

The Development and Management of Tourism Projects Featuring Chinese-Thai for Chinese-Style Shrine Architectural Elements

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Abstract

As the cultural tourism industry expands globally, shrines, which are significant carriers of culture and religion, are increasingly becoming integral to the tourism sector. Chinese-style shrines in China and Thailand blend traditional Chinese architectural styles with local Thai cultural elements, creating a tourism resource with unique cultural appeal. This study examines cultural value and historical background of these architectural elements, discussing their application in tourism projects and proposing corresponding development and management strategies. Through rational product design and scientific management measures. The article as: this article aims to advance the sustainable development of Chinese-Thai shrine tourism projects.

Keywords: Chinese-style shrines; Architectural Elements; Tourism Project Development; Tourism Management

Introduction

The research objectives of this article are (1) To investigation on Chinese-Thai Shrine building and its cultural significances. (2)To excursion hospitality tourism management for sharing on Chinese-Thai planning program.

Shrines, as important carriers of culture and religion, are symbols of history and heritage in many countries. Chinese-style shrines in China and Thailand, through the fusion of traditional Chinese architectural artistry and Thai local culture, have developed a unique architectural style. Chinese shrines emphasize grand scale and cultural depth in their design and construction, while Thai shrines integrate characteristics of the tropical climate and distinct Buddhist cultural traits. With the growth of global tourism, shrines have increasingly become valuable tourism resources, attracting numerous tourists from both home and abroad. As a result, an important question arises on how to reasonably incorporate shrine architectural elements in tourism development, so as to retain their cultural and religious value while supporting economic growth in tourism.

This article will primarily examine the application of Chinese-Thai Chinese-style shrine architectural elements in tourism project development. Through an analysis of their cultural background, it proposes management strategies to enhance the effective use of shrine tourism resources, foster cultural exchange between China and Thailand, and stimulate the rapid growth of both countries' tourism economies.

Cultural Connotations of Shrine Architectural Elements

1. Chinese Shrine Architectural Elements

The design of Chinese shrines deeply reflects the cultural essence of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Key architectural elements include the main hall, incense burner, bell and drum tower, archways (paifang), upturned eaves, and interlocking wooden brackets (dougong). Chinese shrine architecture is characterized by its emphasis on symmetry, grandeur, and solemnity, with frequent use of colors such as red, yellow, and gold. These colors not only serve decorative purposes but also carry religious and symbolic significance. For instance, the main hall, as the central structure of the shrine, often symbolizes the divine power and sacredness of Buddhism, while the bell and drum tower serves as a key cultural symbol, representing the passage of time and the start of religious ceremonies.

2. Architectural Elements of Thai Shrines

Thai shrine architecture, deeply influenced by Indian Buddhism and local traditions, showcases a unique regional style. Common architectural elements include the stupa, Buddha statues, gold embellishments, roof ornaments (such as Naga designs), and traditional tiled roofs. Gold is a predominant color in Thai shrines, symbolizing the sacred and radiant qualities of Buddhist culture. The stupa, as a hallmark of Thai shrines, holds religious significance and represents Buddhist wisdom and cosmology. Ornamental patterns on the roof, such as depictions of the Naga (serpent deity), reflect local beliefs and cultural heritage in Thailand.

Analysis of Similarities and Differences in Chinese-Thai Shrine Architectural Elements

1. Similarities

Shrine architecture in China and Thailand exhibits numerous similarities in religious purpose and cultural symbolism. Firstly, shrines in both countries strive for harmony between the architecture and natural surroundings, emphasizing a sense of solemnity and tranquility in the space. Secondly, architectural elements in shrines often carry deep symbolic meanings; for instance, the main hall represents the teachings of the Buddha, while stupas and Buddha statues symbolize the presence and wisdom of the Buddha. Temple architecture in both China and Thailand highlights unique local characteristics, showcasing each country's religious beliefs and cultural values.

2. Differences

While shrine architecture in China and Thailand shares certain similarities, there are also distinct differences. Chinese shrines emphasize overall structural layout and architectural symmetry, reinforcing the solemnity of rituals. Thai shrines place a stronger focus on the use of color, particularly gold, to symbolize the radiance of Buddhism. Thai temple architecture is generally more detailed and decorative, while Chinese shrines stand out for their grandeur and solemnity. Additionally, Thai stupas are usually circular or multi-leveled, whereas Chinese towers tend to be square or octagonal.

