

**Cultural Tourism Development along the Royal Travel Routes of King Rama V: A Position  
Paper for Heritage-Based Economic Growth**

---

**Nontawat Khawkhong\***

Independent researchers

Email: [buncha.g541@pnru.ac.th](mailto:buncha.g541@pnru.ac.th)

\*Corresponding Author

**Gantapit Senatibbordee**

Independent researchers

Email: [G.saynatibordee@gmail.com](mailto:G.saynatibordee@gmail.com)

*Received: 08/12/2025*

*Revised: 18/12/2025*

*Accepted: 18/12/2025*

---

**Abstract**

The royal journeys of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) represent a significant historical foundation of Thailand's transition toward modern statehood, encompassing reforms in administration, transportation, and state-society relations. Although many locations along these routes retain tangible cultural heritage, their potential has not yet been systematically developed as integrated cultural tourism pathways. This position paper argues that Thailand should develop cultural tourism routes based on the Royal Travel Routes of King Rama V as a strategic mechanism for heritage conservation, strengthening local identity, and promoting the grassroots economy. Drawing on historical documents and contemporary cultural tourism research, the paper presents key arguments supporting this position, addresses potential limitations, and proposes policy-oriented guidelines, including heritage route mapping, community-based tourism development, digital interpretation tools, and conservation standards. It is argued that, if implemented through participatory and systematic approaches, tourism along the royal travel routes can function not only as a cultural learning space but also as a sustainable driver of heritage-based economic development in Thailand.

**Keywords:** King Rama V, Royal Travel Routes, Cultural Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Grassroots Economy

## Introduction

Cultural Heritage Tourism has continuously gained increasing attention across many nations, including Thailand. This tourism modality deeply connects historical value, local wisdom, and community identity with the visitor's experience. Research over the past decade indicates that heritage tourism is not only a crucial source of income for local communities but also a social tool that aids in cultural preservation, fostering community awareness of their historical assets, and generating shared pride (Saengin et al., 2023). This concept aligns with studies on cultural heritage development which specify that community participation is a primary factor for the sustainable management of heritage sites (Suwanno, 2020).

In the Thai context, numerous heritage sites are interwoven with the history of the monarchy, particularly significant events during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). This era marked a period of extensive national reform in governance, transportation, and regional urban development. King Rama V's royal journeys to the provinces, documented in key texts such as his royal writings, "Klai Baan" (Far from Home), and several records of his provincial tours, serve as historical evidence explaining the way of life, economy, and the state-people relationship during the late 19th century (Chulalongkorn, 1992). These routes are distributed across all regions, including royal visits to the Southern provinces, Prabhas Ton (incognito trips), trips for opening various railway lines, and inspections of major port cities. This diversity reflects the high potential of these royal routes for development into "National Historical Heritage Tourism Destinations."

Despite the significant historical value of King Rama V's travel routes, they are not currently presented as a systematic tourism pathway. Apart from exhibitions in isolated areas, such as National Museums, City Pillar Shrines, and archaeological sites he visited, there is no integrated "Royal Journey-Tracing Tourism Route" that provides a comprehensive national overview. This lack of a coherent heritage interpretation system results in many citizens being unaware of the historical value linked to their local areas, preventing the full utilization of opportunities for developing a culture-based economy.

Compared to case studies in other Thai heritage areas, such as Si Thep Historical Park, research suggests that sound heritage management, the readiness of facilities, and a distinct sense of local identity influence tourists' intention to revisit (Pongyeela and Chanasongkram, 2024). This lesson indicates that if King Rama V's routes were managed appropriately, they could be elevated into major attractions that both generate revenue and promote historical understanding among the public.

Simultaneously, research on community-level cultural tourism, such as the case of Ban Prang Nakhon Community in Nakhon Ratchasima, reveals that even communities with prominent cultural and historical resources cannot transform their potential into social or economic value without continuous development and support in management, heritage interpretation, and local involvement (Pattiya and Chaiyachet, 2023). This case highlights that for King Rama V's routes, the participation of local communities, as co-stewards of the shared historical heritage, is a critical condition for success.

