

Commodification and Politicization of Heritage: Implications for Heritage Tourism at the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, Hanoi (Vietnam)

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► Bui, H. T., & Lee, T. J. (2015). Commodification and politicization of heritage: Implications for heritage tourism at the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, Hanoi (Vietnam). *ASEAS – Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8(2), 187-202.

The current study deconstructs the process of turning heritage resources into tourism products. A case study of the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, a UNESCO World Heritage site located in the capital city of Vietnam, Hanoi, provides an in-depth understanding of the plural use of heritage. Findings from the study reveal issues of heritage dissonance inherent in the process of resource selection, interpretation, and targeting for different audiences. It is apparent that commodification cannot be separated from the politicization of heritage. In the case of heritage of national importance and international significance, politicization has been prioritized and results in diminishing the utilization of heritage for commercial purposes such as tourism.

Keywords: Commodification; Heritage; Identity; Tourism; UNESCO World Heritage

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage is defined as “a contemporary commodity purposefully created to satisfy contemporary consumption” (Ashworth, 1994, p. 16). Historical monuments become heritage products through a process of commodification, and heritage products influence place identities via politicization. Heritage tourism, a form of economic use of heritage is an arena operationalized by both commodification and politicization. The triangular relationship between heritage, identity, and tourism is summarized by Ashworth (1995): (1) Heritage contributes toward political identity (politicization); (2) heritage supports tourism (commodification); and (3) heritage tourism contributes toward the individual’s appreciation of places and political identification. Similar to the propositions of Ashworth (1994), Smith (2006) contends that heritage symbolically represents identity through a cultural process that encompasses experience, memory, and remembrance.

The plural use of heritage depends on the socio-political and economic context of the respective society. Since “the past, transformed into heritage, is a ubiquitous resource with many contemporary cultural, economic and political functions” (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007, p. 1), it is necessary to deconstruct how heritage is transformed for contemporary use within particular cultural, economic, and political contexts. For example, Hitchcock, King, and

Parnwell (2009) have set their conceptualizations and representations of heritage in Southeast Asia against relationships between culture, nature, tourism, and identity. Earlier work by Peleggi (2002) analyzing *The Politics of Ruins and the Business of Nostalgia* revealed that selected historical sites enjoy special visibility as symbols of Thai identity within the larger construct of the national heritage, at the same time as they are being commodified and consumed as tourist attractions. Thailand, however, never having been a colony, is a different case to other Southeast Asian countries that are former colonies. In the course of gaining independence, the political elites of Southeast Asian countries constructed narratives of their origins that have often been concerned with nation-building and creating distance from their former colonial masters (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2009); a process in which heritage plays an important part.

Moreover, recent criticism of the Eurocentric biases of the global heritage movement recognizes the need for the development of heritage frameworks that are sensitive to the complexities and socio-cultural specificities of the Asian region (Long, 2012; Winter, 2009; Winter & Daly, 2012). Rapid growth of travel for leisure and recreation within Asia today is presenting new challenges for policy makers regarding the management and presentation of heritage sites. These trends stimulate the discussion on heritage politics in the new era (Timothy & Boyd, 2006) and particularly within the political systems of Asian communist states (Long, 2012).

Previous studies of heritage in communist states have discussed the utilization of heritage for tourism (Henderson, 2000, 2007) as well as the hybridity of heritage that accommodates contemporary strategies of commemoration and tourism in the context of Vietnam (Bui, Joliffe, & Nguyen, 2011; Long, 2012). However, none of the work concerning heritage tourism in Vietnam has addressed the complicated nature of the interrelationship between heritage, identity, and tourism, leaving a large gap in scholarly research of Southeast Asian studies. This study contributes to existing literature by investigating the process of commodification and politicization of heritage within the context of contemporary Vietnam. Using a case study of the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS), the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi, the analysis drills into the issue of heritage politics bounded up in the process of political and ideological legitimation and economic development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adopting the notion that “heritage is not a ‘thing’, a ‘site’, a building or another material object, but heritage is what goes on at these sites” (Smith, 2006, p. 44), this review of literature clarifies the politicization and commodification of heritage (Ashworth, 1994) in the triangulation of heritage, identity, and tourism. Existing literature on heritage tourism in Southeast Asia and the context of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, Hanoi (Vietnam), has also been reviewed.