Literature Review on the Tourism Development of Chinese-Thai Chinese-Style Temple Architectural Elements

This literature review explores the application and management strategies of Sino-Thai Chinese-style temple architectural elements in tourism development, offering guidance to support the preservation of cultural heritage and the sustainable growth of tourism.

1. The Relationship between Temple Architectural Elements and Tourism Development

1.1 Cultural Connotations of Chinese and Thai Temple Architectural Elements

Although temple architecture in China and Thailand shares a Buddhist cultural background, they display distinct differences in style, design, and architectural elements. Chinese temple architecture emphasizes symmetry, grandeur, and the intricate wood carvings of the structural framework, with elements such as the main hall, upturned eaves, interlocking brackets (dougong), and Buddha statues, highlighting a blend of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions (Wang Wei, 2020, p.15). Thai temples, on the other hand, display distinct tropical characteristics, with elements such as stupas, golden embellishments, and Naga (serpent deity) motifs serving as key features of their architecture, emphasizing a harmonious coexistence with the natural environment (Chen Liang, 2021, p.25). These architectural elements not only convey the essence of each religious culture but also offer rich cultural and artistic value for tourism development.

1.2 The Influence of Temple Architectural Elements on Tourist Attraction

Temple architectural elements have a direct influence on their appeal to tourists. Li Tao and Zhao Lijun (2023) found that the historical and cultural value and architectural aesthetics of temples are central attractions for visitors. Specifically, the spatial ambiance created by Buddha statues, towers, and temple courtyards plays a significant role in activities such as worship, sightseeing, and photography (Li Tao & Zhao Lijun, 2023, p.45). The golden stupas, temple gate carvings, and detailed wall decorations of Thai temples contribute to their status as world-renowned tourist destinations (Zhang Hua, 2019, p.68). Meanwhile, Chinese temples attract a large number of visitors interested in traditional Chinese culture with their majestic main halls and historic relics.

1.3 Temple Architectural Elements and Cultural Tourism Development

Temple architectural elements offer not only aesthetic value but also profound cultural and religious context, positioning them as important resources for cultural tourism. According to Wang Wei (2020), these architectural elements play an irreplaceable role in tourism development, especially in heritage preservation, educational experiences, and religious tourism. For instance, the main halls and stone inscriptions in Chinese temples provide valuable historical and cultural information, while the stupas and Naga decorations in Thai temples offer visitors a distinctive religious experience (Wang Wei, 2020, p.38). This integration of cultural experiences enhances visitor engagement and strengthens the cultural attractiveness of these destinations.

2. Practical Applications of Temple Architectural Elements in Tourism Development

2.1 Cultural Experience and Visitor Engagement

In temple-based tourism projects, the cultural significance of architectural elements not only serves as a visual attraction but also encourages visitor engagement. According to Chen Liang (2021), activities such as worship, blessings, and meditation centered around temple architecture enhance visitors' sense of religious involvement and

deepen cultural identification (Chen Liang, 2021, p.41). For example, the golden stupas and Naga carvings in Thai temples create an immersive sacred atmosphere, while the halls, Buddha statues, and stone inscriptions in Chinese temples provide visitors with opportunities to connect with ancient Chinese culture, history, and Buddhist philosophy (Wang Wei, 2020, p.40).

2.2 Integration of Architectural Elements with Landscape Design

Architectural elements in temples serve a purpose beyond the structure itself; they also interact with surrounding natural scenery and cultural settings to create distinctive landscape effects. Zhang Hua (2019) suggests that the seamless integration of temple architecture with landscape design can significantly improve the visitor experience. For instance, Thai temples frequently combine stupas with garden landscapes, resulting in a harmonious and beautiful environment. Chinese temples, however, achieve the concept of “unity between humans and nature” by incorporating elements of mountains and water into their surroundings (Zhang Hua, 2019, p.72). This combination not only enhances the spatial arrangement of the tourist area but also deepens the visitor's sense of immersion.

