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THE VALUE OF VIETNAM'S WORLD HERITAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM (A CASE STUDY OF HỘI AN ANCIENT TOWN)

1. Introduction

Vietnam is a small country with diverse and magnificent natural scenery. In addition, Vietnam's history can be traced back thousands of years. There are 54 ethnic groups in the country, which shows the diversity and richness of the country's cultural heritage. In the world, many countries/regions develop tourism based on heritage, such as Britain, France, Spain, Italy, China, Russia, etc. Italy attracts more than 50 million international tourists every year, and the tourism industry alone generates nearly 170 billion U.S. dollars (approximately 85% of Vietnam's GDP in 2016)¹. At the continental level, Europe has the Union of European Heritage Preservation Organizations, which has defined an annual "The European Heritage Days" in the third week of September, with the purpose of expanding access to heritage for all. On the European Heritage Days, a series of cultural events are organized, most of the participants are Europeans. In Vietnam, the natural and cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO is very rich and diverse. Therefore, it is very important to use these resource advantages to develop tourism. This is also the current principle of the development of tourism in Vietnam (Article 2, Article 4, "Tourism Law"): "The development of tourism is related to the protection and promotion of the value of the country's cultural heritage and natural resources."² From the diversified value of the cultural heritage of Hội An ancient town, especially from the perspective of the economic value development of cultural heritage,

¹ Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, Chu Lâm Anh & Nguyễn Anh Thu: "Tài nguyên di sản văn hóa trong bối cảnh đương đại: thách thức, khó khăn trong bảo tồn và phát huy giá trị (Cultural heritage resources in the contemporary context: challenges and difficulties in preserving and enhancing their value)", in *Hội nhập quốc tế về bảo tồn – Cơ hội và thách thức cho các giá trị di sản văn hóa* (International Integration in Conservation: Opportunities and Challenges for the Value of Cultural Heritage), Vietnam National University Press, Ho Chi Minh City 2018, pp. 17-18.

² National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam: *Tourism Law*, Hanoi 2017.

we will clearly see the value of Vietnam's world heritage in the development of tourism and propose appropriate behaviors.

2. Vietnam's World Heritage and its value in the development of tourism

Provisions of the 17th Session of the "UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" ratified in Paris from October 17 to November 21, 1972 prescribe:

Article 1: Cultural heritage includes:

Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view³.

Article 2: Natural heritage includes:

Natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;

Geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation;

Natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty⁴.

To be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, natural and cultural heritage must meet at least one of the ten criteria established by UNESCO⁵.

According to *the EU 2020 Strategy*, heritage is considered to be a complex concept that continues to develop over time, including not only historical, cultural, aesthetic, symbolic, and spiritual aspects but also economic, social, and political aspects⁶.

³ A. Pederson, *Managing tourism at World heritage sites: A practical manual for World heritage site manager*, UNESCO World Heritage Site, France 2002, p. 16.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

⁶ Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, Chu Lâm Anh & Nguyễn Anh Thu: "Tài nguyên...", pp. 16-17.

Therefore, according to the understanding of scientists implementing *the EU Strategy* in 2020, heritage is not the “framework” of the past but continues to exist, and even its vitality is spread and resonated in many cultural exchange channels, including tourism.