Commodification and Politicization of Heritage

Heritage is defined by Smith (2006) as “a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present, and

the sites themselves are cultural tools that can facilitate ... this process" (p. 44). Conceptualizing heritage as "what goes on at the site", Smith emphasized that "heritage had to be experienced for it to be heritage" (p. 75). Other important aspects of heritages include memory, remembering, and performance. The meanings and memories of past human experiences are recalled through contemporary interactions with physical places and landscapes (Smith, 2006).

Attention has increasingly been devoted to the ways in which cultural phenomena are deployed to make statements about identity. Providing "meaning to human existence" (Graham, 2002, p. 41), heritage is used as a legitimizing discourse in constructing and maintaining a range of 'identities' (Crouch & Parker, 2003, p. 405). Heritage plays a majorly important part in the process of trying to distance independent Southeast Asian states from their former colonial powers (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2009). In post-colonial developing states this is an urgent task to select and deploy archaeological finds and heritage sites to present images of national resilience, unity, and innovation, often in the context of an "imagined" (Anderson, 1991, pp. 178-185) golden or glorious age of endeavor and achievement which was subsequently eclipsed by colonialism (Glover & Bellwood, 2003).

This point was addressed in an earlier work of Richter (1999) on cultural politics of heritage in Asia where "even the very substance of a heritage is a political construction of what is remembered" (p. 109). Heritage has been politicized in shaping socio-cultural identities in support of particular state structures. The "dominant ideology hypothesis" (Ashworth, 1994, p. 20) asserts that governments will project message legitimating their position. Official narratives are highly selective, particularly in communist states, where the official attitudes to the past, including approaches to heritage, contribute to "the effort to create more purely nationalistic narratives" (Long, 2012, p. 210). In some cases such as China and Russia, heritages are laboratories and mirrors of new cultural practices and ideologies that reflect the two countries' different historical traditions (Breidenbach & Nyiri, 2007).

The state, and particularly the state in the developing world, enters into a relationship between tourism and identity because both are seen to require state-directed political action (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2010). Heritage and associated narratives of identity, however, appear in a different manner to domestic and international visitors. Places of heritage are commonly used to build patriotism at the domestic level and spread propaganda to international visitors (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). According to Richter (1989), formal planning of tourism in developing Asia started around the beginning of the 1970s, and in general gave greater priority to international over domestic tourism, Western over Asian tourists, and up-market over low-spending clientele. The single most important objective was 'more tourism'. However, current trends of heritage tourism promotion show a shift in market focus. For example, Peleggi (1996) addressed growing appreciation of cultural heritage in the domestic arena.

Heritage is a political tool in negotiations over identity, but it is also a part of an 'industry' – a heritage, tourism, and leisure industry. Cultural tourism was once regarded as a specialist, niche activity that was thought to be pursued by a small number of better educated, more affluent tourists who were looking for something other than the standard sun, sand, and sea holiday. Now, it is viewed as part of mainstream

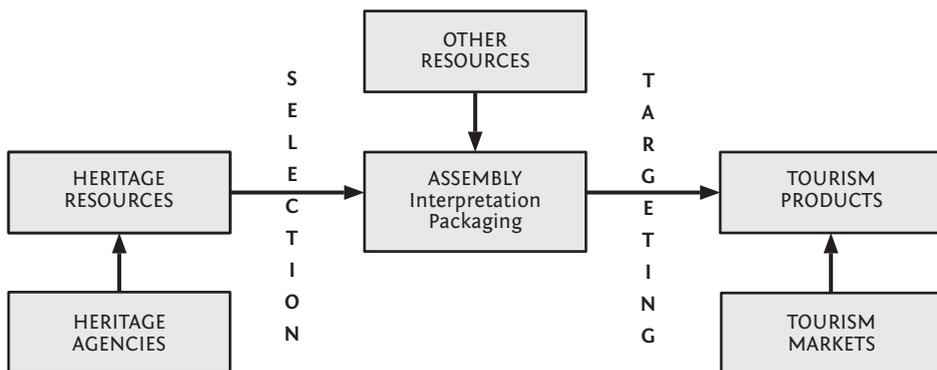


Figure 1. Commodification of heritage (adapted from Ashworth, 1994, 2000).

