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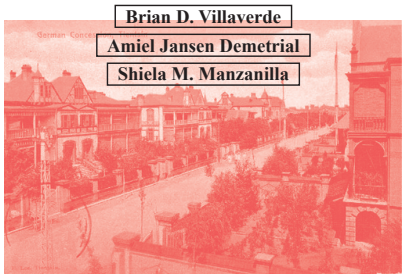
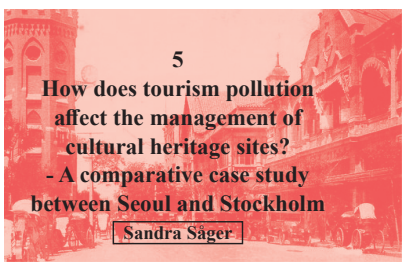
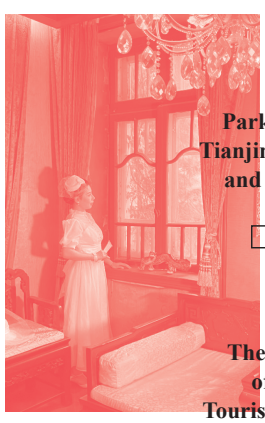
Edited by Young-jae Kim and Ji Eun Park







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UNESCO Chair 2024 Research on Capacity-Building for the Preservation and Restoration of Asia-Pacific Cultural Heritage

Young-jae KIM & Ji Eun PARK

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Overview

UNESCO Chair Program was adopted at the 26th UNESCO General Conference in 1992 to strengthen capacities and realize UNESCO's ideals through exchanges and cooperation among higher education institutions. In March 2017, the Korea National University of Heritage concluded a UNESCO Chairs agreement under the theme "Capacity Building for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage in Asia and the Pacific," and has since steadily carried out field visits and surveys, research support, the organization of workshops, webinars, and forums, as well as publications. These UNESCO Chair activities have made it possible to accumulate sustained research outcomes in the field of cultural heritage in Asia and the Pacific, leading to the expansion of related data assets and the strengthening of research capacities. Furthermore, policy-makers and educators/researchers in the heritage field in Korea and around the world aim to use the Asia–Pacific as an opportunity for technical cooperation and the expansion of international networks.

The Asia–Pacific region is a vast repository of cultural heritage encompassing both tangible and intangible forms and constitutes a crucial pillar of humanity's cultural diversity. Research on the region's heritage offers meaningful implications for global strategies on cultural heritage conservation and use. As Asia–Pacific cultural heritage possesses historical and socio-cultural contexts distinct from those of the West, there is growing recognition that conservation philosophies and policies must reflect regional particularities. Many Asian countries that have undergone colonial rule and rapid modernization have sought approaches to conserve their heritage within unique historical or social contexts. At times, this has led to paradigms distinct from the monument-centered conservation perspective rooted in Europe: heritage may reflect the Eastern tradition's emphasis on community identity and intangible values, or, within economic or ideological logics, may hybridize histories and cultures.

Today, the cultural heritage of the Asia–Pacific faces complex challenges such as rapid urbanization, tourism development, and climate change. The increase in land demand due to urbanization has accelerated the demolition of historic buildings in old city centers and the clearance of informal settlements, hastening the rupture of traditional skills and knowledge. While the Asia–Pacific is often called the world's richest repository of intangible heritage, it is noted that in many countries inadequate institutional and administrative foundations have placed a considerable portion of traditional culture at risk of extinction (Park, 2012). In other words, the urgent task is to harmonize cultural heritage conservation with community development, with a particular need to pursue both economic vitality through tourism and the sustainable use of cultural assets. The impacts of the tourism industry are two-edged:

excessive tourism can damage cultural heritage and spark conflict within local communities, whereas well-managed sustainable tourism can contribute to economic growth and cultural conservation. Recently, in the international field of cultural heritage tourism there is a distinct trend of seeking balance among economic benefits, the preservation of cultural values, and environmental management, while emphasizing local residents' participation as a core element (Rachmawati et al., 2024). Concepts such as carrying capacity and ethical tourism campaigns are being introduced as efforts spread to find models in which tourists and local communities can coexist. Yet negative side effects have already appeared at several heritage sites due to surging visitor numbers. When particular historic towns or villages rapidly emerge as popular destinations, negative externalities such as increased congestion, overstretched public services, and rising rents have been reported, threatening the residential stability of original inhabitants. Commercialization also leads to transformations of existing retail districts into rows of souvenir shops and eateries; with gentrification, community foundations weaken. This implies that tourism development brings a variety of issues not only in economic terms but also in the conservation/restoration of heritage and in its interpretation and use, underscoring the importance of governance for maintaining the social sustainability of cultural heritage.

Against this backdrop, this 2024 Korea National University of Heritage–UNESCO Chair research anthology takes a multifaceted view of current research trends on the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of cultural heritage in the Asia–Pacific region. In particular, it emphasizes an integrated approach that spans tangible and intangible heritage, and conservation and use, while making community participation, sustainability, digital transformation, and international governance the central axes of discussion. The eight studies in this volume cover a very wide range of topics—from locally applying Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) indicators to a model for transmitting maritime intangible heritage, the tourismization and discursive shifts of a regional festival, comparisons of Eastern and Western conservation philosophies, managing overtourism in urban heritage, immersive exhibitions for modern heritage, the hybridity of colonial urban landscapes, and heritage tourism in the digital age. This illustrates how today's cultural heritage research encompasses everything from macro-level ideas to micro-level fieldwork, and is moving toward the common task of creating a virtuous cycle between conservation and use. Below, we summarize the main contents of each study and consider similar cases in Korea and the Asia–Pacific to derive universal implications suggested by the collective research outcomes. Through this, we reaffirm the significance of UNESCO Chair research and seek directions for the continued development of cultural heritage studies in the Asia–Pacific region.

2. 2024 Research Outcomes on Asia–Pacific Cultural Heritage

This volume compiles the 2024 research and fieldwork outcomes supported by the UNESCO Chair Programme at the Korea National University of Heritage (KNUH), conducted under the theme of strengthening capacity for the preservation and restoration of Asia-Pacific cultural heritage. The contributing researchers approach the heritage of the Asia-Pacific region from diverse perspectives—value assessment and landscape management, the balance between tourism and community, and digital transmission—while engaging in cross-analysis of Eastern and Western paradigms as well as urban and regional case studies.

This book consists of two thematic parts.

Part I: Preservation, Restoration, and Transmission

Part I examines how heritage values are defined and how preservation, restoration, and transmission can be effectively achieved. First, applying and expanding the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) framework, the study of Taman Tasik in Malaysia evaluates authenticity, integrity, and post-/decolonial identity through integrated indicators, and proposes process-oriented and change-management metrics (2.1).

Second, research on digital technology and media explores how digital tools reshape interpretation and visitor experience. The study proposes a transmission model for the Iko Iko of the Bajau community in Indonesia—linking documentation, education, and community participation—through an emergency safeguarding framework, demonstrating its potential contributions to SDG 4.7 and 11.4 (2.2).

Lastly, a comparative study of preservation philosophies contrasts Sweden's principles of minimal intervention and respect for historical layers with Thailand's emphasis on ritual continuity and community practice, drawing policy implications from the perspective of "living heritage" (2.3).

Part II: Interpretation and Utilization

Part II investigates how heritage interpretation, exhibition, and tourism intersect, and how these relationships shape impacts on heritage and local communities. The first study on festival tourism analyzes the negotiation between local discourse and tourism media discourse in the Pahiyas Festival of the Philippines, offering combined recommendations including raw material support, transmission workshops, and digital archiving (2.4). A comparative study of "tourism pollution" between Bukchon in Seoul and Gamla Stan in Stockholm addresses issues such as noise, privacy invasion, and commercialisation, proposing mitigation strategies through carrying capacity management, route dispersion, cooperative agreements, and benefit-sharing (2.5). Continuing from the 2023 research cycle, the Tianjin case studies approach the city through three themes: the dual nature of immersive exhibitions

(2.6), the present dynamics of hybrid (colonial/modern) landscapes (2.7), and the bright and dark sides of social media-driven "Wanghong" destinations (2.8). The exhibition study highlights how storytelling and role-playing in the former concession buildings of Tianjin may improve accessibility while risking historical dilution, calling for fact-checking, balanced narratives, and regulation of commercialization. The park study diagnoses historical erasure, gentrification, and user conflict in concession-era parks and proposes governance tools such as storytelling, visitor management, and benefit recapture. Finally, the Wanghong study examines the dilemma of short-lived popularity and long-term distortion in Tianjin's Wudadao, suggesting post-Wanghong strategies such as transforming creative spaces, mini-museums and AR tours, and shared-benefit models.

2.1. Application of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Approach to Taman Tasik Park in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The first study applied the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach to Taman Tasik, an urban park in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in order to assess the park's historical and cultural values and examine the possibility of its designation as national heritage. Taman Tasik is a lakeside park created in the 1880s by rehabilitating a colonial-era disused mine site; for over 140 years it has functioned as a leisure green space in the daily lives of Malaysia's multiethnic citizens. Following HUL indicators developed by ICOMOS and IFLA, the researcher evaluated the park's value from multiple perspectives—authenticity, integrity, and post-colonial identity. The findings were: (1) the original purpose of regenerating a colonial mining site into a park has been maintained to this day, conferring a high degree of historical authenticity; (2) elements such as the lake, walkways, and tropical vegetation have been preserved intact, enabling the park to function as a core of the urban ecological network and thus ensuring integrity; and (3) while accommodating colonial-style landscapes, the park has been reinterpreted after independence as a place of multicultural coexistence in accordance with the values of the Rukun Negara (national ideology), thereby realizing a post-colonial community identity (Izrar, 2024). Based on this analysis, the researcher proposed, at the policy level, an expanded HUL indicator system that goes beyond criteria centered on physical form to include process-oriented authenticity, socio-landscape integration, and capacities for managing change. This is evaluated as a case demonstrating that modern parks created in Southeast Asia can hold sufficient value as "living heritage" for local communities.

Similar to the Malaysian case, Korea also has successful cases of regenerating industrial and urban heritage into eco-cultural parks. Seonyudo Park in Seoul, opened in 2002 after remodeling an aging water treatment plant, is the nation's first regenerated ecological park.

By preserving parts of industrial structures and incorporating water purification processes, it showcased a shift "from function to value." The park resonates with Taman Tasik in that it utilizes industrial heritage as an eco-friendly leisure space while preserving the city's historicity. Additionally, the Cheonggyecheon restoration project in Seoul (completed in 2005) removed an elevated highway in the city center and revived a stream, restoring elements of the historic urban landscape from the natural watercourse to artificial urban structures. The project has been lauded as a successful urban regeneration model that improved environmental conditions—such as flood control and mitigation of the heat island effect—while returning a 5.8 km waterfront to citizens. These Korean experiences suggest that expanded HUL indicators that integrate industrial, natural, and cultural values can be usefully applied to managing East Asia's complex heritage landscapes. Indeed, in Korea's urban regeneration policies, efforts are underway to harmonize historic landscape conservation with resident participation, and in the urban park sector, to refine the concept of historic parks and systematize strategies for conservation and use. For example, Gil Ji-hye and Park Hee-seong (2020), through a comparative analysis of cases in the UK, USA, and Japan, propose typologizing Korean urban parks as historic urban parks in accordance with ICOMOS/IFLA guidelines and suggest tailored conservation and management strategies based on historicity, ecology, sense of place, and community value. This is expected to contribute to establishing resident-participatory value assessments and integrated conservation–management systems appropriate to each park's purpose and context.

2.2. Transmission and Emergency Safeguarding of the Bajo People's Maritime Intangible Heritage, Iko Iko, in Indonesia

The second study addresses the crisis of extinction facing Iko Iko—the traditional oral epic of the sea among the Bajau (Bajo) seafaring communities along the coast of Sulawesi, Indonesia—and strategies to revitalize its transmission. Once widely passed down, Iko Iko, a long-form epic that sings of life at sea, is now on the verge of being lost, with only two elder master-performers capable of complete recitation remaining (Baskara, 2024). Grounded in the principles of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the researcher proposed a phased emergency safeguarding model combining documentation, education, and community participation. First, through fieldwork, audiovisual materials of Iko Iko were digitally recorded, and the epic's lyrics were transcribed and translated into Indonesian and English, thereby building an archive. Next, the ecological knowledge and community values embedded in the narrative were analyzed and developed into educational materials, which were then used to create textbooks and programs for local youth. Further, the study suggested a variety of measures to revitalize

transmission—such as establishing a creative performance troupe based in a village arts workshop and holding an annual Iko Iko competition—in which community members can directly participate and enjoy. These efforts hold scholarly and practical significance as an emergency road map to revive rapidly declining maritime intangible heritage. In particular, by constructing a model that combines documentation, transmission, and use for oral traditions that had previously relied on the testimonies of elderly bearers, the case is evaluated as a model example for the safeguarding of intangible heritage among Southeast Asia's minority groups. The researcher also emphasized that this case can contribute to achieving the goals of cultural diversity education (UN SDG 4.7) and cultural heritage protection (SDG 11.4).

Since the 1960s, Korea has systematically supported endangered traditional arts such as pansori and gagok through the Important Intangible Cultural Heritage system led by the state. Pansori, which at one time faced the risk of extinction due to a shrinking pool of transmitters, regained its vitality with its 1964 designation as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage and the implementation of a trainee (apprenticeship) system; today, numerous master singers are active. In 2003, pansori was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2008). The case of Jeju's haenyeo (women divers) also offers insights comparable to the Bajo people's Iko Iko. Traditionally, haenyeo sang work songs during free-diving to strengthen community bonds, but with rapid industrialization the number of haenyeo declined dramatically and this lifeway culture faced the risk of disappearance. Conservation efforts led to Jeju haenyeo culture being inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List in 2016, drawing global attention. Following the inscription, the government and local authorities moved to comprehensively support transmission by filming haenyeo's free-diving techniques and songs, and by implementing experiential education for youth through a "Haenyeo School" (Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, 2017; Yoo Won-hee et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2023). These efforts, combining national legal–institutional backing with community participation, revived a culture on the brink of disappearance and significantly improved the transmission environment. Korea's three-pronged transmission system—linking holders, trainees, and transmission education facilities—and its extensive digital archive-building experience, if adapted to the Bajo context, could accelerate the revival of Iko Iko. Practical avenues for international cooperation could include collaboration between Indonesian local governments and Korea's National Intangible Heritage Center, joint workshops, and the sharing of transmission materials.

2.3. A Comparative Study of Conservation Philosophies in Sweden and Thailand

The fourth study compares how Western and Eastern conservation perspectives (conservation philosophies) have historically formed and evolved through the cases of Sweden and Thailand. While it is commonly assumed that the West emphasizes tangible heritage (physical form and aesthetics) and the East emphasizes intangible heritage (rituals and practices), the study seeks to demonstrate that actual policies and discourses in each country unfolded in complex ways beyond such a dichotomy. The researcher examined, chronologically from the 17th to the 21st century, cultural property laws, the development of conservation movements, and the roles of religion and the monarchy in both countries. In Sweden, after the 1666 Antiquities Act, there was a period of uniform restoration of churches into a medieval Gothic style; however, in the early 20th century, Sigurd Curman established a modern conservation philosophy that respected stratigraphy and favored minimal intervention. Subsequently, amid postwar industrialization pressures for urban remodeling, scientific conservation techniques such as "repairs using like materials," following Ove Hidemark's principles, developed further. In contrast, Thailand traditionally valued the continuity of rituals over historical originality, considering it virtuous—grounded in Buddhist merit-making—to rebuild or expand temples and stupas. Under King Rama V in the 19th century, Western archaeological concepts of originality were introduced, and modern cultural property systems began with the establishment of the Fine Arts Department in the 1930s; still, rebuilding and beautification projects led by the monarchy and clergy remained active. From the 1960s–70s onward, Thailand also adopted international standards such as the Venice Charter, promoting evidence-based restoration and the creation of historical parks (e.g., Sukhothai), but conflicts emerged between civil society and the government, as seen in the Mahakan Fort community case (Rujivanarom, 2018). The comparative analysis found that both countries shared a shift from early government/expert-led conservation toward social participation and value pluralization in the modern era. Both also actively reflected the influence of international organizations (adoption of the Venice Charter, ICCROM training, etc.) to advance conservation concepts, and the discourse integrating tangible and intangible heritage (e.g., the rise of the "living heritage" concept) gained importance. Differences included Sweden's secularization of religion, leading to treating religious heritage such as churches primarily from historical–aesthetic viewpoints, whereas Thailand prioritized the religious function of active rituals in temples as the basis for conservation interventions. The weight of intangible elements was relatively higher in Thailand, with rituals and community practices often taking precedence over physical form. By analyzing these differences, the study re-examined the commonly held East–West dichotomy in conservation philosophies through historical lenses and is significant in highlighting how notions of "living heritage" versus "dead heritage" have influenced policy decisions and technical choices.

Korea traditionally maintains ongoing religious rituals in places such as Jongmyo (Royal Ancestral Shrine), seowon (Confucian academies), and Buddhist temples, while also

having adopted Western conservation techniques for Joseon-era and modern architectural heritage. Thus, Sweden and Thailand's experiences offer multifaceted lessons for Korea's conservation policy. First, Thailand's approach to religious heritage use is instructive for harmonizing ritual continuity with public viewing and conservation at sites such as Jongmyo, clan houses, and temples. For instance, at Jongmyo—inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List—the royal ancestral rites are re-enacted annually. Going forward, a dual operational strategy is needed to maintain ritual music and dance as living culture while improving general visitor environments. Second, regarding social participation in value assessment, Sweden introduced a heritage-value assessment platform in 2014 that formalized citizen and stakeholder input. Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration has recently piloted citizen-participation conservation projects and plans to institutionalize value assessments via local resident councils. This is essential to prevent conflicts caused by unilateral development—such as in the Mahakan Fort case—and to shift toward conservation that respects community memory and life (Rujivanarom, 2018). Third, for integrated management of tangible and intangible heritage, Korea currently operates the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (est. 1962) and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Act (enacted 2016) separately; however, linkages between the two are important to address new categories such as modern industrial heritage and everyday-life heritage. Thailand's 2017 Intangible Heritage Act incorporated such domains as traditional crafts, performing arts, and customary practices into the national protection system. Korea likewise supplemented limitations of the previous system through the 2016 Act on the Preservation and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage, introducing new support mechanisms such as aid for local transmission communities and recognition of trainees. In the future, cooperation between agencies managing tangible heritage (Cultural Heritage Administration, local governments) and those managing intangible heritage transmission (National Intangible Heritage Center, etc.) should be expanded to interpret and utilize specific places together with the narratives and intangible values embedded in them. In short, Korea's conservation policies, by balancing Sweden's principles of "minimal intervention, disclosure of values, and transparent processes" with Thailand's strategy of "respect for community practices and encouraging merit-based participation," should establish a "living conservation" model in fields such as modern religious heritage and everyday-life heritage.

2.4. The Touristification of the Pahiyas Festival in Lucban, the Philippines, and the Reconfiguration of Local Identity

The forth study analyzes how the San Isidro Pahiyas Festival, the representative festival of Lucban in the Philippines, has undergone discursive and identity transformations as it has been re-packaged from a traditional religious rite into a tourism product. Originally held every May as a Catholic fiesta to thank Saint Isidore, the patron saint of agriculture, the Pahiyas Festival transformed into a series of secular, spectacle-oriented events from the 1970s onward to attract tourists, altering the festival's meaning. Applying a discourse–tourism–culture intersectional frame (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005), Nicanor L. Guinto et al. (2024) examined how local narratives (community discourse) and media/tourism-industry discourse clash and negotiate over the festival's meaning. Participant observation, resident interviews, and analysis of promotional videos and social media posts revealed the following key patterns. First, in local discourse, residents consistently emphasized values of "gratitude to God, family cooperation, and communal aesthetic creativity" through the tradition of decorating house facades with colorful rice wafers called kiping and agricultural produce. Second, media tourism discourse, as presented on television and social media, highlighted Pahiyas as a "highly Instagrammable, dazzling event," marginalizing the festival's religious roots and the lives of farmers. Third, commercialization threatened sustainability: prices for kiping and produce, symbols of the festival, rose sharply; artisans who had handed down decoration techniques were aging; and youth participation in succession was low, raising the possibility of a break in the festival's traditions. In response, the Lucban local government was seen to be exploring material support measures such as subsidizing kiping materials and significantly raising competition prizes. Finally, these changes had ambivalent effects on local identity. The festival's national fame brought residents pride and increased tourism income, but concerns emerged that religiosity and tradition were being diluted and that the cohesion of the indigenous community could weaken. The researcher underscored the academic significance of empirically demonstrating how discursive packaging occurs in the process of tourismizing a local festival. The study further suggested that by fostering cooperation among local governments, communities, and media—combining material support for raw materials, intergenerational transmission workshops, and digital archiving—SDG 11.4 (protecting cultural heritage) can be pursued alongside local economic revitalization.

