

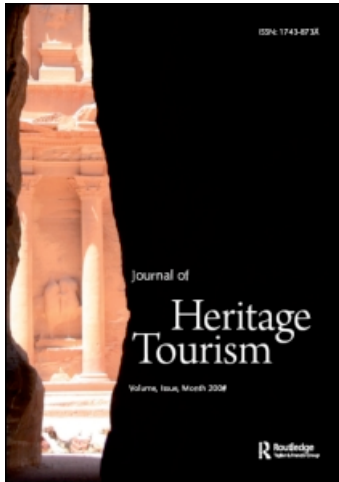
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The modernities of heritage and tourism: interpretations of an Asian future

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Recent years have seen the emergence of a number of regional-based charters and declarations; all of which attempt to address the Eurocentric biases of the global heritage movement. For example, the *Nara Declaration*, *China Principles*, *Hoi An Protocols* and *Seoul Declaration* all reflect a desire to develop heritage frameworks that are sensitive to, and in tune with, the complexities and socio-cultural specificities of the Asian region. With the primary concern of these initiatives being the development of more appropriate ‘conservation philosophies’ or notions of ‘authenticity’, they have given less attention to the interface between heritage sites and their consumers, or tourists, and the rapidly changing nature of tourism in Asia. Indeed, the vast majority of reports and studies produced by UNESCO, ICOMOS, IUCN and others continue to talk of ‘the tourist’ as a singular, homogenous construct. The rapid growth of travel for leisure and recreation within Asia today, however, demands a re-appraisal of how such terms are used and deployed within the heritage industry. Accordingly, this article examines why Asian tourism is presenting new and unfamiliar challenges for policy makers regarding the management and presentation of heritage sites in Asia. More specifically, it considers the industry familiar discourse of ‘site interpretation’ against a backdrop of Asian modernities in order to ask questions about aesthetics and the politics of heritage narration.

Keywords: interpretation; Asia; modernity; landscape; consumption

Introduction

As tourists we frequently find ourselves acting as amateur anthropologists. If a trip to a heritage visitor center involves encountering visitors or tour groups from other countries it is hard to resist leaping to conclusions about the behavior – sometimes perceived as rude – of those Germans, Italians, Americans or Koreans across the room. All too often those conclusions rest on clichés. But to dismiss such observations out of hand would be to close down a fascinating and potentially fruitful line of enquiry. Clearly, it would be foolish to suggest that our spectrum of cultural differences are somehow erased or transcended as we take on the role of ‘the tourist’. But to identify national traits risks the criticism of sweeping generalizations, or worse, of even being racist. So how are we to safely read and differentiate between the behaviors of tourists originating from different parts of the world? The boundary that separates rigorous, analytically sound accounts from unfounded

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generalizations is not always readily apparent. Perhaps most treacherous is identifying appropriate geographical scales or ethno-cultural axes for making assertions about motivations, desires or discernable characteristics. At what point is it valid to speak of Asian, European, Western, French, Hindu Indian or North American traits? By analyzing the changing nature of tourism in Asia today and the impact this will have on the presentation or 'interpretation' of heritage sites, this article ventures down such treacherous and murky roads. Moving between a number of geographical and historical scales, the account is schematic rather than being narrowly prescriptive, and as such, it incurs the risks that accompany generalizations. Nevertheless, various avenues of enquiry are pursued here in the hope that they offer some fresh perspectives on heritage interpretation and cast light on issues that have yet to receive the attention they deserve.