tourism (du Cros & McKercher, 2015). The transformation process actualizes the potential of the asset by converting it into something that tourists can consume. In order to facilitate this consumption, cultural heritage assets must be transformed into products. Despite the fact that cultural tourists want to consume a heritage experience, not everyone is capable of having the same depth or quality of experience (du Cros & McKercher, 2015).

Concerning how heritage has been selected, interpreted and targeted to different markets, Ashworth (1994, 2000) proposed a model of heritage commodification presented in Figure 1. In this model, resources are selected based on the criteria of consumer demand and created through interpretation for targeting certain markets with particular heritage (tourism) products. In fact, “the interpretation, not the resource, is literally the product” (Ashworth, 1994, p. 17). The interpretation and representations of the heritage resource are selected according to the demand of the present (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2005). The discrepancy between the interpreted heritage product and ‘objective historical truth’ also results from different experiences perceived by visitors in regards to the heritage asset. Here, personal experience, attachment, relevance, and emotional elements are brought into heritage construction (Timothy & Boyd, 2006).

The touristic uses of heritage, however, have the potential to cause heritage dissonance as the creation of “heritage products endow those products with the tensions and dilemmas inherent in all commodification for contemporary markets” (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1996, p. 21). The root cause of the dissonant nature of heritage lies in their observation that heritage is created through interpretation. Not only what is interpreted, but how it is interpreted and by whom will create different messages about the value and meaning of specific heritage places and the past represented (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1996). This issue, however, has been explored only to a limited extent in the context of Southeast Asian tourism, and Vietnam in particular.

Heritage, Identity, and Tourism in Vietnam

Vietnam is a socialist country with strongly centralized political structures. Since 1986, the country implemented market economy reforms. Central government also

exerts an influence at cultural levels. Aligning with economic reforms, during the 1990s the Vietnamese government came to realize that one way to win international recognition for Hanoi was through promoting its heritage (Logan, 2009, p. 90). In June 2001 the National Assembly introduced the Law on Cultural Heritage that focuses primarily on defining tangible or intangible cultural heritage, historical-cultural sites, scenic landscapes, relics, and antiquities. At the national level, heritage has been extensively used to express the cultural, social, and political beliefs of the political leaders under the mainstream interpretation of patriotism and national identity in the context of the capital city of Vietnam (Bui, Joliffe, & Nguyen, 2012).

Designation of UNESCO World Heritage status is believed to be a top tourism brand that places destinations among the pantheon of other world-class destinations (Li, Wu, & Cai, 2008). The approach to designating a UNESCO World Heritage in Vietnam is found to be similar. In a newspaper interview in 2007, Vietnam's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nguyen Van Tho, gave five reasons for embracing the World Heritage program for:

building and advanced Vietnam culture with strong national identity; it promotes national pride and Vietnam's image in the world; it offers a global brand, and was prerequisite to developing human resources, attracting foreign investment, especially in tourism; and it could be a good and convincing tool to introduce Vietnam's national identity to the world, especially its age-old history and rich culture. (cited in Logan, 2014, p. 70)

Starting in the 1990s, the growth of the tourism industry and the development of cultural heritage policy in Vietnam became deeply intertwined. The government saw heritage tourism as a powerful economic and diplomatic tool; consequently heritage preservation received a great deal of attention relative to other cultural endeavors (Saltiel, 2014). Cultural tourism emerges as the most important economic activity in Vietnam (Lask & Herold, 2004). Hue and Hoi An, two cities in central Vietnam, are key examples of how inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List brings public relations and economic benefits. In Hoi An and Hue, through the sale of tourist entry tickets to the World Heritage site, the municipal government has been able to restore properties, both state-owned and private, and has transformed the once deteriorating heritage town into a thriving tourist destination. It was believed that the inscription of Thang Long Citadel is expected for the boost of tourism, and for further international recognition of Vietnam and its governance structure after being designated World Heritage status in 2010 (Logan, 2014). This is positively perceived by the residents of the city (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2013).