As of December 2020, UNESCO has recognized 31 heritage sites in Vietnam as World Heritage Sites, including World Natural Heritage, World Cultural Heritage, World Intangible Cultural Heritage, World Documentary Heritage, World Mixed Heritage, and Multinational Cultural Heritage. Specifically, the *World Natural Heritage* group includes Halong Bay (1994, 2000); Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng National Park (2003; 2015). The *World Cultural Heritage* group includes Huế Ancient Capital Complex (1993), Hội An Ancient Town (1999), Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary (1999), The relic of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long - Hanoi (2011). The *World Intangible Cultural Heritage* group includes Huế royal music (2003), Tây Nguyên gong culture space (2005), Quan Họ folk song (2009), Ca Trù art (2009), Gióng Festival at Phù Đổng Temple and Sóc Temple (2010), Xoan singing in Phú Thọ (2011), The worship of Hùng Kings (2012), Art of Đờn ca tài tử music and song in Southern Vietnam (2013), Ví and Giặm folk songs of Nghệ Tĩnh (2014), The practice of “Mẫu Tam Phủ” worship (2016), The art of Bài chòi in Central Vietnam (2017), and Practices of Then by Tày, Nùng and Thái ethnic groups in Vietnam (2019). The World Documentary Heritage includes Woodblocks of the Nguyễn Dynasty (2009), Stele of Lê and Mạc dynasties (2010), Woodblocks of Vĩnh Nghiêm pagoda, Bắc Giang (2012), Imperial Archives of the Nguyễn Dynasty (2014), Literature on Huế Royal Architecture (2016), Phúc Giang school woodblocks, Hà Tĩnh (2016), and The Envoyship Journeys to China (Hoàng Hoa sứ trình đồ) (2019). The *World Mixed Heritage* group includes only Tràng An Landscape Complex (2014) while the *Multinational Cultural Heritage* group also only includes Tugging rituals and games (2015). Last but not least, Vietnam has 3 Global Geoparks, including Đồng Văn Karst Plateau (2010), Non Nước Cao Bằng (2018), and Đắk Nông National Park (2020).

In terms of the value of tourism heritage, world heritage has always been an important resource for the development of tourism. Countries with many UNESCO World Heritage sites such as Italy, China, Spain, France, Britain, India, Mexico, and the Russian Federation have been concerned about how to effectively use and promote the value of World Heritage Sites, and protect them perfectly to serve sustainable tourism. Based on the understanding of the important economic resources of cultural heritage in the development of tourism, the European Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Europa Nostra) has proposed many standards to quantify the economic value of cultural heritage: (1) Ability to create employment opportunities for families living in heritage areas through tourism development; (2) Ability to create entertainment value for the community; (3) The value(s) created by tourism; (4) Ability

to create added value from real estate, and (5) Ability to promote and benefit small and medium businesses⁷.

3. The Multi-faceted Value of the World Cultural Heritage Hội An Ancient Town in tourism development

With its outstanding value and complete protection and decoration of historical and cultural monuments, in line with UNESCO's World Heritage Committee No. 2 and No. 5 standards, UNESCO recognized Hội An Ancient Town as a World Cultural Heritage at its 23rd session on December 4, 1999. Hội An Ancient Town (or Hội An City) is an ancient port city located at the lower reaches of the Thu Bồn River, on the coastal plain of Quảng Nam Province, about 30 kilometers south of Đà Nẵng City. Due to favorable geographical and climatic factors, Hội An in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was once a busy international trading port and a meeting place for Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asian and Western merchant ships. Therefore, the architectural complex of Hội An Ancient Town is very unique, integrating many cultures from Vietnam, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the West. According to Trần Quốc Vương (2001), "one feature that makes Hội An unique is the city-commercial port located in the coastal area of the estuary, especially its superior and relatively pure commercial nature. Hội An clearly has the 'urban' element, and so its main function is foreign trade"⁸.

The name Hội An is also an interesting culture. Westerners used to call Hội An by the name "Faifo". There are still many doubts about the origin of this name today. In *the Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary* of the missionary Alexandre de Rhodes (printed in Rome in 1651), the word "Hoài Phố" is interpreted to mean a village in Cochinchine where the Japanese lived, called *Faifo*. The most popular saying is that *Faifo*'s name comes from the place name "Hội An phố (meaning Hội An Town)", which was mentioned in Chinese and Vietnamese history books. According to another theory, Thu Bồn River was formerly known as Hoài River, so the ancient Hội An was also called *Hoài Phố*. Later it became *Phai Phố* and then appeared as *Faifo*. In the letters and notes of Western clergy and scholars, the names Faifo, Faifoo, Fayfoo, Faiso, Facfo... appeared many times. The missionary Alexander de Rhodes in the map of Annam published in 1651, including Đàng Ngoài (Tonkin) and Đàng Trong (Cochinchine), clearly