Concurrently, a study by Nethchanok Riddhagni. (2018) pointed to the challenge of "authenticity" in heritage site management. This is a particularly sensitive issue for routes related to the Monarchy, requiring careful and circumspect use of primary source documents due to social sensitivities. The design of the tourism route must maintain historical accuracy while simultaneously translating the history into a format that is easily understandable and accessible to the general public—a challenge for modern heritage tourism design.

Furthermore, data from the Fine Arts Department (2019) indicates that historical sites associated with King Rama V, such as antique buildings, reception halls, and old railway stations, are spread across various provinces and are in diverse conditions. Some are well-preserved, while others lack proper maintenance. Developing a tourism route along these royal paths therefore necessitates the integration of conservation, restoration, and historical interpretation, along with coordinating

cooperation among government agencies, local communities, and academic institutions to create an accurate and updated historical database.

For these reasons, the drafting of this Position Paper on "Tourism along the Royal Travel Routes of King Rama V" is crucial. It presents policy concepts founded upon verifiable history, current cultural heritage research, and the need for sustainable community development. This framework can facilitate the design of routes with a clear narrative, utilize factual historical documents, and provide opportunities for local communities—who are part of the history—to play a role in stewarding their own heritage.

In conclusion, developing tourism routes tracing King Rama V's journeys is not merely about promoting tourism; it is also a vital approach for conserving Thailand's historical values, strengthening local identity, and creating a new framework of meaning for historical sites that aligns with the contemporary era. This Introduction thus paves the way for presenting appropriate policy recommendations and a conceptual framework to realize this route's development and maximize its benefits for Thai society.

### Background and Significance of King Rama V's Royal Travel Routes

The royal travel routes of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) serve as historical landmarks reflecting the transition of Thai society during the late 19th to early 20th centuries. This was an era when the nation faced pressures from colonialism, efforts to maintain sovereignty, and structural state modernization (Wyatt, 2003). His journeys to various provinces across multiple regions were not solely for official inspection or visiting the populace; they were also integral to the national reform strategy in the domains of administration, transportation, economy, and strengthening the bond between the monarchy and the regional chiefdoms (Hua Muang) (Fine Arts Department, 2019).

To provide a clearer overview of the geographical scope and diversity of King Rama V's royal journeys, the routes can be preliminarily categorized according to their dominant geographical and functional characteristics. Presenting these route types at an early stage helps visualize the nationwide scale of the journeys and contextualizes their historical, political, and socio-economic significance.

Table 1. Geographical Characteristics of King Rama V's Royal Travel Routes

Route Type	Main Geographical Characteristics	Primary Purposes of the Royal Journeys	Representative Areas
Central and Western Routes	Riverine plains, agricultural heartland, proximity to the capital	Strengthening state–people relations, observing livelihoods, agricultural inspection	Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Suphan Buri
Northern Routes	Mountainous terrain, former semi-autonomous Lanna region	Political integration, security consolidation, incorporation into modern Siam	Chiang Mai, Lampang, Phrae
Northeastern Routes	Plateau region, borderland areas, sparse infrastructure	Administrative restructuring, territorial survey, transport linkage	Nakhon Ratchasima, Ubon Ratchathani

Route Type	Main Geographical Characteristics	Primary Purposes of the Royal Journeys	Representative Areas
Southern Routes	Coastal zones, ports, maritime trade corridors	Trade supervision, diplomacy, border governance with Malay states	Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla, Pattani

This geographical categorization underscores that the royal travel routes were not uniform journeys, but rather context-specific movements shaped by regional landscapes, political priorities, and socio-economic conditions. These spatial differences later manifested in the political, administrative, and urban development dimensions discussed below.