Understood in its broadest sense heritage is about conserving or restoring the past, and preserving tradition or traditions. But as Eric Hobsbawm succinctly reminded us, the notion of tradition is an invented one. More specifically, it is vital to remember that a language of 'tradition' and 'the traditional' have evolved within the rapid and seemingly irrevocable changes inflicted by industrialization and modernity. Accordingly, over the last 20 years or so it has become increasingly apparent that a language of World Heritage has emerged within, and been forged by, the broader contexts of a European, cum Western modernity. As we know, momentum for the creation of UNESCO, along with the subsequent protection instruments of the 1964 Venice Charter and 1972 World Heritage Convention largely came from Europe and North America. For a number of reasons – not least the massive destruction caused by two world wars and the twentieth century's unstoppable march toward industrialization and urbanization – World Heritage emerged as an overwhelmingly 'fabric' based discourse. Understandably, the primary concern was the protection of cultural and natural landscapes, which together constituted an endangered 'heritage of mankind'. Implicit to a language of 'mankind' was the idea that certain frameworks for protecting heritage could be universally implemented and ratified. One of the key precepts of the Venice Charter was the protection of the authenticity of the physical fabric. While the term authenticity vividly captured the philosophical orientations toward conservation at that time, its use also pointed toward a series of underlying fears. Quite naturally calls for preservation would stem from a fear of losing the ir retrievable. The discourse of heritage that emerged strongly reflected fears about the rapid social and environmental changes of modernity, post-war reconstruction, urbanization and globalization. There was also a fear of how the degenerative forces of capitalism would incur a loss of that authenticity. Industries like tourism, for example, have been consistently perceived as threatening the authenticity of sites and landscapes, and thus resisted or kept at a safe distance.

While the broad concept of World Heritage has proved extremely successful, concerns about the validity of universalist approaches, and the semantics of 'universal value', have continued to grow. In the face of such critiques, there has been a widespread shift away from earlier 'top down' models of heritage management in favor of more democratic approaches that valorize concepts like 'stakeholders' or 'values'. These terms reflect a concern for incorporating multiple perspectives and a plurality of voices. Heritage planners are now required to incorporate – and balance – the views of local residents, academics, local businesses, government offices and non-governmental organizations with the needs of those consuming the heritage: tourists. As a result, the opinions and interests of the central government or outside experts are now countered by more localized, everyday perspectives.

To complement the recognition given to these global, local tensions, more regionalized, culturally sensitive paradigms have also evolved via the Burra Charter, Nara Declaration,

and the more recent Hoi An Protocols and China Principles. One of the key challenges for those involved in the China Principles – an initiative of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage in China, The Getty Conservation Institute and the Australian Department of the Environment and Heritage – has been the incorporation of ‘international best practice while maintaining traditional attitudes to China’s rich inheritance and its values’ (Sullivan, 2005, p. 281). To help resolve such socio-cultural differences, these regional charters and guidelines have shifted attention away from the authenticity of the fabric toward ideas of continuity and renewal, the preservation of craftsmanship, and more values based approaches¹.

Past and present is an interface that appears in all societies. Each society, however, develops its own cultural norms and shared ideas of how to negotiate, mediate and delineate the traditional from the modern, the ‘authentic’ from the ‘inauthentic’. While initiatives like the China Principles have admirably helped overcome many of the Eurocentric biases inherent to today’s globally roaming discourse of heritage, it will be suggested over the coming pages that many of the field’s core ideas and assumptions – forged within European and North American experiences of modernity – continue to be deployed in universalist, global ways. Much the same can be said about our understandings of tourism and tourists. Even within those approaches that have sought to differentiate between a variety of stakeholders, the need to balance inside versus outside, or local versus non-local, values invariably results in the homogenization of ‘the tourist’ as the outsider. Although numerous attempts have been made to differentiate among cultural-tourists, eco-tourists from mass-tourists, the seeming inability of these categories to map onto the complex empirical realities of tourism has meant ‘the tourist’ remains a generic, universally understood term. As such the tourist conjures up certain identifiable characteristics, desires, aspirations and habits. But to recognize these characteristics is to identify with a long cultural history of medieval travel, the European enlightenment and the rise of industrialized modernity in the west (Craik 1997; Rojek & Urry 1997). The dominance of European languages in today’s global heritage movement means understandings of the social, cultural and moral values associated with the ‘tourist’ are empirically grounded within histories of pilgrimage, the European grand tour, colonial exploration, the rise of leisure and the growth of mass travel during the twentieth century². As a consequence, in the arena of heritage policy, the analytical frameworks for interpreting tourism have been overwhelmingly directed toward west-to-east and north-to-south encounters. In countless studies exploring the impact of a *global* tourism industry on a *local* environment or destination the tourist has been conceptualized as the wealthy westerner traveling in search of pre-modern authenticity. In essence then, the argument presented in broad strokes here, is that today’s globally roaming discourse of heritage policy implicitly draws upon western-centric ideas of tourism and tourists and deploys them in universalist ways. Conceived in such monolithic terms, ‘the tourist’ has come to be the outsider, and the default consumer of heritage.

