

## **Local History and Cultural Landscape for Cultural Tourism Management: A Case Study of the Ancient Town Community around Prasat Phanomwan, Ban Pho Subdistrict, Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province**

Nittaya Wannakit<sup>1</sup>, Worawit Chantadet<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore local history and cultural landscape as cultural capital for cultural tourism management of Phanomwan Community located around the ancient site of Prasat Phanomwan, Ban Pho Subdistrict, Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The results reflect cultural ecology through the dynamic of adaptation to the environment and culture. In particular, the community regards Prasat Phanomwan as its significant ancient site, both from the aspect of various forms of local land use and information on local history and folklore that demonstrate the development of settlement, way of life, local wisdom, and cultural economic system of local people that align with the concept of cultural landscape. The body of knowledge is regarded as significant capital that the community can build upon and develop as a prominent cultural tourist attraction.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Landscape, Cultural Tourism Management, Phanomwan Community.*

### **Introduction**

Archaeological evidence shows that the area of present-day Nakhon Ratchasima Province in Thailand has witnessed the development of ancient communities since prehistoric times, approximately 3,000-4,000 years ago. One of the province's most significant ancient sites is 'Prasat Phanomwan,' located in Ban Makha village, Ban Pho Subdistrict, Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, along the Nakhon Ratchasima-Khon Kaen Highway. According to stone inscriptions discovered there, this temple was called 'Devasrom.' It is an ancient Khmer architectural monument originally built as a Hindu shrine dedicated to Hindu deities, but was later converted into a Buddhist sacred site. As the 5th largest stone temple in Thailand, Prasat Phanomwan is currently, Prasat Phanomwan is currently under the administration of Ban Pho Subdistrict Administrative Organization (Ban Pho SAO), Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

Being a community located near an ancient site, the community surrounding Prasat Phanomwan, known as 'Phanomwan Community,' regards Prasat Phanomwan as a sacred space. A large Arokayasala (hospital pavilion) was built during the Ayutthaya period, larger than typical Arokayasala of that era. Additionally, local history and folklore reflect the culture and way of life of people living around Prasat Phanomwan, including the dynamics and development of settlement patterns in relation to the landscape. This includes the continuation of lineages of artisans who constructed the temple in the past, and the utilization of Sa Phleng, a large reservoir that the community has used from ancient times to the present. The Phanomwan Community has undergone transformation through several eras, as evidence shows multiple influxes of settlement due to the area's favorable geography as elevated land or lowland plains amid fertile rice fields.

Evidence from stone inscriptions in Khom script, Sanskrit language, and Old Khmer found in the area of Prasat Phanomwan, which were registered and studied under the Fine Arts Department's survey project, clearly reflects the prosperity of the Phanomwan community in the past. The content of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Thai and Oriental Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.  
E-mail: Nittaya.w@msu.ac.th

<sup>2</sup> Department of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Design, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. E-mail: Worawit.c@msu.ac.th (Corresponding Author)

inscriptions mentions the dedication of land, water sources, slaves, and property for the maintenance of religious sites and religious activities, which was a common characteristic of inscriptions in Khmer culture during the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Buddhist centuries (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries CE), and indicates the existence of a stable resource management system and administrative structure (Fine Arts Department, 2011). Moreover, the references to agricultural areas, water sources, and resource allocation in the inscriptions are consistent with geographical and archaeological evidence showing that the Phanomwan community was located in an area with a network of tributary streams that could connect to the Mun River, a major waterway of Nakhon Ratchasima. These waterways served as main transportation routes in the past, facilitating the movement of people, goods, and resources between Phanomwan and other communities in the Mun River Basin and surrounding areas (Wongthes, 2003).

When considered together with information from Khmer inscriptions in the northeastern region of Thailand that scholars have studied, it was found that religious sites in the Khmer network were typically located near important transportation routes, especially waterways, which played significant roles both economically and ritually (Coedès, 1968). These characteristics are consistent with the context of Phanomwan, which has traces of canals, reservoirs, and irrigation systems surrounding the temple, demonstrating that this site was not merely a religious sanctuary but rather an urban community with economic prosperity and an important role in the Khmer state's water transportation network.