In terms of historical evidence, primary sources such as the royal writings “Klai Baan” (Far from Home) and the records of his provincial tours (Chulalongkorn, 1992) meticulously detail the routes, waterways, maritime navigation, encounters with the people, area surveys, and the foundation-laying for urban development in places like Phetchaburi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Pattani, Nakhon Ratchasima, and several northern provinces. These royal visits were essentially “royal field observations,” which yielded empirical data that subsequently led to reforms in public health, transportation, taxation, and the provincial administrative structure (Aphaivongs, 2014).

Scholars of Thai history, such as Baker & Phongpaichit (2014), emphasize that the royal journeys were a crucial mechanism that enabled the Siamese state to connect the center with the provinces more effectively before the complete establishment of the Thesaphiban administrative system. Therefore, the royal routes are not merely the travel paths of the King, but are also “routes of state integration.”

From a cultural heritage perspective, these routes are areas that reflect the relationship between the monarchy, local communities, and urban development. Heritage researchers, including Suwanno, (2020) and Pongyeela & Chanasongkram (2024), indicate that heritage sites with clear historical documentation, such as the King’s travel routes, possess high potential for development into heritage tourism destinations. This is because they can be interpreted based on authentic documentation and allow tourists to understand the context of societal changes during that era. Geographically, many of the royal routes have distinct characteristics:

1. Central and Western Prabhas Ton Routes: Involved visiting the populace, observing agricultural conditions, and reinforcing the symbolic bond between the King and the people.
2. Northern Province Routes: Focused on strengthening national security and integrating the Lanna area into modern Siam.
3. Northeastern Province Routes: Related to restructuring the administration, geographical surveying, and establishing transport links.
4. Southern Province Routes: Linked to international trade, border area management, and diplomacy with the Malay states.

The historical value of the royal routes thus comprises at least three major dimensions: (1) The Political and Administrative Dimension, (2) The State-People Relationship Dimension, and (3) The Urban and Public Utilities Development Dimension. All of these are systematically supported by documents, including the Royal Gazette (Ratchakitchanubeksa), Ministry of Interior records, and contemporary historical works (Fine Arts Department, 2019; Baker & Phongpaichit, 2014).

In the context of modern tourism, King Rama V's travel routes have the potential to be developed into “national historical tourism routes” because they fully meet the criteria of heritage interpretation, possessing:

1. A clear historical narrative.
2. Support from primary source documents.

3. Existing physical locations such as palaces, residences, Prabhas Ton sites, waterfronts, and ancient transport routes.
4. A verifiable social impact based on political and economic records from the reform era.

From the tourism management perspective, research by Saengin et al. (2023) posits that heritage sites possessing “national collective memory” are a key component of quality creative and historical tourism. This strongly aligns with King Rama V's routes, as these events are part of the Thai society's historical memory and are extensively and officially documented.

Consequently, the Royal Travel Routes are significant on the levels of:

1. National History.
2. Thai Cultural Identity.
3. Modern Historical Education.
4. Sustainable Heritage Tourism Development.

This fusion of historical and tourism value makes King Rama V's routes a high-potential foundation for developing historical tourism pathways that can generate long-term benefits for the economy, heritage conservation, and national historical knowledge.

### **Arguments Supporting the Position**

Developing the "King Rama V Royal Travel Routes" as a base for historical and cultural tourism is valuable not only for conserving the past, but also as an approach that strengthens the grassroots economy and builds the image of Thai tourism internationally. Furthermore, it directly addresses the concept of value-based tourism, a key global trend in the modern era (UNWTO, 2020). The supporting arguments can be explained across three main dimensions:

#### **Argument 1: Historical Value and Cultural Heritage**

##### *The Royal Routes are Tangible History*

The royal travel routes of King Chulalongkorn are crucial evidence of the national reform era in the late 19th to early 20th century—a time when Siam was adapting to global changes. His journeys to various provinces not only reflect official inspections, rapport-building with the populace, or transport development, but also represent the genesis of reforms in public administration, education, and the economy across many regions. Developing these historical paths into place-based learning resources helps to bring history to life. People can "visualize" the actual events through the landscapes, towns, and surviving cultures. Place-based learning has been proven to enhance in-depth understanding more effectively than learning solely from documents or general media (UNESCO, 2019).

