

ON THE VALUE AND MEANING OF CULTURAL RESOURCES

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During the past few decades, the term "cultural resource" has been a common topic for conversation among academics and general audience. While well received in public media, aspects of cultural resource have not been discussed in greater detail than a superficial perception. One significant aspect of cultural resource that deserves much attention, I believe, is its value and meaning. In the following, attempts have been made to illustrate value and meaning of a class of cultural resource, namely the archaeological site of Kru Se in Pattani Province

Kru Se is a place mostly known to public in two different ways: 1) as a Muslim fishing village like any other fishing communities in the border provinces of southern Thailand, and 2) as a historical site where it once was a capital location of Pattani Kingdom, about 6 kilometers east of the present city of Pattani. In addition, it had a good locality for trade contact. Many of the archaeological and historical remains including an old brick – structured mosque (Figures 1-2) discovered in the area have been proven to be of high value, particularly for the study of Pattani's history and the history of complex societies in Southeast Asia as a whole.

The following values of the site are considered in a contextual sense. The sense is that any cultural items or properties received from the past have specific tradition or perceptions, provenance, and history which depend on particular cultural, intellectual, historical, and psychological frames of reference held by particular individuals of groups involved (Lipe 1984). Undoubtedly, Kru Se yields some kinds of potential value and maintains a certain level of relative significance to its surrounding society in the following manners:

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Informational Value As a cultural resource, Kru Se can provide a great deal of information that is useful to various fields of study, such as archaeology, history, architecture, etc.

Kru Se complex covers an area of about 90 ha stretching from the shore of Pattani bay east of Ban Kru Se and from the edge of the salt farm to the south side of Ban Di. In the area of the complex several physical remains have been found in situ. Aerial photographs reveal the outline of a roughly rectangular 10 ha moated site directly east of the village. Near Pattani Bay a villager found a Chinese tombstone dated to A.D. 1592, the earliest so far discovered in Southeast Asia. Two cemeteries are located on sand dune east of the moated site; one is of the first Islamic king of Pattani; the other holds three graves, which are said to be of those of the three sister queens who ruled Pattani from 1584 to 1635 (Welch and Mcneil 1989). On the south side of the village there is an old mosque.

For an archaeologist or historian, Kru Se is an important record of events that occurred during the history of Pattani. According to the book "History of the Malay kingdom of Pattani" (Syukri 1985), an important and limited manuscript on the Muslims of the present southern Thailand, Kru Se played a major role in approximately the late 15th century as a new capital of the newly converted Islamic dynasty. The book gives some details about the newly converted Islamic dynasty. The book gives some details about the movement of the capital from an inland city to the coastal village of Pattani at Kerisik or the Malay's name of ban Kru Se (Syukri 1985:13 – 14). The village became more developed and densely populated because it is located in such a position that it attracted merchants from elsewhere for trade.

This written record has been associated with a large number of archaeological remains at the site. An intensive archaeological investigation conducted in 1987 by a team of archaeologists from Prince of Songkhla University led by David Welch produced a lot of information about this site. The physical remains and features found

in the site include concentrations of potsherds, Ayutthaya period earthenware, stoneware and porcelain sherds of Chinese origin. In addition, locally-minted gold coins with Arabic inscriptions reportedly have been discovered by villagers (Welch and McNeil 1989, 38 – 41). Thus far, this is only a preliminary investigation. There is still much more information awaiting discovery from Kru Se site.

Symbolic/Spiritual Value A mosque, believed to have been built during the middle Ayutthaya period, is another source of value of the site. Widely known as Kru Se mosque, it is the origin of a myth told from generations to generations by the people of Kru Se (See e.g., Syukri 1985; Teeuw and Wyatt 1970; Fraser 1960 for further details). The myth may have no relation to the abundant archaeological remains, but it is very important to local people in identifying who they are, where they come from. The myth ties villagers together and helps create a sense of identity and self-defense. More importantly, the mosque has been a center for religious ceremonies that provide village members with a great opportunity to meet each other. Sometimes people in the village referred to the myth when they need to call for meetings about fighting against possible attack from the outside world.

Based on the values described above, it can be said that Kru Se sustains some level of significance to society. The site itself can produce valuable archaeological information for interpretation of the history of the region or the nation. For example, the history of Pattani, or the history of Thailand would remain incomplete without the study of Kru Se. As for the myth, it can also be considered as a local intellectual property, and this intangible property has significance to local people.

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