The ancient community around Prasat Phanomwan, which has existed since prehistoric times, likely experienced settlement development beginning with prehistoric humans, then evolved into an iron-smelting community. It is assumed that people dispersed during this period migrated and moved to engage in trade both by land and sea. The influence of trade resulted in Indian merchants traveling to trade with people in this area and introducing Buddhism, which was blended with traditional beliefs in spirits and supernatural powers. Subsequently, when settlements developed into states, the state of Chenla evolved into Kambujadesa, the source of Khmer culture. Power and trade then expanded to salt-producing and iron-smelting communities to extend trade to various areas northward to the Sukhothai state, Vientiane, and by sea to the Lavo state, with routes connecting from Angkor and having rest stops for goods distribution in the area of Phimai and communities around Prasat Phanomwan.

Previous research studies on Prasat Phanomwan have primarily focused on archaeological and architectural aspects of the temple itself, such as the Fine Arts Department (2011) *Report on Archaeological Study and Restoration of Prasat Phanomwan*; Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (2017) on *Prasat Phanomwan–Devasrom*; Atijitto and Jai-em (2020) on *Metaphysical Analysis of Khmer Temples in Nakhon Ratchasima Province*; and Coedès (1968) *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. Regarding the study of people living around Prasat Phanomwan, there is social archaeological work on community conservation of ancient sites by Phalopakorn (2019) on *Community Cooperation in the Conservation of Prasat Phanomwan*. This article therefore focuses on studying the economic and cultural history of people in the community around Prasat Phanomwan. It emphasizes local history and folklore related to settlement, way of life, beliefs, and rituals. The study also examines spatial historical information regarding land use patterns, both economically and culturally. The aim is to reveal the dynamics and development of the community's economic units interwoven with diverse cultural systems. The community has accumulated this as local knowledge and experience, which is expected to play a role in their own resource management, particularly in community cultural tourism management.

## **Research Objective**

To study local history and cultural landscape as cultural capital for cultural tourism management of the Phanomwan community, an ancient community around Prasat Phanomwan, Ban Pho Subdistrict, Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

## **Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts**

### **Cultural Landscape and Cultural Ecology**

Cultural landscape is an important concept used to study the relationship between terrain or ecological environment and human cultural ways of life. The key underlying principle is that geographical space comprises both natural and cultural resources linked to the sociocultural development of humans in each area. Moreover, cultural landscape also encompasses values concerning the natural environment and terrain for creating prosperity and developing human society, which are connected to historical development and possess aesthetic value (Taylor, 2009).

Wallipodom (2017) explained the definition and scope of cultural landscape studies as the examination of geographical landscape characteristics in a particular area, such as forests, mountains, plains, swamps, rivers, canals, estuaries, and seashores, in relation to the settlement of local people. These places become known and are assigned names that are commonly recognized, taking the form of diagrams or maps for communication purposes. The study of cultural landscape is considered a fundamental process that leads to the study of cultural ecology of local people who share a way of life within ethnic village communities. Therefore, understanding changes in cultural landscape requires studying past environments and current environmental changes resulting from various factors in both internal and external dimensions.

The study of cultural landscape consists of three important components. First is geography in relation to settlement, referring to significant geographical features for human settlement that appear as places or village and town names, serving as important landmarks for local residents or travelers entering the area. Second is cultural life and relationships in daily life, representing the way of life of people in the same community, which includes social structures such as kinship networks and various social groups. The final component is the study of cultural ecology, meaning that specific areas where humans establish settlements in different localities are not identical. The cultural ecology of each place is often viewed from an insider's perspective toward the environment in detail, recognizing biological diversity and multiple ethnic communities in the same area. Subsequently, knowledge systems for living are established or created, rules for coexistence are formed, and traditions and beliefs are developed in the same area. For this reason, cultural landscape serves as a fundamental process leading to understanding the cultural ecology of people in each community. This is because cultural ecology emphasizes human adaptation to natural and social environments, where human adaptation refers to the process of physical adjustment as well as sustaining life and sociocultural practices in order to survive under particular environmental conditions.

### **Development of Potential and Standards for Cultural Tourism Sites**

Cultural tourism is a contemporary form of tourism based on the concept of developing cultural resources into tourist attractions. Cultural resources refer to characteristics of cultural systems that are valuable or representative and can communicate various cultures. Cultural resources can be classified into two types: tangible cultural resources or material culture, such as ancient sites, antiquities, and tools and implements for daily life; and intangible cultural resources or abstract cultural resources, such as language, performing arts, rituals, among other things (Wongwipak et al., 2003).

