

Chapter 8

Public Archaeology in Thailand

Rasmi Shoocongdej

Introduction

Archaeology, as part of cultural heritage management, has recently become very important for economic development in Thailand and similarly economically disadvantaged countries elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Bautista 2007; Fine Arts Department 1988; Paz 2007; Peleggi 2002; Shoocongdej 1992). This seems to be linked to the popularity and growth of tourism in the capitalist world of globalization. Consequently, there has been increased interest in the rescue, protection, conservation, and restoration of archaeological sites in Southeast Asian countries, especially for sites closely tied to the recent history of each nation. This paper seeks to explore the complexities in the relationship between archaeology and the public that have generated such trends in cultural heritage management in Thailand.

Over the last few decades, Thailand has boosted local economies through cultural heritage tourism. This has affected the practice of archaeology in Thailand in two ways. First, while the conservation and restoration of archaeological sites and their management for tourism have come to be considered a high priority, archaeological research and public education have become lower priorities. Second, archaeological surveys and excavations have increasingly been conducted by private companies under contract, with minimal public involvement and limited monitoring for the assurance of the quality of work. This is a worrying situation because, in the author's opinion, management of archaeological sites cannot be successfully implemented if research elements in archaeology are neglected. In general terms, the research of heritage sites should be valued as much as their conservation and restoration.

Another important phenomenon observed in the development of cultural heritage tourism in Thailand is the promotion of the concept of "Thai Cultural Heritage."

R. Shoocongdej (✉)
Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University,
31 Na Phralan Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand
e-mail: rasmi@su.ac.th



Fig. 8.1 Map of Thailand. Highland Pang Mapcha is indicated by the inset in the *upper left* of the map

This promotion is effectively state cultural propaganda aimed at conserving Thai culture (Charoenwongsa 2003; Nagavajara 2004), and as such excludes and marginalizes ethnic groups other than the Thais. There is a need to consider the implication of this when seeking to practice public archaeology in multiethnic areas. Admittedly, little attention has been paid thus far to the conflicting interests between Thai archaeologists and multiethnic communities, although, ironically enough, the conflicts between Western archaeologists and indigenous/Thai people have already been

discussed for some time. In the postcolonial era, Thai archaeologists need to be more self-critical and fulfill their social responsibilities by communicating the results of their research not only to academic audiences, but also to the broader public, in particular local communities including multiethnic ones.

Bearing these issues in mind, I shall examine the impact of globalization on archaeology in Thailand at the local level with the following three aims: (1) to review the authority and organization of Thai archaeology; (2) to give an overview of the practice of public archaeology in Thailand; and (3) to discuss the processes of communication between archaeologists and multiethnic communities in relation to heritage management. In order to address the third aim, a case study of the “archaeological heritage management” of the prehistoric sites in Highland Pang Mapha is presented. Highland Pang Mapha is a district in Mae Hong Son Province, northwestern Thailand, on the border between Thailand and Myanmar, where a number of different ethnic groups live (Fig. 8.1). The case study, based on the author’s own experience of conducting research projects and practicing public archaeology, highlights the question as to how archaeologists could and should engage with multiethnic cultures affected by the growth of heritage tourism.

Definition of Terms

In this paper, the term “public archaeology” refers to the general responsibilities of archaeologists to the public, which include using archaeological knowledge to serve society and involving all interested and concerned communities in the process of archaeological practice.

Some archaeologists define the term differently as “archaeological/cultural heritage management” or “cultural resource management” (e.g., Darvill 2006: 410; Green 2008: 375; Tainter 2006: 435). According to Skeates (2000: 9–18), “archaeological heritage” can be defined in two general ways: “(f)irst, as the material culture of past societies that survives in the present; and second, as the process through which the material culture of past societies is re-evaluated and re-used in the present.” Alternatively, others use the term more specifically to refer to “community archaeology.” According to Moser and others (2002: 220), community archaeology incorporates “a range of strategies designed to facilitate the involvement of local people in the investigation and interpretation of the past.” I shall use these terms under the general umbrella of “public archaeology.”

The Authority and Organization of Archaeology in Thailand

In Thailand, the major institutions engaging in archaeological research and cultural heritage management are the Royal Thai Fine Arts Department (FAD) of the Ministry of Culture and universities. Two major departments within the FAD are

involved in archaeological heritage work: the Division of Archaeology and the National Museum. In addition, a growing number of private companies and other agencies have become involved in public archaeology over the past 2 decades.