The Pahiyas case can be compared with Korean local festivals regarding the tensions and discursive shifts that occur as traditional festivals become tourism products. The Andong International Mask Dance Festival, based on Korea's mask dance traditions inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List, is a representative example where various efforts are made to balance tradition and popular appeal (Han Yang-myeong, 2008; Cho Jeong-hyeon, 2009; Lee Jin-gyo, 2013). To preserve the ritualistic and artistic value of mask dance, organizers schedule traditional performances during daytime and public-friendly programs in the evening, pursuing both sacredness and entertainment. Meanwhile, the Boryeong Mud Festival in Chungcheongnam-do, famous as an experiential tourism festival utilizing the

local specialty of mud, faced operational challenges due to rising costs for mud harvesting and processing. Local government and corporate sponsorship helped keep participation fees in check and fed mud cosmetics sales revenue back into festival finances. As a result, the festival grew into an international event drawing over 500,000 visitors annually and creating about USD 50 million in economic benefits for the local community (Korea.net, 2023). Such public–private cooperation and revenue return models can inform solutions to Pahiyas' financial difficulties (rising raw material costs and artisan remuneration). Lastly, to increase youth participation, many Korean festivals run supporter groups, youth arts troupes, and digital promotion creator programs to engage Gen MZ. For example, the Andong festival operates a "Mask Dance Creators" program where young people promote the festival via social media and offers experiential content using new technologies such as AR filters. These efforts are applicable to the Pahiyas Festival and can help achieve the triple goal of tradition, economic viability, and intergenerational transmission.

2.5. "Tourism Pollution" in Bukchon(Seoul) and Gamla Stan (Stockholm)

The fifth study defines the negative effects caused by overtourism in urban historic landscape areas as "tourism pollution" and compares the cases of Bukchon Hanok Village in Seoul, Korea, and Gamla Stan (the Old Town) in Stockholm, Sweden. Here, "tourism pollution" refers not only to traditional environmental pollution (littering, air pollution) but also to social–cultural damage such as noise, violation of residential environments, and gentrification resulting from tourism congestion. Based on international frameworks such as UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) and the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter (1999), the researcher set analytical criteria covering governance, community participation, carrying capacity management, and economic balance. The comparative findings are as follows. Bukchon Hanok Village is a 600-year-old traditional residential area where approximately 900 households live, yet it has transformed into a popular destination attracting more than six million tourists annually (Choi & Yi, 2024). As a result, residents experience severe discomfort—numerous complaints concern loud noise in alleys, littering, and invasion of privacy (e.g., photography over walls), and in some cases tourists have opened hanok gates or peered through windows, causing friction with the community (Choi & Yi, 2024). Meanwhile, Gamla Stan, a historic city center formed since the Middle Ages, houses only around 3,000 residents but attracts millions of visitors annually as Sweden's representative tourist site. In the 1970s, large-scale improvements, including the demolition of modern buildings and height restrictions, preserved the historic townscape relatively well. However, rising tourism demand accelerated commercialization, reorienting central Gamla Stan's retail from shops selling daily necessities toward souvenir stores and

tourist restaurants. Consequently, the resident population has steadily decreased, and residents have been replaced primarily by high-income groups or short-term rental operators.

To mitigate shared problems observed in these two cases, the study suggests comprehensive measures such as continuously monitoring visitor numbers so they do not exceed carrying capacity, establishing mutual-benefit agreements and economic support for residents and merchants, and diversifying tourist routes. The study also conveys the message that "tourism pollution is alleviated not by simple control but by designing a balance among residents' lives, heritage values, and tourist experiences," emphasizing the construction of coexistence models through dispersion, coordination, and guaranteed benefits for local residents rather than merely reducing visitor numbers.

2.6. Converting Former Concession-Era Buildings in Tianjin into Immersive Exhibitions

The sixth study examines how modern heritage in Tianjin, China—particularly buildings from former foreign concessions—has been reborn as immersive experience content in contemporary museums. From the late 19th century, Tianjin grew into an "international city in China" with nine national concessions, and roughly 300 modern buildings remain today. The researcher sought to show how authorities and the private sector reprocess this "dissonant heritage" into storytelling-based immersive experience spaces, thereby boosting public interest while channeling historical memory toward a specific, "Sinicized" direction. The analysis focused on Zhang Garden (张园) in the former British concession and the Former Residence of Zhang Xueliang (少帅府, Shaoshuai Fu) in the former French concession. At the Zhang Xueliang residence, a program invites visitors to don 1930s Western-style suits and participate in a detective game, allowing them to role-play as if they were figures in that society. At Zhang Garden, immersive theater is staged simultaneously across four mansions, guiding audiences wearing wireless earphones to follow different dramas unfolding in separate spaces.

The research found that in these immersive exhibitions, actual historic spaces and scripts serve as the core media rather than cutting-edge digital technologies, and visitors pursue sensory satisfaction through "alternative history simulations" rather than the delivery of objective facts (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024). For example, the immersive experience at the Zhang Xueliang residence uses themes of salon culture and pro-Japanese conspiracy, arranging missions so participants can enjoy a "warlord game," but the real historical context of colonial violence and exploitation is intentionally simplified or omitted. Instead, comfort and patriotic narratives tend to be emphasized. These immersive museums are highly popular, drawing tens of thousands of visitors during the 2023 National Day holiday, and achieved commercial success. Tianjin authorities promote them as model cases for "red tourism and

the experience economy," and joint ventures between state-owned and private capital are accelerating the industrialization of immersive performances (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024).

In Korea, attempts to interpret and utilize buildings from the Japanese occupation period and modern industrial heritage as explanatory or experiential spaces are on the rise, making Tianjin's case a useful reference. First, in interpreting colonial heritage, Korea should avoid the one-sided nostalgia or historical distortion observed in China and pair such programs with balanced historical education. In Gunsan and Mokpo, for instance, former Japanese-style buildings have been refashioned into historical walking routes and some into cafés and exhibition spaces. If these sites are gamified as immersive experiences—like Tianjin—public interest may grow, but historical context risks being lost. Therefore, if a mystery experience program is run at Gunsan's Hirotsu House, for example, it should be accompanied by pre- and post-program measures that inform visitors about the actual owner of the site and the history of exploitation during the colonial period. Second, in terms of museum exhibition innovation, the Tianjin cases demonstrate new possibilities that combine visitor-participatory narratives and playful experiences to move beyond static displays. Korea's modern-history museums might adopt such storytelling-plus-experience techniques. Whereas such initiatives in China are primarily planned and operated by the government, in Korea local citizens and young cultural planners could co-create ideas and participate, fostering community-driven content. Third, moderation of excessive commercialization is necessary. If Tianjin's immersive tourism districts become "Disneyfied" with indiscriminate commercial facilities and merchandise sales, the identity of the heritage could blur. Korea's Ikseon-dong Hanok Street, recently an Instagram hotspot, has also caused inconvenience to original residents due to commercialization and noise. When introducing experiential facilities into historic spaces, local governments should impose conditions at the stages of architectural review or business licensing—such as bans on historical distortion, and measures for soundproofing and traffic management. Ultimately, the study suggests that immersive experiences can be a double-edged sword: if used well, they can attract younger generations to heritage, but erasing uncomfortable histories in the process should be avoided (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024). In Korea's immersive uses of modern heritage, fact-checking and balancing narratives of damage and resistance should be guiding principles to satisfy both enjoyment and educational value.

2.7. Hybrid Landscapes and Contemporary Consumption in Tianjin's Former Concession Parks

The seventh study traces the transformation of parks remaining from Tianjin's modern concession era and critically analyzes contemporary patterns of use and conflict. From the 1860s onward, parks were created in British, French, Japanese, and other concessions, producing unique hybrid landscapes that fused Western garden styles with local Chinese functions. However, many parks were damaged or lost during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s–70s and the 1976 Tangshan earthquake; only six retain their original forms today. The researcher conducted on-site surveys of historical traces and spatial structures in the remaining parks and analyzed patterns of spatial consumption through visitor interviews and social media reviews. The study found that colonial traces tend to be intentionally downplayed and that the parks are treated much like ordinary urban parks. Specifically, seniors practice tai chi or dance in the mornings; the Central Park hosts government-led patriotic ceremonies and public campaigns (e.g., population, anti-drug) on weekends; and food trucks and informal stalls appear at park entrances, indicating informal economies. Factors shaping visitor experiences included ease of access, scenic comfort, social interactions, and nostalgia. Some visitors over 60 expressed nostalgia—"I came here as a child"—but most younger visitors knew little of the parks' history and saw them simply as walking spaces. This appears to stem from a "gap in memory" caused by the disappearance of some parks and the lack of historical interpretation or signage in the remaining ones, preventing recognition as cultural heritage.

The research also identified management problems: (1) authenticity loss—for example, installing modern fountains in Central Park altered the historical landscape; Yamatō Park (in the former Japanese concession) had lost its original form entirely; (2) gentrification—the development of the high-end "No. 5 Taian Road Garden" complex and a Ritz-Carlton near Jiefang North Road Park squeezed traditional commercial districts and sharply increased nearby rents; (3) user conflicts—in some parks, dance groups and gymnastics groups clashed over loudspeakers and space, and during festivals crowds of tourists made it difficult for local residents to pass. These observations led the researcher to argue that Tianjin's hybrid concession-heritage parks are simultaneously consumed as positive narratives of modern opening while suffering from poor management that undermines historical authenticity and publicness, risking homogenized landscapes and community exclusion. Policy recommendations included evaluating heritage values and systematizing storytelling for each park (e.g., AR digital interpretation, exhibitions of historical photos) to raise visitors' historical awareness; forming a user-management committee with diverse stakeholders (seniors, youth, etc.) to adjust time-of-use and sound levels; and recapturing profits from surrounding real estate development to reinvest in park maintenance and community benefits. This emphasizes that urban heritage should be conserved not through hardware-centered beautification but through people-centered governance and social sustainability. Comparable issues may arise in Korea's Namsan Park, which retains some landscape features

from the Japanese colonial period, and in the future Yongsan Park (the returned former U.S. military base). It is therefore necessary to document and research the historicity of these spaces through citizen-participatory surveys and to integrate historical interpretation with community-space functions in park planning.

2.8. The "Wanghong" Tourismization of Tianjin's Wudadao (五大道) Historic Residential Area and Post-Wanghong Strategies

The eighth study examines Wudadao (Five Avenues) in Tianjin as a case to trace how social media–based tourism (so-called wanghong tourism, i.e., internet-celebrity hotspots) has shaped the use of modern heritage and impacted the local community. Wudadao, a low-rise residential district developed in an expanded British concession in the early 1900s, contains over 300 European-style buildings. Facing economic stagnation in the 1980s, Tianjin launched staged heritagization and tourism strategies from the 2000s to leverage Wudadao as a new growth engine. The area was designated a Famous Historical and Cultural City district in 2009 and certified as a national 4A-level tourist attraction in 2014. After forming a high-end boutique and café district, the area attracted more than three million visitors annually at its peak. Especially since 2019, Wudadao has surged as a wanghong hotspot on short-video platforms like Douyin (TikTok China) and Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book). On weekends, crowds of young people flocked in to take "life-shot" photos, transforming once-quiet streets. This social-media-driven tourism boom brought positive effects such as revitalized commerce and enhanced city branding, but it also sparked controversies over "superficial consumption" and overtourism (Fu & Verdini, 2025). Visitors focused on café interiors and photo ops rather than the history of the buildings, showing little interest in the inherent meanings or stories of the heritage. As a result, academia and media criticized that "the historical value of Wudadao is reduced to a commercial Instagram backdrop" (Fu & Verdini, 2025). Gentrification worsened as rising rents drove out original residents and small businesses, homogenizing the streets with restaurants and clothing shops (The World of Chinese, 2021).

In response, since around 2021 Tianjin has been exploring "post-wanghong" strategies. The aim is to move beyond tourism that chases short-lived social media popularity toward sustainable development by integrating cultural and creative industries with lifestyle tourism. Specifically, some blocks within Wudadao (e.g., Minyuan Xili) have been remodeled into creative spaces hosting local artists and young entrepreneurs, transforming the area into a meaningful cultural hub for residents as well as visitors. The 1920s Minyuan Stadium has been restored and repurposed as a community venue for flea markets and sports events. However, such high-end cultural-district developments risk further rent hikes and the exclusion of original residents; thus, measures such as rent caps and management committees must be instituted to prevent a second wave of gentrification. The study warns that while a digital tourism boom can provide short-term vitality to a city, it can also compromise heritage identity and erode local communities over the long term. To transform "wanghong-ized" heritage into a sustainable urban asset, stakeholder cooperation, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and content diversification are essential. The study proposes, for example, channeling part of tourism revenues from Wudadao into resident welfare or education funds and introducing micro-museums with professional interpretation and AR tours to guide visitors beyond mere photo-taking toward learning the area's stories.

In Korea, urban regeneration tourism sites such as Seoul's Ikseon-dong and Euljiro alleys and Busan's Gamcheon Culture Village have recently surged via social media and then struggled with commercialization and gentrification. Wudadao's experience offers several lessons. First, in responding to short-term booms, local governments should develop content emphasizing each place's unique story. For example, Ikseon-dong, now famous as a youth commercial district, originated in the 1930s as a product of a Korean hanok promotion movement—an historical fact not widely known. Going forward, guideboards and web content should communicate "why hanok are clustered here" to foster visitors' attachment to and understanding of the place. Second, stakeholder governance must be activated. To prevent the displacement of original residents due to rapid commercialization, a consultative body comprising residents, property owners, merchants, and authorities should be established from the early stages to agree on measures such as restraining rent increases and setting rules for business hours and noise. Third, visitor dispersion and quality management are needed. To relieve crowding at hotspots, nearby hidden attractions can be promoted concurrently, or reservation systems and circulation management can be introduced. Visitor etiquette education and guidelines should be implemented to encourage respect for local culture and enhance the quality of experiences beyond simple "proof-shot" consumption. Through such efforts, wanghong-ized heritage can evolve into a sustainable urban asset while preserving local identity.

3. Overall Significance of the Studies and Future Directions

The common implications emerging from the eight studies conducted in 2024 on the conservation and use of cultural heritage in the Asia–Pacific can be summarized as "integration and balance." First, the importance of an integrated approach. Cultural heritage reveals its full value only when it encompasses not just physical assets but also the intangible stories and community life contained within. As emphasized across multiple studies, maintaining heritage as a living culture in the present requires community participation and

the continuity of identity (Rujivanarom, 2018). This aligns with UNESCO's perspective that "heritage is not only about places but also about the traditional knowledge, social values, and community memory attached to them" (UNESCO, 2011). Concretely, the Taman Tasik study demonstrated the potential of integrated landscape management—linking environmental restoration, historical conservation, and multicultural coexistence—by locally applying the HUL framework that integrates natural and cultural elements. The Iko Iko study proposed an integrated transmission model combining documentation, education, and festivity for intangible heritage. The Sweden–Thailand comparison expanded the horizons of conservation philosophy through the harmony of tangible and intangible, tradition and modernity. Collectively, these attempts show a paradigm shift from fragmented conservation to integrated conservation. Interdisciplinary collaboration should continue to grow in order to interpret and conserve cultural heritage from diverse perspectives.

Second, the principle of balance and harmony—between conservation and use, tradition and modernity, and local interests and external attention. While conservation must be primary for cultural heritage, sustainability cannot be ensured if heritage is isolated from contemporary society. Conversely, if economic use—such as tourism revenues—dominates, heritage identity will be compromised (Rachmawati et al., 2024; Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024). Several studies therefore emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism and maintaining living communities. As seen in the "tourism pollution" study, Bukchon illustrates the need for governance that simultaneously improves residents' quality of life and visitor experience. Without a balanced design among "community life – heritage values – tourist experiences," none of the three will remain sustainable (Choi & Yi, 2024). The Pahiyas Festival case likewise showed that if balance between religiosity (tradition) and commercial appeal (tourism) collapses, the festival's very continuity may be threatened. Meanwhile, Wudadao succeeded in building a digital-era city brand but paid the price of community collapse due to over-commercialization (Fu & Verdini, 2025). This demonstrates the need to reflect residents' voices from the outset of tourism development and establish benefit-sharing mechanisms (The World of Chinese, 2021). Future cultural heritage tourism policies in Korea and other Asian countries should set community sustainability indicators alongside economic metrics in order to check for balance. World Heritage cities and other destinations should also adopt the concept of carrying capacity to calibrate visitor volumes and paces, while strengthening programs that educate visitors on ethical travel behavior. Spreading such a culture of responsible travel will prevent tourism pollution and support tourism that coexists with heritage.

Third, the evolution of policies and institutions. Several studies in this volume illuminated policy changes across countries. Sweden, for instance, shifted in the 2010s toward heritage-value assessments as a public-interest platform incorporating citizen participation. Thailand broadened legal protection targets with the 2017 Intangible Heritage Act. Korea, too, introduced the 2016 Act on the Preservation and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage and established the National Intangible Heritage Center in 2014, innovating intangible heritage policy; in the 2020s, Korea is discussing a conservation framework that includes the concept of "everyday-life heritage," encompassing modern living heritage. These movements can be summarized as expanding the scope of heritage and embracing inclusive conservation. In many Asia–Pacific countries, modern heritage, industrial heritage, and colonial heritage still lie in blind spots of official protection. Yet, as seen in this anthology, parks and buildings from the colonial period are part of today's multicultural identity and heritage that offers lessons to later generations (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024; Fu & Verdini, 2025). Policymakers should thus seek to use even "uncomfortable heritage" not by removing it, but by properly contextualizing it as an educational resource for healing and reconciliation. Scholarship is needed to support this process. For example, the study on immersive museums in Tianjin offers a critical lens on government-driven historical narratives, opening the possibility that future policies may be revised in a more balanced direction. Korea, too, faces debates over the conservation and use of structures from the Japanese occupation; academic review and social consensus should foster efforts to preserve memory without glorification, re-creating these sites as civic educational content. Finally, institutionalizing stakeholder cooperation governance is critical. Since heritage management involves multiple actors—government agencies, experts, local residents, and private firms—formal consultative bodies and participation procedures are needed to mediate conflicts and set common goals (Rujivanarom, 2018; The World of Chinese, 2021). This implies that the heritage management paradigm should shift from government-led to co-governance.

Fourth, opportunities and challenges in the digital age. Several studies observed the impacts of digital technologies and social media on cultural heritage. Without digital documentation, the revival of Iko Iko would have been unlikely. Wudadao shows that digital platforms can explosively amplify tourism demand. AR/VR technologies have become new instruments for education and entertainment in immersive museums (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024); meanwhile, in traditional villages like Bukchon, smart management through visitor apps is being piloted to route dispersion and enable noise reporting. Digital tools are thus double-edged: they can increase accessibility and appeal while risking over-consumption and commercialization. When applying digital technologies to heritage, it is therefore necessary to ensure content depth and to establish ethical guidelines. Given controversies over historical distortion in Tianjin's immersive tourism, it is desirable in Korea to subject AR/metaverse heritage content to expert verification and civic review in advance. Cities should

also consider smart monitoring systems that track real-time social media–driven tourism booms and activate countermeasures when thresholds are exceeded.