However, approaches to cultural resource management are not specific to any particular type of cultural resource, nor do they focus on the cultural resources of any specific culture or ethnic group in an area. Cultural resources have multiple values and meanings and are significant at various levels. The value of cultural resources is dynamic and may differ from the original or develop new values according to human social and cultural contexts (Lertcharnrit, 2011). Furthermore, a key concept of cultural tourism is an emphasis on sustainable cultural tourism management through community participation.

## **Results**

The study of local history and cultural landscape as cultural capital for cultural tourism management of the Phanomwan community, Ban Pho Subdistrict, Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, presents the following noteworthy findings:

### **Prasat Phanomwan and Phanomwan Community as Cultural Capital in Local Historical and Folkloristic Knowledge**

The culture that influenced the development of ancient communities in Nakhon Ratchasima from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries CE was Khom or Khmer culture, which expanded into the northeastern region of present-day Thailand. Starting around the mouth of the Mun River from the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Khmer culture's influence became particularly prominent during the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Subsequently, around the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, the influence of Mahayana Buddhism from Cambodia spread into the region once again. This Khom cultural influence is evident from the appearance of numerous religious sites and sacred objects in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. After the end of King Jayavarman VII's reign, the Khmer Empire of the Angkor period declined. The Khmer likely no longer maintained strict control over this territory, as during the Sukhothai Kingdom period, Siamese territory did not yet include Nakhon Ratchasima. Later, during the reign of King Ramathibodi I, Nakhon Ratchasima was

incorporated into the Ayutthaya Kingdom, resulting in cultural transmission and the transfer of art forms and architectural styles, particularly to Nakhon Ratchasima and Phimai as frontier cities.

Prasat Phanomwan is a religious site that has been in use from the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE to the present, as evidenced by a group of eight stone inscriptions found in the area of Prasat Phanomwan, dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The names of six kings appear during the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is presumed that the temple was originally constructed with bricks, and later, around the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, a stone structure was built over it (Banthom, 1999). Prasat Phanomwan is constructed as a prang (tower) with a chanuan (corridor) connected in a rectangular shape measuring 25.50 meters long and 10.20 meters wide. The prang has three arched doorways. The northern doorway enshrines a standing Buddha image in the dispelling fear posture, in Ayutthaya artistic style. Surrounding the temple is a wide courtyard with a gallery enclosure built of stone, measuring 54 meters wide and 63.30 meters long, with four entrance gates in each cardinal direction. To the east is a baray, or large community reservoir, called Sa Phleng. To the southwest of the prang is a structure built of red sandstone called Prang Noi (Small Prang), which enshrines a large stone Buddha image inside. Around the temple is a gallery built of sandstone and laterite forming an enclosure wall, with gopuras (entrance gates to the sanctuary) constructed as tall towers in all four directions. Around the outer area of the temple to the east, nearly 300 meters from the ancient site, there are traces of a moat and an earthen mound called Noen Oraphim. Additionally, laterite stones arranged in rows resembling the foundation remains of a structure were found on this mound. Currently, Prasat Phanomwan is under the administration of Ban Pho Subdistrict Administrative Organization (Ban Pho SAO), Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District.

The Fine Arts Department estimates that the community in Ban Pho Subdistrict, or the Phanomwan community, was likely established approximately 250 years ago. In the past, it probably served as a frontier outpost before entering Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat), as evidenced by archaeological findings from excavations that uncovered human skeletal remains, glazed pottery fragments, animal bones, and shells beneath the foundation of the main prang of Prasat Phanomwan. These show traces of intentional burial rituals, dating to approximately 2,000–2,500 years ago, based on black burnished pottery vessels known as Phimai Black ware, which were buried with the deceased according to beliefs that the dead would use them in the afterlife. This evidence allows the cultural periods of the early Phanomwan community to be classified into two important eras: the Bronze Age, with evidence of land use dating to approximately 370 BCE as the earliest period, followed by evidence of habitation in the subsequent Iron Age, approximately 370 BCE to 230 CE. It is presumed that agriculture combined with hunting for food was likely the way of life of people during this period (Banthom, 1999).