The FAD Division of Archaeology is primarily responsible for conducting archaeological research and is in charge of the registration, restoration, and preservation of all archaeological sites in the country. In recent years, damage and destruction of cultural heritage resources has increased with the expansion of industry, urbanization, and tourism. Most archaeological work in Thailand, as elsewhere in the world, has therefore come to focus on salvage/rescue archaeology. The majority of the FAD budget is used to maintain and restore archaeological monuments, mostly those relating to Buddhism, and only a small amount of the budget remains for conducting genuine research projects. It would be possible to argue that at present the government uses archaeology to promote tourism, since the economic benefits from it are direct.

On the other hand, the universities that have archaeological programs (i.e., Chiang Mai University in northern Thailand, Khon Kean University in northeastern Thailand, Silpakorn University and Thammasat University in Bangkok), tend to give high priority to teaching archaeology to students and provide education to the general public. The Department of Archaeology at Silpakorn University is the only institution in Thailand that provides training in archaeology to PhD level. At other universities, archaeology is usually taught within a Department of History or Sociology and Anthropology. In a sense, the situation of the universities is not very different from that of the FAD, in that the focus of the educational system is to train people for state bureaucracy while research is a secondary consideration.

To the present day, decentralization of control over Thailand's cultural heritage has been a national policy. Since the 1997 Constitution, local administrative units have been responsible for the management of their local resources. As a result, the control of a number of archaeological heritage sites, not yet considered to be of national significance, has gradually been transferred to local authorities and communities. This move has affected the practice of archaeology. The FAD has recently reformed the archaeological administration in Thailand and assigned salvage archaeology and conservation projects to private companies and universities, with the consequence that there has been an increase in the practice of contract archaeology. However, the FAD still retains control over granting permission to conduct archaeological and conservation work. Currently, there are over 30 private companies working on salvage projects of various scales in Thailand.

Another form of nongovernmental activity relating to archaeology began in the mid-1970s with the publication of journals for the general public, such as *Muang Boran (Ancient City Journal)* and *Silapa Watthanatham (Arts and Culture Journal)*. Containing articles written by authors with backgrounds in archaeology or history, these journals have functioned as a medium for communication between professional archaeologists and the public. They have also facilitated public education in archaeology, art history, local culture, and history by organizing and supporting public talks, seminars, and other cultural activities.

Finally, there are a few informal groups of volunteers, amateur archaeologists, and cultural activists who support the FAD's efforts to stop the looting and destruction

of the archaeological and cultural resource. Thailand currently does not have a non-governmental organization (NGO) working for the protection of cultural heritage; this is rather surprising, given that there is a large number of NGOs working on environmental issues. The people of Thailand might well understand this situation as indicating that archaeology is monopolized by the Thai government and that issues relating to heritage or cultural destruction are not as urgent and serious as economic or environmental concerns that directly affect their lives.

The Practice of Public Archaeology in Thailand

There are two major practices of public archaeology that are worthy of discussion here: archaeological heritage tourism and community-based archaeology.

Public Archaeology as Archaeological Heritage Tourism

In the globalized world, the tourism industry in Thailand has grown rapidly since the 1980s, and heritage and cultural heritage have become major businesses and tourist attractions (Cohen 2001). In recent years, the promotion of mainstream “Thai” culture has been managed by the Tourist Authority of Thailand, which markets national heritage sites as tourist attractions (Charoenwongsa 2003). The tourism industry caters for the need of middle/upper-class tourists, both domestic and international, rather than local people, and as a result tends to romanticize the past.

Another impact of globalization has been the development of the concept of World Heritage, promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Thailand has been active in advocating this concept that calls for universal rights to the past for all the peoples of the world. For example, Sukhothai World Heritage Site has achieved great publicity for archaeological heritage tourism (Faculty of Environment and Resource Studies 1991; Fine Arts Department 1988).

The promotion of archaeological heritage tourism has led to the establishment of festivals on the one hand and an increase in facilities at archaeological sites and surrounding areas on the other. This development of tourism, however, often seems superficial and lacking in knowledge based on in-depth research work (Shoocongdej 2007).