##### *Promoting Youth Understanding of the Reform Era*

Currently, many Thai youths may only know King Rama V superficially through history lessons, such as the abolition of slavery or the construction of railways, without grasping the structural context and the concerted efforts of the Siamese state to modernize the nation. Creating the royal routes as open-air exhibitions, living maps, or interpretive trails will allow young people to understand that national transformation originated from on-site travel, meeting with the people, and the complete overhaul of resource management systems. History linked to real places also helps build local identity and pride, which numerous studies confirm are vital factors for social learning and the development of civic consciousness (Richards, 2018).

#### **Argument 2: Opportunity for the Grassroots Economy**

##### *Cultural Tourism Generates Direct Community Income*

Cultural Tourism is a segment where the average expenditure is typically higher than that of general tourists. This is because these tourists are inclined to use local products, indigenous tour services, and experiential learning activities, such as workshops, handicrafts, and local food experiences (UNWTO, 2020).

Developing the royal routes allows each town or village along the “historical travel trace” to create its own specific tourism products, for example:

1. One-day historical walking tours.
2. Community storytelling centered on the era of King Rama V's visit.
3. Cultural souvenirs based on historical references.
4. Place-based tours led by community guides.

The income generated from these activities will not flow solely back to large businesses in the main cities but will be tangibly distributed to local SMEs, entrepreneurs, and community enterprises.

### *Linking to the "Creative Economy" Concept*

The Thai government has continuously promoted the Creative Economy, emphasizing development based on cultural heritage, local wisdom, and identity. The royal travel routes can be leveraged into various creative products, such as:

1. Story-based souvenirs.
2. Digital platforms narrating the history of the royal routes.
3. Contemporary art inspired by the visited areas.
4. Provincial festivals linked to history.

Multiple studies indicate that a “cultural narrative experience” is the key factor that makes tourism feel valuable and sustainable to visitors (Richards, 2018). The royal routes possess all the necessary components for crafting such narratives.

### **Argument 3: Connecting Communities and the Nation**

#### *Enhancing Thailand's Image on the Global Tourism Stage*

In the global tourism arena, the concept of a “Heritage Route”—such as the Silk Road, the Camino de Santiago, or ancient routes in Japan—is popular and recognized as a cultural tourism route that reflects the identity of the origin country. Developing the King Rama V routes can elevate Thailand to a similar stature, using the “Siam's modernization and state-building process” as a unique selling point. Having a clear and unique historical tourism route enables Thailand to stand out in the Southeast Asian market, where other countries also possess abundant cultural and heritage sites. Presenting the “Route of Thailand's Modern State Creation” will give Thailand a distinctive narrative, setting it apart from its neighbors.

#### *Creating Cultural Branding for Each Area*

When the royal routes link multiple provinces together, those provinces will share a collective cultural identity that can be communicated to both Thai citizens and international tourists. For example:

1. Phetchaburi Province can communicate its role as a key seaside city frequently visited by the King.



2. Nakhon Si Thammarat can elevate its role as the center of the Southern Hua Muang (chiefdoms).
3. Chiang Mai can tell the story of the integration of the Lanna state into modern Siam.

These efforts are highly potent for Place Branding, which is a crucial factor in the tourism economy today (UNWTO, 2020).

#### *Connecting the Public with National History*

The royal routes are not just tourist attractions; they are vital tools for symbolically connecting the public with the nation-state. Most records of the royal journeys contain stories of local villagers, meetings with the populace, on-the-spot problem-solving, and surveys of people's well-being, painting a natural picture of the relationship between "the state and its people." Opening up spaces for communities to tell their own stories through history will help citizens feel ownership of the heritage, not just stewardship. This sense of ownership is essential for sustainable conservation (Richards, 2018).