**Figure 1-2: Prasat Phanomwan, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand.**

The Phanomwan community was an important city for controlling military forces and trade caravans before passing through to coastal cities. It featured urban and temple layout patterns with iconography and art contemporary with Phimai as a subsidiary city. Water management systems included excavated barays for storage, roads that also served as dikes, and the popular practice of planting Asian palmyra palm trees as landmarks and rice field boundaries—a practice widespread in communities influenced by Khmer culture in various locations such as Sukhothai. The Phanomwan community likely underwent transformations across multiple eras and periods due to multiple waves of settlement. Stone inscriptions indicate that in ancient times, the community around Prasat Phanomwan was highly prosperous due to waterway connections to the major river of Nakhon Ratchasima, which

served as a route linking the Phanomwan and Phimai communities for inter-city trade. Goods were transported across Huai Boribun at the landing at Ban Talat (Ban Wang Hin) in the present day. Settlement around Prasat Phanomwan is presumed to have initially concentrated near the baray, while households of various craftsmen—including laborers who transported stone from distant mountains, stone assemblers, stone surface polishers, and carvers who created decorative patterns on pediments, lintels, eaves, and balusters—likely established their residences near the construction site, as evidenced by traces of pottery kilns found in the vicinity.

Regarding the landscape architecture surrounding the ancient site, Prasat Phanomwan is located in a lowland area away from the community, which sits on elevated ground. The surrounding area is characterized by agricultural land, including rice fields, with irrigation canals and natural streams flowing past both the northern and southern sides of the temple. This results in the location of Prasat Phanomwan and its adjacent areas having distinctive physical characteristics, constituting unique and beautiful landscape architectural elements that have been interrelated with the community's way of life since ancient times. Additionally, there is a body of local historical and folkloristic knowledge that reflects the culture of people in the community surrounding the temple, particularly the legend concerning the unfinished construction of Prasat Phanomwan. The story tells that in the past, there was a competition to build temples between a men's team and a women's team. The men's team built Prasat Phanomwan, while the women's team built Prasat Phimai. The rules stipulated that whichever team finished building their temple first should light and release a lantern into the sky. However, the women's team was cleverer and released a lantern before completing their temple. When the men's team saw the lantern floating into the sky, they believed they had lost and ceased construction. Thus, Prasat Phanomwan remains in an unfinished state to this day. This legend of a grand temple construction rushed to near completion in a single night but halted before completion has given rise to the belief that Prasat Phanomwan is an ancient monument intentionally left unfinished, either by design or through supernatural power, to preserve its sacredness and prevent human desecration. This type of legend is commonly found at many Khmer temples, reflecting the community's perspective of explaining ancient monuments through narrative rather than documentary history.

Even the bathing pavilion structure, located approximately 300 meters east of the temple, traditionally called 'Noen Nang Oraphim' or 'Noen Oraphim,' is named after the tale of King Phrommathat and the maiden Nang Oraphim, which is the origin of the name Phimai—said to come from Nang Oraphim's exclamation 'Phi ma laeo' (My beloved has arrived). This Noen Oraphim is likely a bathing pavilion in a unique form never found elsewhere in Thailand. The upper level was a wooden structure surrounded by swirling water pools on all four sides, with water channeled from the nearby Sa Phleng baray. It served as a residence for receiving nobility or as the palace of the ruler of Phanomwan, and as a royal pavilion to receive King Jayavarman VII or his representative who likely traveled to Prasat Phanomwan during the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE to dedicate the Buddha image Phra Chai Phuttha Mahanath.

### **Landscape-Based Economic System: Patterns of Production, Trade, and Agricultural Systems with Distinctive Characteristics of the Local Economy**

Space is a type of social product that arises from the production process, and this production process consists of two interrelated components: forces of production and production relations. The first important component of forces of production includes the nature of space, such as terrain, climate, and location. Another component is labor and the organization of labor. The final component is knowledge and technology.

As for production relations, these are viewed as the struggle of classes or various class fractions to possess space. Another dimension is the process of reproduction of production relations, which consists of biological reproduction and reproduction of production relations (Lefebvre, 1991).