Such normative understandings, however, are being rendered increasingly unsustainable in Asia by the rise of domestic and intra-regional tourism. The rapid increases in the number of Asians traveling for leisure mean that heritage tourism across the region can no longer be read through the conceptual lens of eastern, southern hemisphere hosts and western, northern hemisphere guests. In 2005 around 6 million mainland Chinese tourists traveled abroad for a holiday. Equally, PATA reports that over 8 million Indians traveled abroad for their holiday in 2006, with around 3 million of those traveling to destinations within the Asia Pacific region³. Given the optimistic predictions concerning the sustained economic growth of these two countries, it is widely estimated that their outbound tourist numbers will continue to rise by a rate of around 10% per annum. Indeed the UNWTO

estimates that by 2020 the number of Chinese outbound tourists alone will rise to around 100 million⁴.

The aesthetics of modernity

This growth in Asian tourism is taking place against a backdrop of extremely rapid social change. Urbanization, mechanization, industrialization and information technologies – processes that spanned several decades in Europe and North America – are now being completed in just a few short years. It also goes without saying that this accelerated modernization of Asia is also occurring within very different, non-western, cultural and societal contexts. In the case of China, for example, tourism has emerged as post-Maoist phenomena. As Nyíri (2006) shows, the eventual arrival of mass tourism in China was dependent upon the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to recast its citizens as modern consumers. While tourism would form part of the party's desire to privatize the country's economy, it would also be a mechanism for promoting a state-centered nationalism.

To interpret such changes requires a subtle reading of multiple modernities. Few observers suggest that the experience of modernity across Asia is uniform and that the region is merely following the same trajectories as the West (Hosagrahar, 2005). In fact, pursuing this line of enquiry sheds light on a very different set of social, economic and cultural dynamics surrounding heritage and heritage tourism. Asia's various pathways of modernity require us to revisit our core assumptions about these two public spheres, including how we understand heritage as the interface between past and present, how the past is presented and narrated, and how traditions come to be venerated, ignored or deliberately discarded. The current destruction and removal of architectural structures regarded as less than 'modern', coupled with the insertion of re-created 'pre-modern' cultural landscapes across countless Asian cities suggests familiar questions about heritage are being met with unfamiliar answers⁵. How do we make sense of the management and presentation of architectural heritage in cities like Singapore for example? Or the modernization of the temple landscape of Pagan in Burma? Should the approaches adopted in these places merely be pejoratively described as post-modern? It was noted earlier that these questions are now being addressed within debates about the philosophies of conservation and regionalized approaches to restoration. However, the impact they hold for the field of interpretation has yet to be fully explored.

To help frame such a discussion it is important to note that the distinction between the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' is not as clearly articulated in Asia as it is in western discourses of heritage and tourism. Indeed, as Ito (1995, p. 35) points out, the Japanese language has 'no proper word for authenticity'. As a consequence, conservation and modernization are not seen as inherently in tension or as antithetical processes as they invariably are in the west. This raises interesting questions about the presentation of sites and the aesthetics of interpretation. In the case of China, for example, ideas of sustainable management often involve the modernization of a site and the improvement of its facilities. As Nyíri illustrates, the management authorities of historic *mingsheng*, or scenic spots, are not afraid of adding concrete and glass ticket booths, large gates, and conspicuously located retail outlets. It is perceived that adding these facilities enhances the tourist experience. Instead of blending buildings in with their local environment through the use of low-pitched roofs, muted colors or native timbers, they are designed to look distinctly modern, and conspicuously new. Crucially, given that such interventions are not perceived as intrusions threatening the authenticity of the site, there is little concern for a language of 'harmonizing the old with the new', or using 'materials sympathetic to the environment'.

For Nyíri (2006, p. 67) 'the Chinese tradition suggests a different way of approaching and responding to nature, lacking the modern western taboo on human intervention'. By examining the aesthetics of current heritage site management practices in China we can see that the fear of modernization and commercialization that pervades a western discourse of heritage is often absent. Such differences can also be seen within the context of tourist souvenir aesthetics. As I have shown elsewhere, the purchasing patterns of tourists visiting Cambodia from Northeast Asia speak of radically different relationships between tradition and the modern⁶. Rather than buying miniature stone carvings or 'traditional Khmer' silks, tourists from Korea, Taiwan and China are returning home with glass sculptures illuminated by LEDs, metal ornaments or plastic figurines. A trip to the temples of Angkor is not remembered by the locally crafted, traditional but by the modern, mass-manufactured. But do such examples mean the aesthetics of heritage and tourism in Asia are fundamentally and intrinsically different to those in the west? Or is Asia essentially evolving along the same aesthetic and cultural trajectories as other parts of the world? These are two simple, but challenging questions that have yet to be fully addressed.