2.3 Sustainable Development of Temple Tourism Projects

With the growth of temple tourism projects, balancing commercial development with cultural heritage preservation has become a key challenge. Li Tao and Zhao Lijun (2023) argue that commercial development of temple architecture should proceed only with safeguards for its original appearance and traditional culture. For instance, the frequent issues of overtourism and high visitor density in Thai and Chinese temple sites have impacted both the architectural structures and the environment, indicating a need for effective management measures, including visitor limits and well-planned tourist routes (Li Tao & Zhao Lijun, 2023, p.52). Furthermore, various temple sites employ digital technology, including VR and AR, to increase visitor interaction and to protect and display architectural elements through virtual technology, thus safeguarding cultural heritage while enhancing the visitor experience quality (Wang Jie, 2022, p.93).

Conclusion

As an essential component of cultural heritage, temple architectural elements hold significant cultural value and economic potential in tourism development. The analysis of Chinese and Thai temple architectural elements reveals that the architectural styles and religious cultural connotations of temples not only attract visitors for worship and sightseeing but also provide abundant cultural resources for tourism development. Future temple tourism development should focus on balancing culture and commerce, promoting sustainable tourism growth, and strengthening the protection and management of cultural heritage.

Distribution of Major Chinese-Style Shrines in Thailand

Chinese-style shrines in Thailand exhibit distinctive characteristics in architectural style, religious function, and cultural background. They are not only Buddhist shrines but also reflect the influence of Chinese culture. Most Chinese-style shrines in Thailand were built by Chinese communities or local Chinese religious groups, with many of these shrines closely connected to the history of Chinese communities. Below is an overview of the distribution and introductions to some of the main Chinese-style shrines in Thailand:

1. Chinese-Style Shrines in the Bangkok Area

As the capital of Thailand, Bangkok hosts numerous Chinese-style shrines, most of which were established by Chinese communities. These shrines combine traditional Chinese architectural elements with Thai religious culture.

1.1 Wat Leng Noei Yi

- Location: Yaowarat, Bangkok's Chinatown.

- Features: Wat Leng Noei Yi is among the most renowned Chinese-style shrines in Thailand and is a major center of worship for the Chinese community. The shrine features typical Chinese architectural elements, including golden roofs, upturned eaves, and red pillars. The primary deities worshipped here are Mazu (the Sea Goddess) and Guan Gong (the God of War), along with other deities revered by Chinese followers.

- History: Established by early Chinese immigrants, the shrine has stood for over a century and continues to be a central place for religious activities in the Chinese community.

1.2 Wat Pho

- Location: Central Bangkok, near the Grand Palace.

- Features: Although Wat Pho is primarily a Buddhist temple, its architectural style incorporates Chinese elements. The Reclining Buddha statue within the temple is one of Thailand's most famous Buddha images. The surrounding shrine buildings blend traditional Thai and Chinese decorative elements. The roof design and interior decorations, in particular, reflect a strong Chinese style.

2. Chinese-Style Shrines in the Chiang Mai Area

Chiang Mai, the cultural and religious center of northern Thailand, is home to numerous Chinese-style shrines built by the local Chinese community in addition to traditional Thai Buddhist shrines.

2.1 Wat Phra That Doi Suthep

- Location: Situated on a mountain in Chiang Mai.

- Features: This shrine, while mainly a Thai Buddhist shrine, integrates numerous Chinese elements into its design. Traditional Chinese symbols and patterns are especially visible in the shrine's carvings and decorations. The temple enshrines Buddha statues that are revered in both Thailand and China.

2.2 Wat Phra Sing

- Location: In the center of Chiang Mai.

- Features: Wat Phra Sing combines the traditional architectural style of northern Thailand with Chinese cultural influences. The shrine frequently hosts traditional Sino-Thai cultural events, as well as rituals and cultural activities organized by the Chinese community.

3. Chinese-Style Shrines in the Hua Hin Area

- Hua Hin, a popular resort destination in Thailand, is predominantly home to Thai-style shrines; however, it also has a few temples with Chinese architectural influences, especially those built to serve the local Chinese community.

3.1 Hua Hin Chinese Shrine

- Location: In the center of Hua Hin.
- Features: Chinese Shrine is the religious center for the local Chinese community, featuring a typical Chinese shrine architectural style with a traditional upturned eave roof. The shrine houses shrines to Mazu and other regional gods, symbolizing the religious beliefs of Chinese immigrants.

4.Chinese-Style Shrines in Southern Thailand

Southern Thailand has a significant concentration of Chinese communities, especially in regions such as Phuket and Songkhla, where numerous shrines combine Chinese architectural styles with local Buddhist beliefs.