⁷ Đặng Văn Bài: "Bảo tồn di sản văn hóa gắn với phát triển bền vững ở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh (On the protection of the cultural heritage of Ho Chi Minh City related to sustainable development)", Kỷ yếu Hội thảo *Phát triển du lịch di sản văn hóa trên địa bàn thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* (Proceedings of Ho Chi Minh City Cultural Heritage Tourism Development Conference), Ho Chi Minh City 2018, p. 11.

⁸ Trần Quốc Vương: "Khu phố cổ Hội An (Hội An Ancient Quarter)", in *Hội An - Di sản văn hóa Thế giới* (Hội An – a World Heritage in Vietnam), Youth Press, Hanoi 2001, p. 433.

marked the name *Haifo*. Later, on the official map of the Indochina government, the French used the name *Faifo* to refer Hoi An⁹.

Although most townhouses in Hoi An today were built during the colonial period, there are still many cultural relics that reflect the historical period of the formation, revival and decline of the ancient town. According to statistics in December 2000, Hoi An World Heritage Site has 1,360 monuments, including 1,068 ancient houses, 11 ancient wells, 38 ancestral halls, 19 pagodas, 43 temples, 23 public temples, 44 ancient tombs, and especially a bridge built by the Japanese (Hoi An Temple Bridge). Among these monuments, more than 1,100 monuments are located in the ancient urban area¹⁰.

Hoi An Ancient Town today is a typical representative of a well-protected traditional commercial port in Southeast Asia. Most ancient houses are traditional buildings distributed on narrow streets, and their history can be traced back to the 17th to 19th centuries. Religious structures, ancestral halls, and association halls, etc. are alternately arranged in the townhouses. All of these figures vividly prove the different periods of the formation, development, and decline of the town. Hoi An is also a land with many mixed and cross-cultural markers. Ethnic Chinese associations halls (also called Native Place halls) and temples are located next to traditional Vietnamese townhouses, a Japanese-built bridge, and French-styled houses (later built), making this ancient town an interesting melting pot. In addition to the cultural value obtained through architectural works, Hoi An also retains the diverse and rich intangible cultural resources related to the daily lives of local residents. The customs, religious activities, folk arts, and cultural festivals of the Hoi An residents are still preserved and developed. Hoi An is considered to be the “living museum” of Vietnamese medieval architecture and urban lifestyle.

4. A view on Hoi An Ancient Town from the Perspective of Promoting the Economic Value of Cultural Heritage

In Vietnam, Hoi An Ancient Town is considered to be a model of management, protection, decoration, and promotion of cultural heritage values for sustainable and responsible tourism development. It can be said that Hoi An has effectively used the brand of human heritage in high-quality tourism.

According to the above analysis, the world cultural heritage of Hoi An Ancient Town has multiple values, and the ancient town has successfully enhanced the economic val-

⁹ Tổng cục Du lịch - Trung tâm thông tin du lịch (General Department of Tourism - Tourism Information Center): *Di sản thế giới ở Việt Nam* (World Heritage in Vietnam), Youth Press, Hanoi 2012, p. 69.

¹⁰ Nguyễn Văn Mỹ: *Ngày đường sáng khôn* (Travelling widens one's horizon), tập 1: Dọc đường đất nước (Vol 1: Along the country road), Culture and Art Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City 2016, p. 219.

ue of its cultural heritage. According to the standards provided by Europa Nostra to quantify the economic value of cultural heritage, we can clearly see that the development direction of Hội An's tourism industry has reached these standards.

First of all, the development of world cultural heritage tourism in Hội An Ancient Town has created employment opportunities for families where the heritage is located. Residents living in the old town and nearby areas can directly benefit from tourism, thus ensuring their own lives.