The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi

Thang Long is the ancient name of Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam established in 1010. The archeological evidence shows the sign of early residence dated back to the seventh century. The transformation of Thang Long follows a cyclical pattern; the city began as the provincial capital of an external power before becoming capital of an independent Vietnamese state (Whitmore, 2013). The city served as the political

and economic center from the early 11th century to the late 18th century. Although from 1802 onwards, the imperial city was moved to Hue, Thang Long, remained an important political center in Northern Vietnam. Capturing Hanoi in 1874, the French demolished the ancient citadel, tore down the imperial palace, and in the place of the former citadel, erected the military headquarters of colonial power for the vast region ensemble of French Indochina (modern Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). After the First War of Independence (also called Indochina War, 1946-1954), followed by the division of Vietnam into two entities in 1954, the Citadel became the military headquarters for North Vietnam during the Second War of Independence (so called Vietnam War, 1954-1975). Between 1994 and 2004, the Ministry of Defense gradually abandoned its use of the property, handing it over for cultural and historic purposes. The Citadel reclaimed its cultural identity thanks to a break-through archeological excavation in 2002 for the construction of a new National Assembly Hall at 18 Hoang Dieu (now an annexed archeological site). The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long-Hanoi was designated UNESCO World Heritage status at the 2010 World Heritage meeting in Brasilia in the year of its 1000th birthday.

The Universal Outstanding Values (OUV) of the Thang Long Citadel are reflected in criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv) in its longevity and continuity of a political center as stated in the description of the property on UNESCO World Heritage Center (2015). On criterion (ii), the property features cross-cultural exchanges that contributed to the formation of a unique culture in the Red River Delta. Criterion (iii) was justified by the almost uninterrupted role that the Citadel has played as the center of power from the 11th century up to now. Criterion (iv) states that the Citadel, with its political function and symbolic role, is directly associated with numerous and important cultural and historical events that have marked the formation and deployment processes of an independent country over a thousand years, including through the colonial period and the two modern wars of national liberation and unification.

METHODS

The case study method employed in this study is an in depth empirical inquiry investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). The mutual interdependence of the commodification and politicization of heritage as a case should better be examined with the heritage designated with UNESCO World Heritage status. Thanks to its global significance, this designation attracts great attention from policy-makers and the tourism industry for both the purposes of nation-building and economic enhancement. Located in the capital city with a long history of being the political and cultural center of the country, Thang Long – Hanoi Imperial Citadel has long been an essential part of the history of the capital city and of the country as a whole. More importantly, the Citadel has been selected as a prime target in the strategy to boost heritage tourism in Hanoi (Thang Long Conservation Center, 2013), where the UNESCO World Heritage label functions both for reaffirmation of political identity and as an asset for heritage tourism.

Data for the research was derived through participant observation by one of the authors, who has been witness to the transformation of the Citadel for many years. The team conducted ten interviews with heritage custodians, government officers

in the tourism industry, and scholars to gain an in-depth understanding of the patterns of heritage governance. In the interviews, respondents talked freely about their concerns with regards to issues of heritage governance and in relation to tourism development. Instead of using a structured approach, the conversations with selected respondents were conducted in a flexible manner, adopting a semi-structured framework. Interviews and participant observation were carried out with fifteen tourists in 2014 and 2015. A researcher approached tourists and talked to them as they toured different sections of the Citadel. The questions centered on their observation and perception of interpretation programs at the heritage site. In addition, an extensive review of scholarly publications and the attainment of data from governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in the conservation and development of the site, adds more insightful understanding of the triangular relationship of heritage, identity, and tourism development at this UNESCO World Heritage site. Fieldwork data was projected against the framework of heritage commodification by Ashworth (1994) presented in Figure 1. Data was sorted and arranged into themes reflecting different components of the framework.