4.1 Wat Chalong

- Location: Phuket.
- Features: While the architecture of Wat Chalong in Phuket is predominantly Thai, it incorporates several Chinese architectural elements. The shrine’s carvings and decorations, in particular, display distinctive traditional Chinese characteristics. Wat Chalong serves not only as an important Buddhist shrine in southern Thailand but also as a center for religious activities within the Chinese community.

4.2 Songkhla Dragon Temple

- Location: Songkhla City.
- Features: Songkhla Dragon Shrine is a significant Chinese-style shrine in southern Thailand, showcasing a typical Chinese temple architectural style. The temple’s entrance, Buddha statues, and carvings all reflect strong Chinese cultural elements. Inside, the temple enshrines dragon deities and Buddha statues, symbolizing the cultural fusion between Thailand and China.

5.Chinese-Style Shrines in Other Regions

In various small cities and rural areas across Thailand, numerous Chinese-style temples have been built by Chinese immigrants. These temples primarily serve the local Chinese communities and reflect a fusion of Chinese and Thai cultural elements. Please refer to Table 1 for specific details.

Table1 Major Chinese-Style Shrines in Other Regions of Thailand

Shrines' Name	Address	Affiliated Sect	Year of Construction	Architectural Structure
Guandi Ancient Temple	No.361/1 Isaranu Phap Lane, Charoen Krung Road, Bangkok	Taoism	18th Year of the Guangxu Era of the Qing Dynasty (1892 AD, Buddhist Era 2435)	Stone construction, single-courtyard style
Lüdi Temple	No. 494 Phaholyothin Road, Bangkok	Taoism	Completed in 1902 AD (Buddhist Era 2445)	Wood and stone structure, hall and pavilion style
Longwei Ancient Temple	No. 16 Isara Phap Lane, Charoen Krung Road, Bangkok	Buddhism	23rd Year of the Daoguang Era of the Qing Dynasty (1843 AD, Buddhist Era 2364)	Brick and stone structure, single-courtyard style

Great Sage Buddha Temple	No.66 Rama IV Road, Bangkok	Buddhism	Unknown	Single-courtyard style
Sin Bentou Gong Temple	No. 942/8 Long Road, Bangkok	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Jichou Year of the Daoguang Era of the Qing Dynasty (1829 AD, Buddhist Era 2372)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one hall, the hall is on the second floor
Bentou Ma Temple	Charoen Krung Road, Bangkok (near King Taksin Bridge)	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Xinyou Year of the Xianfeng Era of the Qing Dynasty (1861 AD, Buddhist Era 2409)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Guansheng Dijun Ancient Temple	Wong La Commercial Center, Moon Road, Bangkok	Taoism	Original construction date unknown, renovated in Buddhist Era 2531 (1988 AD)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Qisheng Ma Temple	No. 1638 Charoen Krung Road, Bangkok	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	First Year of the Xianfeng Era of the Qing Dynasty (1851 AD, Buddhist Era 2394)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Bentou Gongma Temple	Udon Thani City Center, Udon Thani Province	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Original construction date unknown, rebuilt in 1945 AD (Buddhist Era 2488)	Wood and stone structure, garden-style architecture
Shuiwei Shengniang Temple	Uthai Thani City Center	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	1971 AD (Buddhist Era 2514)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Tianhou Shengmu Temple	Ban Do Road, Surat Thani Province	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	27th Year of the Guangxu Era of the Qing Dynasty (1901 AD, Buddhist Era 2444)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Bentou Gong Temple	Ban Do, Surat Thani Province	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Original construction date unknown, rebuilt in 1954 AD (Buddhist Era 2497)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Lotus Temple	To Anusan Lane, New Market Road, Surat Thani Province	Buddhism	1952 AD (Buddhist Era 2495)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Luoshen Guandi Temple	Luo Shen City Center	Taoism	13th Year of the Guangxu Era of the Qing Dynasty (1887 AD, Buddhist Era 2430)	Wood and stone structure, multi-story building style
Guangyun Temple	Bang Lang District, Lopburi Province	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	1956 AD (Buddhist Era 2499)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple

Lin Guniang Temple	Pattani City Center	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	2nd Year of the Xianfeng Era of the Qing Dynasty, Renzi Year (1852 AD, Buddhist Era 2395)	Wood and stone structure, double-courtyard style
Sanbao Gong Temple	Ayutthaya (Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya) Province	Buddhism	1324 AD (Buddhist Era 1867)	Wood and stone structure, double-courtyard style
Nezha Prince Ancient Temple	Nakhon Sawan City Center	Primitive Religion, Polytheistic Worship	This temple has a history of over 60 years	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Bentou Ancient Temple	Nakhon Sawan City Center	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Original construction date unknown, rebuilt in 1945 AD (Buddhist Era 2488); relocated and rebuilt again in 1991 AD (Buddhist Era 2534)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Bentou Ancient Temple	Nakhon Chum, Kamphaeng Phet Province	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Original construction date unknown, rebuilt in 1981 AD (Buddhist Era 2524)	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Qitian Dasheng Temple (Temple of the Great Sage Equal to Heaven)	Kamphaeng Phet City Center	Buddhism	Recently constructed	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple
Bentou Ancient Temple	Chai Nat City Center	Primitive Religion, Indigenous Worship	Original construction date unknown, rebuilt in 1947 AD (Buddhist Era 2490)	Wood and stone structure, residential-style two-story building
Da Feng Patriarch Temple	No.326 Phaholyothin Road, Bangkok	Zen Buddhism (Mahayana Buddhism)	1910 AD (Buddhist Era 2453)	Wood and stone structure, double-courtyard style
Sanbao Gong Temple - Shanqing Hermitage	Ayutthaya (Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya) Province (Ayutthaya)	Buddhism	Built before the establishment of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, this temple has a history of over 700 years	Wood and stone structure, Siheyuan (courtyard) style
Bangkok Hakka Association Temple	Next to the Thai Hakka Association, Chinatown, Bangkok	Buddhism	This temple has a history of over 200 years	Wood and stone structure, one courtyard with one temple

Source: Cited from Duan Lisheng, (1996.11 p40-120). Chinese-Style Temples in Thailand (M), Bangkok: Thai Datong Publishing Co., Ltd., First Edition, November 1996.

5.1 Wat Thong Noppakhun

- **Location:** Nampang City.

- **Features:** This shrine features a distinct Chinese architectural style and enshrines traditional Chinese deities such as Mazu and Guan Di. The architectural style incorporates Chinese-style roofs, carvings, and colors, showcasing a strong influence of Chinese cultural heritage.

Chinese-style temples are widely distributed across Thailand, with concentrations in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, and Phuket. These temples serve not only as religious centers for the Chinese community but also as vital links for cultural exchange between China and Thailand. The architectural style of these temples incorporates traditional Chinese elements such as upturned eaves, dougong brackets, and golden decorations, while also being influenced by Thai Buddhist culture, creating a unique Chinese-Thai hybrid style. With the historical legacy and cultural development of the Chinese community in Thailand, the significance of Chinese-style shrines has steadily grown, becoming valuable cultural and tourism heritage resources.

Cultural Background and Historical Significance of Chinese-Thai Shrine Architectural Elements

Chinese-style shrine architecture in Thailand reflects the cultural exchange between China and Thailand, blending traditional Chinese architectural styles with elements of Thai Buddhist culture, and holds unique cultural and historical value. A deep understanding of these architectural elements is essential for designing and developing tourism projects.

1. Upturned Eaves and Angled Corners

Upturned eaves are a vital feature in traditional Chinese architecture, serving both functional and symbolic purposes by aiding in rainwater drainage and representing height and spirituality. In Chinese-Thai shrine architecture, the design of upturned eaves is often more decorative and has been adapted to meet the needs of the tropical climate (Wang, 2019, p. 34). As shown in Figure 1, the high, upturned eaves resemble a bird poised for flight, adding a unique ornamental element while allowing rainwater to flow off quickly to protect the wooden structure. The dougong structure is intricate and layered, serving both to support the roof and to enhance the building's sense of depth and dimensionality.



Figure 1: Upturned Eaves of the Hakka Ancestral Hall in Ninghua County, China
Source: Photograph taken by the author on-site at the Hakka Ancestral Hall in Ninghua County, China.