Finally, what the studies collectively emphasize is to keep the focus on "people." Cultural heritage ultimately exists for people and truly lives in their memories and everyday lives. The ultimate aim of heritage conservation is to connect the past with the present and pass it into the future in ways that benefit individuals and communities. Heritage without residents, festivals stripped of meaning, and developments that exclude communities do not endure. By contrast, when local residents feel pride and affection and participate, heritage acquires sustainability (Rujivanarom, 2018; Rachmawati et al., 2024). This is also the core of SDG 11.4: "Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage" and the sustainability of urban communities. Future directions should be more inclusive and creative. For example, giving local youth opportunities to reinterpret and promote heritage in their own ways can bridge the gap between younger generations and heritage. Integrated value creation that links heritage with other sectors (environment, social welfare, etc.) should also be explored. Turning old village communities into tourism resources while reinvesting proceeds in elder care or the transmission of traditional skills is fully possible (The World of Chinese, 2021). This integrated, human-centered approach is the path to passing the Asia–Pacific's rich cultural heritage on to the next generation in healthy condition.

4. Conclusion

This preface has comprehensively reviewed eight recent studies on the conservation, restoration, and tourism use of cultural heritage in the Asia–Pacific. The key message derived is the urgent need for innovation in governance and a shift in values in heritage management. We must move away from a one-way conservation paradigm toward participatory models in which local communities and diverse stakeholders collaborate to recreate and share the present meaning of heritage. A discursive shift is also needed to regard cultural heritage not as an obstacle to development but as an asset for sustainable development. Fortunately, the cases introduced in this anthology demonstrate concrete practices that signal such changes. From a small lakeside park to a vast megacity, strategies attempted at each site differ in context but share the common goal of "connecting past and present." This reflects the aspiration that cultural heritage researchers and practitioners should pursue.

The papers in this volume represent the outcomes of research conducted over the past year by both established scholars and emerging researchers. The 2024 research cycle advances interdisciplinary inquiry into Asia–Pacific cultural heritage, crossing the boundaries of tangible and intangible, natural and cultural, and local and global heritage. It proposes a set of core principles centered on balancing preservation and utilization, fostering stakeholder co-governance, and ensuring digital ethics.

It is our hope that this book serves as a practical reference for researchers, policymakers, and on-site practitioners—providing guidance on indicator development (such as extended HUL frameworks and carrying capacity metrics), governance models (including participation and benefit-sharing), and interpretation and utilization strategies (such as micro-museums, AR/VR applications, and digital documentation) in Asia-Pacific region.

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Assessing the Eligibility of Taman Tasik as a National Heritage: A Study of the ICOMOS-IFLA Historic Urban Landscape Criteria

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Abstract

Taman Tasik exemplifies public parks in Malaysia, repurposed from abandoned tin mining sites. These parks prioritize societal roles and practical functions over aesthetic pleasure, serving as integral elements of Kuala Lumpur's urban history and identity. By analyzing Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri, this study explores their historical and contemporary relevance, particularly in shaping urban identity, fostering unity in a multicultural society, and adapting to evolving civic needs. It examines the eligibility of Taman Tasik for National Heritage designation using the ICOMOS-IFLA Historic Urban Landscape ^{HUL} approach. The study applies a multi-dimensional framework focused on authenticity in processes, achievements, and post-colonial identity, alongside aesthetic and functional considerations. Central to this framework is the concept of integrity, which highlights the parks' enduring contributions to the city's cultural and natural fabric. Furthermore, the research underscores the parks' alignment with HUL criteria, emphasizing their integration of natural and cultural elements within Kuala Lumpur's historical development, from colonial influence to post-independence nation-building. By positioning Taman Tasik as a heritage site reflecting both historical significance and contemporary societal aspirations, the study advocates for their recognition as essential cultural assets. The findings suggest that their heritage value extends beyond material authenticity, encompassing their capacity to reflect, adapt, and remain relevant over time. This research informs future heritage policy and strengthens the case for Taman Tasik's designation as a National Heritage, contributing to broader discussions on historic public parks in Southeast Asia.

1. Introduction

Taman Tasik, commonly translated as "Lake Park," is a prominent example of the picturesque landscape typology in Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia. With a history spanning over 136 years, these parks have become integral to Kuala Lumpur's urban fabric, serving as essential recreational spaces for local communities. Despite their long-standing presence and social significance, Taman Tasik's historical and cultural value has often been overlooked, overshadowed by the focus on monumental architectural conservation in Malaysia. Designed landscapes like Taman Tasik have received limited recognition as products of urban history, despite their significant contributions to the city's development.

This study evaluates the eligibility of Taman Tasik in Kuala Lumpur for heritage designation using the guidelines and principles established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) through the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach. The ICOMOS-IFLA HUL framework integrates cultural heritage conservation within a sustainable urban management model, offering a comprehensive methodology for assessing the heritage value of designed landscapes like Taman Tasik, which are key components of the city's historical narrative. This paper argues that Taman Tasik should be considered one of the earliest examples of modern park typology in Kuala Lumpur, meriting heritage recognition.

The paper begins with a historical and cultural overview of Taman Tasik, tracing its origins, development, and current status within the urban landscape. It then assesses the park's eligibility for heritage status through the criteria outlined by ICOMOS and IFLA, focusing on two key dimensions: (i) the park's historical integrity and (ii) its historical trajectory as a designed landscape.

Ultimately, this study seeks to strengthen the case for the formal recognition of Taman Tasik as a critical element of Malaysia's cultural heritage. By uncovering its historical integrity and examining its developmental trajectory, the research underscores the park's role as valuable evidence that can guide future conservation efforts. The paper advocates for heritage management practices that balance historical preservation with the evolving needs of society, ensuring the sustainability and relevance of these green spaces for future generations. These findings serve as a foundation for policy recommendations emphasizing the importance of public parks as living heritage and cultural landmarks within Malaysia's broader heritage framework.

2. Heritage Status in Kuala Lumpur

2.1. Current heritage classification in Kuala Lumpur

The foundation of conservation efforts in Malaysia is shaped by its colonial past and multiracial society, which together inform the nation's unique cultural heritage. This heritage, developed over centuries of interaction among diverse ethnic groups and external influences, reflects a complex historical narrative that underscores Malaysia's potential as a young nation. In particular, the architectural and cultural landscape of Kuala Lumpur exemplifies this rich blend of influences, presenting both opportunities and challenges for heritage conservation. The city's skyline, dominated by grand architectural structures, features designs and styles that originated outside the country, a direct legacy of Malaysia's colonial era. In contrast, the suburban areas—featuring a combination of traditional and modern housing, places of worship, and marketplaces—offer a different view of Kuala Lumpur's cultural identity. This sharp contrast between the colonial grandeur of the city center and the more localized, traditional character of the suburbs is rarely explored, especially in heritage conservation discussions. This research aims to address this gap by focusing on Taman Tasik as a focal point for understanding and enhancing the heritage character of Kuala Lumpur's suburban areas. With its long history and cultural significance, Taman Tasik serves as an ideal starting point for expanding the recognition of heritage beyond the Central Business District and into the broader cityscape. The research intends to reinforce the notion that heritage conservation in Kuala Lumpur should encompass both its grand colonial structures and its local, community-based cultural assets.

Malaysia's heritage system is classified into two main categories: Heritage (Warisan) and National Heritage (Warisan Kebangsaan) (National Heritage Department, 2024) (see Figure 1). There are seven sub-categories: Building, Monument, Archaeological Site, Natural Site, Tangible Object, Intangible Object, and Living Legacy (Human).

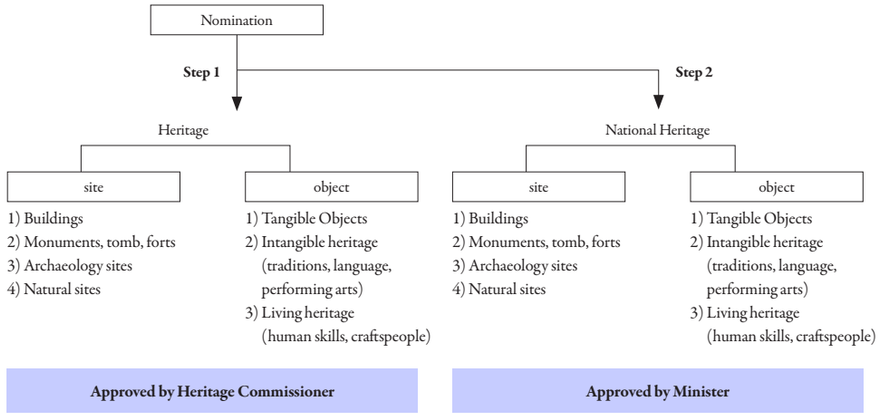


Figure 1. Malaysia Heritage and National Heritage classification

The term *heritage* refers to elements deemed significant by the community for understanding Malaysia's history and culture. *National Heritage*, by contrast, is an official designation by the Malaysian government for sites or objects of exceptional value to the nation. These are considered irreplaceable and integral to Malaysia's national identity. Although both Heritage and National Heritage include natural sites, nominations in this category remain relatively few. To date, only two lake parks have been designated under the Natural Heritage category: Taiping Lake Park, recognized as Heritage, and Perdana Botanical Garden, designated as National Heritage. Both parks, established during the pre-independence era, reflect a stronger Western influence in their design.

Twenty-three years after Independence, Kuala Lumpur began developing additional *Taman Tasik* (lake parks), highlighting their significance as designed landscapes. This shift emphasized the aesthetic and functional roles of these parks within the broader urban environment. Although these parks still incorporate large water features typical of the English garden style, they also exhibit distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from their Western counterparts. These parks addressed several urban challenges, including rehabilitating neglected tin mining areas, fostering social cohesion, promoting healthy lifestyles, mitigating flash floods, and reducing urban heat through improved ambient temperatures (Jabatan Perancang Bandar dan Desa, 2000).

Despite their significant contributions, the historical value of *Taman Tasik* remains largely overlooked, hindering their recognition as vital components of Kuala Lumpur's urban heritage. To ensure their future conservation and potential heritage listing, it is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of the various roles these parks have played in the city's history and development. The National Heritage Act 2005 defines heritage broadly, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements of cultural, historical, and natural significance. While Malaysia's recognized heritage often focuses on the colonial period, it is crucial to expand this perspective to include the post-independence era. Heritage need not be limited to remnants of foreign influence; it should also reflect Malaysia's achievements and identity as a sovereign nation.

Post-independence heritage highlights Malaysia's ability to shape its cultural and urban landscape in response to national priorities and aspirations. For example, the creation of *Taman Tasik* (lake parks) after independence reflects Malaysia's commitment to designing spaces that balance functionality and aesthetics while addressing urban challenges such as social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and public health. Recognizing post-independence contributions under the framework of the National Heritage Act not only celebrates the nation's colonial past but also its progress, creativity, and sovereignty in the years following independence.

When compared to heritage conservation practices in countries like England and South Korea, Kuala Lumpur's approach reveals a noticeable gap. Historical preservation efforts in the city are primarily concentrated in the Downtown Area, particularly within the business district. In contrast, remnants of the industrial era in suburban areas face increasing threats from rapid urban development. As Kuala Lumpur continues to expand, it is essential to minimize the impact of redevelopment on the local character and identity of these suburban areas. The accelerated pace of transformation poses significant risks to the heritage values embedded within these communities. While change is inevitable in a modern suburban environment, it is crucial to ensure that local residents maintain a sense of belonging, attachment, and familiarity with their surroundings. Recognizing and preserving suburban heritage not only protects the city's historical diversity but also strengthens the cultural fabric of its communities.

One promising approach to fostering this sense of connection is to enhance both the functionality and historical significance of *Taman Tasik*. By elevating *Taman Tasik* as a vital component of the local heritage landscape, these parks can serve as living reminders of the community's historical narrative. This approach not only preserves the past but also strengthens the community's sense of identity and continuity in the face of rapid urban transformation.

Modern Kuala Lumpur expanded outward from its central area, gradually forming the suburban boundaries we recognize today (Figure 2). Initially, the city center focused on trade and administration, while suburban areas were shaped by labor-intensive industries such as mining, plantations, and railway workshops. These industrial hubs were accompanied by housing developments for middle- and lower-income populations, reflecting the socio-economic structure of the time. Following the decline of the tin mining industry, many abandoned mining sites were repurposed for various uses, including the development of new housing complexes and recreational spaces. This transformation illustrates the city's adaptive approach to urban growth and how historical economic shifts have shaped Kuala Lumpur's spatial and social dynamics.

The 1970s and 1980s marked a transformative period for Kuala Lumpur as it rapidly modernized and positioned itself as a global city. This era reshaped the urban fabric and spurred interest in green spaces as integral components of urban infrastructure. Reflecting this shift, Kuala Lumpur established its second major public park in 1980, initially called Taman Jalan Kuantan, later renamed Taman Tasik Titiwangsa. This was soon followed by the development of Taman Tasik Permaisuri in 1989. Recognizing the importance of green spaces for urban quality of life, the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) launched initiatives to identify and repurpose underutilized land for park creation. These efforts expanded the

number of public parks, particularly in suburban areas, aligning with the city's growing emphasis on green infrastructure. Figure 3 provides an overview of the current distribution of green spaces across Kuala Lumpur, and Table 1 lists the public parks under the DBKL.

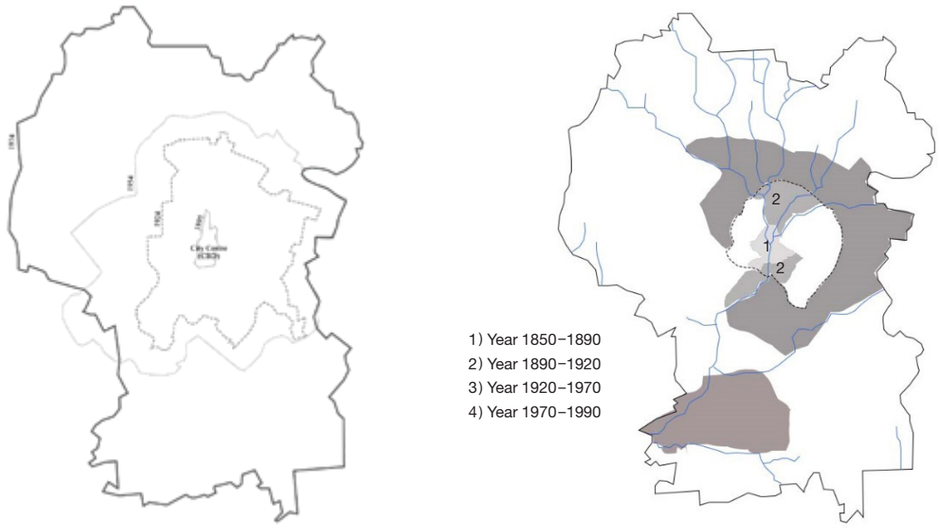


Figure 2. Kuala Lumpur (KL) municipal boundaries in four different periods (left) amid physical and spatial development in KL 1850 – 2020. Modified from Gullick (2000) and the KL structure Plan 2040

Figure 3. Public Park distribution in Kuala Lumpur

Table 1. List of public parks in Kuala Lumpur

Bil	Green Space/ Public Park	Land Use as of 1904	Year Established As Public Park
1	Taman Metropolitan Kepong	Mining	2001
2	Taman Tasik Manjalara	Unknown	
3	Taman Metropolitan Batu	Agri land/ rubber	
4	Taman Tasik Danau Kota	Agri land/ rubber	2019
5	Taman Kejiranan Air Panas	Mining	1980
6	Taman Tasik Titiwangsa	Mining	
7	Taman Tasik Datuk Keramat	Mining	
8	Taman Tugu	Secondary forest	
9	Taman Botani Perdana	Mining	1888
10	Taman Tasik Ampang Hilir	Mining	
11	Taman Tasik Pudu Ulu	Mining	2007
12	Taman Tasik Permaisuri	Mining	1989
13	Taman Alam Damai	Mining	2007
14	Taman Bukit Jalil	Agri land/ rubber	1998
15	Taman Rimba Bukit Kerinchi	-	
16	Taman Rimba Kiara	Agri land/ rubber	

2.2. Public Park as National Heritage

In many countries, designed landscapes are integral to national identity. Gardens and parks express cultural heritage, historical significance, natural preservation, and patriotism. This recognition has prompted increased efforts to safeguard and preserve such spaces as part of a nation's heritage. For instance, countries like the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, and China carefully preserve gardens and parks due to their deep respect for designed landscapes. From ancient times to the present, these spaces have been embedded in national identity and enjoy esteemed recognition within the landscape community.

In contrast, Southeast Asia lacks similar recognition for historic gardens (Osiri, 2023). As noted by the author, many gardens in Kuala Lumpur have origins in the British colonial period, yet the foundational concept of the "Taman Tasik" remains relevant today. The defining characteristics of Taman Tasik include: 1) a central lake, 2) a mix of landscape principles from various design concepts, 3) a pathway encircling the lake, 4) diverse plant varieties, and 5) organized park programs. These features raise important questions: What defines Kuala Lumpur's heritage? And how can designed landscapes like Taman Tasik be formally recognized as key components of this heritage?

Defining Kuala Lumpur's heritage requires acknowledgment of its dynamic cultural, historical, and spatial identity, shaped by colonialism and post-independence development. Key heritage elements, as outlined by frameworks like the National Heritage Act 2005 (Malaysia) and UNESCO's HUL approach, include cultural continuity, historical integrity, and community value. Taman Tasik exemplifies these principles. Its origins in the British

colonial period established it as a symbol of urban green space planning, and its evolution reflects Malaysia's efforts to balance modernization with cultural preservation.

Taman Tasik's design—its central lake, diverse flora, and encircling pathways—demonstrates historical and ecological significance. Its role as a communal space fosters social cohesion, reflecting the nation's multiracial unity. For formal recognition, the park's heritage value must align with both national and international criteria. Locally, it could be listed in the National Heritage Register, which emphasizes material authenticity, cultural relevance, and public benefit. Internationally, aligning with UNESCO's HUL principles—such as integrating landscape conservation into urban development—would position Taman Tasik as a model of sustainable heritage management. Preserving the park ensures that its historical significance and contemporary role remain vital to Kuala Lumpur's evolving identity.

Heritage systems differ significantly between countries, particularly when comparing Western and Eastern approaches (Gao & Jones, 2021). Western heritage discourse often follows a materialist paradigm, where physical objects are preserved as monuments to symbolize historical and cultural significance. This approach prioritizes tangible elements such as age, materiality, and craftsmanship, often unsuitable for many Asian contexts. In contrast, Asian heritage, particularly in Japan, Korea, and China, embodies local wisdom and philosophy. Gardens in these countries are designed as expressions of spiritual values and collective experiences, rather than individualistic or monumental ideals. This makes Asian heritage less reliant on material permanence and more focused on intangible meanings, such as harmony with nature and cultural continuity.

The heritage discourse often prioritizes grand narratives of power, ideology, and monumentalism, overlooking the deeper, localized essence of landscapes (Sykes & Ludwig, 2015). This bias challenges the recognition of landscapes like Taman Tasik, where the absence of ancient structures, limited reliance on garden art philosophy, and the relatively recent history of its creation hinder its eligibility under traditional heritage frameworks.

Kuala Lumpur's multiracial identity further complicates defining a cohesive "national heritage," especially for designed landscapes, which have historically symbolized national identity but remain ambiguous in Malaysia's context (Tahir & Kaboudarahangi, 2014). This study begins by examining heritage classification systems and garden design philosophies in countries like South Korea, Japan, and Thailand, considering the influence of political and religious contexts (see Table 2). These foundational studies provide a comparative lens for analyzing the evolution of Taman Tasik. By synthesizing insights from these examples, the research establishes a framework for identifying key attributes necessary for site observation, ensuring that both local and intangible elements are considered. This approach paves the way for recognizing Taman Tasik as an integral part of Kuala Lumpur's national heritage.