FINDINGS

Analyzing the responses of visitors and actors involved in heritage management and interpretation, the findings from our current study shed light on three major actions in the convergence of heritage resource to tourism products. First, OUV of the heritage determined the selection of central themes presenting heritage identity. Second, interpretation of heritage identity features the OUV while relatively neglecting tourists' interest. Third, interpretation targets domestic tourists for fulfilling political purposes and thus leads to dissonance in perception of international tourists. Examining the process of converting heritage resources into tourism products, we discovered that the narratives of the Vietnam War parallel with the narration of historical heritage's OUV. Despite limited interpretation of the Vietnam War at the Citadel, tourists found the heritage of war fascinating and demanded more information.

Selection

Commenting on potential resources for tourism development in the early 1990s, Gillespie and Logan (1995) noted: "There is no doubt that Vietnam will become a tourist mecca within the next ten or fifteen years and not only because of its recent war history but also because of its imperial monuments at Hue and natural scenery at Ha Long Bay and along its southern coastline" (p. 105). Interestingly, resources from the recent history of wars came into the narrative prior to cultural and natural resources. Wars and national struggles for independence are presented as parallel to the cultural values of the heritage in the OUV statement of the Citadel. In further detail, criteria (iv) refers to the symbolic role of the long history of resistance against invaders remarked by various wars:

It was within this distinctive Vietnamese cultural and power center that key events in the consolidation and defense of national independence from China

led to the Red River area, with Thang Long – Hanoi at its center, becoming, in effect the ‘border zone’ between Southeast and East Asia. The defense of Vietnamese independence from Mongol invasion in the 13th century, an event of great regional importance, served to perpetuate the separation of Southeast Asia from China ...The meeting of East and West and the struggle for power under the colonial period have also left remarkable imprint on the heritage site. ... Vietnam played the leading role in the war against colonialism and the national liberation movement in the 20th century in Southeast Asia and Asia as a whole. (Thang Long Conservation Center, 2012, pp. 90-91)

The interpretation and exhibits displayed in the area of the Citadel mainly present OUV criteria (ii) referring to cross-cultural exchanges and criterion (iii) for the center of power since the 11th century. For example, the panels introducing outstanding values of heritage at the entrance contain no information on the two contemporary wars:

The heritage with its architectural remains, construction technology, town planning, landscape design and monumental and plastic arts, represents the contacts and exchanges of ideas of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, colonialism and communism on the background of local culture of Vietnam. They are adjusted, adopted and modified to create a unique and typical Vietnamese culture that exists, over a thousand year of history. The Heritage is the prominent emblem of the evolution of Asian civilization of the Vietnamese that being formed and proceeded in the Northern Delta from the 7th century to the 19th-20th century. (Panel “Outstanding values of Thang Long-Hanoi Imperial Citadel” at Archaeological site 18 Hoang Dieu, Ha Noi, Vietnam)

The information exhibited on the two major wars, Indochina- (1946-1954) and Vietnam Wars (1954-1975), however, is relatively limited. Panels in the interpretation center do not provide much information related to the wars. While there are three buildings dedicated for archaeological exhibits and displays, the information related to the wars can only be found in two panels of D67 Building and D67 Bunker that very briefly introduce their functions:

This building was constructed in 1967 at the height of the American War (Vietnam War). It housed the General Headquarters of the People’s Army of Vietnam ...The D67 Building was erected on the northern part of the Kinh Thien Palace foundation. (Panel at D67 Building – The Central Sector of Thang Long – Hanoi Citadel)

The army dug a system of bunkers beneath the Citadel. The most important section was constructed in 1967 under the D67 building and linking to the Dragon House. In this D67 Bunker (also called the Central Military Commission Bunker) the Politburo, Central Military Commission and Army commanders met to make key decisions about the conduct of the American War. (Panel at D67 Bunker – The Central Sector of Thang Long – Hanoi Citadel)