The spectrum of practices being employed for heritage site presentation across Asia today suggests these questions will deliver complex answers. If we look at sites that have been primarily designed for domestic visitors and/or have been managed by local authorities or entrepreneurs, it is apparent that the position and style of signboards, retail units and information kiosks, as well as the positioning of view points and walkways differ significantly from many of the conventions recognized as 'best practice' within western heritage discourse. A number of recent studies on the practices of tourists from across the region have also revealed various cultural practices that would seem unfamiliar to a student of western tourism. In her account of mainland Chinese tourists in Macau, Du Cros (2007) observes particular behavioral norms that pose new challenges for the city's heritage management authorities. She also identifies how some sites, such as churches, linked to Macau's historical connections with Europe receive scant attention, an issue I shall return to shortly. For Chan (2008) Chinese tourists travel to Southeast Asia in search of signifiers of modernity and futurity. She offers a framework of 'disorganized tourism space' to interpret how sites of consumption are encountered and made meaningful through particular embodied practices. Whereas in the case of Bali, Thirumaran (2008) develops a framework of cultural affinity to make sense of Indian tourism to the island. Rather, the rehearsing the account of Balinese culture as the quintessential exotic 'other', Thirumaran explains how the cultural referents of a 'shared heritage' between the Indian tourists and Balinese dancers are pivotal to the consumption and interpretation of traditional dance.

The risk of offering sweeping generalizations ensures conclusions remain tentative. Nonetheless, when seen together, these studies suggest that tourism in contemporary Asia remains bound up in collective identities and communal affinities, rather than the search for individualized expression, independence and self actualization familiar to Europe and North America. By implication, rather than absorbing information individually via guidebooks, there is a greater tendency for many Asian tourists to learn about a destination via DVDs or videos played on airplanes or tour buses. The widespread popularity of airline magazines, television documentaries or the glossy brochures produced by local authorities means that information can be disseminated across a wide variety of media. It is also equally important to consider how sources of information are perceived. For American, Australian and European tourists, brands like Lonely Planet, Baedeker or National Geographic are consumed as reliable, authoritative sources of knowledge. In many Asian countries, however, the concept of the branded guidebook has yet to solidify. Consequently, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian or Indonesian tourists tend to rely more on publications by

ministries of tourism, airlines or recognizable bodies like UNESCO. Once again, it is common to find that content offered via CDs or DVDs from these sources is as popular as text-based publications. More research also needs to be conducted concerning how heritage visitor centers are read and perceived by domestic and intra-regional tourists in Asia. It appears that rather than being oriented around conservative, fact-based narratives of the past, visitor centers for Asian tourists place greater emphasis on performance and re-enactment. The dozens of 'cultural villages' now dotted across the region provide a parallel illustrating how the cultural, whether it be historic sites or ethnic communities, is performed, modernized and aesthetically stylized for consumption as a tourist product.

Visitor centers have become a commonly used tool for managing tourist flows as well as raising awareness about a heritage resource. In countries like China, the addition of such modern facilities can actually transform sites previously considered as unattractive into 'tourable' destinations (Nyíri, 2006). Not surprisingly, throughout Asia today, local developers and entrepreneurs are preparing and modernizing heritage sites for the domestic and intra-regional tourist dollar. For many Western observers, the addition of neon signage or glass and concrete shopping malls or visitor centers might be regarded as 'tacky' or 'kitsch'. Of course, however, such critiques, along with suggestions for more 'tasteful' or 'sympathetic' alternatives, are value judgments that stem from particular cultural and historical contexts. The question of cultural differences in aesthetics and what constitutes good or bad taste is a very familiar one, and the thoughts outlined here offer nothing new to these debates and arguments. However, the issue is raised as a highly pertinent one in light of a burgeoning Asian consumer market. The rise of the Asian tourist now means that it is more important than ever to re-visit and re-work these issues and questions into the field of heritage interpretation. Should heritage experts, for example, revert to what might be seen as elitist readings by eschewing loudspeakers or brightly painted kiosks and labeling them as kitsch?