Table 2. Influencing factors contributing to the traits of Historical Gardens in East and Southeast Asia

Continent	East Asia			South East Asia	
Countries	Korea	Japan	China	Thailand	Singapore
Geography	Large continents with significant mountain and river systems			Maritime influence due to its extensive coastline, with a mix of mainland and island	
Historical Development	Ancient civilization Imperial Era Modernization and conflict			Early Kingdom and Empire Colonial period Post-Colonial Era	
Religions	Confucian, Shamanism	Buddhism Shinto	Taoism	Hinduism Islam Buddhism Taoism Confucianism Christianity Animism/ Folk Belief	
Political System and Interactions	Democratic Nation Regional Tensions	Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy	Authoritarian one-party state	Monarchies	Republic
Economic development	Economic Powerhouse Technological Leader			Agriculture Industry	Economic Powerhouse Technological Leader
Cultural and historical elements	Imperial Palace Literature and Art			Temple complexes Performing Arts	Multicultural Heritage Colonial history Experimental and cutting edge

2.3. Kuala Lumpur case

Research on historical parks in Kuala Lumpur is limited, as public parks in Malaysia have been established more recently than in many other countries. Studies on public parks and green spaces in Malaysia tend to focus on their scientific and social contributions, with few exploring their recognition as heritage or historical resources. This gap arises because institutional standards for 'historic parks' typically require criteria such as age, design integrity, and cultural, artistic, educational, biodiversity, and ecological value, with a strong emphasis on maintaining originality.

Urban space legislation in Malaysia is governed by several key laws, including the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172), the Local Government Act 1976 (Act 171), the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982 (Act 267), the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 (Act 133), and the Environmental Quality Act 1974 (Act 127). Although Kuala Lumpur is often considered a young city, it has a rich history, with heritage areas reflecting significant events, people, and places. However, these heritage sites are frequently replaced by newer developments in the city's pursuit of modernization. Over time, the historic

character of Kuala Lumpur has diminished, with most attention focused on the central city. Meanwhile, suburban areas have become denser and more homogeneous, reducing residential neighborhoods to places of rest rather than vibrant communities. Green spaces, once considered essential for societal well-being, are now often seen as regulatory requirements rather than integral components of urban life. As a result, these spaces are increasingly regarded as mere urban infrastructure for leisure and exercise, rather than fostering a deeper connection to the community.

A comparison of parks and gardens in England, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Singapore reveals significant differences in how public parks are conceptualized and valued. These nations have a deep-rooted interest in the arts, advancements in botany, and horticultural technology, and often view parks and gardens as symbols of national pride and sustainability. In contrast, Kuala Lumpur's appreciation for green space is shaped by its historical and socio-economic context. Unlike countries where public parks have long been central to civic identity—shaped by robust artistic, scientific, and ecological pursuits—Malaysia's appreciation for green spaces emerged later, primarily during the colonial period. While other nations emphasize the artistic and national symbolism of parks, Kuala Lumpur's early green spaces, defined by economic and social disparities, catered largely to the elite (e.g., the *padang*[1]), with public access minimal and typically confined to marketplaces, riverbanks, and other incidental spaces.

Post-independence efforts, including the creation of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, aimed to democratize access to green spaces and rehabilitate industrial landscapes to support urban development. However, these spaces continue to face challenges in being recognized as historical assets, often overshadowed by urbanization priorities.

2.4. International standard on Cultural diversity and heritage diversity

The international conventions relevant to this research establish a foundational framework for assessing Taman Tasik's eligibility as a heritage site (see Figure 4). Key principles include authenticity, the categorization of cultural landscapes, and the HUL approach. These frameworks emphasize the importance of integrating historical, cultural, and environmental elements to evaluate the heritage value of urban landscapes. In the context of Kuala Lumpur, applying these standards is essential to address challenges arising from colonial legacies, urbanization, and evolving perceptions of green spaces.

This study examines international examples from South Korea and Thailand to demonstrate how historic parks are categorized and managed. Researchers, including Gil, Park, and Park (2016), have classified historical parks in South Korea into four categories—heritage parks, memorial parks, historical theme parks, and historic parks—based on their

1 Padang: Open grassy lawn Padang: Open grassy lawn

(1) Authenticity	(2) Category of Cultural Landscape	(3) Approach
1994 Nara Document **2005** Hoi An Protocol (for Asia)	☑ Clearly defined landscape designed • Organically evolved Landscape • Associative cultural landscape	**2011** Historic Urban Landscape

Figure 4. International convention studied to assess the eligibility to make Taman Tasik a heritage site

historical resources and significance. Although not an official classification, this framework offers a valuable lens for understanding the diverse typologies and functions of historical parks, particularly in regions lacking formal guidelines. This categorization reflects a sophisticated approach to preserving cultural and historical narratives.

In Thailand, historic parks, especially royal gardens, serve as key representations of national cultural heritage, though their establishment has progressed more slowly. These examples emphasize the need to develop frameworks tailored to local contexts while aligning with international standards. For Taman Tasik, they highlight the importance of recognizing its multifaceted value—not only as a recreational space but also as a repository of Kuala Lumpur's cultural and historical identity.

Taman Tasik exemplifies a common typology of designed cultural landscapes in Kuala Lumpur, originating during the British colonial period as pleasure gardens. Shaped by colonial governance, the city developed as a center for trade, resource extraction, and infrastructure growth. These colonial legacies continue to shape the urban landscape, often overshadowing local narratives and complicating authenticity. The challenge of authenticity for Taman Tasik lies in balancing its colonial origins with its contemporary role as a community space. While international conventions emphasize maintaining originality, Kuala Lumpur's historic parks must also reflect the dynamic, multicultural identity that has emerged post-independence.

This research evaluates the eligibility of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri as heritage sites, aligning them with international conventions on cultural landscapes and the HUL approach. It seeks to address authenticity challenges, redefine public parks as cultural heritage, and propose a framework for recognizing green spaces as integral to Kuala Lumpur's historical and urban fabric. By examining Taman Tasik's historical significance, cultural typology, and evolving role within its environment, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on heritage diversity in Southeast Asia.

3. Materials and Methods

This research examines Taman Tasik, established in the 1980s, a period when the significance of green spaces in urban planning became increasingly recognized in Kuala Lumpur's development. To explore Taman Tasik's role and heritage potential, this study employs a multi-dimensional approach, utilizing a variety of primary and secondary materials, including historical references, archival maps, and local chronicles. These resources provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the park's evolution within its broader urban context (see Figure 5). The key resources include:

i. Historical Maps: Maps from the *Selangor Federal Malay State* (1904, 1929) and *Kuala Lumpur Structure Plans* (1984, 2020, 2024) will be analyzed to trace the transformation of the surrounding urban fabric and the evolution of land use. These maps are essential for understanding the historical context of the area and the original design intentions for Taman Tasik as a green space.

ii. Local Chronicles and Expert Testimonies: Local narratives, including oral histories from residents and experts, will provide insight into the park's significance within the community. These sources will shed light on the social and cultural impact of Taman Tasik and its role in the urban landscape.

iii. HUL Approach: The research adopts the HUL framework to position Taman Tasik as an urban heritage asset. This approach emphasizes not only the preservation of physical structures but also the broader cultural, historical, and social dimensions of the park. By applying this framework, the study aims to define the park's value as an urban space contributing to the city's identity and cultural memory.

iv. Green Spaces as Infrastructure: In contemporary urban discourse, green spaces are increasingly regarded as essential infrastructure. This research will explore how Taman Tasik fulfills the functional needs of the urban population, particularly in suburban areas with limited access to recreational and ecological spaces. The study will also assess how Taman Tasik aligns with evolving expectations of urban green spaces in the context of urban planning and development.

v. Framework for Historical Parks: Drawing from existing preservation frameworks, particularly those outlined by Gil et al. (2016), this study will propose a classification for historical parks in Kuala Lumpur. This framework will enhance preservation and management efforts, ensuring that Taman Tasik's cultural and historical significance is adequately recognized and protected.

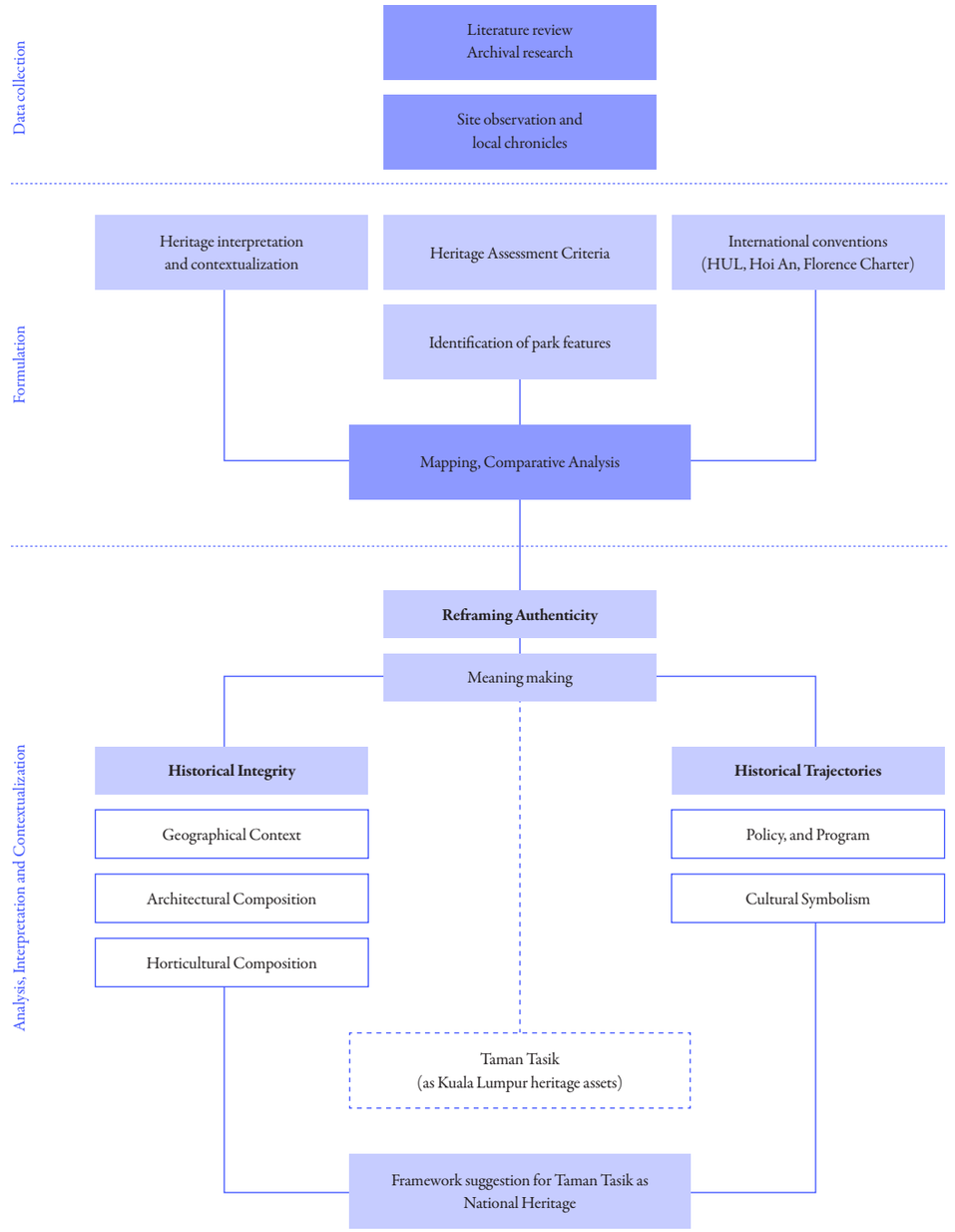


Figure 5. Research Process for Determining Taman Tasik's National Heritage Eligibility

4. Reframing Authenticity—The Dichotomy Between the East and the West

There are significant differences between Eastern and Western approaches to preservation, particularly in how authenticity is defined and maintained. Early conservation ideologies primarily emerged from the West, where preservation efforts have focused on materiality and scientific processes. Western approaches emphasize historical significance and aesthetics, often prioritizing the protection of individual objects, particularly those linked to prominent historical figures. This mindset frequently leads to the "freezing" or monumentalization of structures to preserve their original forms. Consequently, Western conservation philosophies have concentrated on architectural and urban preservation, contributing to advancements in both the sciences and the humanities (Gao & Jones, 2021).

In contrast, Eastern values stress a spiritual and harmonious relationship with the natural world, prioritizing balance, symbolism, and contemplation. Philosophical traditions such as Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism deeply influence Eastern garden arts, imbuing these landscapes with symbolism that reflects the surrounding nature. Eastern gardens and parks are designed as spaces for meditation, reflection, and escape, fostering a deeper spiritual connection through simplicity and tranquility. Principles such as *Yin-Yang, Feng Shui, Pungsu*, and *Zen* guide their design, allowing Eastern gardens to maintain their unique identities over time despite changes in external surroundings.

The situation in Kuala Lumpur presents a complex blend of these influences, complicating the classification of parks as historic or heritage sites. While many Western frameworks emphasize specific historical periods or figures, such an approach may overlook the layered and evolving cultural identities of parks in Kuala Lumpur. For example, Taman Tasik is often viewed as a municipal park serving nearby residential areas, yet it also embodies distinct regional characteristics and reflects the historical and cultural values of its community. Its ongoing use for public recreation and community activities aligns closely with the definition of heritage. However, under contemporary frameworks, it is challenging to classify parks in Kuala Lumpur as either historic or heritage sites, requiring adjustments to existing evaluation methods. To address this challenge, it is essential to first define and classify the concept of "heritage" within Malaysia (see Table 3). Generally, the term encompasses:

i. Tangible Heritage: Physical artifacts, sites, monuments, and landscapes.
ii. Intangible Heritage: Language, literature, customs, performing arts, and traditions.
iii. Cultural Heritage: Practices and customs that define the cultural identity of communities.
iv. Natural Heritage: Landscapes and ecosystems of cultural significance.

v. Built Heritage: Structures and urban areas with historical or architectural importance.

Although gardens and parks often overlap with these categories, they require distinct classifications based on their functions and themes, rather than simply their size or location. A comparative approach offers valuable insights. For instance, research by Gil et al. (2016) in South Korea suggests that historical parks may be classified into categories such as heritage parks for conservation, memorial parks for commemoration, historical theme parks for recreation, and historic parks that embody specific stories or events. Thailand's approach to historical parks primarily focuses on the preservation of ancient ruins and royal pleasure gardens for tourism and cultural education. This emphasis on specific themes—such as royal history or ancient architecture—enhances the understanding of heritage.

Adapting these classifications to the local context of Kuala Lumpur may assist in developing a framework that recognizes the unique cultural and historical values of Malaysian parks, including Taman Tasik. However, while the frameworks derived from South Korea and Thailand provide useful insights, they do not fully address the complexities of Kuala Lumpur's parks. For example, the categorization of South Korean heritage parks is effective within its context, where there is a well-established heritage center and strong community appreciation. However, Taman Tasik's identity has not yet been recognized as sufficiently historic, as it is typically not classified or discussed within such terms. Similarly, Thailand's focus on preserving ancient ruins holds limited relevance for Kuala Lumpur's modern, civic-oriented parks, especially given the absence of ancient ruins in the city.

Table 3. Categories of 'Heritage' related parks in South Korea and Thailand

Countries	Categories	Resource Management	Description
South Korea	Heritage Park	Conservation	Constructed for conserving (or protecting heritage and scenic site)
		Reconstruction/ restoration	Heritage restored by excavation or historical record research
	Memorial Park	Commemoration	Commemorating a historical place, event, or historical figure
	Historical Theme Park	Re-creation	For entertainment with historical stories, persons, or heritage. Re-created for enjoyment or tourism
	Historic Park	Conservation	Park having special historical stories, events, or heritages
Thailand	Historical Park (Ancient Kingdom/ royal pleasures garden)	Conservation	Ancient ruins preserve for tourism

These differences raise critical questions about how existing heritage categories can be adapted to reflect the unique cultural and historical landscape of Kuala Lumpur. Parks like Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri serve not only as repositories of history but also as dynamic spaces of community engagement, where heritage is continuously reshaped through social interactions. Therefore, contemporary evaluation frameworks should expand beyond material authenticity to include intangible values and the multifaceted roles these spaces play. Furthermore, such frameworks must consider the spiritual dimensions and cultural sensitivities inherent in a multicultural society, ensuring a more holistic approach to heritage assessment.

4.1. Distinction between historic parks and heritage parks

The distinction between historic parks and heritage parks reflects different cultural, historical, and ideological perspectives. One primary difference lies in the age criterion: historic parks are typically defined as being over 50 years old, serving as a marker of their historicity. In contrast, heritage parks do not adhere to a specific age limit. While historic parks often represent particular historical periods, reflecting the values and aesthetics of their time, heritage parks are broader in scope, encompassing cultural, natural, and architectural elements that gain significance over time.

Heritage parks celebrate the living values of a community, integrating traditions, biodiversity, and landmarks that reflect the ongoing identity and continuity of a place. In this sense, heritage parks embody the dynamic relationship between society and its environment. Conversely, historic parks function as "time capsules," offering glimpses into specific historical moments, often serving as national symbols. Examples of such parks include the English Picturesque gardens, as well as traditional gardens from Korea, Japan, and China.

This distinction highlights the differences between regions with long-standing monarchies and structured societal hierarchies, where historic parks often reflect royal estates and aristocratic landscapes. However, the overlap between historic and heritage parks is common, especially in younger nations where categorization remains fluid. In Kuala Lumpur, the city's relatively recent history and lack of significant historic parks complicate this categorization. Countries like Thailand, with their long-standing royal traditions, provide more examples of refined royal gardens (Osiri, 2023), while Kuala Lumpur's public parks have primarily emerged from the British colonial legacy.

Thus, many of Kuala Lumpur's parks, including Taman Tasik, bear the influence of the British picturesque model. Whether consciously recognized or not, these parks reflect a colonial past and an evolving definition of heritage that blends both historic and contemporary elements, challenging the clear distinction between the two categories.

The question of authenticity is not merely a matter of categorizing parks as historic or heritage. The limitations of traditional frameworks in assessing the authenticity of Taman Tasik highlight the need for a more flexible approach that considers the evolving significance of such spaces within a dynamic urban environment. Consequently, the eligibility of Taman Tasik for heritage status should not be dismissed based solely on rigid definitions of historical authenticity. Rather, it warrants careful consideration, acknowledging both its material and intangible values and recognizing the broader role it plays in the social and cultural fabric of Kuala Lumpur.

5. Historical Integrity of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri

5.1. Geographical context

Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, located in the northeast of Kuala Lumpur, is situated within a mature suburban area that was once dominated by tin mining and rubber estates. As Kuala Lumpur expanded into Malaysia's capital, these lands were reclaimed for residential development. Historically, the surrounding area was a mix of industrial, military, and residential spaces, including a railway township, military cantonment, police training center, and several villages, contributing to a diverse socio-economic landscape. This combination of land uses created a unique setting for the park, which emerged from a region of heavy industry and military significance.

Today, the area around Taman Tasik Titiwangsa is characterized by high population density, with both high- and medium-density residential developments. The presence of numerous places of worship highlights the area's vibrant, closely-knit community, which maintains strong cultural and religious ties. The park benefits from its proximity to key cultural institutions, such as the National Theatre (Istana Budaya), the National Art Gallery, and the National Library, all located along Jalan Tun Razak, adjacent to Titiwangsa. These landmarks, designed by prominent local architects, enrich the park's geographical significance, positioning it as a key cultural hub within Kuala Lumpur.

In contrast, Taman Tasik Permaisuri is located in the southeast of Kuala Lumpur, also on land once used for mining and plantations. This area, particularly known for attracting the Hakka Chinese community, underwent significant development after Malaysia's independence. The park is bordered by key residential areas, including Cheras, Taman Midah, and Bandar Tun Razak, which are family-oriented communities. The region, once marked by squatter settlements, has been transformed into a planned urban residential zone. The area's well-connected transport links and various amenities enhance the park's accessibility, solidifying its role as a community hub.