2. Buddha Statue Carvings and Religious Symbolism

Buddha statues are a vital element in Chinese-style temple architecture, with their shapes and carving techniques reflecting not only Buddhist philosophical concepts but also the fusion of regional cultures. In Chinese-style temples in Thailand, Buddha carvings retain the traditional Chinese artistic style while incorporating Thai carving techniques, creating a unique intersection of Chinese and Thai cultures (Zhang, 2020, p. 52). Figure 2 illustrates this with statues of Guanyin and Shakyamuni, whose serene, compassionate faces and delicate expressions convey mercy and wisdom. Guanyin's posture is graceful, with flowing lines in the attire that appear to move naturally, evoking a vivid, lifelike quality. The statues are finely crafted, possibly through stone carving or clay sculpting techniques, meticulously chiseled and polished.



Figure 2: Buddha Statue at the Bangkok Hakka Association Temple

Source: Photograph taken by the author on-site at the Bangkok Hakka Association Temple.

3. Bell Tower and Drum Tower

The bell tower and drum tower, collectively known as the bell-drums tower, primarily served as timekeeping structures in ancient official cities, with the bell tower for ringing the bell and the drum tower for beating the drum. As signature elements of Chinese temple architecture, the bell and drum towers function primarily to signal the time and gather worshippers for religious ceremonies. In Chinese-Thai shrines, the bell and drum towers not only fulfill religious functions but also serve as artistic expressions of architectural aesthetics (Liu, 2021, p. 76). Their design reflects a blend of traditional and modern elements, as shown in Figure 3. At the Shanqing Hermitage in Ayutthaya, Thailand, the bell and drum do not serve for timekeeping but are played together during Buddhist ceremonies, producing beautiful music for devotees and tourists, embodying a distinct Buddhist cultural character.



Figure 3: Bell and Drum at Shanqing Hermitage Shrine in Ayutthaya, Thailand

Source: Photograph taken by the author on-site at Shanqing Hermitage Shrine in Ayutthaya, Thailand.

4. Garden Landscapes and Courtyards

The garden landscapes in Chinese-style shrines emphasize the arrangement of natural elements including mountains and water, as well as courtyards, reflecting the philosophy of “unity between humans and nature,” as shown in Figure 4. Features such as ponds, rockeries, and trees are designed to create a serene, religious atmosphere. In contrast, the garden design of Chinese-style shrines in Thailand incorporates tropical plants and flowers, creating a unique landscape style (Li, 2020, p. 99), as illustrated in Figure 5.



Figure 4: Overall Layout of the Hakka Ancestral Hall in Ninghua County, China

Source: Photograph taken by the author on-site at the Hakka Ancestral Hall in Ninghua County, China.

As shown in Figure 4, the Hakka Ancestral Hall in Ninghua County, China, is a palace-style, traditional-style building located on Tulou Mountain in Shibi Village. With the Wuyi Mountains as its backdrop and overlooking the Shibi Basin, the site is carefully chosen for its excellent feng shui. The overall architectural layout is grand, with a well-considered location. The main structure covers a large area with over 5,000 square meters of building space. It consists of three main halls—front, middle, and rear—connected by spacious corridors, reflecting the symmetrical beauty and harmony of traditional architecture while conveying a solemn and imposing atmosphere that leaves a strong visual impact.



Figure 5: Overall Layout of Shanqing Hermitage Temple in Ayutthaya, Thailand
Source: Photograph taken by the author on-site at Shanqing Hermitage Shrine in Ayutthaya, Thailand.

Figure 5 illustrates that Thai shrine architecture emphasizes symmetry, a principle evident in the layout of Shanqing Hermitage Shrine. The arrangement, from the central Buddha statue to the surrounding structures, is symmetrically designed. Each area within the temple, including the Buddha worship section and monks' living quarters, is thoughtfully planned according to Buddhist guidelines. The harmonious connection between temple architecture and the natural environment is crucial in Thai design; located in Ayutthaya, Shanqing Hermitage Temple benefits from lush surroundings and rich natural scenery. The shrine buildings make full use of the surrounding environment to foster a tranquil and dignified atmosphere. Additionally, natural materials such as wood and stone are extensively used in construction to minimize environmental impact, embodying Buddhism's principle of harmony with nature. Shanqing Hermitage Shrine, a historic shrine, exhibits architectural influences from Ayutthaya's cultural heritage. Formerly the ancient capital, Ayutthaya left a lasting mark on Thai shrine architecture. As a result, Shanqing Hermitage Shrine incorporates elements from the Ayutthaya period, particularly in the design of the stupa and intricate carvings, featuring characteristic elements like decorative tiles and delicately sculpted Buddha images. The shrine's style typifies traditional Thai Buddhist temples, focusing on symmetry, detailed carvings, golden embellishments, and integration with the natural environment. These architectural elements not only display the allure of Buddhist art but also embody Thailand's cultural and spiritual traditions. Through these architectural details, worshippers can appreciate both the profound meaning of Buddhist teachings and the aesthetic value of Thai traditional architecture.