A landscape-based economic system refers to a community's economic system that relates to the spatial conditions or ecological characteristics of the community, reflecting the land use patterns of community members with distinctive features of the local economic system, production system, trade system, and agricultural system. The physical space of the Phanomwan community is notably distinctive. Based on the survey of the landscape architecture in the study area, the surveyed area was divided into the landscape architecture of the community within the study area and the landscape architecture surrounding Prasat Phanomwan and adjacent areas, including Noen Oraphim and Sa Phleng reservoir.

The landscape architecture of the Phanomwan community reveals that the setting of the community has distinctive physical characteristics: the community is situated on elevated ground, with

surrounding plains used for agriculture, and irrigation canals and natural streams flowing through the area, which constitute beautiful landscape architectural elements. Additionally, the area exhibits a landscape architectural pattern that blends rural and modern forms. Specifically, the role of the study area is as a residential community in Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District. Most of the community area still maintains rural characteristics with lifestyles related to agriculture, retaining naturalness, and has not undergone significant transformation into an urban social pattern. The way of life of most people in the community still involves connections between people and the community's landscape architecture, both in terms of occupation and beliefs.

### **Prehistoric Settlement:**

Archaeological evidence from the Khorat Plateau shows that human settlement has existed since prehistoric times, particularly during the Neolithic period and early Metal Age. The discovery of stone tools, pottery, and traces of subsistence activities reflects human adaptation to an environment abundant in water sources and natural resources (Fine Arts Department, 2005). Settlement in this area did not occur by chance, but rather resulted from the area's potential to support continuous habitation. Later, when humans acquired metallurgical knowledge, the ancient community around Prasat Phanomwan developed into the Iron Age. The production of iron tools increased efficiency in agriculture, hunting, and construction, making communities more stable and capable of expansion (Wongthes, 2003). During this period, evidence of trade and exchange between communities emerged at both local and regional levels, reflecting population movement and the linkage of trade networks by both land and sea.

The expansion of trade networks in Southeast Asia from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE onward resulted in Indian merchants traveling to trade with communities in this region, bringing with them religious concepts and culture (Coedès, 1968). Buddhism and Brahmanism-Hinduism thus began to play roles in local communities. However, the adoption of these religious influences did not completely replace existing beliefs, but rather blended with local beliefs in ancestor spirits, nature spirits, and supernatural powers, which were characteristic features of ancient societies in this region (Santasombat, 2008).

As communities became more socially and economically complex, they merged into ancient states. The state of Chenla, located in the lower Mekong basin, developed into Kambujadesa, an important origin of Khmer civilization (Coedès, 1968). Kambujadesa emphasized control over resources and trade routes, particularly strategic commodities such as salt and iron, which played crucial roles in the livelihood and security of the state (Wongthes, 2003). The area around Prasat Phanomwan was part of the transportation and trade network of Kambujadesa, with routes connecting from Angkor through important cities such as Phimai, which served as a political and religious center in the region (Fine Arts Department, 2011). The community around Prasat Phanomwan thus played a role as a rest stop and distribution center for goods to various areas, both northward to Sukhothai and Vientiane, and southeastward to Lavo and routes to the sea. This role reflects the significance of this area as a center of trade and cultural networks in the region.

### **Cultural Ecology under the Cultural Zone and Ancient City Economic System: Patterns of Way of Life, Society, and Culture of the Phanomwan Community**

Ancient communities emphasized geographical factors in establishing settlements, including terrain, climate, soil, water, and various environmental conditions. Communities would occupy fertile lowland areas that facilitated livelihood, occupation, farming, and house construction. Natural conditions were modified to suit human living requirements, with the aim of dominating nature and attempting to adapt and improve the environment within limited development boundaries. Historical evidence of human construction on inhabited land includes moats and earthen embankments around communities, waterways, roads, dams, and reservoirs. Archaeological artifacts include prehistoric objects similar to those commonly found, along with historical period artifacts.