Archaeological heritage tourism targets both international and domestic tourists, who have obviously different interests. International tourists tend to visit only “landmark” sites that are well-promoted, such as developed historical parks or large monumental complexes near big towns (e.g., Chiang Mai, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya). They often miss other types of archaeological heritage sites, such as prehistoric or rock art sites. In contrast, domestic tourists tend to visit diverse types of archaeological sites throughout the country (Peleggi 2002: 69). It is important to note that

the amount of money spent on the development of tourism relating to archaeological sites differs between those located in urban and those in rural areas – more is spent on sites in urban areas.

A few years ago, the previous (Thaksin) government initiated one of their populist policies called “One Village/One Tourist Spot,” with the aim of promoting the local economy at each village – heritage is no longer a free commodity! The idea of archaeology as a commercial product is a good example of the misuse of archaeological heritage. This is clearly illustrated in the case of Pratu Pha, a prehistoric rock art site in Lampang, northern Thailand. The local administrative organization failed to manage this site appropriately, as it rushed into responding to “One Village/One Tourist Spot” policy and built the infrastructure at the site before studying and understanding its archaeological nature. There was no involvement of local communities in the management of the site either, and, as a result the building at the site stands empty and abandoned today as the local communities have no sense of belonging to it.

To summarize, the central government agencies in Thailand still maintain central roles in archaeological heritage management and the promotion of tourism, despite the general move to decentralize their control. While sustainable heritage tourism has been promoted at the local and community levels over the past decades, these efforts are smaller in scale and will take more time before bearing fruit.

Public Archaeology as Community-Based Archaeology

As mentioned above, globalization has created the promotion of mass tourism. It is, however, worth remembering that localization, namely, the move to strengthen local/grassroots community organizations (Connors 2005), has at the same time emerged as a response to or a reaction against globalization. In the case of Thailand, two examples of localization were discussed earlier: the move authorized by the 1997 Constitution to decentralize control over the “Thai cultural heritage”; and the efforts to promote sustainable tourism through local communities.

Archaeology has been used to promote local cultures, identities, and ethnic pride by and for different ethnic groups (Vallibhodama 1989). The use of archaeology in the process of localization has obviously had a strong impact on the development of community-based archaeology and local/community museums throughout Thailand (Natapintu 2007; Prishanchit 2005; Santasombat 2001).

One of the most successful community archaeology projects in Thailand was undertaken at Pong Manao, a late prehistoric site (c. 3500–1000 BP) in Lopburi Province, central Thailand. Pong Manao is a cemetery site with multiple levels of cultural deposition; numerous skeletal remains and artifacts were discovered during excavations. The community archaeology project was started in 2000 when looters seriously disturbed the site. The majority of people living in Pong Manao are Thai, who recently migrated from central and northeast Thailand. The local Huai Khun Ram Sub-District Administrative Organization, which has central powers in terms of

decision-making and resource allocation in the subdistrict (covering approximately 10–15 villages), asked the Department of Archaeology at Silpakorn University to assist with the archaeological excavation and preservation of the site. Excavation was thus conducted over 4 years (2000–2004), which involved close collaboration between the local administrative organization, local people, and faculty members and students from Silpakorn University under the direction of Surapol Natapintu. The collaborative project led to the establishment of Ban Pong Manao Community Museum in the village temple after the end of the excavation. The museum exhibits photographs and archaeological artifacts from villagers' collections and looters' pits. The project also assisted in training local school children to become museum guides.

Another well-known community archaeology project was carried out at Ban Bo Soak in Nan Province, northern Thailand, by Sayan Prishanchit. Sayan's approach was slightly different from that of Surapol: he used archaeology as a tool for community development. Sayan's research focused on ceramic production in Nan Province, where he had worked for over 5 years. The majority of people living in Ban Bo Soak are northern Thai and are a relatively homogeneous ethnic group. The community archaeology project was implemented at historic ceramic production sites (c. sixteenth to seventeenth centuries AD). Unlike in Pong Manao, local people were involved in various project activities from its earliest stages, for example: survey; excavation; analysis; exhibition; the training of site guides; and building museums.

One of the project's noteworthy results was the establishment of a local museum in a house run by a local family. Sayan and villagers excavated ancient kilns in the village. When the excavation was completed, villagers built a museum near one of the kiln sites; the museum later received financial support from private companies and donations from visitors. At the museum, Sayan worked with elders and children to develop educational programs. This museum has become famous and is now a popular tourist spot in the province. As another important result of the project, the local administrative organization built a handicraft center as a tourist attraction for the village. Reconstructions of ancient technology can be seen by visitors to the center. Archaeologists assisted the administrative organization to develop heritage products relating to ceramics that were produced in the kilns.