Application of Chinese-Thai Shrine Architectural Elements in Tourism Project Development

1. Cultural Theme Tourism Development

The architecture of temples in China and Thailand not only represents religious beliefs but also serves as an important cultural resource. In tourism project development, the cultural value behind temple architecture can be explored to create unique cultural theme tourism routes. For example, tourism projects themed around Buddhist and Taoist cultures could be developed by incorporating the historical and philosophical aspects of Chinese temple architecture. Thai shrines can combine Buddhist culture with traditional Thai art to offer a tourism experience rich in religion, art, and cultural characteristics.

To satisfy the demands of different groups of tourists, diverse tour routes can be designed around the architectural elements of Sino-Thai temples. For example, routes themed as “Buddhist Cultural Journey,” “The Beauty of Architectural Art,” and “Harmony between Garden Landscapes and Nature” can be developed to help visitors deeply experience the religious culture and architectural artistry of the temples (Zhao, 2021, p. 45).

1.1 “Buddhist Cultural Journey”: This includes visiting Buddha statues, participating in religious ceremonies, and listening to explanations of Buddhist philosophy, allowing tourists to gain a deeper understanding of Buddhist thought and the religious functions of shrines. Sample itinerary: Talad Rot Fai Floating Market + Oriental Princess Cruise + Shanqing Hermitage Shrine in Ayutthaya (Chinese-style temple) + Famous Fengyue Walking Street (1 day).

1.2 “The Beauty of Architectural Art”: By explaining the design concepts and historical background of architectural elements such as upturned eaves, bell and drum towers, and Buddha carvings, this tour helps visitors appreciate the artistic value of shrine architecture. Sample itinerary: Wat Arun (a fusion of Chinese and Thai architectural styles) + Da Feng Zu Temple in Chinatown (Chinese-style shrine) + Night Cruise on the Chao Phraya River (1 day).

1.3 “Harmony between Garden Landscapes and Nature”: This tour highlights the garden design within temples, featuring elements such as ponds, rockeries, and trees to embody the philosophy of “unity between humans and nature.” Sample itinerary: Grand Palace (a blend of Chinese, Thai, and European architectural styles) + Wat Arun (a fusion of Chinese and Thai architectural styles) + Popular Night Market (1 day).

2. Religious Experience Tourism

Shrine architecture offers a venue for religious experiences, which are especially appealing to believers and tourists interested in religious culture. By integrating temple architecture with religious practices, religious experience-based tourism projects can be developed. Activities including morning chanting, meditation, or other shrine rituals allow visitors to immerse themselves in the religious culture of both China and Thailand. The design and function of shrine architecture can further enhance these experiences, deepening visitors’ understanding of shrine culture.

To enhance engagement, a variety of interactive experiences could be designed, helping visitors better connect with the architectural elements of Chinese-Thai shrines.

2.1 Handicraft Experience: Visitors can participate in making handicrafts such as Buddha statues, Buddhist sachets, and blessing plaques, which they can take home as souvenirs (Li, 2021, p. 82), as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Temple Tourism Handicrafts (Illustrative Image)
Source: Photographed on-site at the BITEC exhibition (Craft Bangkok 2024).

2.2 Religious Ceremony Experience: Design participatory religious ceremonies for visitors, allowing them to experience the unique charm of Chinese-Thai Buddhist culture.

(1) Buddha Worship Ceremony (Bowling and Paying Respects to Buddha)

This is a common practice among Buddhist followers, typically performed in shrines. Worshippers show reverence and devotion by performing a series of three bows and nine prostrations before the Buddha statue. The usual posture involves joining hands together and bowing the head in respect.

(2) Buddha Chanting Ceremony

Chanting the Buddha's name is a form of practice for many Buddhists, particularly in Pure Land Buddhism. Worshippers recite "Namo Amitabha Buddha" repeatedly, aiming to accumulate merit and attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land. Chanting sessions are often held in groups, either in shrines or in home shrines.