Second, the World Cultural Heritage of Hội An Ancient Town has the ability to create entertainment value for the community. Perhaps the most attractive period for Hội An is when the city lights up. When the afternoon sun is almost completely off, lanterns of various colors and sizes use different designs to illuminate the old town, making it more sparkling and magical. This is also the time for tourists to take to the streets and experience the vitality of life in this ancient town. In the old town space carefully organized by the local government, local people and tourists cooperate voluntarily to enhance the magical vitality of Hội An.

Third, in the process of modernization, the value created by the tourism industry in Hội An is becoming increasingly rich, diverse and traditional. In addition to the traditional values of the old town, Hội An now has a theme park "Hội An Impression", in which "Hội An Memory" scenic performances has left a deep impression on tourists from Vietnam and around the world. The show has been meticulously and methodically made large-scale investment, designed to combine with the world's leading entertainment technology to protect and spread the unique characteristics of Hội An's nature, culture and people. "Hội An Memory" is indeed the largest live performance in Vietnam, recreating the historical and cultural beauty of the ancient Hội An people. In "Hội An Memory", the scenes of fishing, rice transplantation, labor scenes in house construction, and business dealings with merchants from many countries are lively reappeared. It fully describes the historical and cultural values, thereby enhancing the unique beauty of Hội An. Tourists in Hội An believe that this is not only a cultural heritage of the past reputation, but also a heritage of modern vitality, because the current residents and cultural activities are very lively and energetic. This feature helps turn the legacy into reality.

Fourth, the World Cultural Heritage of Hội An Ancient Town creates added value through real estate. Thanks to the booming tourism industry, the old city, restaurants, hotels, resort systems can all add value. In addition to the cultural space inherent in the old town, the vicinity of the town has also become more valuable. Excursions and tourist routes can help visitors experience the daily life of the living Hội An people who live on rice cultivation, vegetable cultivation, handicrafts, services, etc. In addition, many tourists are also familiar with and like the beaches of An Bàng or Cham

Island (Cù lao Chàm). Tourists can visit the centuries-old Trà Quế vegetable farming village, the 7-acre nipa village¹¹ or the coastal fishing village not far from the town, etc. The development of tourism in Hội An Ancient Town has also increased the real estate value of central cities related to Hội An (such as Đà Nẵng City).

Fifth, let alone large enterprises, the development of tourism is clearly centered on the world cultural heritage of Hội An Ancient Town to promote and bring benefits to small and medium enterprises.

Although regarded as a model for managing, protecting, modifying and promoting the value of cultural heritage and tourism development in a sustainable and responsible direction, there are still many shortcomings in the heritage-based tourism development of Hội An Ancient Town. In order to make the heritage truly increase its value in the tourism industry, the authors believe that it is necessary to adhere to the following solutions:

First, strictly enforcing Vietnam's *Heritage Law* and *Tourism Law*;

Second, promoting the subjective role of communities in the socialization of heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and community-based tourism;

Third, properly resolving the relationship between heritage destinations and tourism, because this relationship is dynamic and easily conflicts with each other. In particular, local authorities need to strengthen the role of local management to build attractive, cultural, safe, and friendly destinations;

Fourth, promoting close cooperation between tourism companies and heritage management committees to enhance the uniqueness, characteristics, and attractiveness of the national culture of tourism products and services to attract both domestic and foreign tourists;

Fifth, establishing partnerships between investors, scientists, tourism service companies, and local communities to develop heritage protection and promotion strategies and to create unique and high-quality tourism products;

Sixth, training and developing heritage tourism human resources with professional knowledge and skills to serve tourist satisfaction;

Seventh, applying information technology to actively and innovatively manage, promote, and stimulate the demand for heritage tourism;

Eighth, calling on domestic and foreign investors to participate in heritage destination planning;

Last, but not least, promoting connections with traditional tourist attractions to extend the experience of tourists.