Nakhon Ratchasima Province is renowned for its history, geography, society, economy, and politics. This is due to important historical evidence from the past, with remaining traces of civilization in both ancient monuments and artifacts dating back approximately 3,000-4,000 years. Prehistoric ancient communities in Nakhon Ratchasima Province were agricultural communities with moats and earthen embankments in natural circular and oval shapes influenced by Dvaravati culture, and rectangular shapes influenced by Khmer culture. Some communities have overlapping earthen embankments and moats, demonstrating the evolution of community establishment and showing that these areas were continuously inhabited from prehistoric times through the historical period. Ancient

communities appearing in Nakhon Ratchasima Province since prehistoric times are found to be distributed across more than 700 locations. In Nakhon Ratchasima, 29 ancient cities with visible traces of surface structures have been found, along with 9 other ancient community settlements. The Phanomwan community is one of these ancient communities.

Being a community located near Prasat Phanomwan has led the communities in this area to regard Prasat Phanomwan as an important ancient monument of them. This is evidenced by the construction of a large arokayasala (hospital pavilion), larger than typical arokayasalas in the Ayutthaya period. Furthermore, according to data on ancient sites surrounding Prasat Phanomwan from the Archaeology Group of the 12<sup>th</sup> Regional Office of Fine Arts, Nakhon Ratchasima, there are 12 ancient sites within a 5-kilometer radius of Prasat Phanomwan, most of which have not been registered by the Fine Arts Department. These cover the areas of Ban Pho Subdistrict, Phanao Subdistrict, Maroeng Subdistrict, Talat Subdistrict, and Nong Rawiang Subdistrict in Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District, including Sa Phleng reservoir, the baray north of Prasat Phanomwan, the old city moat at Ban Nong Bua, Wat Maroeng Noi, Ban Maroeng Noi, Ban Phutsa, Prasat Wat Khok Don In Charoen Tham, Ban Krathon, Wat Khok Talat, and Wat Yong Yaeng.

The livelihood of most people in the community still involves connections between people and the community's landscape architecture, both in terms of occupation and beliefs. Regarding occupations, there are occupations within the home, such as knife forging, basketry, snack making, salt production, and charcoal burning. Occupations outside the home include rice farming, vegetable cultivation, and field crop cultivation. Regarding beliefs, there are Ta Pu shrines (ancestors' shrines) and Thao Suranaree Monuments (Ya Mo Monuments) located in every community within the study area, which are places that community members respect.

### **Cultural Capital for Community Economic Development in Cultural Tourism**

Knowledge about Prasat Phanomwan, as well as the settlement development of the Phanomwan community, constitutes local historical and folkloristic knowledge as cultural capital for community economic development, in dimensions including conservation, resource management, and land use. The Phanomwan community itself is distinctive and interesting in terms of its geographical conditions and land use patterns, possessing a clear cultural landscape identity that can be developed into a cultural tourism destination.

Cultural tourism is a contemporary form of tourism based on the concept of developing cultural resources into tourist attractions. Cultural resources refer to valuable or representative aspects of cultural systems that can communicate various cultures. These resources can be classified into two categories: tangible cultural resources or material culture, such as ancient monuments, antiquities, and everyday tools and implements; and intangible cultural resources, such as language, performing arts, and rituals (Wongwipak et al., 2004). Approaches to cultural resource management are not limited to any particular type of cultural resource, nor do they exclusively focus on the cultural resources of specific cultures or ethnic groups within an area. Cultural resources possess multiple values and meanings at various levels of significance. The value of cultural resources is dynamic and may change from the original or acquire new meanings according to evolving social and cultural contexts (Lertcharnrit, 2011).

Based on the researcher's field survey, the Phanomwan community is an area with a distinctive cultural landscape identity that can be developed into a cultural tourism destination. This is because Prasat Phanomwan is associated with the beliefs of people in the study area in terms of their livelihood and agriculture. Regarding the landscape architecture surrounding the ancient site, Prasat Phanomwan is located in a lowland area away from the community, which sits on elevated ground. The surrounding area is characterized by agricultural land, including rice fields, with irrigation canals, and natural streams flowing past both the northern and southern sides of the temple. This results in the location of Prasat Phanomwan and its adjacent areas having distinctive physical characteristics with substantial natural conditions, constituting unique and beautiful landscape architectural elements that have been interrelated with the community's way of life since ancient times. Archaeological evidence indicates that groups of people have inhabited this study area from prehistoric times through the historical period when Prasat Phanomwan was constructed, continuing to the present with rice cultivation, field crop cultivation, harvesting, salt farming, or fishing for subsistence. The above discussion explains the interconnection between what occurs naturally and what humans have created, illustrating the evolution of human society and settlement across different time periods, as well as factors and influences from physical limitations of the natural environment on human livelihood that have caused the emergence of



cultural landscape in the area. This can be developed into a distinctive and unique tourism destination that blends and communicates meaning between ancient monuments and the way of life and beliefs of people in the community, potentially connecting them in the future.