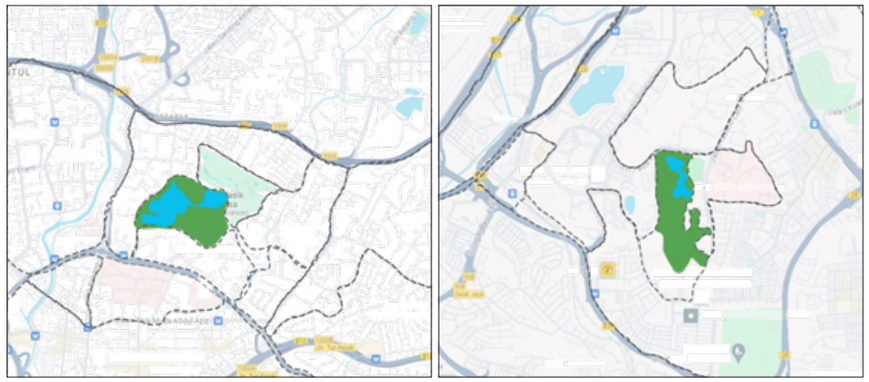
Taman Tasik Permaisuri has become a bustling recreational area, particularly popular on weekends. Its location in a rapidly growing suburban zone speaks to Kuala Lumpur's urban expansion and the city's commitment to integrating green spaces into developing districts. Both parks share similar origins in the transformation of former industrial lands into green spaces, reflecting Kuala Lumpur's post-independence urban planning efforts. This transformation addresses both the city's growth and the desire for environmental revitalization.

While both parks originated from the repurposing of industrial lands, their socio-cultural roles diverge. Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, situated near cultural landmarks like the National Theatre and National Art Gallery, serves as a cultural focal point, attracting both locals and international visitors. In contrast, Taman Tasik Permaisuri serves as a local recreational space, primarily catering to the residents of surrounding neighborhoods. Its significance lies in its role as a family-oriented green space, fostering leisure and social interaction. Together, these parks highlight Kuala Lumpur's efforts to balance urban growth with the creation of green spaces that address the diverse needs of the population. Although both parks contribute to the city's green infrastructure, their distinct functions reflect Kuala Lumpur's adaptive approach to urban planning, blending cultural, recreational, and community-based uses into the city's fabric (see Figures 6 to 8).

Taman Tasik Titiwangsa

Taman Tasik Permaisuri

Figure 6. Layout of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri



Taman Tasik Titiwangsa

Institutional:
Palace of Culture, National Art gallery, National Blood center
Police Training Centre
Ministry of Defense, Department of Survey and Mapping, Technical University
National Library, National News agency
Kuala Lumpur Hospital

Taman Tasik Permaisuri

Institutional:
7. Kuala Lumpur Football stadium, Bandar Tun Razak swimming complex, University Hospital
8.Schools

Figure 7. Institutional layout of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri

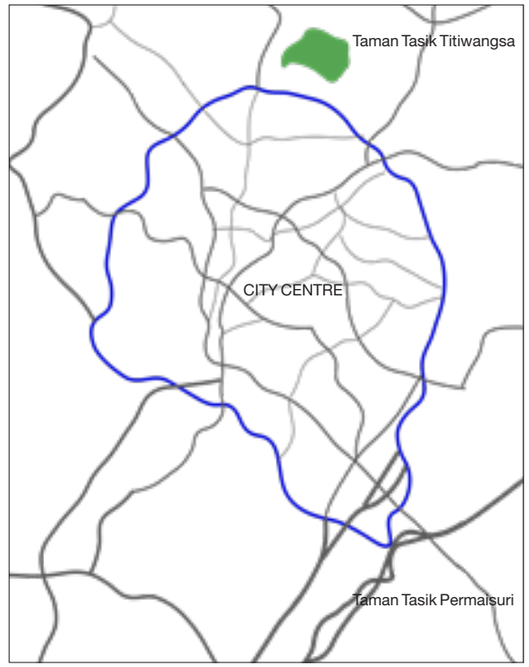


Figure 8. Placement of Taman Tasik from the city center

5.2. Architectural composition

Kuala Lumpur's urban landscape is shaped by its colonial past, resulting in a diverse architectural and spatial pattern that incorporates both local and external influences. However, the city's landscape design continues to evolve. Currently, there is a notable lack of comprehensive studies documenting the historical and stylistic development of parks in Malaysia. The classification of quintessential Malaysian gardens remains challenging, with most gardens categorized as village gardens (*Laman*), royal gardens, or thematic gardens influenced by English, Japanese, and Chinese traditions. These typologies underscore the significant international influences on Malaysia's garden design heritage.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in developing design philosophies that respond to the local climate, cultural traditions, and aesthetic values. This shift has given rise to a distinct tropical landscape style that prioritizes both functionality and aesthetics, blending modern urban needs with Malaysia's cultural identity. Both Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri exhibit distinct spatial configurations (see Figure 9). Developed in the 1980s, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa was designed to alleviate the overuse of Taman Tasik Perdana and meet the growing demand for recreational spaces. In line with national objectives to promote unity, sports were identified as a medium for fostering integration, leading to the inclusion of sports arenas and stadiums. While these sports

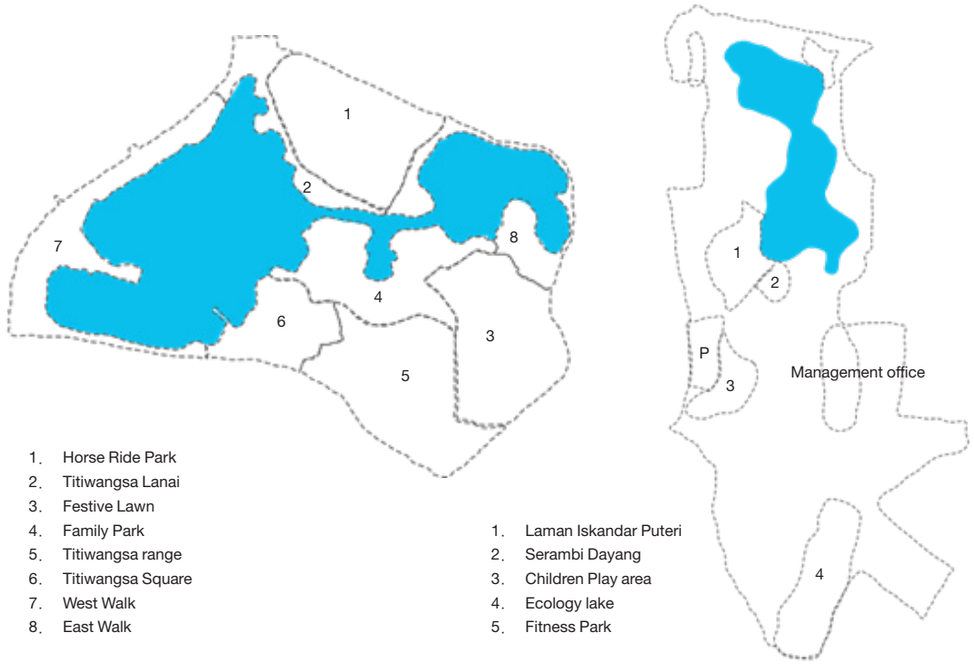


Figure 9. Spatial Composition of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa (Left) and Taman Tasik Permaisuri (Right)

complexes cater to activities like badminton, tennis, and soccer, the park's layout prioritizes unstructured recreational activities, such as jogging, walking, and sightseeing.

Both parks attempt to balance traditional and modern aesthetics. In 1986, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa gained cultural prominence with the construction of a floating fisherman's restaurant designed in the Traditional Kelantan architectural style. This landmark served as a cultural hub during the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) conference, showcasing Malaysian arts, traditional dance, and cuisine. The restaurant was later removed, and the park's design now incorporates more contemporary elements, reflecting Kuala Lumpur's evolving urban character.

Taman Tasik Permaisuri, originally called Laman Iskandar Puteri, was conceived with a traditional Malay royal garden design. The park featured elements such as orchids planted in a seven-tiered royal courtyard and the *Serambi* Dayang (Maid's Porch), which included a stainless-steel sculpture adorned with batik motifs, embodying a quintessential Malay landscape aesthetic.

Despite these differences, both parks share common design elements, including lakeside promenades for walking and jogging, *wakaf* (Malay gazebos) for resting, expansive

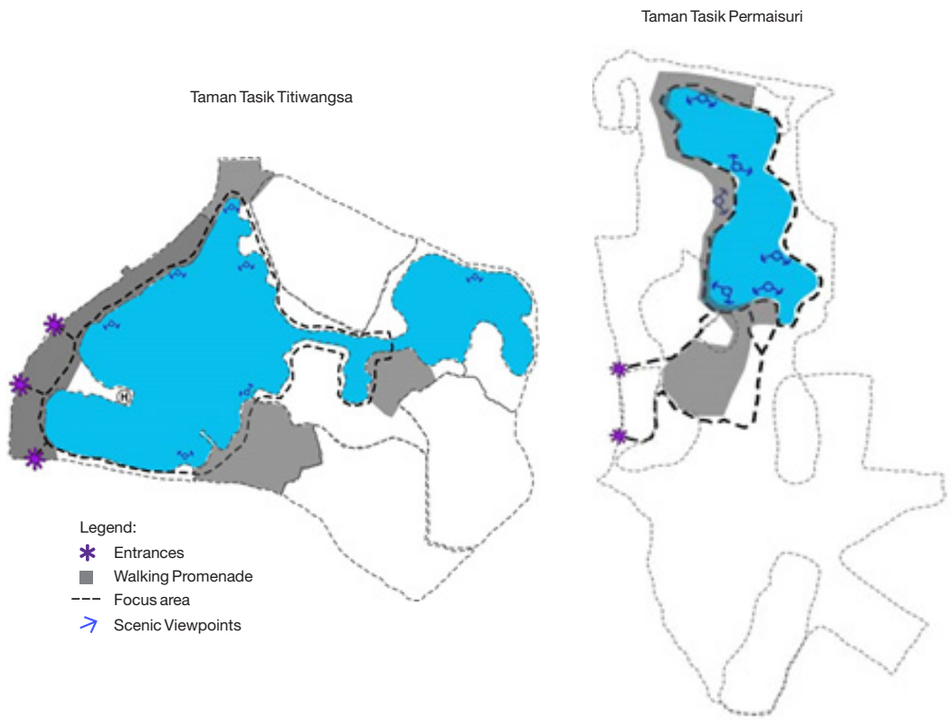


Figure 10. Features of Taman Tasik: Entrances, Scenic Viewpoints, and Walking Promenades

water features that reflect the surrounding landscape, and benches for relaxation (see Figure 10). Taman Tasik Titiwangsa benefits from the concept of 'borrowed scenery,' drawing on the distant beauty of the Titiwangsa mountain range and the urban skyline. In contrast, Taman Tasik Permaisuri emphasizes internal views, focusing on the park's own landscapes and features. Both parks incorporate design elements from English garden traditions, particularly the works of Capability Brown and Humphry Repton, which emphasize picturesque landscapes, tree clumps, and expansive open spaces. Subtle influences of Japanese garden design further enrich the parks' visual and cultural experiences.

5.3. Horticultural composition

The horticultural composition of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri (see Figure 11) reflects a thoughtful integration of native and introduced plant species, creating lush yet structured landscapes. This design not only enhances the aesthetic appeal but also mirrors Malaysia's diverse ecological and cultural context. The choice of flora, ranging from towering tropical trees to ornamental shrubs, supports ecological functionality, recreational needs, and biodiversity (see Table 4). This combination of practicality and beauty underscores the parks' role as vital green spaces within Kuala Lumpur's urban environment.

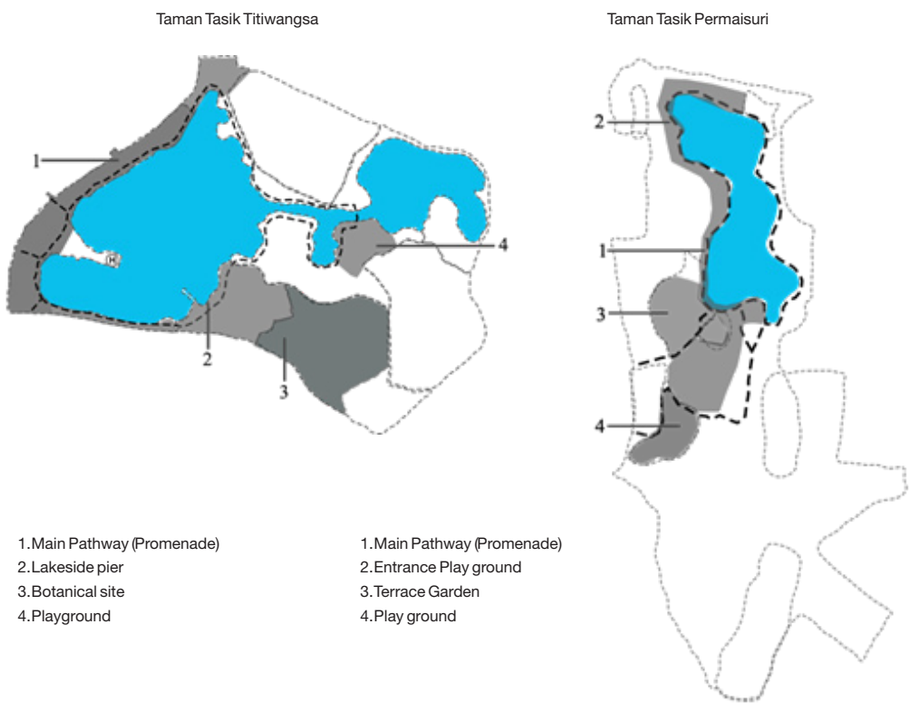


Figure 11. Horticultural Composition of Taman Tasik: Based on the Most Frequently Used and Popular Spaces

Table 4. Plant species of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri

Zones	Taman Tasik Titiwangsa		Taman Tasik Permaisuri	
1	Native	Non-Native	Native	Non-Native
	Pongamia pinnata (ornamental flower)	*Samanea saman (ornamental)*	*Cocos nucifera (coastal, utilitarian)*	
	Malelueca (ornamental flower)		*Cyrtophyllum fragrans (Fragrant plant)*	*Callistemon citrinus (Ornamental flowers)*
	Ficus Benjamina (ornamnetla fruits)		*Lagerstroemia speciosa (L.) Pers. (ornamental flowers)*	
	Pometia pinnata (ornamental leaves)			
	Peltophorum pterocarpum (ornamental flowers)			
	Cocos nucifera (coastal, utilitarian)			
		Polyalthia longifolia (ornamental foliage)		
	Lagerstroemia floribunda (ornamental flowers)			
2	*Cocos nucifera (coastal, utilitarian)*	*Livistona chinensis*	*Cyrtophyllum fragrans (Fragrant plant)*	*Pterocarpus indicus (ornamental leaves)*
				Samanea saman (ornamental)
				Falcataria falcata
				Lagerstroemia speciosa (ornamental flowers)
			Casuarina equisetifolia L.	*Xanthostemon chrysanthus (ornamental flowers)*
			Pometia pinnata (ornamental leaves)	
3	*Montane ericaceous forest replica*		*Orchidaceae*	
4	*Syzygium papillosum*	*Livistona chinensis*	*Lagerstroemia speciosa*	*Callistemon citrinus (Ornamental flowers)*
		Mimusops elengi (Fragrant plant)	*Cyrtophyllum fragrans (Fragrant plant)*	*Samanea saman (ornamental)*

6. Historical Trajectory of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri

As cities expand and modernize, preserving their unique cultural essence becomes increasingly challenging. This is especially true when urban landscapes lose their individuality, blending into a uniform sameness. Heritage, a fundamentally social construct, emerges from the complex interplay of societal processes over time and space. In Kuala Lumpur, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri transcend their roles as public parks, standing

as living symbols of a post-independence era defined by aspirations for a distinct Malaysian identity. Amidst the remnants of colonial history, these parks embody the city's efforts to forge a legacy that celebrates the diversity and resilience of its people.

While the following section outlines standard criteria for assessing the eligibility of historic parks, Kuala Lumpur's case does not fully meet these conventional standards. However, the city possesses its own criteria worthy of recognition and consideration. Table 5 highlights these uniquely Kuala Lumpur-specific criteria.

Table 5. Key features and symbolism

Historic Park			Kuala Lumpur	
1)Architectural Composition		Philosophy	Local cosmology and worldview	✓
		Art & Aesthetic	International Influence	✓
		Cultural Symbolism	Cultural Symbolism	✓
2)Horticultural Composition		Plant Selection	Plant Selection	✓
		Functionality	Functionality	✓
		Spirituality	Spirituality	✓
		Knowledge advancement	Diplomacy cooperation	✓
3)Age	✓			

The historical trajectories of Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri began after Malaysia's independence in 1957, driven by the desire to define a national identity while balancing the legacy of colonialism with the ambitions of a modern nation. This post-independence period reshaped public spaces into symbols of unity, progress, and cultural pride. These parks serve as tangible expressions of cultural integration, reflecting efforts to foster a harmonious, multicultural society.

During the rapid urban transformation of the 1970s and 1980s, these parks emerged as part of a broader urban planning vision to provide green spaces amid growing urbanization. Taman Tasik Titiwangsa stands as a testament to the city's ability to transform an industrial site into a cherished communal space, while Taman Tasik Permaisuri embodies enduring royal heritage and aligns with the New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP guided urban restructuring, improved the quality of life, and created equitable access to public spaces for all communities.

Though the concept of a public park originated in the West, its adaptation in Malaysia reveals distinct differences rooted in the local context. While both Western and Eastern

parks share the ideal of civic improvement, the interpretation and implementation in Malaysia more closely align with Eastern ideologies, using parks as tools for social reform and expressions of national ideals. Unlike Western parks shaped by a garden art movement, Malaysia's public parks reflect the civic ambitions of post-independence authorities, tailored to the needs and values of the local population.

After independence in 1957, Malaysia embarked on national projects designed to assert sovereignty and cultural pride. Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri are living records of this era, where cultural expression, local values, and landscape design converged to form a unique heritage, distinct from colonial influence. However, their historical and cultural significance is often overshadowed by dominant narratives emphasizing Malaysia's colonial past.

The early designs of these parks show minimal influence from the Western garden art movement. This can be attributed to Malaysia's colonial history, where public park designs were direct expressions of colonial authorities. As Malaysia gained independence, these designs adapted to better suit the local environment and cultural context.

This research reveals that the creation of these parks is closely linked to the transformative period of the 1970s and 1980s, marked by rapid industrialization, suburbanization, infrastructure development, and cultural evolution. These changes were underscored by the hosting of major international events, signaling Malaysia's emergence on the global stage (see Figure 12). Amidst this physical progress, Kuala Lumpur continued its efforts to strengthen social harmony and foster a sense of community through the development of public parks.

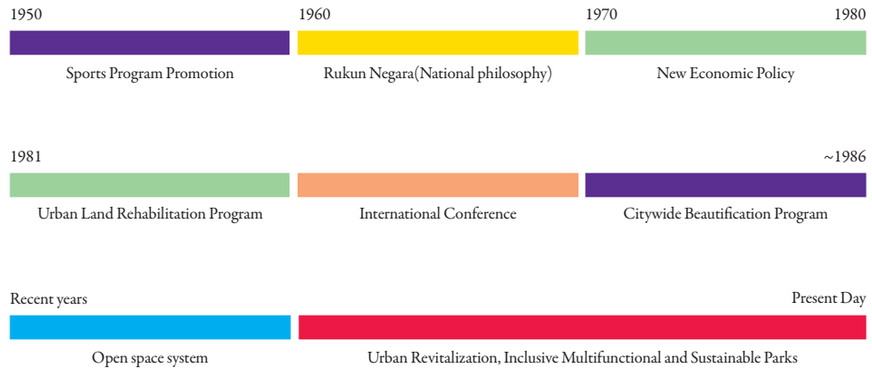


Figure 12. Changing intention and priorities in Taman Tasik's Development

Unlike traditional gardens, which often prioritize aesthetic and symbolic planting schemes, the planting design of Taman Tasik is functional, reflecting the utilitarian values of a post-independence nation focused on fostering national pride and glory. The plant selection primarily consists of evergreen tropical species, with minimal inclusion of non-native plants. Dominant trees such as *Ficus benjamina*, *Peltophorum pterocarpum*, *Cocos nucifera*, and *Lagerstroemia speciosa* were chosen for their practical benefits, aligning with the needs of local communities rather than the aesthetic-driven practices typical of Western traditions.