In Thailand today, there are only a few community-based projects that are founded on archaeological research. This means that community archaeology is still at an early stage of development. It is worth pointing out that both projects discussed above involved collaboration with relatively homogeneous ethnic populations.

The Case Study of Ban Rai Rockshelter in Highland Pang Mapha

A summary of our research project and public archaeology activities carried out at Ban Rai in Highland Pang Mapha since 1998 is presented in the following sections. Highland Pang Mapha is a mountainous district in Mae Hong Son Province, north-western Thailand, which is a borderland between Thailand, Myanmar, and the

Shan State. Due to the mountainous terrain, Pang Mapha is geographically isolated and it is still very economically disadvantaged in comparison to other districts in Thailand. Having a multiethnic population, including a number of migrants who come from Myanmar each year, and where many languages are spoken, this area has one of the lowest literacy rates in the country. Pang Mapha has long been the focus of government modernizing policies: these policies, forced on Thailand by international donor agencies, include opium eradication and the elimination of shifting cultivation.

The research project in Highland Pang Mapha, in which I also participated, began in 1998. Initially, there was admittedly very little interaction between archaeologists working for the project and local communities surrounding the sites, as the archaeological work consisted of field surveys in remote forests, and once excavation and analysis started the archaeologists were based at a field station for many years. There was also the problem of a language barrier, which made individuals on the team feel as if they were foreigners in their own country. Gradually, however, the significance of the input from local communities in protecting cultural resources in the area became apparent. This experience resulted in changing the author's view on archaeology and the practice of public archaeology, as discussed later.

Archaeological Research and Public Archaeology Projects in Highland Pang Mapha

Highland Pang Mapha is known to scientists as a natural laboratory because of the very rich biodiversity of its seasonal tropical environments. Yet, its archaeology was relatively poorly known by archaeologists as well as the Thai public for a long time; a notable exception was an American excavation at Spirit Cave in 1969, which focused on the origins of agriculture in Southeast Asia (Gorman 1970). The above situation began to change in 1998, when the *Cave Survey and Database System Project* was implemented in Mae Hong Son Province, although the project focused only on caves and rockshelters. During 2001–2006, the *Highland Archaeology Project in Pang Mapha* began a long-term, multidisciplinary research program in Pang Mapha, which addressed archaeology, physical and dental anthropology, dendrochronology, ethnoarchaeology, and GIS. The project was under the author's direction and involved a research team from the Faculty of Archaeology at Silpakorn University, the Faculty of Social Science at Chiang Mai University, and the Faculty of Environmental Studies and Natural Resources at Mahidol University. Ban Rai and Tham Lad rockshelters were excavated as part of the project.

When the *Highland Archaeology Project in Pang Mapha* ended in December 2006, there was much work to be done on artifact conservation and the protection and management of Ban Rai and Tham Lod rockshelters. Thus, from 2006 to 2008, the *Archaeological Heritage Management at Ban Rai and Tham Lod Rockshelters Project* was carried out with financial support from the US Ambassador's Funds for

Cultural Preservation 2006. This project consisted of the establishment of an education program, the conservation of artifacts, site management, the training of guides, exhibitions, and publications. In addition, the project assisted local communities in coping with the economic opportunities generated by tourism, which was, however, also endangering the integrity of fragile archaeological sites and threatening the tribal/cultural beliefs from which the original meanings of those sites derived. We created on-site educational resources and informed local people of alternative and sustainable ways of using their heritage. Although the project ended in March 2008, I carried out another project, the *Archaeological Exploration and Sustainable Heritage Management in Pai-Pang Mapha-Khun Yuam District, Mae Hong Son Province*, which began in 2007 and continued through 2009. This project is a continuation of the *Archaeological Heritage Management at Ban Rai and Tham Lod Rockshelters Project*, and its scope of activities has expanded to include nearby districts of Pai and Khun Yuam. The project examines the impact of globalization caused by the promotion of Thailand's tourism on this area. In particular, the project focuses on the effects of adventure tourism and eco-tourism on archaeological heritage management.

Ban Rai Village

Ban Rai is a small village in Highland Pang Mapha established about 40 years ago. The residents of the village consist of many ethnic groups, including northern Thai, Hmong, Lisu, Karen, and Shan. As in other parts of the region, the central Thai language is a medium for communication, although other languages are also widely spoken. The village is situated in a valley that is one of the most fertile areas in Highland Pang Mapha. Apart from paid labor, the sale of agricultural products is a major source of subsistence.