**Figure 3-4: The prominent characteristics of the Phanomwan community's cultural landscape.**

However, the development of the community economy in cultural tourism for the Phanomwan community should be integrated with eco-tourism programs, sustainable tourism development, and community-based tourism management planning that emphasizes strengthening the community's capacity in tourism management. Public relations programs should cover both the local level and employ diverse promotional formats with broader comprehensive coverage. For example, promoting sense of place can communicate the community's landscape architectural identity and convey meaning to tourists and visitors from various areas. This enables them to perceive landscape architectural elements that indicate the location or direction to Prasat Phanomwan and other ancient sites. Additionally, improving viewpoints and beautiful scenery approaching Prasat Phanomwan can enhance the value and significance of the ancient monument for tourists.

Promoting sense of place to connect with reviving and protecting local knowledge and wisdom that can be passed on to future generations is at the heart of community economic development in tourism. This also represents a new understanding of the relationship between culture and sustainability: that sustainability is grounded in sufficiency economy and local culture. This leads to sustainable design that respects local identity by integrating past and present for future benefit and value, leading to planning at various levels that integrates cultural perspectives, local identity, environment, society, and economy. Therefore, cultural development is an essential foundation that should participate in current development approaches and can be linked to other developmental dimensions such as public health, housing, education, and environment. This integrated perspective combining cultural and other dimensions will generate the components of sustainable development.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

The study of the development of the ancient community around Prasat Phanomwan reveals that this area has been highly significant as an ancient city with settlement, trade, and cultural exchange from prehistoric times through the Khmer state period. The relationship between natural resources, trade networks, and state power has dynamically shaped the community around Prasat Phanomwan as part of the region's historical landscape. This has resulted in diverse developments in beliefs and cultural forms that blended to create distinctive characteristics of the people and community culture in physical, artistic, cultural, and architectural forms. Particularly notable are the urban layout patterns and the role as a spiritual center for the community around Prasat Phanomwan, and their connection to broader historical dimensions across different time periods related to the area. The dynamics and development of the economic units of the community around Prasat Phanomwan reflect the movement of another local economic system that is not dependent on the state economic system, but rather is an ancient city system that manages relationships based on community economy and culture in an interesting way.



Regarding the setting of Prasat Phanomwan and its adjacent areas, distinctive physical characteristics remain: it is located on plains surrounded by agricultural land, with irrigation canals and natural streams flowing through the northern and southern parts of the area. These constitute beautiful landscape architectural elements that can be developed to enhance the significance of Prasat Phanomwan and its adjacent areas. The cultural landscape significance of the area encompasses historical value, aesthetic value, social value, and scientific value, all related to area management embedded in the form of beliefs and traditions. This serves as soft persuasion for people to continue and preserve them indirectly.

The legend of the construction of Prasat Phanomwan narrated in the community relates to cultural landscape in multiple dimensions. Regarding location and natural resources, the temple's position on lowland plains near water sources and ancient transportation routes aligns with Khmer beliefs in selecting fertile areas for religious sites. Legends thus often mention auspicious topography. The explanation of physical traces in damaged or seemingly incomplete parts of the temple is conveyed through legend rather than being viewed as the result of time, thereby merging physical landscape with cognitive landscape. Furthermore, this reflects the community's beliefs and use of space—that although the temple is an ancient monument, legend maintains its perception as a living sacred place where the community performs rituals, asks for blessings, or recounts stories to one another. This represents the transmission of cultural meaning alongside the actual environment. Most importantly, Prasat Phanomwan's architectural layout and building orientation correspond with other major temples such as Prasat Phimai. The legend thus helps explain the area's connection as a network of religious sites sharing a sacred landscape.