#### *Supporting Community Network Grouping*

The royal routes connect several provinces and numerous communities. Developing the route into a community tourism network structure will allow each area to collaborate in a cluster or regional format. This fosters cooperation in marketing, event organization, and service development, which the UNWTO identifies as a key factor in sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2020).

### **Counterarguments and Rebuttals**

Although the development of the "King Rama V Royal Travel Routes" into an area for historical learning and cultural heritage is viewed as a concept with high potential for both conservation and value-based tourism, concerns from various sectors remain a crucial matter that requires explanation and rebuttal using credible academic frameworks. This critical analysis aims to address three frequently raised counterarguments: the risk of cultural commercialization, the incompleteness of historical data, and the cost of budget allocation. It also presents rebuttal strategies founded on historical evidence, public policy, and the concept of sustainable tourism.

The first issue is the concern regarding the commodification of culture (cultural commercialization). Critics argue that introducing historical narratives or local traditions into the tourism system may lead to the content being reduced to only "marketable images" rather than preserving the cultural complexity authentically. Anthropologists such as MacCannell (1999) proposed the concept of staged authenticity to describe situations where communities fabricate simulated rituals or activities solely for tourist consumption, resulting in the distortion of the culture's original meaning. When considering the context of the royal routes, which possess high historical value, the risk of content reduction will increase if there are no regulatory measures or an interpretative framework tied to accurate evidence.

However, this concern can be rebutted using the concept of sustainable cultural tourism, which is supported by both UNESCO and UNWTO, employing three key mechanisms: establishing interpretive guidelines based on primary sources, such as royal letters, state archives, and academic works on the Siamese reforms during Rama V's reign; creating a development process guided by the community (community-led tourism), which UNWTO (2020) indicates effectively reduces the risk of cultural commercialization; and designating the routes as learning resources rather than merely superficial exhibition or show spaces. Emphasizing learning formats like narrative trails, community museums, and interpretive digital maps will help maintain the depth of the historical information while simultaneously increasing its educational value for the public. Thus, the issue of cultural commercialization is not an inherent limitation if there is a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework.

The second issue is the concern regarding “incompleteness and inaccuracy of historical data.” This often stems from the perception that information concerning the royal routes in certain years is incomplete, such as lost route records or locally collected data not being standardized. Critics fear that creating a historical route may lead to over-generalization or inaccurate linking of events. In the context of historical work, the development of routes that require meticulous data must rely on verified sources.

This argument can be countered by utilizing three main data sources: primary sources like King Rama V's royal letters, official state archives (Ratchakitchanubeksa), and records of the Prabhas Ton (incognito trips) with clear timelines and routes; secondary sources from contemporary academic works, such as Wyatt (2003), Terwiel (2011), and Baker & Phongpaichit (2014), which have been peer-reviewed; and local sources maintained by provincial archives, such as in Phetchaburi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Chiang Mai. The integration of data from these three parts will help mitigate the risk of inaccuracy and enhance the precision of route planning. Furthermore, the proposal to create a digital database for the royal routes enables a traceability system, allowing users to transparently verify the evidence and source of information, thereby elevating the route's credibility as a historical body of knowledge.

The final issue is the economic counterargument, which views the development of the royal routes as requiring a high initial cost in terms of data research, infrastructure development, creation of educational media, and capacity building for local personnel. This concern is linked to the question of whether such an investment will yield a worthwhile return, especially if the route is not widely known to tourists during the initial phase of operation.

The answer lies in adopting a “phased development approach,” a strategy successfully implemented in countries like Japan, South Korea, and Spain, which can significantly reduce the initial budget burden. The first phase focuses on database creation and route prototyping, which requires a low budget and can be undertaken in collaboration with academic institutions to minimize costs. The second phase involves community capacity building and storytelling, utilizing partnerships with the private sector and CSR projects to share expenses. The final phase is the specific infrastructure development only in the towns that are ready first, which can generate pilot results and attract further investment. Works by Richards (2018) and UNWTO (2020) indicate that cultural routes have a higher rate of return than general tourism, as tourists spend more time in the area and have greater purchasing power, making the long-term investment economically and socially worthwhile.