Ban Rai Rockshelter from a Scientific Perspective

The rockshelter is located near the top of a limestone cliff, under a large overhanging rock. The total area investigated by our test excavation was 140 m². The results of the excavation suggest that the site can be dated to the period between ca. 12500 and 2000 BP. The earliest cultural layers, dated to the late Pleistocene, ca. 12500–10250 BP, included fragments of faunal remains and lithic debris. In this period, the area was presumably used as a temporary camp site.

Skeletal remains of an elderly man were found dating from the succeeding period, the early Holocene (9720 ± 50 BP). Rock art discovered along the eastern edge of the site represent both realistic and idealistic images, including human figures, animals, and a number of symbolic images, can be dated to the same period.

In the late Holocene, in the Iron Age (from c. 2500 BP to the ninth century AD), the rockshelter was used as a cemetery. In addition to skeletal materials, log coffins, faunal remains, pottery, beads, and iron implements dated to this period were recovered. The analysis of teeth from the burials suggests that the people buried in the log coffins shared similar traits with present-day Southeast Asian populations. Ban Rai rockshelter is the largest Iron Age log coffin cemetery found in Highland Pang Mapha.

Public Archaeology at Ban Rai Village and Rockshelter

Community Perspectives

Highland Pang Mapha has now become increasingly popular for eco- and adventure tourism among Thai and other visitors (Loethanawanit 2006). The number of tourists visiting the area has increased enormously over the past decade, and as a consequence a number of problems have arisen that are new to Pang Mapha, such as the sudden change of culture, the use of drugs, and human trafficking (Bechstedt and Legsomboon 2004).

While the author's research has proven many of the archaeological sites to have been burial sites and temples, tribal groups on the whole believe that these sites are the places of their tribal spirits. In the past years, some local communities prevented us from working at the sites, as they were afraid that someone in the village would suffer misfortune or die as a result of our research work. However, today their attitude has changed with the growth of the tourism industry. A number of remote villages have recently become accessible via roads and archaeological sites can now be used as tourist attractions.

Practice of Public Archaeology

Our excavation and research work at Ban Rai and Tham Lod rockshelters was completed in 2006, and since then we have been carrying out public archaeology activities through the *Archaeological Heritage Management at Ban Rai and Tham Lod Rockshelters Project* (2006–2008), and the *Archaeological Exploration and Sustainable Heritage Management in Pai-Pang Mapha-Khun Yuam District, Mae Hong Son Province* (2007–2009). The two important components of the activities are community involvement and public education campaigns.

For our projects, community involvement has been essential for the purpose of developing lines of communication with various ethnic groups in Ban Rai. The process of community involvement consists of three simultaneous steps: village



Fig. 8.2 Children’s workshop “The Detectives of the Past” held at Ban Rai rockshelter (photo by author)

meetings; interviews; and recruitment. Monthly meetings are intended to give explanations to local people about the archaeology and the progress of our research work. Interviews have been conducted with local people in order to situate the “heritage with no ownership” within the present communities. More specifically, the following information has been collected through interviews: the history of each community (based on oral history); local people’s perceptions of their natural and cultural heritage (e.g., folklore, belief, tribal medicine); their response to archaeological discoveries in their villages; and their opinions as to how the sites should be protected and managed. After several meetings and interviews, we identified groups of local people who are particularly interested in our projects. From these, we recruited children, teachers, and adults so that they could work with us, namely, archaeologists, in workshops (Fig. 8.2).

We have also designed and implemented various training programs for local children, adults, school teachers, and forestry officers. For example, six training programs were carried out in 2007, the themes of which were:

- “Tham Lod children and their awareness of the past” (for local children)
- “Curriculum development on local heritage in Ban Rai and Tham Lod villages” (for school teachers)
- “Archaeology in Tham Lod station” (for forestry officers)
- “Being a good host at Tham Lod village” and “Being a good host at Ban Rai village” (for local people in general)
- “Children guides for archaeological and cultural tourism at Ban Rai village” (for local children)

Candidates of “good hosts” were selected from the participants in the programs so that they could serve as representatives and guides for the village.