Of course it would be extremely misleading to suggest that heritage and tourism in Asia have a single, all encompassing set of aesthetics. There will always be a spectrum of opinions and tastes. The management of heritage sites within the region involves the typical discordant views and disputes between government bureaucrats, local entrepreneurs, landowners and academics. Indeed, it is not difficult to find scholars or bureaucrats lamenting the ways in which their local environment has been transformed in recent years. The extensive destruction in the name of Beijing's beautification in readiness for the 2008 Olympics provides a case in point. And in Asia, as elsewhere, deciding on the appropriate type and style of site interpretation does not necessarily mean following the popular, or indeed populist, view. In offering this brief overview I do not want to argue that there is an 'Asian way', a perspective that would lead us back to the Asian values debates. Rather, the aim here is to suggest that the rise of the Asian tourist opens up important questions about what constitutes 'best practice' in heritage interpretation. It should not be assumed that the conventions adopted in Europe or North America can continue to be deployed uncritically. Equally, it should also not be assumed that the rise of Asian tourism renders all western approaches 'bad' or Eurocentric. Instead, the field of interpretation needs to pursue a path that straddles the polarized positions of universalism and cultural relativism. Adopting such an approach will help us find solutions to the difficult questions about what is 'tasteful', appropriate and successful.

Narrating the past and non-universal histories

The final part of this article examines the issue of interpretation content. For understandable reasons the field of interpretation has grown out of a desire to remain rigorous about how

the past is presented. In the quest for historical accuracy, speculation is to be avoided. The idea of 'authenticity' has provided the semantic vehicle for ensuring this paradigm is upheld. Within early ideas of heritage management authenticity was a term used to ensure the meanings and values were extracted from a heritage landscape in a genuine, faithful and systematic manner. The focus was on authoritative, credible truths. The move toward notions of plurality and contestation clarified the limitations of these earlier prescriptions. However, the ongoing use of the term reflects the idea that meanings and voices, however disparate, can still be extracted from a heritage site as stable, intrinsic values. The term also implies that narratives and places are consumed and interpreted by the audience in stable, universally shared ways. All too often, this homogenization of the audience rests on the assumption that the tourist is, by default, prototypically Western. This, in turn, serves to reproduce Eurocentric understandings of how the past or heritage sites are narrated. To illustrate this I want to focus on the World Heritage Site of Angkor.

Visitors to Angkor today invariably suffer from an overload of information. Tour-guides and guidebooks bombard the visitor with a seemingly endless amount of information about the kings of Angkor, their dates of rule, chronological shifts in architectural style, transitions between styles of sculpture, and a bewildering list of gods, demons and their various avatars. The information tourists receive is derived from a field of scholarship that has studied the temples of Angkor as the legacy of a once glorious, classical civilization. At the heart of Angkorean scholarship lies the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO). Over the course of nearly one hundred years of research EFEO has built up an immense wealth of information on Angkor. They are rightfully seen as the authorities of knowledge about the temples and their history. This situation does, however, mean that Angkor has been interpreted through an intellectual prism of European origin.

One of the defining stories within Angkorean history relates to its 'discovery' by the French botanist Henri Mouhot in 1860. It is commonly recounted that Mouhot battled his way through the north Cambodian jungle to rescue the decaying architectural remnants of a civilization that had supposedly abandoned its capital in the mid-fifteenth Century. Arriving just over 400 years later, Mouhot entered history as the man that awakened the Khmers from an era of decay and cultural degeneration. As I have detailed at length elsewhere this account of historical rupture and resurrection has played a pivotal role in shaping recent discourses of heritage and conservation in Cambodia (Winter, 2007). Not surprisingly, the tourism industry that has evolved around Angkor has also thrived off the romantic, mysterious and adventurous tales of rediscovering lost antiquities. But as heritage and tourism have converged and come to shape each other, a period of history spanning around 400 years has been eclipsed.