Considering all the evidence, it can be concluded that the three counterarguments—cultural commercialization, data incompleteness, and initial budget—are not obstacles that render the development of the royal routes unsuitable. Rather, they are issues that can be systematically managed with clear policy guidelines, the use of verifiable historical evidence, and a development plan founded on sustainability and community participation. Consequently, the development of the “King Rama V Royal Travel Routes” remains a highly viable and valuable project for the nation, truly serving as a national cultural tourism route.

Table 2. Policy-Oriented Synthesis of Problems, Approaches, and Expected Outcomes

Identified Problem	Policy Approach	Expected Outcomes
Fragmented historical sites with no integrated narrative	Development of a national royal route framework and digital heritage mapping	Clear historical storytelling, improved public understanding, national-level coherence



Identified Problem	Policy Approach	Expected Outcomes
Limited community participation in heritage management	Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and co-design of route interpretation	Local ownership, strengthened community identity, sustainable conservation
Risk of cultural commercialization and historical distortion	Interpretation guidelines based on primary sources and academic review	Historical accuracy, ethical tourism practices, reduced commodification
Unequal economic benefits concentrated in major cities	Creative economy linkage and local tourism product development	Grassroots income distribution, SME growth, regional economic balance
Lack of accessibility and visitor-friendly infrastructure	Phased infrastructure development using GIS-based planning	Improved visitor experience, manageable investment costs
Low engagement of younger generations with historical heritage	Digital tools (QR codes, interactive maps, multimedia content)	Increased youth engagement, modernized heritage learning

This synthesis table demonstrates that the proposed policy guidelines are not abstract recommendations, but are directly derived from the identified challenges associated with heritage route development. The alignment between problems, policy approaches, and expected outcomes reinforces the feasibility and strategic coherence of developing the King Rama V Royal Travel Routes.

### Policy Guidelines and Development of the Royal Travel Routes

Before outlining specific policy measures, this section translates the preceding analysis into actionable development strategies. Rather than reiterating the historical significance of the royal routes, the focus here is on how these routes can be operationalized as a sustainable heritage-based tourism system through governance, technology, and community participation.

#### *Development of a Digital Heritage Map System*

A foundational policy guideline is the establishment of a Digital Heritage Map as a centralized and verifiable database for the royal travel routes. This system should integrate historical records of royal journeys, spatial data, archival photographs, and community-contributed information. Beyond functioning as a public learning platform, the digital map serves as a strategic planning tool for identifying high-potential sites, prioritizing conservation needs, and designing interconnected route networks. Empirical studies indicate that digital heritage mapping enhances both heritage visibility and community participation by enabling local actors to curate and disseminate place-based knowledge within an academically accountable framework.

#### *Linking Digital Data to Physical Sites through Interpretive Technology*

To ensure that historical knowledge is effectively communicated at the site level, policy should support the installation of QR Code-based interpretation systems and interactive signage along key locations of the royal routes. These tools allow visitors to access concise, evidence-based historical narratives, royal letters, historical maps, and multimedia content via mobile devices. Such

technology reduces dependence on guided tours while maintaining interpretive accuracy and consistency. From a management perspective, this approach balances accessibility with scholarly control, ensuring that historical interpretation remains grounded in primary sources.

#### *Community-Based Tourism as a Governance Mechanism*

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) should function as a core governance mechanism rather than a supplementary activity. Communities located along the royal routes should be formally positioned as co-designers and interpreters of heritage content. Policy implementation must therefore prioritize capacity building in historical interpretation, tourism management, and service standards. Research on cultural-route development demonstrates that when communities exercise interpretive authority, the risks of cultural distortion and over-commercialization are significantly reduced, while long-term conservation outcomes are strengthened.