Our public education campaign has promoted the preservation and conservation of the local cultural and archaeological heritage. The campaign has consisted of many activities that include talks, publications (e.g., guide books, brochures, maps), guide training for children and adults, the establishment of a museum in collaboration with local people, an “Archaeology in the Arts” program for children, community photography, an art exhibition, and the training of local experts (children, adults, and schoolteachers) in archaeological heritage management. As a result, the local communities have been empowered to undertake heritage management and sustainable tourism. Importantly, this has taken place before the development of commercial tourism starts at Ban Rai village.

In collaboration with villagers, we have also established Ban Rai Local Museum at the village meeting hall as an information center for the village and Ban Rai rock-shelter site. The museum explains the everyday lives, tools, crafts, and local products of the people who lived in Ban Rai in the past. There are also special exhibitions that show the history, tradition, rituals, food, and dress of the village. The Ban Rai museum/information center is one of the most significant results of the projects. The museum disseminates information on local history and multiethnic cultures and visitors can learn about the rich heritage of Ban Rai village in Highland Pang Mapha.

Our projects have been successful in two senses. First, Thai archaeologists involved in the projects have gained invaluable experience in working closely with multiethnic communities whose languages and cultures are very different from those of the majority Thai ethnic group. Second, the results of our archaeological research have become an important knowledge base for the local communities for managing their cultural resources.

Discussion

I discussed elsewhere (Shoocongdej 1992), the working relationship between Thai (and Southeast Asian) and foreign archaeologists, as well as the problems for archaeologists working in areas having diverse cultural traditions in Southeast Asia.

It is undeniable that the Western concept of studying the past has long been embraced in Thai archaeology, and consequently we, Thai archaeologists, have been consciously adopting rigorous scientific agendas in practicing our archaeological research. However, at the same time we have also been unconsciously perpetuating the colonialist and nationalist ideology by failing to consider the views of the past held by ethnic minority groups (e.g., the Mon, Khmer, and Laotian), and treating them as part of the “Thai national heritage.” It is only in recent years that the situation has begun to change as the concept of community archaeology emerges in Thai archaeology. The essential point here is that there is no single appropriate way of practicing community archaeology. As illustrated by the examples of Pong Manao (Lopburi Province), Ban Bo Soak (Nan Province), and Ban Rai in Highland Pang Mapha (Mae Hong Son Province), communities in different regions have had different historical trajectories, and therefore community archaeology, the fundamental principle of which is to incorporate local views and voices into its agendas, needs to carefully attend to the local history and traditional knowledge of each community. In this regard, there are still many challenges for Thai archaeologists in implementing a community archaeology that truly meets the need of “the public”: we need to overcome the colonialist ideology that underpins our research practice and also learn what other agendas (e.g., education, health, and economy) could exist in each community, where we seek to study the past. Changing our perspectives to this effect will certainly take time, but a gradual change is better than no change.

With the great importance and potential of community archaeology for Thai archaeologists thus recognized, two observations can now be made of the current situation of heritage tourism and public archaeology in Thailand. Firstly, it is evident that public archaeology in Thailand has developed in response to the global economy, in particular the growth of global heritage tourism. However, there are differences in the approaches to heritage management adopted by the state and those taken at community levels. The FAD, a national government agency, focuses on “nationally significant heritage sites” and “world heritage sites,” rather than archaeological sites of smaller scales, especially prehistoric ones. What the FAD does is, in essence, *official* management of heritage sites. In this regard, Highland Pang Mapha is neither nationally significant nor a “world heritage site,” and is therefore beyond the scope of the state’s heritage tourism development; it is an example of “unofficial” management of a heritage site by a local community. The state promotes mass tourism featuring “Thai heritage,” which is mostly concerned with sites located in towns. This implies that little “official” attention has been paid to archaeological sites in multiethnic or rural areas. In contrast, community-based archaeology can put more emphasis on working at the grassroots level and empower socially marginalized people through education, conservation, and implementing local guide training programs for sustainable community tourism.

Secondly, although many tourists, both Thai and international, are willing to learn more about the Thai heritage sites they visit, most of the sites at present provide only brief and generic information on their historical and cultural contexts. This is an unfortunate situation, since on-site education could be a powerful tool to make Thai visitors aware of their histories and identities and to help international

visitors to appreciate and learn about Thai cultures. In order to improve the quality of information provided to tourists, there is a need to enhance the quality of archaeological research at each site first, as it is the only source of information. There is also a need to establish a system for channeling the information thus gained from research to those who are responsible for site management.