(3) Incense-Holding Ceremony

Lighting incense is a common act in many Buddhist rituals, symbolizing purity, respect, and offering. The fragrance represents the "scent of the Dharma," symbolizing the wishes of the faithful and the spread of Buddhist teachings.

(4) Dharma Ceremony

The Dharma ceremony is a significant Buddhist ritual, usually conducted on special occasions such as the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, or Parinirvana, or as a means of delivering blessings for the deceased. Typical components of a Dharma ceremony include chanting, preaching, and prayers.

(5) Ordination Ceremony

The ordination ceremony is the process by which a Buddhist becomes a monk. Typically held in a temple, it involves the shaving of the head, donning of monk's robes, receiving teachings, and vowing to follow the Buddhist path.

(6) Offering Ceremony

Devotees often make offerings of fruit, flowers, food, incense, and more at the temple as a way of honoring the Buddha and the monks. Offering is not only a material gift but also an expression of sincere devotion.

(7) Sutra Chanting and Teaching Ceremony

Monks in Buddhist shrines frequently conduct ceremonies for the recitation of scriptures, including classics such as the Diamond Sutra and the Lotus Sutra. These ceremonies serve to transmit the Buddha's teachings, inspire wisdom among followers, and aid them on the path to awakening.

2.3 Customized High-End Tourism Products

For the high-end market, personalized, custom-tailored tourism products can be offered.

- Private Guided Services: Provide high-end tourists with professional cultural guides, offering customized itineraries and services, as well as deeper cultural explanations and experiences (Liu, 2020, p. 108).

- Exclusive Blessing Ceremonies: Design personalized blessing ceremonies and Buddhist cultural activities for visitors to enhance their unique experience.

2.4 Festive Events and Cultural Exchange

By integrating traditional festivals from China and Thailand, such as Buddha's Birthday and Chinese New Year, festive shrine events can be designed to attract tourists and offer an immersive experience of the unique charm of Chinese-Thai culture.

- Temple Fairs and Festive Events: Shrine fairs can be organized during specific festivals, featuring Buddhist music and dance performances to enhance visitor engagement and interaction.

- Cultural Exchange Activities: Chinese-Thai cultural exchange events, such as Buddhist art exhibitions and calligraphy exhibitions, can be organized to foster cultural communication and integration between the two countries.

3. Cultural Heritage Protection and Sustainable Tourism

In tourism project development, protecting the cultural heritage of temple architecture is a critical issue. As valuable heritage sites, shrines in China and Thailand require effective preservation measures during tourism development. Partnering with cultural heritage organizations, managing visitor flow responsibly, and employing digital technology for virtual displays can help minimize damage to these structures. Additionally, developing tourism products with cultural and educational value can enhance visitors' awareness and understanding of shrine preservation, thus promoting sustainable tourism development.

Strategies for Tourism Project Management

1. Balancing Innovation and Preservation

Tourism project development requires a balance between innovation and preservation. Shrine architecture in China and Thailand has great potential to attract tourists, but development management must address the challenge of protecting the religious and cultural significance of these sites, preserving their appearance and function, and avoiding over-commercialization. Strategies such as incorporating cultural and creative industries, developing locally-inspired handicrafts, and establishing cultural experience zones can enhance tourism offerings without compromising the original appearance of the shrines.

2. Visitor Management and Service Improvement

Management of shrine tourism projects also includes visitor management and service enhancement. With the growing number of visitors, optimizing the visitor experience and improving service quality become essential aspects of tourism management. Implementing smart management systems, such as electronic ticketing, virtual tours, and smart guides, can enhance the visitor experience, prevent overcrowding, and ensure visitor safety and comfort.

3. Involvement of the Local Community

As representatives of local culture, shrines should include the participation of local communities in their tourism development. Collaborating with local residents to develop region-specific tourism products, such as local cuisine and handicrafts, can offer visitors a more authentic experience, promote social and cultural sustainability, and stimulate local economic growth.

Conclusion

As significant cultural heritage resources, the unique architectural elements of Chinese and Thai shrines hold substantial value for tourism project development. Through effective planning and management, the cultural significance of shrine architecture can be integrated with modern tourism demands, promoting sustainable tourism development in both China and Thailand. Future tourism project development should focus on preserving the cultural heritage of shrines while fostering innovation and improving visitor experience, aiming for a balanced outcome of cultural preservation and economic benefit.

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