Despite the utilitarian focus, a distinct principle guides the selection and placement of these trees, subtly evoking a tropical ambiance. For example, coconut trees (*Cocos nucifera*) are strategically planted near water bodies, their natural habitat, which enhances the tropical atmosphere while contributing to soil stability. As one of Malaysia's most valued trees, the coconut serves multiple purposes, symbolizing both cultural and practical significance. Similarly, other large trees are selected for their shade, providing relief from the intense tropical sunlight.

Over the decades, the planting materials in Taman Tasik have evolved, reflecting changes from its establishment in the 1970s to the present (see Figure 13). However, the original intent of the planting scheme—serving functional purposes while celebrating Malaysia's tropical identity—remains a defining characteristic.

Although the influence of the garden art movement on Taman Tasik is limited, the park incorporates elements drawn from globally recognized garden concepts. Given a lack of widespread understanding and exposure to garden art, however, the park's design may not be easily interpreted by the general public. Nevertheless, its design remains unique and deeply tied to the local context, symbolizing the resilience and sustainability of urban parks. This distinctiveness was further solidified with the establishment of the Malaysian Landscape Architect Institute in 1981 (ILAM, 2022).

In Malaysia, garden art was never a dominant cultural practice. Traditionally, gardens in the Western sense symbolized power and status, associated with monarchies and their display of wealth and influence. However, after 1974, Kuala Lumpur transitioned to a mayoral governance system. As the nation embraced a democratic framework, the emphasis on showcasing royal power through public spaces diminished. While royal gardens historically represented cultural capital and demonstrated sophistication in arts, horticulture,

Figure 13. Changes in the type of trees for use in the lake park from 1970 to date

and architecture, Taman Tasik's design shifted focus from artistic expression to the ideals of a nation striving to define itself. Early designs may have been influenced by philosophical and artistic principles, but later designs reflected the evolving values of the nation.

Taman Tasik represents Malaysia's post-independence ideals, particularly reflecting the values of Tanah Melayu (the Malay Peninsula) and the tenets of the Rukun Negara (the National Principles). Taman Tasik Permaisuri embodies "Loyalty to King and Country," while Taman Tasik Titiwangsa reflects "The Supremacy of the Constitution." These parks serve as living symbols of the nation's collective values, blending nature with cultural meaning. Rather than static works of art, the parks embody a living, evolving art form. For example, in 1986, during the PATA conference, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa played a significant political and cultural role, showcasing Malaysia's hospitality and cultural pride through the opening of Restoran Nelayan, which featured cultural performances for international delegates. Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri stand out from other parks due to their distinct reflection of the region's cultural, ecological, and historical context. They exemplify a communal, adaptive approach that integrates practicality, spirituality, and cultural expression. As vernacular landscapes, these parks have served as vital community spaces, promoting harmony and collective values over rigid design codes.

Overall, while Taman Tasik may not meet all the current criteria for national heritage designation, aspects of its design should be considered as added value to existing standards. Modifying these standards is necessary to accommodate the needs of post-colonial countries, as suggested by the HUL approach. This research proposes an expanded framework for evaluating public parks like Taman Tasik, which includes the following criteria (see Table 6):

① Authenticity
② Historical Integrity, including geographical context and architectural composition
③ Horticultural Composition
④ Historical Trajectories, examining the park's evolution, interconnected influences, continuity, change, and causal relationships.

While HUL traditionally emphasizes the dynamic interaction between urban heritage and contemporary needs, incorporating authenticity beyond materiality—by considering experiences, traditions, and values—provides a deeper understanding of public parks as living cultural assets. Historical integrity further considers the geographical context, as well as architectural and horticultural compositions, recognizing how natural and human elements shape significance. Moreover, exploring the historical trajectories of these parks requires examining their philosophical and social dimensions, delving into societal organization,

cultural symbolism, and artistic aesthetics alongside design intentions and planning evolution. This approach aligns with HUL's holistic heritage management while adapting it to the unique socio-cultural narratives and practical realities of Southeast Asian urban parks like Taman Tasik. An expanded methodology ensures that public parks are not merely preserved but actively celebrated as dynamic spaces that bridge history, identity, and contemporary utility.

In the context of historic gardens, as outlined by the Florence Charter (1981), gardens are typically evaluated based on their age and scientific contributions. However, in former colonial countries, gardens often embody complex layers of identity, power, and adaptation. These landscapes are not just botanical or artistic achievements; they are socio-cultural artifacts that reflect colonial influences, local resistance, and post-colonial reinterpretations. Incorporating these considerations would better recognize the unique trajectories of such spaces and align with the Florence Charter's ethos of preserving authenticity while addressing the historical and cultural specificities of colonial contexts. This ensures that these gardens are valued not only for their aesthetic or scientific contributions but also for their profound socio-historical significance (see Table 6 for the proposal).

Table 6. Proposed Additional Requirements for Heritage Consideration in the Case of Taman Tasik, Kuala Lumpur

Requirement		Description	Purpose
Authenticity		Authenticity beyond materiality includes process, experience, traditions, and values	Maintain the true essence of the site, emphasizing intangible qualities and historical meaning
Historical Integrity	Geographical Context	Explain and describe the location, natural features, and activities interaction in shaping site characteristics, development, and significance	Highlights how the site's physical and cultural environment influenced its role and identity
	Architectural Composition	Analysis of built structures and spatial arrangements, including pathways, gazebos, and other park elements	Identifies historical design principles and their role in shaping user experience and functionality
	Horticultural composition	Study of plant species, arrangements, and their symbolism or cultural importance in the park's design	Preserves biodiversity and reflects cultural connections to nature in design elements
Historical Trajectories	Philosophical and Social Dimension	Explores the Societal Organization, Cultural symbolism, Art, and aesthetics embodied in the park	Reveals the values and societal aspirations reflected in the park's creation and evolution
	Design Intention and planning	Examines the original goals of the park's design, the philosophy, its intended uses, and how it evolved to meet societal needs	Assesses the adaptability and foresight of the design in responding to changing urban contexts

7. Conclusion

The research on Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri highlights their significance not only as urban green spaces but also as historical assets that reflect the socio-cultural and political aspirations of post-independence Malaysia. These parks serve as living symbols of the nation's journey toward unity, identity, and cultural pride. Emerging during a pivotal era, they stand as testaments to Kuala Lumpur's vision of blending modernity with deeply rooted local values, contributing to the city's unique cultural narrative amidst rapid urbanization.

Although initially influenced by Western concepts of public parks, both Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri exhibit distinct adaptations to Malaysia's context, reflecting the aspirations of its people through vernacular landscape design. Their planting schemes, spatial planning, and functional evolution align with national values and their role as inclusive spaces fostering social harmony. These parks serve as tangible expressions of historical transformation, bridging the colonial past with the aspirations of a modern, multicultural society.

Despite their profound significance, the contributions of these parks to Malaysia's cultural and historical identity remain underappreciated, overshadowed by dominant narratives of colonial heritage. This research argues that these parks deserve recognition as vital historical assets and recommends their designation as national heritage sites. Such recognition would underscore their value not only as communal spaces but also as enduring legacies that document Malaysia's post-independence narrative, cultural evolution, and commitment to unity.

To support this designation, the research proposes an expanded heritage evaluation framework tailored to post-colonial contexts. This framework incorporates criteria such as authenticity beyond materiality, historical integrity, horticultural composition, and historical trajectories, emphasizing the dynamic and evolving nature of Taman Tasik as cultural landscapes that embody resilience, adaptation, and the aspirations of their time.

Taman Tasik Titiwangsa and Taman Tasik Permaisuri are more than public parks—they are indispensable historical artifacts and cultural landmarks that anchor Kuala Lumpur's identity. Recognizing them as national heritage sites would preserve their physical and cultural legacy and acknowledge their enduring relevance as spaces where history, identity, and community converge. Such a designation would ensure these parks continue to inspire and serve future generations as symbols of Malaysia's rich and diverse heritage.

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2

Preservation and Safeguarding of *Iko-Iko* as a Cultural Expression of the Bajo People

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PP. 060-075

Abstract

The Bajo people are a unique ethnic group historically known as sea nomads. In recent years, however, many have settled in stilt houses on shores, atolls, and small islands. One form of cultural expression among the Bajo is iko-iko, a traditional song poetry. The practice of chanting iko-iko is now at risk of extinction, as it is only performed by the elderly, with younger generations unable to chant it. This research aims to preserve and safeguard iko-iko as an important cultural expression of the Bajo. The study was conducted in Bajo villages in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The results indicate that, among the thousands of Bajo people living in several villages in Southeast Sulawesi, only two elders from two villages are still able to perform iko-iko. Preservation efforts involve transcribing the lyrics of iko-iko into written form and translating them into Bahasa Indonesia and English, along with providing descriptions of their content and meaning. Additionally, iko-iko will be recorded and preserved in audio format. This compilation serves both to preserve the tradition and to educate younger Bajo generations about iko-iko.

1. Introduction

The Bajo people are a unique ethnic group in Southeast Asia. Historically, the Bajo were known as sea nomads, living on traditional boats and wandering the seas. In recent times, however, they have settled along shorelines, atolls, and small islands, often building stilt houses near the water. Due to their nomadic past, the Bajo are dispersed across Southeast Asian waters, not only in Indonesia but also in Malaysia and the Philippines. This research, however, focuses specifically on the Bajo people residing in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, where their settlements are spread across various water areas and small islands.

As a distinct ethnic group, the Bajo have developed their own culture, marked by a "symbiosis"[2] or "creolization"[3] of several cultural influences. One of their cultural expressions is the *iko-iko,*[4] *a traditional form of poetry or chanting that serves as an oral tradition and can be considered part of their cultural heritage.*[5] *The iko-iko* is typically chanted by Bajo men while traveling at sea or during activities such as repairing boats and fishing equipment. Bajo women also chant *iko-iko* as lullabies to put their children to sleep. The content of the *iko-iko* includes stories of significant events in the life of the Bajo, such as tales of heroes, ancestors, and travels, and serves to transmit educational and didactical values to younger generations.[6]

Several studies have explored the *iko-iko* as a cultural expression of the Bajo. Some focus on its educational and didactical value, highlighting how it functions as a medium for passing on knowledge and cultural values from older to younger generations.[7] Others examine the influence of Malay traditional literature on the *iko-iko* form.[8] Further studies analyze its structure, social functions, and values within Bajo society.[9] Some studies delve into the historical background of the Bajo,[10] explore ecological and cultural aspects of their life through the *iko-iko*,[11] and describe efforts by local governments and other parties to preserve this oral tradition.[12]

2 Nagatsu, K., "Social Space of the Sea Peoples: A Study on the Arts of Syncretism and Symbiosis in the Southeast Asian Maritime World", *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* Vol.33 (2015): 111 – 140.

3 Nagatsu, K., "Maritime Diaspora and Creolization: Genealogy of the Sama-Bajau in Insular Southeast Asia", Senri *Ethnological Studies* No.95 (2017): 33 – 62.

4 Other Bajo also spell it as "*ikiko*", see Zacot, F.R. *Orang Bajo, Suku Pengembara Laut*, trans. Fida Muljono and Ida Budi Pranoto (Jakarta: Gramedia-EFEO-FJP, 2008)

5 UNESCO, *2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris, France, 2003)

6 Adri & Anwar, "Iko-iko Sebagai Media Pembelajaran Dalam Lingkungan Masyarakat Bajo di Desa Bokori Kecamatan Soropia Kabupaten Konawe", *Historical Education, Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Sejarah* Vol.4, No.1 (Jan. 2019): 1-12.

7 Ibid.

8 Suardika, K. & Hafid, A. (2016). "Peran Tradisi Lisan Iko-iko Berbasis Sastra Melayu dalam Penguatan Komunitas Etnis Bajo", *MUDRA*, Vol. 31, No.1 (Feb. 2016): 87-97.

9 Putra, H.D., Martha, I.N. & Yasa, I.N., "Sastra Lisan Iko – Iko dan Pakannahan di Kepulauan Sapeken Sumenep: Analisis Struktur, Nilai, dan Fungsi Sosial", *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* Vol.11, No.2 (Jun. 2021): 216-228.

10 Nuraini, C., "The Intangible Legacy of the Indonesian Bajo", *Wacana* Vol.17, No.1 (2016): 1 – 18.

11 Mahsyar, R., Tabrani, A. & Ambarwati, A., "Ekologi Budaya dalam Sastra Bahari *Iko-iko* Masyarakat Bajo di Kepulauan Sapeken", *NOSI* Vol.9, No.2 (Sep. 2021): 75-100.

12 Hakim, A., "Kolaborasi Pemerintah Daerah dalam Pelestarian Tradisi Lisan Iko-iko Suku Bajau di Sulawesi Tenggara", *Journal of Governance and Local Politics (JGLP)* Vol.4, No.1 (May 2022): 118-124.

However, the *iko-iko* as an oral tradition is at risk of extinction. Today, it is primarily chanted by the elderly, and even among them, few continue the practice. Many younger Bajo no longer know or are capable of chanting the *iko-iko*. The dominance of popular culture poses a significant challenge to the survival and preservation of traditional Bajo cultural expressions, especially the *iko-iko*. Younger generations tend to favor popular songs, which are more widely known and regarded as modern, while the *iko-iko* is often seen as old-fashioned and outdated.

The *iko-iko* is traditionally chanted without instrumental accompaniment, and its strict rhyming structure can make it seem difficult for younger Bajo to perform. As a result, they are more inclined to engage with contemporary art forms that appear simpler. Evidence of this shift is seen in the popularity of Bajo songs written in the Bajo language (baong sama), which are often performed with modern instruments, particularly solo organs.

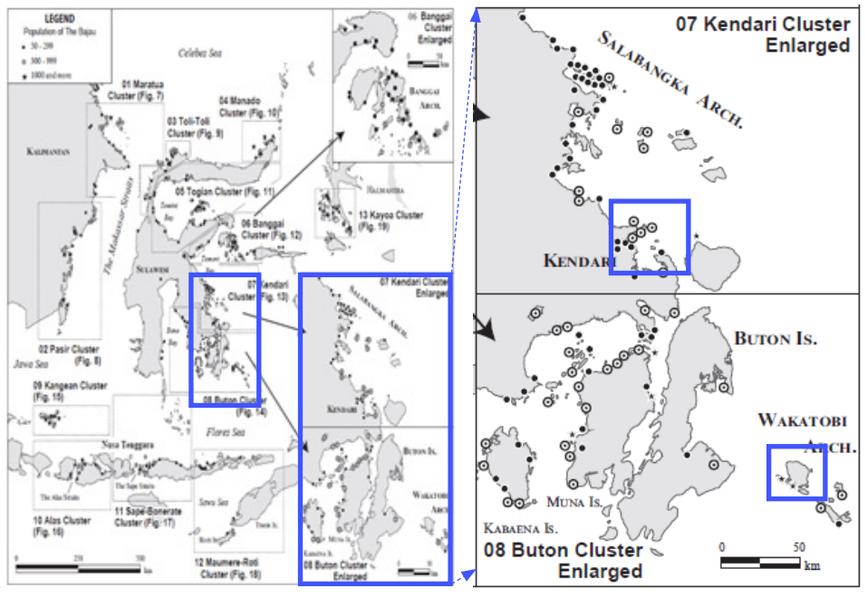
This research aims to not only describe and analyze the content and role of the *iko-iko* in Bajo society but also to take action toward its preservation. The preservation efforts will involve transcribing the lyrics of the *iko-iko* and compiling them into written and audio formats. The chanting of the *iko-iko* will also be recorded and preserved in audio form. This compilation will not only serve to safeguard the *iko-iko* but also introduce and promote it to a broader audience beyond the Bajo community, thus ensuring its continued relevance and cultural significance.

2. Research Results

2.1. Iko-iko at risk of extinction

The research focuses on the Bajo villages located in Southeast Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. In these villages, certain Bajo individuals have retained the ability to sing iko-iko. However, the findings reveal that among the thousands of Bajo people living in dozens of villages in Southeast Sulawesi, only two elders can still sing iko-iko. These villages are Leppe, near Kendari, the capital of Southeast Sulawesi, and Mola in the Wakatobi Islands. The locations of these two villages are shown in Figure 1 below.

The remaining *iko-iko* singers in the Bajo villages of Southeast Sulawesi are Pak Ndaddi (72 years old), who resides in Leppe village, and Pak Ator (76 years old), who lives in Mola village, in the southeastern part of the province. According to reports from various Bajo individuals, there were once other *iko-iko* singers, such as Mak Kodoh from Boepinang village, about 300 km west of Kendari, and Pak Mungkamma' from Mandike village, near Muna Island. Unfortunately, both of them passed away recently. Images of Pak Ndaddi and Pak Ator can be seen in Figure 2 below.



Legend:

- • / ⊙ = Bajo village
- □ = Iko-iko singer available (in Leppe near Kendari and Mola in Wakatobi)
- □ = Research field (Bajo villages in Southeast Sulawesi)

Figure 1. Availability of *iko-iko* singer in Bajo villages in Southeast Sulawesi
(Source: Adopted and modified from Nagatsu, 2017)

Pak Ndaddi, also known as Pak Jaiz,[13] was born in 1952 on Bokori Island. He later moved to Banggai, Central Sulawesi, where he completed his high school education before returning to Bokori and marrying in 1977. After the village of Bokori was divided into several smaller villages due to local development, Pak Ndaddi moved to Leppe village, where he resides today. Pak Ator, born in 1948 in Mantigola, a Bajo village near Kaledupa Island, was forced to relocate to Mola during the Islamic Hardliners' rebellion (DI/TII)[14] in the 1950s. He has lived in Mola since then. Both Pak Ndaddi and Pak Ator learned to sing *iko-iko* directly from their fathers, primarily by listening to their father's chants and memorizing the lyrics. Unfortunately, neither of their children has inherited the ability to perform *iko-iko*, nor has any younger Bajo generation.

13 About the second name in the Bajo society, see further Baskara, B. *Islam Bajo: Agama Orang Laut* (Jakarta: Javanica, 2016)

14 For more detail about the DI/TII rebellion, see further Baskara, B. *Islam Bajo: Agama Orang Laut* (Jakarta: Javanica, 2016) and Stacey, N. *Boats to burn: Bajo Fishing activity in the Australian Fishing zone* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2007).