Based on this understanding, some evaluations of the three different public archaeology projects in Thailand are presented in this paper: the projects at Pang Manao, Ban Bo Soak, and Ban Rai. The project at Pong Manao and Ban Bo Soak developed in response to the needs of rural Thai communities that wanted to promote local tourism in their villages in accordance with the policy of the central government. Villagers of Pong Manao asked for assistance from archaeologists to excavate a looter's trench. At Ban Bo Soak, archaeologists conducted a research project focusing on ceramic kiln sites and encouraged local people to join the project. In both instances, archaeologists were aware of the potential of the sites for the development of tourism; they thus prepared local people for sustainable tourism while conducting archaeological research.

The project at Pong Manao is, in a sense, a model case of managing a heritage site for the development of tourism through community involvement. The on-site community museum was established at the completion of the archaeological excavation and a guide-training program for local people was implemented. Local people, although recent migrants to the area, came to feel proud of having a well-known heritage site in their village.

The project at Ban Bo Soak was slightly different from that at Pong Manao in that villagers already had a strong sense of the ancient settlement history of their community, represented by the historic kilns situated in the village, and it was therefore easier for them to feel historically connected with the sites. The excavation was carried out in a residential area and the villagers gradually learned about the sites, which today they can explain to visitors.

These two projects of community-based archaeology demonstrate the economic value of archaeological heritage, which could generate income for local communities. Social value of heritage was also strongly recognized in both projects, as a result of which the local communities have taken pride in the past of their villages.

Our public archaeology projects at Ban Rai village and rockshelter were again different from the projects at Pang Manao and Ban Bo Soak in that they took place in an area that has more multiethnic populations and is less economically developed. Our work at Ban Rai began as a long-term scientific research project with specific research objectives. When the archaeological research was almost complete, we decided to move the focus of the succeeding project to communication and collaboration with the local communities. A two-way dialogue was thus established, which allowed us, archaeologists, and the tribal communities to share experiences and expertise with each other. Our research team learned much about the local cultures and knowledge from those communities. The two-way communication enhanced the interpretation and presentation of Ban Rai heritage in a meaningful, collaborative way. Even though the local communities did not have a history that is

directly associated with Ban Rai rockshelter, the site has now assumed scientific, social, and economic value for them. In other words, the communities have learned how to use archaeology for their own economic benefits by negotiating local knowledge and beliefs.

The three public archaeology projects demonstrate that long-term archaeological research is necessary for the development of sustainable heritage tourism at the local level. In this sense, community archaeology is very useful because it addresses archaeological research, community involvement, and public education all at the same time. In order to carry out community archaeology, however, it is essential to gain the trust of local communities first and foremost; archaeologists should not simply arrive, excavate, and leave. It is worth remembering that the dissemination of archaeological information concerning each site rests with the archaeologist, who is responsible for making it available and accessible to both academics and the public.

Conclusion

In the globalized era, archaeology has been extensively used in Thailand for the development of heritage tourism. The promotion of heritage sites tends to be aimed at the mass market and package tourism, while the conservation and restoration of archaeological heritage sites have been managed by the central government for the development of heritage tourism. Archaeological sites should, however, be managed not only for tourism, but also for public education, the promotion of the importance of understanding the human past, and the enhancement of the quality of life of local communities. To this end, close collaboration between archaeologists and local communities is essential.

The practice of public archaeology in each local community is far more complex than is generally assumed. An approach that works in one situation does not work in another – each approach must be developed based on a thorough understanding of individual cultural and historical contexts.

Acknowledgments Our projects were made possible by the support of a number of grants and with the collaboration and assistance of many institutions and people. Financial support for archaeological heritage management at Ban Rai and Tham Lod rockshelters has been provided by the US Ambassador's Funds for Cultural Preservation 2006. Funding for research at the Ban Rai and Tham Lod rockshelters by the Highland Archaeology Project in Pang Mapha (HAAP) was provided by Thailand Research Funds (TRF) during 1998–2006 and the Archaeological Exploration and Sustainable Heritage Management in Pai-Pang Mapha-Khun Yuam Project (PPK) was also funded by TRF during 2007–2009. A debt of gratitude is owed to the local people at Ban Rai and Tham Lod villages. I would especially like to thank Dr Tristine Smart for her comments on an earlier version of this report. Finally, my special thanks and appreciation go to my wonderful research team and art project team. Without good teamwork, the projects would never have been accomplished.