#### *Phased Infrastructure and Spatial Planning*

Given the geographic breadth of the royal routes, a phased development approach is essential. Initial phases should focus on low-investment interventions such as route identification, signage, and storytelling enhancement, followed by targeted infrastructure improvements in areas demonstrating readiness and community support. GIS-based spatial planning tools can be employed to assess accessibility, connectivity, and visitor flow, enabling data-driven decisions that minimize financial risk while maximizing experiential quality.

#### *Cultural Programming and Event-Based Activation*

To sustain long-term visitor engagement, policy should encourage cultural programming and periodic events aligned with the historical narratives of the royal journeys. These may include heritage walks, temporary exhibitions, community-led festivals, and creative activities informed by archival materials. Such events function as temporal anchors that renew public interest, reinforce local identity, and expand the interpretive scope of the routes beyond static displays.

#### *Development of Interpretation Standards and Ethical Guidelines*

A further policy priority is the formulation of interpretation manuals and ethical guidelines for tourism operators, local guides, and content developers. These documents should outline standards for historical accuracy, appropriate storytelling, and respectful engagement with sensitive royal narratives. Establishing such guidelines ensures consistency across regions, enhances public trust, and directly addresses concerns regarding cultural commodification.

#### *Collaborative Governance Structure*

Finally, the long-term sustainability of the royal travel routes requires a collaborative governance framework involving government agencies, academic institutions, local communities, and private-sector partners. A coordinating body at the national level could provide policy continuity, oversee data integrity, and facilitate cross-regional collaboration. This structure aligns with international best practices in heritage-route management and ensures that development remains adaptive, inclusive, and accountable.

In sum, these policy guidelines emphasize implementation over reiteration, demonstrating how historical analysis can be transformed into a coherent, scalable, and community-centered heritage tourism system.

## **Conclusion**

The study of the historical significance and tourism development potential of the “King Rama V Royal Travel Routes” demonstrates that these paths are not merely traces of the monarchy’s past journeys. They represent a knowledge structure that can be significantly reinterpreted to align with contemporary Thai society, encompassing history, education, culture, and the creative economy. The systematic development of the royal routes as a “learning space” and a “living cultural landscape” is

therefore an opportunity that should be proactively pursued, underpinned by verifiable historical evidence and policy guidelines that adhere to international standards in cultural heritage management. Primary documents, such as royal letters, records of the royal journeys, and state archives, have confirmed the crucial role of these routes in the reformation of Siam, the construction of the modern state, and the forging of relationships with communities across various regions of the country. Simultaneously, modern academic works by Wyatt (2003), Terwiel (2011), and Baker & Phongpaichit (2014) have expanded the understanding of the socio-political and economic context of these royal visits, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the routes. The existence of such strong historical evidence supports the credibility of developing these historical sites into a standardized cultural tourism system.

The analysis of the policy support reveals at least three principal values of the royal routes: (1) Historical and Cultural Heritage Value, which makes the route a foundation for learning about the Siamese reform process; (2) Grassroots Economic Opportunity, through cultural tourism that emphasizes cultural capital as the core driver of income generation; and (3) Strengthening Community-Nation Linkages, which helps build local identity and provides Thai tourism with a distinctive international image. These three concepts align with the cultural tourism development framework of the UNWTO (2020) and the creative economy principles of Richards (2018), which stress the use of culture and history as a base for driving the economy at the local level.

Despite concerns from certain sectors, such as the risk of cultural commodification, the incompleteness of historical data, and the budgetary burden of development, the analysis in this paper demonstrates that these counterarguments can be managed with systemic measures. These include adopting historically accurate interpretation guidelines, ensuring communities play a regulatory role to prevent distortion (community-led tourism), integrating primary sources and modern research in route mapping, and utilizing a phased development policy to keep initial costs manageable while building confidence for long-term investment.