¹¹ Nipa in Hội An belongs to the same type as nipa in the Mekong Delta and some Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, etc.

Conclusion

The study on the value of Vietnam's World Heritage in the development of tourism (taking Hội An Ancient Town as an example) clearly shows that heritage recognized by UNESCO as a resource of special value for the development of tourism. Heritage is a resource and a foundation for the development of tourism and the promotion of sustainable development. Appropriate heritage tourism will in turn promote and enhance the cultural value of the heritage and contribute to the preservation and promotion of the heritage. Vietnam's World Heritage has unique and attractive values, attracting domestic and foreign tourists. However, there are still many shortcomings in the preservation and promotion of heritage in the country. The relationship between heritage and tourism is not yet close and harmonious, heritage has not yet become a special tourism resource, and tourism commensurate with the potential and advantages of heritage has not yet been developed. At present, Vietnam's tourism industry is achieving the dual goal of "preventing the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting the tourism industry", that is, to control the COVID-19 pandemic and alternatively open Vietnam to visitors from some countries and international regions. The Vietnamese government is currently evaluating and allowing the opening of many international trade routes to Japan, China, Taiwan, and Thailand to stimulate domestic and foreign tourism. Regardless of the background, it is crucial and fundamental to increase organic cohesion, the interaction between heritage and tourism, and the understanding of multiple values, especially the economic value of Vietnam's World Heritage. Heritage must be an important driving force, motivation, and resources of tourism. In turn, tourism must enhance its value and create economic resources for the community to protect heritage. Vietnam's tourism industry should work hard to restructure tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic and is determined to implement tourism development plans in the next few years to increase the proportion of UNESCO World Heritage tourism in the value structure of Vietnam's tourism industry.

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The Value of Vietnam's World Heritage in the Development of Tourism (a case study of Hội An Ancient Town)

Summary: From the perspective of promoting the economic value of cultural heritage, this article examines the world heritage value of Vietnam in the development of tourism by studying the multi-faceted value of the ancient town of Hội An. First of all, this article clarifies many issues related to Vietnam's world heritage, such as the concept of heritage, cultural heritage, and an introduction to Vietnam's world heritage and its value in the development of tourism. Next, the article analyzes the basic value of the ancient town of Hội An from many aspects, thereby clarifying the economic value of this ancient town in the world cultural heritage and the direction of its promotion. Finally, the study gives some conclusions on the value of the entire world heritage in Vietnam, especially the case of Hội An ancient town in terms of tourism development.

Keywords: world cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, heritage tourism, promoting heritage values, heritage management

Znaczenie Światowego Dziedzictwa w Wietnamie dla rozwoju turystyki (Studium przypadku Starego Miasta Hội An)

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł poddaje analizie znaczenie światowego dziedzictwa Wietnamu dla rozwoju turystyki z perspektywy promowania ekonomicznej wartości dziedzictwa kulturowego. Autorzy badają wieloaspektową wartość starożytnego miasta Hội An. W artykule wyjaśniono liczne kwestie związane ze światowym dziedzictwem Wietnamu, takie jak pojęcie dziedzictwa, dziedzictwa kulturowego, światowego dziedzictwa Wietnamu i jego znaczenie dla rozwoju turystyki. Następnie Autorzy artykułu analizują znaczenie starożytnego miasta Hội An, przyglądając się mu z wielu aspektów, wyjaśniając tym samym wartość ekonomiczną tego starożytnego miasta w kontekście światowego dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz kierunek jego promocji. Opracowanie zawiera także pewne wnioski i rekomendacje odnoszące się do ogółu światowego dziedzictwa w Wietnamie, w kontekście rozwoju turystyki, które pojawiły się w wyniku analizy znaczenia starożytnego miasta Hội An.

Słowa kluczowe: światowe dziedzictwo kulturowe, niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe, turystyka, promowanie wartości dziedzictwa, zarządzanie dziedzictwem