Figure 2. Remnant of the *iko-iko* singers in Southeast Sulawesi
(source: author's documentation)

2.2. Transcription and description of iko-iko

The lyrics of *iko-iko* often reflect historical themes, including important events, heroic stories, the lives of ancestors or prominent Bajo figures, and tales of travels, maritime journeys, or significant places from the past. *Iko-iko* songs do not typically have specific titles; instead, their names are derived from their thematic content. Below are examples of *iko-iko* lyrics from the singers described earlier, Pak Ndaddi and Pak Ator:[15]

Pak Ndaddi	Pak Ator
1. *Timpusu teringah boyo uwa'na* (the reef where the father died)	1. Juragan Abung and Mbo Panai
2. Difficulties the Bajo faced in fishing	2. Sahamma and Kacaka Mommo
3. The marriage of the Bajo	3. Racing and Siti Kamaria
4. Confrontation with Tobelo	
5. Captain Ashan	
6. Captain Latage	
7. Captain Babawang	
8. Sika Ase-ase (a pity)	

15 The complete recordings of the iko-iko are saved in a Google drive with the link stated after the References.

An example of the transcription and translation of *iko-iko* lyrics is as follows:

Difficulties the Bajo faced in fishing (Pak Ndaddi)

Original transcription	English translation
Eee.. ditarikne pamannang,	Eee… pulled up to the land
Ngiri' ne sangai, nggai lagi takole	(the boat for fishing)
na mamea doi'	Wind is blowing hard, cannot go for making
mamea kalullumang	money,
Eee.. mau kita sukar daha sanang	searching for livelihood.
karidaang marennu, daha du karidaang	Eee… although we are sorrow, don't be too
Lamung darua batitu, ansini kami ma pore	happy or sad, don't be too much.
sanang kadilao	But as it was, we go to the sea for fishing,
Dayah dantolo duantolo sanang matakole	
bele…	One skewer, two skewers (of fish) we got.
Eee… damung batiru nggai lagi ginna	Eee… if so like that, it doesn't cover the cost
sanang na pa pugai ongkos	
Ma ruma bele…	at home
Eee.. ailagi na boa ana'na sikola napa	Eee… what else can be brought by the
balanja damong	children to school,
dalle mimitta' rua songo sanang, ooo…	if the sustenance just like drops of sweat,
bele…	ooo… bele...
Allao na mamia kita darua dolu	If we were gone for fishing in the past,
nggai lagi na nia bele sanang	will be no more (in recent times),
apa dayah nggai lagi para sanang ma dilao,	because fish are no longer abundant,
nggai lagi	not like before,
darua dolu pallibu kita masi je	if we went for fishing,
kole na si karapi kalullumang.	were still able to sustain life.
Ooo… aine itu lamong batitu	Ooo… what will be happen if (the situation)
dayah nggai lagi para	like this,
lamo missi nggai lagi para takole sanang	fish are no longer abundant,
nggai lagi darua dolu.	if we go for fishing, only get a few,
	not like before.

Juragan Abung & Mbo Panai (Pak Ator, shorted version)

Original transcription	English translation
Ooo... eee... dinda Bajo.	Ooo... eee... Bajo girl.
Dipititoto'ne susurang si Abung,	Being asked to talk si Abung,
di ala' malingauna, dinda Bajo.	take it quickly, Bajo girl.
Ooo... eee... ele'nane patilauko.	Ooo... eee... because (you) asked it.
Ooo... eee... alo' neko panginjamang,	

Alo' kabangi, dua mbangi si Abung,	Ooo... eee... a good place to borrow,
dinda Bajo.	for days or two days si Abung, Bajo girl.
Nak bagong o ngala didikki atai lebba	A *bagong* kid takes soul like life,
nyawa padingarko pakaleko, dinda Bajo.	(of) the listeners, Bajo girl.
Ooo... eee... aladine sanang bulang walu,	Ooo... eee... crying for being picked up at
dinda Bajo.	month eight, Bajo girl.
Ngala kabangi tullu mbangi dinda bajo.	For days or three days, Bajo girl.
Ooo... eee... rurupo'ne massisiamah	Ooo... eee... *Rurupo'ne Masissiamah* told to
amabara' lilla Bajo,	a Bajo man,
Dilanmis susurang si abung atuk.	*Dilanmis* talke d to si Abung, O Atuk,
Ooo... eee.. inggako anak lapanang si Pata,	Ooo... eee... where are si Pata's children and
baka Salah.	Salah?
Nalapanangna Suasa' inggako lapanang	It is better Suasa', where is better Mas
Mas Bonang.	Bonang.
Lapanang bukanu ne ma' bualawahta,	
boku dutai patele' tele' ne milah ancor ko,	It is better for Mother to open the door,
dinda Bajo.	let me go up and turn for counting, Bajo girl.
Pakale ko anak padingarko.	
O lamong na bunangku jara natibaku kadia',	You, kid, listen!
inta'na ele binatah ele' mano', dinda Bajo.	If I give you, it is better to throw it on the floor,
Ma' poro boe'ta dakaca,	eaten by animal, eaten by chicken, Bajo girl.
Daha lagi boe' dakaca lamong niako ku tiba	Mother, only a glass of water,
iya kadia inongna ele binatah, dinda Bajo.	if only a glass of water, if it is,
Ninggene si Abung tare'na ne purusangna.	it is better to be drunk by animal, Bajo girl.
Ooo... eee... tare'na ne pasinnah si Abung	Si Abung then stands up and pulls his
nasilupassne bittahna ka buku'na, dinda	drawstring.
Bajo.	Ooo... eee... si Abung pulls it through the
Dumalang nea katinga' alanane Qoraangna,	stomach until his back, Bajo girl.
bona ngaji, dinda Bajo.	He then goes to the middle and takes a
Katidurangne ma'na, o ngge sabe bibitta,	Quran,
dinda Bajo.	and recites it, Bajo girl.
Lapanang Qoraang tutu'ku ko mau ngajiku	His mother then put to sleep, not for a long
nggai lagi kitaku, dinda Bajo.	time after, Bajo girl.
Alo'na tidor ma' na batongna ne ndi'na.	Better I close the Quran, because I don't pay
	much attention to my recitation, Bajo girl.
O ndi' si piara neko ka ma' nu kau madi	It is good his mother is put to sleep, but (then
karimang.	she is) awakened by his little sibling.
	O, little sibling, live in harmony with your
Alangna lamong batong ya baraangnu ya	mother, you are beloved.
ndi'.	Tell your mother if she is awakened, little
Barah nia berena bona pangaramangna iya	sibling.
si Abung, dinda Bajo.	If she has got a partner, then give him a name
	si Abung, Bajo girl.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1. Analysis of iko-iko using content analysis

The analysis in this research utilizes content analysis as an analytical tool to extract meaning, interpret, and identify the context of the object.[16] In this study, content analysis is applied to all *iko-iko* chanted by both Pak Ndaddi and Pak Ator. The objective is to explore their meaning, provide interpretations, identify the context, draw comparisons, and understand the relationships between the various *iko-iko*.

3.1.1. Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko*

Pak Ndaddi chants eight distinct *iko-iko*, which are: (1) *Timpusu turingah boyo uwa'na* (the reef where his father died), (2) *Difficulties the Bajo faced in fishing*, (3) *The Marriage of the Bajo*, (4) *Confrontation with the Tobelo*, (5) *Captain Ashan*, (6) *Captain Latage*, (7) *Captain Babawang*, and (8) *Sika Ase-ase* (a pity). The following analysis describes the content of each *iko-iko*.

Timpusu Turingah Boyo Uwa'na (The Reef Where His Father Died) This *iko-iko* recounts the story of a Bajo man, Kudalamanang, whose father died at the Cakalang Timun reef. As a child, Kudalamanang longed to visit the reef where his father had perished. Upon arrival, his boat was struck by violent waves, leaving him stranded on Tobelo land, where he was captured. Kudalamanang eventually escaped, sailed to his uncle's village, and later married his uncle's daughter.

Difficulties the Bajo Faced in Fishing As suggested by the title, this *iko-iko* describes the challenges the Bajo people encounter while fishing, particularly strong winds that force them to pull their boats ashore. Despite their persistence, they catch few fish, insufficient to meet their daily needs. The *iko-iko* reflects the Bajo's lament for a past when fishing was abundant, contrasting it with the scarcity they now face.

The Marriage of the Bajo This *iko-iko* narrates the story of Si Denreng Lao, a Bajo man who wishes to marry Kacaka Mommo but faces opposition. When he requests his mother's help in proposing to Kacaka, she refuses and instead sends him on a journey. During his travels, Si Denreng Lao is rescued by his father and older sister, who take him home. Eventually, he marries Kacaka Mommo.

Confrontation with the Tobelo This *iko-iko* tells of a Bajo family—a husband, wife, and their two children—who plan to fish around the Banggai Islands. Upon arrival, they encounter the Tobelo people, who threaten them. The children are hidden in the hold to avoid detection. Despite the threats, the family manages to escape and return to their village.

Captain Ashan Though named after Captain Ashan, this *iko-iko* centers on the lives of his three sons. Before his death, Captain Ashan instructed his sons to divide his wealth

16 Krippendorff, K. *Content Analysis: an Introduction to its Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2004).

equally and offered the advice: "Do not eat before you are hungry, and do not sleep before you are sleepy." Only the youngest son followed this advice, becoming the wealthiest person in the village, while his two older brothers suffered and became servants to the village datu. The youngest son eventually redeemed them by purchasing their freedom from the datu and reminded them to follow their late father's advice to avoid misery.

Captain Latage This *iko-iko* tells the story of Captain Latage, a young Bajo man. Before his father died, he inherited a kris, which was passed down through his mother. As an adult, he traveled to his uncle's house, where he fell in love with Sitti Abongang, his uncle's daughter. When he asked his mother to propose on his behalf, he discovered that she had already been courted by Captain Labolong. Latage confronted Labolong and defeated him in a fight, using the kris inherited from his father. Latage ultimately married Sitti Abongang.

Captain Babawang This *iko-iko* narrates the story of Captain Babawang, whose father was kidnapped by the Tobelo when Babawang was a child. As an adult, he sought to discover the location where his father was taken. Accompanied by Mbo Panai, Babawang confronted the Tobelo. After a battle, Mbo Panai defeated the Tobelo, allowing Babawang to find his father, who was captured and bound. Babawang rescued him and returned home.

Sika Ase-ase (A Pity) This *iko-iko* portrays the misfortunes of a Bajo family, focusing on a husband who complains about his poor fortune compared to his friends. His friend reveals that the husband's wife had wronged him, which was the cause of his misfortune. The husband confronts his wife and proposes relocating to another village, but she refuses to accompany him. The husband leaves her, returns to his village, and chooses not to forgive her.

3.1.2. Pak Ator's *iko-iko*

Pak Ator chants three *iko-iko*: (1) *Juragan Abung and Mbo Panai*, (2) *Sahamma and Kacaka Mommo*, and (3) *Racing and Siti Kamaria*. The full versions of these *iko-iko* are quite long. According to Pak Ator, chanting each *iko-iko* in its entirety would take two days and two nights. The descriptions provided here are based on recordings of only a quarter of each *iko-iko*'s total length. The content of Pak Ator's *iko-iko* is summarized as follows:

Juragan Abung and Mbo Panai: As the title suggests, this *iko-iko* tells the story of two Bajo figures, Juragan Abung and Mbo Panai. However, the recorded portion focuses primarily on the early life of Juragan Abung, with only a brief mention of Mbo Panai. Juragan Abung is portrayed as an influential figure whose words command attention. He is depicted as a devout Muslim, often shown reading the Koran, and as a powerful individual capable of defeating entire villages. Despite his strengths, Juragan Abung is also shown as someone who enjoys gambling, betting, and cockfighting. Mbo Panai's role is less prominent, with his character mainly described as a companion to Juragan Abung during their voyages.

Sahamma and Kacaka Mommo: This *iko-iko* is expected to tell the story of the figures Sahamma and Kacaka Mommo. However, the recorded portion does not yet reach these two central characters. Instead, it focuses on a figure named Rajjing and his relationship with the main figures remains unclear. Rajjing is depicted as a skilled and powerful individual, particularly proficient with knives. Despite his abilities, Rajjing is shown to have a negative character, notably when he abducts a young girl. Rajjing is ultimately defeated by Aji, a figure who appears to be a relative.

Racing and Siti Kamaria: This *iko-iko*, as the title suggests, centers on Racing and Siti Kamaria. The recorded portion, however, only covers the beginning of Racing's story and does not yet introduce Siti Kamaria. Racing is portrayed as having migrated to Java, where he is advised to work hard to make a living away from home. His parents remind him of the sacrifices his mother made during his upbringing, urging him to repay her care before considering marriage. As a result, Racing chooses to return to his place of migration rather than marry, as his parents have not yet granted their approval.

3.1.3. Comparative analysis between Pak Ndaddi's and Pak Ator's *iko-iko*

Pak Ndaddi chants eight distinct *iko-iko*, each lasting between 10 and 30 minutes. In contrast, Pak Ator performs only three *iko-iko*, but their duration is significantly longer. Pak Ator explained that if fully chanted, one *iko-iko* could extend for up to two days and nights. An informant, Pak Daud, who had listened to Pak Ator's *iko-iko* in the past, recalled that Pak Ator would chant while seated on his terrace, illuminated by oil lamps, with listeners gathered below in boats. Pak Ator would chant throughout the night, from dusk until dawn. Given this context, the *iko-iko* of Pak Ator described here are only fragments, with each recording lasting approximately 30 minutes, which may not fully represent the entirety of the original chants.

Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko* encompass not only historical stories but also contemporary themes. One such *iko-iko* contrasts the difficulties faced by the Bajo in fishing today with their past experiences. The current scarcity of fish, as described, has made fishing less productive, resulting in insufficient catches to meet daily needs. This *iko-iko* also depicts the Bajo pulling their boats ashore and refraining from going to sea due to bad weather, specifically strong winds. This shift may indicate a broader trend of the Bajo considering alternative livelihoods, such as moving to land-based work. Additionally, the adverse weather conditions could be linked to the impacts of climate change, which further affects the Bajo's fishing activities.

Several of Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko* recount the suffering of male characters who were abandoned by their fathers in childhood. For instance, Kudalamanang's father died in the reef, Captain Latage's father died when he was a young boy, Captain Babawang's father was

kidnapped by the Tobelo, and Si Denreng Lao's father migrated to Java when he was a child. Raised without their fathers, these characters, as adults, seek to learn about their fathers' whereabouts. The *iko-iko* details their journeys, such as Kudalamanang's desire to visit the reef where his father died, Captain Babawang's quest to visit Tobelo, and Captain Latage and Si Denreng Lao's searches for their fathers' families. The role of their uncles is significant, as each character seeks their uncle's help in obtaining a boat to embark on these quests.

Other *iko-iko* by Pak Ndaddi feature the Tobelo people, who are depicted as pirates and kidnappers in Bajo lore. In addition to stealing goods, the Tobelo would kidnap coastal villagers, including women and children, selling them into slavery. In the *iko-iko* "Confrontation with the Tobelo," Bajo parents hide their children in the hold of boats to protect them from being kidnapped. In "Captain Babawang," it is revealed that Captain Babawang's father was taken by the Tobelo when he was a child.

Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko* also offers valuable life lessons, with educational and didactic content intended for future generations. In "Captain Ashan," the importance of fairly dividing inheritance among children is emphasized, alongside Captain Ashan's advice: "Don't eat if you're not hungry, and don't sleep if you're not sleepy." This advice underscores the importance of hard work and avoiding laziness, as excessive eating and sleeping represent idleness. The youngest son, who heeds his father's advice, succeeds, while the two older brothers, who ignore it, do not.

In the *iko-iko* "Sika Ase-Ase," the significance of maintaining harmonious relationships, especially between husband and wife, is highlighted. A Bajo man complains to his wife about their poor fortune, which he believes stems from her misdeeds. When she refuses to apologize, he decides to separate from her and return to his hometown. This story emphasizes the importance of trust, respect, and avoiding suspicion and harm in relationships for a stable family life.

In contrast, the *iko-iko* chanted by Pak Ator exclusively depicts historical events, focusing on heroic deeds, the exercise of supernatural powers, and the characters' greatness. For example, Juragan Abung's use of supernatural powers to defeat an entire village and Rajjing's knife skills are highlighted. The *iko-iko* also describes the Bajo's exploration and migration, such as Juragan Abung's journey to Morowali and Rajjing's migration to Java. Additionally, Pak Ator's *iko-iko* contains advice, such as the guidance of Rajjing's parents, who remind him of the hard work they invested in raising him, urging him to repay their kindness despite his success in Java.

When comparing the *iko-iko* chanted by Pak Ndaddi and Pak Ator, several common figures emerge. The first is Mbo Panai, an important figure in Pak Ator's *iko-iko* "Juragan Abung and Mbo Panai." It is unclear whether this is the same figure in both Pak Ndaddi's

and Pak Ator's *iko-iko* or merely a shared name. In both versions, Mbo Panai is portrayed as an expert in sailing, accompanying the main character on journeys. In Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko*, Mbo Panai is also depicted as a powerful figure capable of defeating many Tobelo in Tobelo territory.

The second figure is Kacaka Mommo, featured in Pak Ator's *iko-iko* "Sahamma and Kacaka Mommo." In the recorded portion of this *iko-iko*, little detail is provided about Kacaka Mommo, leaving it uncertain whether this is the same figure from Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko* or a different character with the same name. In one of Pak Ndaddi's *iko-iko*, Kacaka Mommo is described as a woman, the daughter of a village leader (*datu*), who marries her cousin, Si Denreng Lao, the nephew of her father.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Causes of *iko-iko*'s vulnerability to extinction

The Bajo recognize that the existence of *iko-iko* is endangered. Interviews with key Bajo figures, including Pak Ndaddi and Pak Ator, reveal three main causes of its decline. First, the reluctance of younger generations to learn *iko-iko* is a significant factor. They find it difficult to memorize the lyrics, as they have traditionally learned the song by listening to their fathers chant it and memorizing the lyrics without written transcription. Since there is no available transcription, young Bajo people struggle to learn the song through listening alone.

Second, the rapid development of information technology in the digital era has greatly influenced the younger generation, who increasingly spend their leisure time using smartphones instead of engaging in traditional practices like preserving *iko-iko*. Popular culture, especially contemporary music, has also diverted their attention. Many young Bajo prefer singing modern songs because they perceive them as easier and more current, while *iko-iko* is seen as outdated and difficult.

Third, advancements in boat technology have contributed to the decline of *iko-iko*. Historically, Bajo boats were not equipped with engines, and *iko-iko* was traditionally sung during long sailing trips. Today, most Bajo boats are motorized, reducing the time available for singing *iko-iko* during travel. Additionally, the loud engine noise drowns out the chants, making it increasingly rare to hear *iko-iko* during sailing.

3.2.2. Strategies for Preserving and Safeguarding the *iko-iko*

In response to the challenges outlined above, this research proposes several strategies for preserving *iko-iko*. First, the transcription of *iko-iko* lyrics, which is a key result of this study, can serve as a tool for younger generations to learn the song. This written form will help overcome the difficulty of memorizing the lyrics through listening alone. Once the younger generation can sing *iko-iko*, its existence may be revived and sustained.

Second, an initiative led by the village head of Leppe, Pak Hajar, to establish an art studio in front of his house offers a promising avenue for cultural preservation. Though the studio aims to support various art forms, including painting and crafts, it can also provide a space for the younger generation to learn *iko-iko*, with Pak Ndaddi serving as the primary instructor.

Third, organizing periodic festivals, competitions, or cultural events featuring *iko-iko* performances is another strategy to raise awareness and encourage participation. During the research period, a singing competition for popular songs was held in Mola village to celebrate Indonesia's Independence Day. Inspired by this example, a similar event can be organized for *iko-iko*, either during the Independence Day celebrations or other significant national holidays, with support from village authorities, local governments, and other stakeholders.

4. Conclusion

Iko-iko is a vital cultural expression of the Bajo people, yet it faces the risk of extinction. This research highlights that among the thousands of Bajo living in Southeast Sulawesi, only two elders—Pak Ndaddi of Leppe and Pak Ator of Mola—are still able to sing *iko-iko*. The main factors contributing to its decline include: (1) the reluctance of younger generations to learn *iko-iko* due to the difficulty of memorizing the lyrics without written transcriptions, (2) the influence of popular culture, with young people preferring modern songs over *iko-iko*, and (3) technological advances in boat design, which have reduced the opportunity to sing *iko-iko* during sailing.

To safeguard *iko-iko*, this research proposes several strategies: (1) the use of transcriptions to help the younger generation learn the song more easily, (2) the utilization of Pak Hajar's art studio as a space for learning *iko-iko*, and (3) the organization of festivals or competitions to promote *iko-iko* and engage the wider community, with support from local governments and other stakeholders.

