



Michael Hitchcock, Victor T. King, and Michael Parnwell, eds., *Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia*

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THE PAST decade has witnessed an explosion in the number of books on tourism as the topic is increasingly embraced as a distinct but interdisciplinary field of study. This volume is part of this explosion and, like many contemporary books on tourism, it is an edited volume with contributors drawn from different countries and disciplines.

Heritage tourism, the focus of this book, is a malleable term, defined differently by different authors. As the editors note, the idea of *heritage* is linked to something related to the past and which has value as a “treasure” or “legacy” of national, regional, or local importance. Objects of heritage tourism can consist of tangible

sites such as historic buildings and monuments, or of intangible elements such as behavior and performance. Heritage tourism can embrace cultural, human-built elements or natural, non-built environments. UNESCO has helped establish twenty-nine World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia (seventeen of which are cultural and twelve natural), which preserve and protect areas of especial importance to communities at many levels, including global. Though this book is not exclusively about World Heritage Sites, their development and importance is always lurking in the background.

The book consists of an introduction, eleven specialized chapters, and a conclusion. Two chapters focus on Indonesia, two on Taiwan (which some might argue is not really a part of Southeast Asia), one on Singapore, one on Cambodia, two on Malaysia, four on Vietnam, and one on Thailand (the numbers total more than eleven because some chapters examine more than one country). Thus a broad range of Southeast Asia is considered. The topical explorations of the chapters are also equally diverse, driven by the different disciplines of anthropology, geography, history, urban planning, business, tourism studies, and Southeast Asian studies.

The chapters cover a diverse spectrum of topics, including ethnographic museums, conservation and development projects, handicrafts, and of course World Heritage Sites. For example, the chapter by Keiko Miura on Angkor Wat in Cambodia explores how the site contains different meanings for different groups, such as Buddhists, Cambodian nationalists, and foreign tourists. The site was used as a symbol of Indo-Chinese unity during the French colonial regime, and is used today by Hollywood filmmakers in such films as *Tomb Raider* to represent an exotic other. What, then, is the heritage of Angkor Wat?

Other chapters also explore this interplay among differing attempts to portray the heritage of the site. The chapter by Nigel Worden looks at the city of Melaka, Malaysia, and how the ethnic heritage of this place is represented. The Malay population is celebrated, the Portuguese are indigenized, while the Indians and Chinese, despite their historical importance in the city, are largely ignored, although the author notes that recently there has been a greater attempt at inclusivity in order to acclaim a more globalized Malaysian (as opposed to Malay) identity. Whose heritage is being portrayed at Melaka? Likewise, the chapter by Wanatanee Sunkul, Richard Butler, and David Airey examines three sites in Hanoi, Vietnam: the Ancient Quarter, Hoa Lo Prison, and the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. How are these sites represented to heritage tourists? Will the Ancient Quarter of Hanoi become locked in time and turn into something like an open-air museum, or will it continue to exist as a living community? How should the heritage of foreign intervention be portrayed? These are the kinds of questions that Vietnamese tourist authorities must ponder.

Overall, the book is a useful compendium of current thinking on heritage tourism in Southeast Asia. It might have been improved by the addition of a regional map as well as more photographs. Nevertheless, all the important themes are covered. These include the need for Southeast Asian states (except Thailand) to negotiate the postcolonial experience and build a national identity while maintaining links with heritage sites. Indonesia tries to present Borobudur as part of

“Indonesian” history, even though that place predates the formation of Indonesia by ten centuries. Southeast Asian states also need to work around the fact that mainly outside agents have shaped the concept of heritage in the region, especially UNESCO, with its World Heritage Sites, and models of preservation that are not of Southeast Asian origin. Does heritage necessarily emphasize the exotic, especially the often invented heritage of ethnic minorities? And, finally, what to do about the tensions in heritage planning among planners, business interests, local residents, and national governments? *Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia* addresses all of these issues and thus provides a useful set of readings on the problems and pitfalls associated with heritage tourism development in Southeast Asia or indeed in any region.

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