4 of the AHMT Journal, in that all but one of the Silpakorn graduates publishing here presented as ‘independent scholar’, that is, as not currently affiliated with a university. Previous issues of the journal have accommodated papers that were overwhelmingly from ajarns in national universities, embarked on an academic career. With six of the authors here, that is not the case. A few different constructions can be placed on this oddity. First, it might be reflecting the clearly observable shift in Thailand whereby workers in the corporate sector and less so in government service are valuing the ‘doctor’ title as a claim of educational achievement. This shift has been occurring for some time; it may now be accelerating. Second, and linked to the first, we may be witnessing the emergence of a ‘recreational PhD’ social class – people who value learning for its own sake and will pursue research simply because they enjoy it. This is an ancient culture where learning has received a high value for millennia and so the recreational PhD should come as no surprise. Third, the ‘independence’ may simply reflect the uncertainty of the time and increasingly career mobility.

The papers

In the context of that continuum linking publication media suggested above, one might see the papers of this present volume of the AHMT Journal as ‘merely’ at the second level, that is as ‘local journal publishing’. However, in the very important sense of the development of ideas, this is the most important level of all. For it is here that new ideas, new approaches, even new ontology can first be floated. It is here that authors can be most speculative as they develop insights that, hopefully, will be taken further ‘up the scale’ to a more fearsomely critical scholarly audience.

The first paper in this number of the journal, by **Russell Staiff**, might be published here at the level of a more local circulation of ideas, yet the importance of its message clearly demands debate and subsequent presentation more globally, for that more critical scholarly audience. Staiff’s message, at its simplest, is that the increasing focus on *cultural sustainability* – the safeguarding of local customs, cultural

practices and ideas, traditional lifestyles – is suppressing the previous global preoccupation with *heritage*, and especially tangible (built) heritage. The threat, for example, is that ancient villages will be modernized and their houses replaced, provided old practices can somehow be protected. This rift – for such it is – would seem to foreshadow the decline of the heritage enterprise. It is a debate that needs to be taken much further.

The second paper here, by **William Chapman**, is similarly best seen as presenting an argument that will subsequently be taken much further. Just as Russell Staiff sees ‘cultural sustainability’ as distraction from ‘heritage’, so William Chapman shows how the landscaping of great monuments to attract the tourists (at Borobudur, Angkor, Ayutthaya and the like) has the effect of distancing the monuments from any memory of their historical context. Heritage, authenticity and an educational role are all lost.

Also demanding both local and ultimately further debate is the paper of **Isaree Baedcharoen**, reporting an attempt to understand (measure?) the values of Chiang Mai residents confronting the impacts of increasing tourism. First, the paper has the merit of proposing a method for exploring these values which, though derived from a very different context, is entirely novel in its present application. Second, it applies that method with both sensitivity and scholarly rigour. Third, its results go against the conventional wisdom – indeed they are quite disturbing as they seem to reflect on either an absence of local discourse on heritage or else on inadequacies in Thai education. Fourth, and most important, the author demonstrates reflexivity – the intellectual ability to turn back on the inadequacies and inadequacies of her own ideas and scholarship. Therefore, the paper demonstrates the point that I have been making in this Editorial: this is a step to further research and higher levels of publication. It is to be hoped that Ms Isaree will take the next steps.

Also attempting to ‘measure’ the effects of cultural tourism is the project reported by **Sirada Tienkow**. This employs the idea of life cycles (phases) in cultural tourism, arguably attributable to R.W. Butler, to explore the evolution of cultural tourism in the Chiang Khan Old Town of Loei province. From surveys variously stretching from 2009 to 2012, it was possible to observe the transit from a ‘launch

phase' to a 'stagnation phase' as tourism increases but so does the participation of outsiders in the tourism business and as the heritage itself is increasingly commodified. Alarmingly, a 'beginning of the decline' phase is also detectable in Chiang Khan as economic success pushes land values higher thereby encouraging original residents to sell and leave – there is the danger that heritage tourism is giving way to entertainment tourism. Old houses are being made 'modern' or else redeveloped as tourist accommodation. A refreshing aspect of the paper is its decidedly under-played recommendations which derive from a thoughtful assessment of the town's current evolutionary path rather than – as is too often the case – from an author's 'good ideas' which, in reality, are not good at all. In Ms Sirida's project, the link between conclusions and policy recommendations is intelligent and appropriate.