The problems with this account have been highlighted by a number of recent studies focusing on temple graffiti, monasteries, ceramics or vernacular traditions. By turning to such areas, scholars like Ashley Thompson (2004) and Ang Choulean (APSARA, 2000) provide evidence of ongoing occupation in order to refute the overly simplistic narrative of Angkor being 'abandoned'. In an article entitled, *Pilgrims to Angkor: A Buddhist "Cosmopolis" in Southeast Asia?* Thompson also draws our attention to a detailed and rich history of Asian travel to Angkor spanning several centuries. Her account reveals Angkor's role as a major destination for Buddhist pilgrims traveling from around Asia. Together these studies represent important departures from the currently dominant narrative of the post-Angkorean era as a 'middle period' of cultural dormancy.⁷

In many instances, the framing of Angkor's history today also reproduces the broad classifications offered by colonial historians regarding Asia's 'greater' and 'lesser' civilizations. Over the course of the twentieth century Angkorean historiography has focused its

gaze on the former, placing far greater emphasis on the influence of a classical Indian culture and religious iconography. In her piece *Taj Angkor; enshrining l'Inde in le Cambodge*, Edwards (2005, p. 17) describes a process of 'Re-Indianization' whereby early twentieth century 'Buddhist worship at Angkor presented unwelcome challenges to colonial desires to compartmentalize Cambodia both vertically, through time, and horizontally, through the categorization of religion'. Given that most Cambodians practiced a form of Theravada Buddhism that integrated animist beliefs and the veneration of figures like Vishnu and Shiva, the presence of monks and Buddhist icons detracted from the colonial imagining of a once glorious 'Hindu' past represented by a pristine Angkor. Considered to be an eyesore, the community of monks living in front of Angkor Wat were removed by EFEO in 1909 (Anderson, 1991, p. 182). This was followed by the consolidation of all the temple's Buddhist statues within a single space on the ground floor; an area that was subsequently coined 'the gallery of a thousand Buddhas'. According to Edwards such 'Buddhist' identities spoiled the 'Hindu' template presented to tourists [and] disturbed the colonial presentation of Angkor as both monument *and* frozen moment, a material archive to the 'golden' era of Khmer greatness and glory' (Edwards, 2005, pp. 17–18 emphasis hers)⁸. The reification of an Indian influence also defined EFEO's epigraphic research. The meticulous translation of Sanskrit inscriptions found on numerous stelae or doorways revealed elaborate stories of kingship and devoted populations, of battles and conquests, and of deities and religious cults⁹.

In piecing together Angkor's history much less attention has been given to the Khmer inscriptions found among the temples or the evidence pertaining to the ongoing presence of animism. Indeed, within an account of architectural splendor and pristine glory, anthropological accounts that might reveal oral histories or the transmissions of cultural traditions across generations have been largely overlooked. In other words, a fascination with the rise and fall of classical civilizations – a theme central to late nineteenth century European historiography – has inhibited the emergence of narratives addressing localized belief systems, vernacular traditions or Angkor's enduring role within a pan-Asian Buddhist tradition.

In essence then we can see that the heritage industry surrounding Angkor today reproduces and prioritizes certain readings of history. As I have shown elsewhere, these narratives have also emerged in tandem with a Eurocentric discourse of Angkorean tourism. Angkor has become the quintessential lost ruin, the untouched pristine landscape. Encapsulated in a French imagining of *Indochine*, Angkor, as tourist site, has stood as an embodiment of the exotic, the romantic and the mysterious. As Said (1995, p. 169) pointed out, for France in particular 'theirs was the orient of memories, suggestive ruins, forgotten ruins'. With their appeal extending far beyond just France, these themes have strongly resonated with a long tradition of western tourism oriented toward ideas of exploration, adventure, discovery and individuality.

But if we look at Angkor as a site of Asian tourism a very different set of themes begin to appear. For Thai, Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese tourists, the story of 'discovery' by a French botanist carries significantly less weight. Within Asian history, Angkor represents the capital of an imperial power, and one of the most significant pre-modern polities in the region. Within a pan-Asian Buddhist history, Angkor is revered as a site of pilgrimage. And within an Asian social history, Angkor was an important hub of commerce, attracting people and their objects of trade from across Southeast Asia, Southern China and beyond. Stories of Japanese Buddhist pilgrims or Chinese traders need to become part of the interpretation narrative presented at Angkor today. Equally, for Cambodians, Angkor is a living space; a landscape studded with monasteries, villages and an array of animist

traditions. Community-based programs for restoring and modernizing its pagodas and vihears vividly illustrate how the boundaries between past and present, modern and traditional are far less marked for Cambodians. But within an interpretative framework of World Heritage that prioritizes monumental glories, stories of a Hindu pantheon or the aesthetic beauties of ancient relics, these narratives and values receive little attention.