Selecting resources is arguably influenced by the structure of heritage governance. Heritage, with universal outstanding value and national importance, is managed within horizontal and vertical axes of governance. On the horizontal axis, gov-

ernmental agencies including the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism provide a leadership role, while the information and narratives are controlled by the Central Bureau for Culture and Ideology. International agencies such as UNESCO play a monitoring role, parallel to the national agency the Department of Heritage that serves as the advisory board under the leadership of the ministry and the bureau. On the vertical axis, governance of heritage is directed by Hanoi's People Committee in liaison with the Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism. Research and investigation work at the site is the responsibility of the Archaeological Institute and Citadel Research Institute, two research divisions of the Vietnam Academy of Social Science. The Thang Long Conservation Center functions as a focal contacting point dealing with operational issues at the heritage site. The Center receives financial resources from the Hanoi's People Committee, administers the operation of the site, and coordinates with research institutions to conduct research and site planning which is monitored by UNESCO. The horizontal and vertical axes of heritage governance and UNESCO's monitoring role warrant the elements and stories which are selected and shaped in order to satisfy internal consumption for Vietnamese domestic tourists and fulfill political duty rather than aiming to entertain or educate international tourists.

Interpretation

A survey by UNESCO on domestic visitors found that even though 97% of respondents agreed that the property represents national identity the heritage site has failed to retain visitors, evidenced by a low degree of repeated visits (UNESCO, 2013b). The results of the survey on domestic tourists reveal that close to 80% of the visitors came to the site due to curiosity, motivated by friends and relatives (77.5%), and sightseeing (78.5%). Visitors highly evaluate the historical values of the site and its setting at the heart of the historical area in Hanoi. With a spacious area and an impressive main gate (*doan mon*) that's in a good shape, the Citadel is popular for many public get-together events, such as graduation ceremonies, school visits, and other educational trips. The heritage site has been the venue for educating students about Vietnamese tradition and history, resulting in much information and interpretation being presented in Vietnamese.

Information at the site is presented in various panels, pictures, and exhibits in Vietnamese and also in English to a limited extent. Reading the panels is the only way to grasp the information, if a guide is not provided. If tourists are not able to read English, the interpretation contained little meaning to them. A heritage expert admitted limitation of site interpretation stating that "without a guide, tourists can hardly understand anything" (personal communication, March 2014). A personal guided tour is only available in English, therefore there are limited opportunities for tourists with a language background other than English and Vietnamese to get in-depth information. At some sites this limitation can be overcome by the provision of audio guides in different languages, but this is not the case at the Thang Long – Hanoi Citadel. At the time of the study, there had been no audio-visual guide to aid tourists in understanding the site. Regarding the lack of appropriate aids in interpretation, international visitors regarded the interpretation of the authentic historical aspect as overwhelming.

Too much information. It is hard for first-time visitors to understand. (Tourist from Thailand, March 2015)

Audio guide is needed, due to there is not enough signs in foreign languages and site guides. (Tourist from China, March 2015)

International visitors, however, found it hard to follow the interpretation without a mental connection to the history being presented.

The history details are mostly available in Vietnamese, so if there is not a tour guide that can explain deeply about the history, it would be hard to understand the concept and purpose of the heritage. (Tourist from China, March 2015)

Heritage includes tangible elements of the past (buildings, monuments, artifacts, sites, and constructed landscapes) as well as intangible culture expressed in behavior, action, performance or mythology (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2009). At the Citadel, visitors only see the tangible built environment, of which the most impressive features were destroyed. There is no single form of display of intangible elements such as stories or personalities aiding tourists' imagination. The heritage asset has been perceived as an inactive archaeological relic that does not stimulate the interest and curiosity of the visitors to learn more. It is evident that the heritage resource here carries heavy political responsibility for nation-building; but the site is poorly equipped with simple tools in order to communicate this message to the audience. Referring to Ashworth's (1995) argument that heritage tourism contributes toward the individual's appreciation of places and, consequently, political identification, this linkage seems to be missing at the Citadel.