On this matter, Wallipodom (2008) explained that this represents local relationships where multiple groups or ethnic communities came to establish settlements, based on cultural landscape. This refers to geographical landscape characteristics in a particular area related to local settlement patterns that become commonly known, and legends may be created to explain their origins, meanings, and historical, social, economic, and cultural significance. It is evident that the natural environment and man-made environment cannot be separated, because the man-made environment is inevitably based on the natural environment of that area. This is the relationship between humans and nature. For this reason, the legend of Prasat Phanomwan's construction not only narrates origins through faith, but also serves to connect the ancient monument, nature, and people's beliefs together, creating a cultural landscape with physical, historical, and spiritual meaning for the community that lives on to the present.

The study of the ancient community area around Prasat Phanomwan reveals that the community possesses two interesting types of capital. The first type is cultural capital, including local wisdom, legends, beliefs, customs and traditions, as these reflect local cultural identity. The second type is natural capital, where the environment has shaped and defined both the cultural and physical identity of the area distinctively. This represents the human-environment relationship, adaptation to the environment, utilization of the environment, and the ecosystem as the relationship of living things inhabiting the area. For this reason, if the area is to be developed for cultural tourism purposes, the sustainability of the area should be defined by a framework combining the cultural dimension with the physical system dimension. That is, the cultural dimension must harmonize authenticity and integrity with the environmental dimension and be viable within the economic dimension, while the economic dimension must be responsible for the environmental dimension. This is true sustainability that considers the framework of cultural ecology, which indicates the area's unique identity in both physical and cultural aspects. Sustainable development should be considered based on what constitutes the area's identity—that is, development that takes into account the cultural capital and natural capital existing in the area as the foundation for various future developments.

## References

- [1] Atijitto, Y., & Jai-em, K. (2020). Metaphysical Analysis of Khmer Temples in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 7(2), 89–112.
- [2] Banthom, P. (1999). *Kan chai phuen thi nai samai prawattisat ton plai thi laeng khut khon nai boriwen Prasat Phanomwan, Amphoe Mueang, Changwat Nakhon Ratchasima* [Land use in the late historical period at excavation sites in the area of Prasat Phanomwan, Mueang District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province] (Unpublished master's thesis). Silpakorn University.
- [3] Coedès, George. (1968). *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. University of Hawaii Press.
- [4] Coedès, George. (1968). *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. University of Hawaii Press.
- [5] Fine Arts Department. (2005). *Borankkhadi kon prawattisat nai prathet Thai* [Prehistoric archaeology in Thailand]. Fine Arts Department.

- [6] Fine Arts Department. (2011). Mueang Phimai lae khrua khai arayatham Khamen [Phimai and the Khmer civilization network]. Fine Arts Department.
- [7] Lefebvre, H. (1991). The production of space (D. Nicholson-Smith, Translate). Basil
- [8] Blackwell.
- [9] Lertcharnrit, T. (2011). Cultural Resource Management. Bangkok: Sirindhorn Anthropology Center (Public Organization)
- [10] Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. (2017). Prasat Phanomwan–Devasrom. MCU Suranaree Journal, Special Issue, 1–30.
- [11] Phalopakorn, K. (2019). Collaboration with the Community in the Conservation of Prasat Phanom Wan. Asian Archaeology Journal, 12(1), 45–68.
- [12] Santasombat, Y. (2008). Rat boran nai Asia tawan-ok chiang tai [Ancient States in Southeast Asia]. Chulalongkorn University Press.
- [13] Taylor, K. (2009). Cultural Landscapes and Asia: Reconciling International and
- [14] Southeast Asian Regional Values. In Landscape Research, 34(1), 7–31.
- [15] Wallipodom, S. (2008). Khwam mai khong phumi watthanatham: Kan sueksa chak phai nai lae samnuek khong thongthin [The meaning of cultural landscape: Study from the inside and local consciousness]. Lek-Prapai Viriyahpant Foundation.
- [16] Wallipodom, S. (2017). Sang ban paeng mueang: Phumi watthanatham kap prawattisat boranakhadi lae manutsayawitthaya thi samphan kap sangkhom lae watthanatham khong kan tang thin than [Building homes and cities: Cultural landscape and history, archaeology, and anthropology related to society and culture of settlement]. Matichon.
- [17] Wongwipak C. et al. (2003). Cultural Resource Management for Sustainable Tourism. Bangkok: Faculty of Archeology, Silpakorn University.
- [18] Wongthes, S. (2003). Isan Culture. Matichon.