The rise of Asian tourism makes such situations increasingly unsustainable. It brings into view the endurance of Eurocentric interpretations. In the case of Angkor, this has involved the museumification of the landscape via representations of the past as linear narratives. Asian tourism therefore suggests the need for more Asian-centric accounts of place and history. This, in turn, means being aware of the origins of expert knowledge. In a parallel to Angkor, Aung-Thwin (1998, p. 3) shows how the accepted history for Pagan in Myanmar rests upon a series of mythical events invented by late-nineteenth and twentieth century colonial historians. Accordingly, he traces the 'intellectual, political and social trends in nineteenth- and twentieth century Burma that likely shaped the historiography' of the country. It is therefore important that interpretation experts remain alert to such historical processes, in order to avoid today's heritage industry serving as an unwitting residue of colonial power.

Of course the incorporation of more Asian-centric histories poses fresh challenges. A number of recent academic studies on Asian tourism have highlighted how attempts to capture the Renminbi, Indian Rupee or Korean Won have involved a shift in the narratives presented. To preserve harmonious relations with their northern neighbors in China, government officials in Vietnam have instructed local tour guides to skim over histories of invasion and inter-state conflict. In turning to a regional tourist audience, rather than just a western one, Vietnam is having to reconfigure the way it represents war and conflict. Similar challenges face China itself, with the memorialization of the Nanjing Massacre of 1937. As the site becomes increasingly popular with domestic tourists, it seems to engender simultaneous feelings of hatred and peaceful reconciliation toward Japan (Ross, 2006). Equally, in Singapore whether to recognize Little Japan as a heritage space endures as a political dilemma. Once again, the geographical proximity of intra-regional tourism is raising uncomfortable questions about the narration of stories of invasion and violence (Blackburn, 2006). Clearly, such examples also point toward unfolding possibilities for governments to manipulate heritage toward their ideological biases. In this respect, it is worth remembering how intra-regional and domestic tourism in Asia raise the temperature on historically sensitive sites and the politics of their interpretation.

In summary then, the various examples offered over the course of this article begin to illustrate why the field of heritage interpretation needs to revisit the concept of 'the tourist'. It has been argued that the rapid changes now occurring in Asian tourism raise unfamiliar and challenging questions. If heritage sites across the region are to be successfully and appropriately protected, presented and interpreted, more nuanced, differentiated and culturally sensitive readings of tourism and tourists are now required.

Notes

1. For further details see: Agnew and Demas (2002).
2. The ascription of oneself as 'traveler' and others as merely 'tourists', for example, speaks much about everyday social hierarchies, the need for expressing individualism, or the moral benefits of self education. Equally, to interpret the aesthetics of tourism is to trace histories of landscape, beauty or nature. The legacy of *The Picturesque*, for example, can still be seen in the photographic practices of many western tourists who commonly define some scenes and viewpoints as iconic, while disregarding all around them.

3. For further details see *India's buoyant economy to drive strong growth in outbound travel to 2009* Wednesday, 28 February 2007, Available at: http://www.traveldailynews.com/new.asp?newid=35743&subcategory_id=83
4. As a number of observers have commented, tourism statistics quoted by the Chinese government can be extremely elastic. The China National Tourist Office reports the figure of around 16 million outbound tourists for 2005. This figure, however, includes all trips, including day trips, to Macau and Hong Kong. This leaves a figure of approximately 6 million trips made beyond these two autonomous regions. For further details see <http://www.cnto.org/chinastats.asp#5>. See also WTO (1999).
5. See for example: Becker, J. (2004, April 2)
6. See Winter (2008).
7. For further details see APSARA (2000).
8. An example of this hierarchical division can be found in the account presented in the opening chapter of Henri Parmentier's (1959) 'Guide to Angkor'. Dominated by explanations of the Indian pantheon of Hindu deities, little attention is given to other religious forms or aspects of Angkorean history.
9. See for example Coedès (1968) or Dumarcay and Groslier (1973).

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