References

- Bautista, A.P., 2007, The Development of the Tabon Archaeological Cave Complex, Quezon, Palawan, Towards Nation Building in the Philippines. In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Archaeology and Nation Building*, pp. 47–51. Pusat Penyelidikan Arkeologi Malaysia, University of Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang.
- Bechstedt, H. and Legsomboon, W., 2004, *Global Economy and Social Networking – A Case Study from Northern Thailand*. Paper presented for the international conference on “Impact of Globalization, Regionalism and Nationalism on Minority People in SEA.” November 15–17, 2004, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- Charoenwongsa, P., 2003, *CRM for Tourism*. A lectured presented at the SEAMEO-SPAFA workshop on “Cultural Resources Management of Tourism.” Bangkok.
- Cohen, E., 2001, *Thai Tourism: Hill Tribes, Islands, and Open-ended Prostitution*. White Lotus, Bangkok.
- Connors, M.K., 2005, Democracy and the Mainstreaming of Localism in Thailand. In *Southeast Asian Responses to Globalization*, edited by F. Loh Kok Wah and J. Öjendal, pp. 259–286. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.
- Darvill, T., 2006, Public Archaeology: A European Perspective. In *A Companion to Archaeology*, edited by J. Bintliff, pp. 409–434. Blackwell, Malden.
- Fine Arts Department, 1988, *Sukhothai the City of Phra Ruang* (in Thai with English summary). Fine Arts Department, Bangkok.
- Gorman, C., 1970, Excavations at Spirit Cave, North Thailand. *Asian Perspectives* 13: 79–107. Faculty of Environment and Resource Studies, 1991, *Thai Heritage*. Graphic Format, Bangkok.
- Green, T. J., 2008, Cultural Resource Management. In *Handbook of Archaeological Theories*, edited by R.A. Bentley, H.D.G. Maschner, and C. Chippindale, pp. 375–394. AltaMira, Lanham.
- Loethanawanit, D., 2006, From Pang Mapha to Pai: Towards Tourism Development Avenue. In *Dynamics of Social, Culture, and Environment in Highland Pang Mapha* (in Thai), edited by R. Shoocongdej, pp. 473–492. Ruen Keaw Press, Bangkok.
- Moser, S., Darren, G., Phillips, J.E., el Nemr, L.N., Niysam, M.S, Aiesh, R.N., Rochardson, S., Conner, A., and Seymour, M., 2002, Transforming Archaeology Through Practice: Strategies for Collaborative Archaeology and the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt. *World Archaeology* 34(2): 220–248.
- Nagavajara, C., 2004, Modernization and Cultural Heritage: Old Dilemma? In *Fervently Mediating: Criticism from a Thai Perspective*, pp. 51–68. Commanad Press, Bangkok.
- Natapintu, S., 2007, Contribution of archaeology to the quality of life improvement at the village of Ban Pong Manao, Lopburi province, central Thailand. In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Archaeology and Nation Building*, pp. 2–231. Pusat Penyelidikan Arkeologi Malaysia, University of Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang.
- Paz, V., 2007, Public Archaeology in Mindoro and the Improvement of a Philippine National/Cultural Consciousness. In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Archaeology and Nation Building*, pp. 52–65. Pusat Penyelidikan Arkeologi Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang.
- Peleggi, M., 2002, *The Politics of Ruins and the Business of Nostalgia*. White Lotus Press, Bangkok.
- Prishanchit, S., 2005, *Community Archaeology: Past Management and Community Development* (in Thai). Community Archaeology, Bangkok.
- Santasombat, Y., 2001, *Ecotourism, Cultural Diversity, and Natural Resource Management*. Nopburee, Chiang Mai.
- Shoocongdej, R., 1992, Conversations Across the Continent. In *Southeast Asian Archaeology International Newsletter* 2, edited by E. Bacus and R. Shoocongdej, pp. 2–4. Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Shoocongdej, R., 2007, Archaeology and “A Modern Nation-State Building” in Thailand. In *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Archaeology and Nation Building*, pp. 32–41. Pusat Penyelidikan Arkeologi Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang.

Skeates, R., 2000, *Debating the Archaeological Heritage*. Duckworth, London.

Tainter, J., 2006, Persistent Dilemmas in American Cultural Resource Management. In *A Companion to Archaeology*, edited by J. Bintliff, pp. 435–453. Blackwell, Malden.

Vallibhodama, S., 1989, *Ancient Settlement of Sukhothai State* (in Thai with English Summary). Thammasart University Press, Bangkok.