Targeting

The target of heritage interrelation is to increase visitors' awareness of the heritage OUVs. As stated in the OUVs of the heritage, it is the longevity, continuity, and diversity of culture and political power of feudal Vietnam that are presented. It seems that authentic cultural tradition is part of the message imbedded in the interpretation, in addition to the cultural heritage tourism products that target both international and domestic cultural heritage tourists. Interviews with tourists at the site revealed that cultural tourism products have not been well-perceived, if to not say, that they fail to attract tourists.

The Citadel in Hanoi didn't really impress me much. I couldn't tell any outstanding point of it. (Tourist from Indonesia, March 2015)

The archeological site is only interesting for researchers and people interested in conservation. The archeological site is all brick and dried land, very unattractive. (Tourist from Thailand, February 2015)

While the information in relation to the Vietnamese culture and history is presented excessively, the narratives about the Vietnam War that brought international attention to Vietnam back in 1960s and 1970s, have almost been neglected. As men-

tioned earlier, limited information on the Vietnam Wars without much context of the war made tourists feel that it was hard to understand the topic. The colonial architecture of buildings at the heritage site contrasted with the presentation of unique Vietnamese culture and also made tourists feel confused:

There was a lot of information to take in from the guide, while clear, there was too much history covered and went back and forth. Also was not expecting Vietnam War to show up at the citadel. (Tourist from USA, March 2015)

While the supply side promotes the Citadel as witness to a thousand years of cultural history, on the demand side, international visitors in particular, associate the country with the recent wars (Henderson, 2000, 2007).

This site is also good for those interested in war (Vietnam War). I was hoping for some footage of the history of war, just anything to aid me better. (Tourist from USA, March 2015)

Concerning promotion and advertisement, visitors commented that there has not been enough information on road signs, tourist brochures, and guidebooks. The need for active marketing of the heritage of Thang Long is also highlighted in the management plan for the site. Until recently, it has not appeared in the school history textbook or in the agenda for out-of-class room teaching. Much work is needed in connecting the site with existing heritage to form a story line of Vietnamese culture, history, and tradition.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the case of Thang Long – Hanoi Imperial Citadel in Hanoi, Vietnam, this article investigated the process of commodification and politicization of heritage in a communist state. Using the theoretical framework on heritage commodification (Ashworth, 1994, 2000), the authors examined conflicts that arise from plural functions of heritage, reflecting on the concept of heritage dissonance by Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996). Beyond the claim of Logan (2014) that the state parties use heritage and the World Heritage system for their own nationalistic and political purposes, the interviews with tourists and policy makers provided evidence that the intended messages of longevity, continuity, and diversity of the heritage OUVs have yet to be successfully communicated to tourists. Exhibits, displays, and interpretation have not yet been impressive enough to communicate a message of the universal importance of the heritage.

The results of the analysis, however, challenge Ashworth's (1994) comments that successful commodification is demand-driven. When heritage is heavily politicized for national pride and carrying out the official interpretation, the control over the selection and interpretation of heritage results in heritage resources being displayed in the way the ideological doctrine governs. Interpretation, therefore, has been determined by supply instead of demand. The mismatch between what the tourists want to see and how the heritage is displayed exemplifies this aspect. While the heritage