Furthermore, policy proposals such as creating the Digital Heritage Map, installing the QR Code History system, developing historical manuals for tourism operators, organizing festivals and historical storytelling activities, and promoting Community-Based Tourism (CBT) are all measures that align with international best practices for the sustainable conservation and use of cultural heritage (Timothy & Boyd, 2015; Smith, 2009). They can also be integrated with the government's current digital culture policies, thereby increasing the accessibility of historical information to the wider public and extending benefits to Thai society across multiple dimensions.

In summary, the development of the King Rama V Royal Travel Routes into a national historical-cultural tourism route is highly feasible, both in terms of historical evidence, economic potential, and alignment with contemporary tourism policy. If implemented with a framework centered on conservation and community participation, the royal routes will not only be a tourist attraction but will become a “public learning space” that helps build historical knowledge for citizens, promotes local identity, links Thai society together, and supports the creative economy in the long term.

Therefore, the King Rama V Royal Travel Routes possess immense potential to be elevated into a major national policy project, not merely for the conservation of historical value, but to harness history as a creative force for the sustainable future development of the Thai economy and society.

### References

- Aphaivongs, K. (2014). The administrative reforms during the reign of King Rama V. *Journal of Siamese Studies*, 10(2), 45–72.
- Arkarapoti Wong, P., & Chindapol, P. (2023). Cultural-based community tourism development using the C-CBT model: Case studies in Thailand. *Journal of Community Development*, 18(1), 55–70.
- Baker, C., & Phongpaichit, P. (2014). *A history of Thailand* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Boonprachoom, P., Sirirat, S., & Manrom, K. (2025). Digital heritage mapping and community participation in cultural landscape conservation. *Journal of Digital Humanities and Society*, 4(1), 22–41.
- Chulalongkorn, K. (1992). *Klai Baan [Far from home]*.
- Fine Arts Department. (2019). รายงานข้อมูลโบราณสถานและเส้นทางเสด็จพระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว [Report on heritage sites and royal travel routes].
- MacCannell, D. (1999). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.
- Nethchanok, R. (2018). Cultural tourism and architecture heritage: Question of authenticity. *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.14456/jcdr-hs.2018.9>
- Parkkaman, P. (2023). GIS-based planning for tourism potential in Hat Yai District. *Southern Geography Review*, 12(2), 99–120.
- Pattiya, S., & Chaiyachet, S. (2023). Community cultural tourism development in Ban Prang Nakhon Community. *Journal of Cultural Tourism Studies*, 5(1), 33–52.
- Pongyeela, P., & Chanasongkram, W. (2024). Heritage interpretation and intention to revisit: A case study of Si Thep Historical Park. *Journal of Tourism Management Studies*, 9(3), 77–95.
- Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 12–21.
- Saengin, T., et al. (2023). National collective memory as a foundation for creative tourism development. *Journal of Creative Economy*, 7(2), 12–29.
- Shummadtayar, A., et al. (2022). Collaborative governance in community-based tourism: Lessons from Asian case studies. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 15(1), 41–58.
- Smith, M. K. (2009). *Issues in cultural tourism studies* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Suwanno, S. (2020). Community participation and sustainable heritage site management. *Journal of Local Administration*, 13(4), 147–170.
- Tekhanmag, P. (2023). Community festivals and heritage tourism sustainability. *Journal of Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 6(2), 88–105.
- Terwiel, B. J. (2011). *Thailand's political history: From the 13th century to recent times*. River Books.
- Thanarat Rattanaphongthara, N., et al. (2016). Cultural heritage interpretation and tourism in Ayutthaya. *Ayutthaya Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 1–20.
- Timothy, D. J., & Boyd, S. W. (2015). *Tourism and trails: Cultural, ecological and management issues*. Channel View Publications.
- UNESCO. (2019). *Placing heritage at the heart of education: Global report on heritage education*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNWTO. (2020). *Tourism and cultural heritage: National cultural routes and creative economies*. World Tourism Organization.
- Wyatt, D. (2003). *Thailand: A short history* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press.