Rungsima Kullapat draws attention to the phenomenon of literature tourism, the practice of tracing, in geographical space, the fictive space of what are usually seminal texts – the classical world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* or perhaps Dublin of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The *Pachit-Oraphim* story is folklore, myth, imagining, in multiple versions re-told from oral tradition by diverse authors. It therefore has an instability, an ephemerality. It addresses love, death, betrayal, searching, on a real landscape that stretches across Isaan, Laos and Cambodia; it thereby evokes imaginings of many places. The paper reports an attempt to materialise a mythic landscape in a 'cultural route' across a material landscape. The paper finishes with a brief review of global treaties and conventions of the present age and of their guarantees of cultural rights; this leads into the paper's devastating conclusion that the rights to culture – to walk the ancient paths of Pachit and Oraphim, to re-imagine stories of one's cultural origins – are transgressed by that great modern invention of national borders and their contingent barriers, conflicts and wars. The reader might well question the merits of the modern nation-state *vis-à-vis* those of the ancient Southeast Asian *mandala*.

The paper of **Tinikan Prakraiwan** also looks at 'cultural routes' though at a very different scale both physically and mythically from that of Rungsima. The tourism resources of Thonburi's canals and waterscape are examined along with the expressed interests of the area's tourists, from which the author devises a series of

cultural tourism routes variously for tours by boat, by walking, by combinations of boat and walking, and by bicycle. The Thonburi landscape carries traces of a far more recent history than the legend of Pachit and Oraphim; it is also more immediate in its impact on the tourist and, due to its accessibility, will suffer greater impact from the tourist. Accordingly the paper also deals with the more mundane aspects of tourism services – training, safety, hygiene and the like. In contrast to the recommendations emerging in Ms Sirida’s paper, these are more from the author’s own “good ideas”.

The paper of **Pichet Teeranuson** similarly takes a survey based approach, here to assess diverse perceptions of the adequacy or otherwise of the management of Siri Charoenwat Forest Plantation in Chon Buri province. This is an area of both native and regeneration forest that is managed for nature conservation but also for ecotourism. The different assessments of project management and staff, local government, local community and visitors (tourists) are surveyed, to reveal a reasonable level of satisfaction among visitors but some dissatisfaction with policy and management among a more critical management and staff. The author ventures some guidelines for management overhaul based on the variously revealed attitudes. The strength of these guidelines is that they are actually backed by empirical analysis – too often such “good ideas” lack any such support.

From another project directed towards tourism management, **Supot Thaisuriya** writes of Bang Luang community in Nakhon Pathom province. Like Chiang Khan Old Town reported in Sirida Tienkow’s paper, Bang Luang is another small town distinguished by an old commercial street of wooden shophouses, though now by-passed as its once water-borne trade has been supplanted by modern roads. There is something of an irony in its formal foundation in 1903 as a water-focused centre coinciding with Rama V’s program of land transport expressly designed to replace such river transport. While the charm of its surviving Chinese market community would attract day visitors from Bangkok, it has been spared the more radical onslaught of the rebuilding and redevelopment of Chiang Khan. It is useful to see these two papers together, as reporting different phases in transformation of old towns. Supot proposes a management plan for Bang Luang.

Tourism is global and much is to be learned from comparative studies – it is the point made above in relation to the need to follow the international journals. Comparative fieldwork has its place and the paper of **Kantikarn Intrasorn** observes the phenomenon of heritage hotels as manifested in both India and Thailand. Rajasthan, like many other Indian states, is resplendent with great palaces, castles, forts and mansions from a glorious imperial and royal past and the transformation of a great many of these into heritage hotels has constituted what is effectively a new tourism industry. Thailand lacks such accessible splendours and so we see instead the production of ‘new’ antiquities – heritage hotels that are essentially replicants or simulacra. They might be fake but they are popular and they shine a new light on questions of nostalgia and authenticity.

From the above brief notes a lesson hopefully emerges for the reader: these papers are most fruitfully read together and comparatively as each poses questions and contrasts in relation to the others.