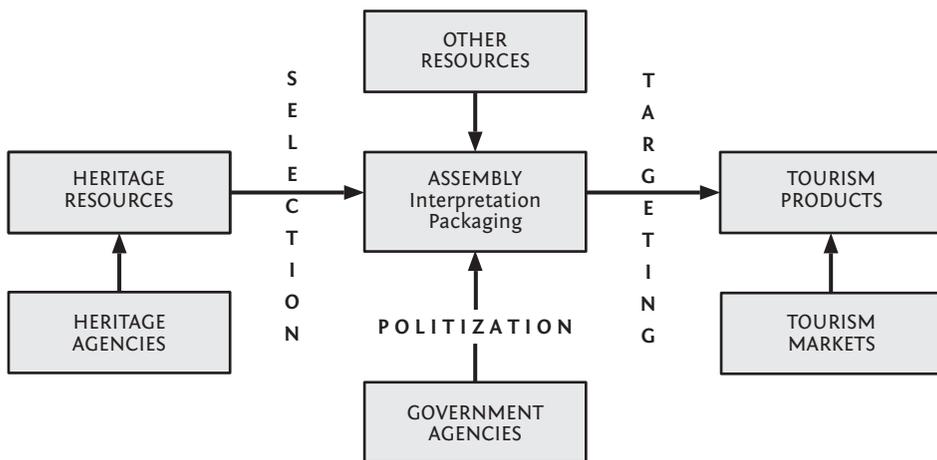


Figure 2. Commodification and politicization of heritage (own compilation).

on exhibit drills into the authentic tradition of ancient Vietnam, it neglects the contemporary aspect of the history, which appears to impress many visitors to the site. In other words, supply-demand tension in the selection and interpretation of resources was directly influenced by the characteristics of Vietnam's political system.

As a result of this study, adjustment has been made to the model of commodification of heritage proposed by Ashworth (1994, 2000). The dimension of heritage politicization is argued as influencing the entire process of commodification through the selection of heritage resources and targeting to different markets via tourism products under the direction of government agencies. A new model integrates commodification and politicization of heritage, as proposed in Figure 2.

A unique aspect of heritage politics emerges from the analysis of interviews with tourists, and that is the culture-war interactions at the Thang Long Citadel. On the one hand, the relics at the Citadel remind us of a thousand year history of cultural diversity in Northern Vietnam, but the Citadel itself has long been the military headquarters of the French Union in the Indochina War, and of North Vietnam in the Vietnam War. It is evidenced, in the case of the Citadel, that tourists were interested in the heritage related to more contemporary wars versus the older historic ones. The parallel of war heritage and cultural heritage is not a surprise in a country like Vietnam with a history written by many wars. This uniqueness of the heritage should be brought into the tourism development strategy, as it is the 'selling point' of such heritage sites.

The results of the case study of Thang Long Citadel have several implications for the heritage tourism industry and heritage management for the city of Hanoi. Reflecting on du Cros and McKercher's (2015) comments that within the transformation process from heritage asset to heritage tourism product, the asset should be converted into something that tourists can understand and enjoy, several suggestions emerge for successful transformation from heritage resources to tourism products.

Firstly, interpretation at the heritage site, currently mainly serving the domestic market, is to be designed with its users in mind. More attractive and interactive

methods of interpretation are recommended to attract international visitors. The material presented should assume little prior knowledge of the site and subject being interpreted. Currently, the interpretation at the Thang Long Citadel is dominated by panels and to a lesser extent, the interpretation presented by onsite guides. Instead of text-heavy interpretation boards, other media such as audio and video can be introduced. In addition, related off-site installations, educational programs, and community activities are among possible aids to on-site interpretation.

Secondly, market-based product development is recommended for heritage tourism at the Thang Long Citadel. It is important to understand the nature of demand for heritage so that product development and promotional strategies may be designed in accordance with the needs and expectations of visitors. Furthermore, demand for heritage product varies at different parts of the site (the Central Sector and Archaeological site), and among different groups of visitors (domestic and international). Identification of these variations is essential to enable individual sites to design their development and promotion policies in accordance with the requirements of cultural tourists.

In sum, heritage is characterized inherently by a dissonance created through its simultaneous commodification and politicization. Although this paper examines the complexity of the politics of heritage in Hanoi from heritage tourism perspectives, further research is needed to understand the relationship that exists among stakeholders in similar heritage sites where the surrounding population has a different interest. Future research may involve either qualitative or quantitative field studies with tourists at the Citadel to better understand their behavior and expectations.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by Grant-in-Aid (number 24530382) of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and Academic Research Subsidy of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). We would like to thank Prof. Lee Joliffe of the University of New Brunswick and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on earlier versions of this article.