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3

Evolution of Conservation Ideologies in Sweden and Thailand – a Comparative Study

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Abstract

Conservation practices vary globally in both planning and execution, and selecting appropriate materials and methods requires a clearly defined purpose and transparency regarding the values being prioritized. The prevailing view suggests that tangible and intangible values have been assessed differently in the West and East. This study compares Sweden and Thailand to examine the similarities and differences in their conservation ideologies. A historical overview indicates that both countries followed a similar trajectory, with significant changes occurring in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when clearer conservation guidelines were established. During this period, state oversight increased, and regulatory frameworks were developed. Religion has played a significant role in both countries, though it has had a more prominent influence in Thailand, where it continues to shape the management of cultural heritage. The division between living and dead monuments has influenced which aspects of cultural heritage are prioritized. The Western world has generally focused more on "dead" heritage—such as ruins and abandoned sites—while the East has emphasized "living" heritage, such as active monasteries. Despite differences in how tangible and intangible cultural heritage are regarded, there are also notable similarities. In recent decades, both countries have increasingly emphasized intangible values, particularly those related to social and civil rights, which are now seen as integral to cultural heritage management.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose

As a practicing painting conservator, I continuously reflect on and justify the actions I propose and implement on objects. To avoid a "copy-paste" approach, where decisions are made based on routine or outdated practices, it is crucial to critically assess the purpose of each conservation project. In recent years, I have encountered street art and graffiti, which differ from traditional painting not only in materials but, perhaps more significantly, in their intangible values. Concepts such as temporality, symbolism, and identity are central to this art form, often requiring conservation methods distinct from those used for traditional paintings.

To challenge and broaden my understanding of conservation principles, I sought to explore ideologies and practices applied in other parts of the world. Swedish conservation principles may differ from those in regions influenced by distinct religions and cultures. By comparing various perspectives, we can gain deeper insights into diverse conservation practices, ultimately strengthening the foundation for cultural heritage work. This study focuses on theoretical ideologies and valuation rather than legislative frameworks, although legal contexts are briefly discussed. Practical interventions should always be preceded by discussions regarding the ideological principles being adopted. Laws and regulations can either restrict or permit measures that may be viewed as more or less desirable from a conservator's perspective. However, it is impossible to create legislation that can adequately address the valuation of every individual object. This study aims to highlight this point: that valuation varies based on numerous factors, including nationality, culture, and religion. Ultimately, the decision of whether and how an object should be preserved depends on the values attributed to it.

1.2. Method

This study employs qualitative textual analysis based on written sources. Thailand was chosen due to the relatively large amount of English-language material available on the subject, though literature specifically addressing painting conservation was limited. Explicit principles guiding practical conservation efforts were also scarce. In cases where conservation principles for paintings could be discerned, they are presented with the assumption that practical execution aligns with broader preservation trends.

1.2.1. Selection

Both Swedish and Thai examples are closely tied to religion and, in some cases, the monarchy or aristocracy. Large-scale church restorations in Sweden during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were prestigious projects that attracted significant public and critical attention, resulting in extensive documentation and subsequent discussions. While secular examples exist, the purpose and underlying ideologies are often more clearly articulated in ecclesiastical contexts. Literature on painting conservation is limited to wall paintings, which, based on personal experience, were valued higher than painted inventories, which were often repainted more extensively.

In Thailand, cultural heritage has historically been linked to religion or the monarchy (Khanjanusthiti, 1998; Siriphatthanakun, 2022). Thus, discussions surrounding historical conservation projects have predominantly focused on temples and monasteries. More recently, the protection of urban secular environments has sparked debate, which is briefly addressed in this study. The selection for this research primarily focuses on religious buildings, some of which remain in use, while others do not.

1.3. Theory

This study is authored by me, a conservator trained in Western traditions, who examines and interprets Thai cultural heritage preservation from a secularized perspective. As Weeraphan Shinawatra notes—and as my own preconceptions suggest—the Western world has traditionally emphasized tangible values, whereas, in Asia, higher value is often placed on intangible aspects, such as religion and traditional ways of life, in the context of cultural heritage conservation (2006).

1.3.1 Terminology

Terms such as conservation, restoration, and reconstruction in Swedish and Thai cannot be directly translated into English. Both Swedish and Thai terminologies have distinct interpretations and are often used inconsistently within the field, complicating any attempt to translate them into another language without delving into the nuances of each term. Thai terminology, as explained by Hatthaya Siriphatthanakun, demonstrates that the meanings of these terms vary depending on their context (2022). In this study, the English term "conservation" is used broadly to refer to both preventive and active measures and interventions on cultural heritage sites and/or objects.

The term "cultural heritage" also presents challenges, as several terms in Swedish and Thai describe cultural heritage from different perspectives. In this study, I use "cultural heritage" to encompass all objects and environments considered to hold or have held value from a conservation perspective.

2. History of Conservation Ideologies

2.1. Sweden

Cultural heritage conservation in Sweden has been regulated since the 17th century, with the enactment of the world's first law for preserving historical monuments. Established in 1666, this law addressed both material and immaterial heritage and was directly linked to the Antiquities Board (Antikvitetskollegium), which was responsible for "gathering information about ancient monuments, architectural landmarks, legends, and traditions" (Bedoire, 2013).

In the 19th century, distinct conservation ideologies emerged, and more formal principles and restoration methods took shape in the early 20th century. The conservation of wall paintings developed alongside broader debates on restoration, particularly regarding religious structures, but also some secular buildings like Gripsholm Castle. Wall painting conservation was often integrated into larger restoration projects, with decisions on their treatment made by the restoration architect. No standardized principles existed for documentation or treatment; for example, significant motifs might be documented before being painted over, but comprehensive documentation was not universally practiced.

An exception to this trend was Nils Månsson Mandelgren, an artist and art historian with a particular interest in medieval buildings. Mandelgren not only documented medieval paintings but also entire interiors. In the 1850s, he conducted what is considered Sweden's first known conservation of mural paintings at Bjäresjö Church, documenting and publishing his work. His efforts were considered careful and respectful of the original (*Conservation of mural paintings*, 2001).

By the late 19th century, differing ideological approaches to restoration emerged, particularly in regard to churches. Architects like Helgo Zettervall advocated for redesigning religious buildings according to High Gothic aesthetics, deemed most suitable for Christian liturgical purposes. High Gothic architecture, originating in the 13th century, is characterized by intricate designs, pointed arches, tall spires, and large windows to let in light. Notable examples include Notre Dame in Paris and the cathedral in Reims.

In Sweden, these principles led to restorations that disregarded earlier alterations, focusing on recreating the Gothic style. Modern materials like cement and steel were sometimes used to achieve these high forms. This style of restoration, known as stylistic restoration, faced criticism for disregarding historical layers. A prominent Swedish newspaper decried such restorations as "modern barbarism," arguing that "the very life had been stripped away" from the restored buildings. National Romantic[17] currents, which emerged around this time, advocated for the use of natural materials and craftsmanship while critiquing the materials employed in stylistic restorations (Bedoire, 2013).

17 The National Romantic movement highly valued Swedish traditions and materials. In architecture, brick, natural stone, and native Swedish wood were commonly used, drawing inspiration from both vernacular folk traditions and Swedish castle architecture.

The treatment of wall paintings during this period followed similar principles. Decorative painters often prioritized aesthetic unity, overpainting and completing fragments to achieve a cohesive result based on prevailing stylistic trends. Medieval paintings were sometimes destroyed if they did not align with the envisioned church interior. Mandelgren's meticulous conservation in Bjäresjö Church, for instance, was later obscured by a decorative painter in the late 19th century who "improved" the paintings (*Conservation of mural paintings*, 2001).

At this time, buildings were categorized as either "dead" or "living," which influenced the values prioritized in conservation. While this distinction was not formally defined, it shaped conservation practices. A "dead" building, such as a ruin, was valued for its historical or age significance, while a "living" building, such as an active church or castle, emphasized functionality, allowing for more alterations and renovations. Both categories were expected to be preserved, although the interpretation of this varied. This distinction continued to influence conservation practices into the 20th century (Geijer, 2004).

Modern conservation principles, which largely persist today, began to take shape in the early 20th century. Sigurd Curman is credited with formalizing many of these principles. A student of art history and architectural engineering, Curman's study tour across Europe at the turn of the century proved highly influential. In Italy, he studied restoration projects such as the restoration of St. Mark's Campanile and the conservation of Gothic wall paintings in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice. Two aspects of these projects particularly impacted Curman: the thorough preliminary studies and measurements before restoration, and the novel ideas surrounding wall painting conservation (Edman, 1999).

2.1.1. Formation of modern principles

The conservation of wall paintings in Frarikyrkan differed significantly from the stylistic restorations common in Sweden at the time. Curman observed key approaches to conservation at Frarikyrkan:

- Respect for the aged color tones
- Acceptance of multiple historical layers
- Selective reconstruction of specific motifs

Sections that had faded or altered in color were not repainted but left in their original state, which Curman described as allowing the paintings to exist in their "true form" without enhancement (Edman, 1999). The preservation of paintings from different historical periods also fascinated Curman, as it contrasted with the stylistic restorations in Sweden, where non-

conforming additions were often removed. Treating all historical layers equally and preserving later overpaintings was a relatively modern concept in Swedish conservation. Retouching and reconstruction varied based on the subject: figurative elements, such as depictions of people and religious themes, were handled differently from decorative elements like lines and leaf motifs. The latter were often more extensively completed to provide structural consistency to the paintings, while figurative elements were left untouched to avoid "making old things new again" (Edman, 1999). These principles were influenced by the ideas of Italian architect Camillo Boito, who was active in Venice during Curman's visit (Bedoire, 2013).

2.1.2. Modern restoration principles and a new profession

Curman refined these principles during his work in Strängnäs Cathedral, where wall paintings were conserved according to his evolving methods. Decorative motifs such as floral patterns, foliage, and lines were completed, as they were considered repetitive and easier to replicate from the originals, while figures—particularly faces, hands, and clothing—were left largely untouched. If necessary, color clarifications were applied but were not considered full restorations. Additions were marked by lines or stippling, making the interventions cohesive from a distance but distinguishable upon closer inspection. As the conservation of paintings moved away from the domain of decorative painters, the profession of conservator emerged (Bedoire, 2013). Curman's principles, which emphasized minimal intervention, transparency, and respect for the original materials, continue to guide modern conservation practices.

2.1.3. Post-war periods

Following the First World War, debates emerged on how to address the widespread damage to buildings and monuments. The Athens Conference, which resulted in *The Athens Charter*, emphasized that stylistic restorations should be avoided, and new additions to older structures must be clearly distinguishable. Modern materials like steel and concrete, however, were accepted. In Sweden, this perspective was partially adopted, leading to the dismissal and, in many cases, removal of 19th-century stylistic restorations. "Taste restorations," which prioritized aesthetic value, became more common. In retrospect, the removal of 19th-century additions can be seen as another form of stylistic restoration. Nonetheless, by the mid-20th century, numerous transformations continued based on this approach. This strategy, however, faced criticism from those who advocated for preserving these environments as representations of a different historical era, limiting interventions to what was absolutely necessary. Some argued that reverting to a pre-19th-century state was impractical and could cause more harm than good (Edman, 1999).

After the Second World War, architect Erik Lundberg became a prominent proponent

of modern architectural approaches within older church interiors. His restorations sought to enhance the church's original purpose as a space for meditation and devotion, while also respecting the architectural character and the significance of light. The post-war period brought liturgical changes and a demand for new solutions, and Lundberg led the way with contemporary approaches that incorporated practical innovations. In some cases, significant interior transformations were carried out, with entire church spaces redesigned to reflect prevailing ideals, often shaped by the architect's vision.

Lundberg framed the concept of restoration through two key perspectives. The first was a museological and conservation-focused approach, in which historical monuments were preserved. The second emphasized adapting the space to modern needs, where conservation was secondary to the architect's reinterpretation of the church. Lundberg favored the latter approach, prioritizing interpretation. Restoration, he argued, should begin only after thoroughly understanding the building's condition. The use of original materials was important, but new designs and materials should harmonize with the old. This did not necessarily mean replicating the exact original colors, even when precise paint samples had been taken. Instead, Lundberg believed in capturing the spirit of the original materials and creating an environment based on that understanding. He argued that an exact return to a previous appearance was a falsification that failed to respect the true nature and significance of the space (Edman, 1999). These taste-based restorations, where the architect's vision took precedence over the preservation of historical layers, were both praised and criticized. Critics argued that these changes deviated too far from established ecclesiastical traditions, while proponents claimed the modernization clarified and enhanced the church's purpose.

From a conservation perspective, comparisons can be made with Erik Olsson, a Gotland-based conservator with an artistic background. Between the 1950s and 1970s, Olsson worked on numerous churches on the island, applying different techniques and materials depending on the nature of the work. He treated medieval murals with far greater respect than later interiors and wall paintings, conserving medieval lime paintings in accordance with Curman's principles, with particular care for figurative elements. In contrast, frameworks such as lines and foliage were restored more extensively.

Olsson also employed techniques like sgraffito, scratching lines into new additions to distinguish them from the original. In churches where different types of artwork were conserved, he often adopted a more liberal approach to overpainting, recreating missing sections based on his interpretations. A notable example of his work is the reconstruction of the illusionistic painted ceiling in Follingbo Church in the mid-1950s. This 17th-century grisaille painting, designed to imitate an elaborate stucco ceiling, incorporated a self-portrait of Olsson as an angel. In the context of contemporary conservation debates, his work in

Follingbo Church reflects partial adherence to Lundberg's principles, albeit through a humorous lens.

2.1.4. New ideology of the 1970s

In Sweden, the 1960s saw a push to improve social conditions by demolishing older city centers with inadequate living conditions, replacing them with new, modern housing areas on the outskirts. The urban cores were commercialized, and tall buildings for retail and office use were erected. This rapid transformation soon attracted criticism for its brutality, its failure to respect the organic environments built up over centuries, and its focus on uniformity and traffic flow rather than preserving historical character (Edman, 1999).

The 1975 designation of the Year of Building Conservation introduced the concept of integrated preservation, which asserted that building conservation should be integrated into all urban planning. This expanded the concept of cultural environments to include all buildings of cultural-historical interest, whether rural or urban, regardless of whether they were individual structures or entire environments. Social justice was a key concern, with changes to the built environment not allowed to undermine social and civic involvement and diversity (Robertsson, 2002).

The restoration architect who shaped the ideology of this period was Ove Hidemark. He emphasized both the use of original materials and the importance of natural aging processes. Hidemark argued that buildings should be repaired with the same materials originally used, based on a technical understanding that buildings like Skokloster Castle, which had stood for 350 years, required durable construction. He also contended that modern materials did not age well, valuing the natural aging of older materials. His approach further emphasized minimal intervention, avoiding unnecessary replacements or repairs (Lindahl, 2008). Hidemark's work on Skokloster Castle from 1968 to 1978 aimed to preserve the castle's original state, turning it into a museum that showcased all periods and their wear, including certain damages. Interventions were made only when absolutely necessary, using the same materials and techniques employed in the 17th century (Ahlgren m.fl., 2004).

Hidemark's principles can be summarized as minimal intervention and authenticity, though the term "authenticity" was not explicitly used. Instead, he framed it as respecting the identity and inherent properties of each object and adapting measures accordingly. In the conservation of paintings, these principles were applied, and retouching was often avoided altogether.

2.1.5. The 2000s

At the beginning of the 21st century, cultural heritage work in Sweden focused primarily

on broadening the scope of what constitutes cultural heritage and examining societal development from this perspective. Historically an expert-driven field, it increasingly became expected to involve greater public engagement, with communities identifying what should be preserved. Cultural environments were now viewed as dynamic and functional rather than static museum pieces, and cultural heritage was regarded as a resource for societal development. Efforts were made to protect local identities, considering both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage. There was also a shift in favor of modern environments and urban areas, alongside a growing appreciation for older buildings. A key realization during this period was that contemporary buildings would eventually become part of the cultural heritage, requiring new knowledge and approaches.

Practical restoration efforts moved toward a value-based process, focusing on determining and defining cultural-historical values. Several models were developed to support this process. A notable model is the Swedish National Heritage Board's *Platform for Cultural-Historical Evaluation and Selection*, published in 2014. This model promotes a reflective approach where decisions are motivated, and all arguments are transparently discussed. The platform emphasizes cultural-historical perspectives, incorporating aesthetic, social, economic, and ecological viewpoints. It is available for free download from the Swedish National Heritage Board's website (Génetay & Lindberg, 2014).

A concrete example of this value-based approach is the 2018 care program for Storkyrkan (The Great Church) in Stockholm. The program was designed as a strategy applicable to all churches in the Diocese of Stockholm, focusing on value identification and the consequences of maintenance and interventions. The document underscores that objects are carriers of value, providing narratives that justify and clarify their cultural-historical significance (Laserna & Nilsson, 2018). Nowadays, action plans require that preservation measures be justified from a cultural heritage perspective, with a consequence analysis to assess the impact of actions or, conversely, the lack thereof on the object.

In 2022, *Building-related public art: method for valuation based on cultural-historical and aesthetic aspects*[18] was published, expanding upon the aforementioned platform but specifically focusing on public art in outdoor settings (Mellander Backman m.fl., 2022). While no specific guidelines are provided for implementation, the document discusses valuation principles to ensure thoughtful decision-making.

Sweden's national organization for conservators, NKF-S, follows the ethical guidelines established by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organizations (ECCO), as it has not developed its own. Conservators working in active conservation are expected to adhere to ECCO's guidelines, though the conservator title is not legally

18 Translated by the author from Swedish: *Byggnadsanknuten offentlig konst. Metod för värdering utifrån kulturhistoriska och estetiska aspekter*

protected in Sweden; that is, no formal education is required to work in this field. This has been a point of concern for established conservators, and licensing has been discussed within the NKF-S community.

ECCO's professional guidelines are divided into three sections: the first defines the profession, the second presents the Code of Ethics, and the third addresses education. The Code of Ethics stipulates that conservators "must undertake only such work as they are competent to carry out." It further asserts that conservators "shall respect the aesthetic, historic, and spiritual significance and the physical integrity of the cultural heritage" and "shall strive to use only products, materials, and procedures that [will not] harm the cultural heritage, the environment, or people." The guidelines emphasize minimizing interventions and performing only what is necessary, and materials should be reversible or, if this is not possible, restorable and compatible with the original material. The conservator is also expected to respect the social use of an object; if conservation is incompatible with use, the possibility of creating a replica should be discussed (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, 2003). Although the guidelines address some material and immaterial dilemmas, they do not offer specific guidance on which values should govern decision-making, allowing room for further development of the guidelines.

2.1.6. Regulations and legislation

Without delving into the specifics of Swedish cultural heritage legislation, here is a brief overview of its evolution and the framework that governs current practices. Swedish cultural heritage legislation dates back 400 years, beginning with the 1666 decree, which aimed to protect ancient monuments and ensure their preservation. This early legislation focused on monuments and antiquities (excluding buildings) and led to the formation of the Antiquities Collegium, a new government agency tasked with antiquarian research, including local history and church history. An inventory of antiquities, such as castles, runestones, and other significant sites, was initiated during this period. Research primarily centered on historical objects related to notable individuals, particularly the monarchy. Concurrently, church law addressed liturgical matters and offered protection for church buildings and their inventories.

The state's direct involvement in cultural heritage management began in the late 18th century, under King Gustav III, who mandated that all major repairs to public buildings be reviewed by the King's appointed Chief Superintendent. During this time, the Antiquities Collegium merged into the Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiques (Vitterhetsakademien).

The management of church buildings and furnishings evolved in the early 19th century, with the Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiques assuming greater oversight of Swedish churches and the values attributed to them. Apart from churches, the focus was primarily on buildings no longer in use, such as castles, ruins, and the city walls of Visby. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Academy began addressing the protection of churches deemed particularly valuable, including those threatened with demolition (Geijer, 2004).

In the early 20th century, debates emerged over how to assess the cultural-historical value of buildings. Authorities expressed concern that such assessments might hinder the use or modification of buildings. Despite these concerns, a law passed in 1920 granted the state authority to evaluate the cultural-historical value of public buildings and protect them as monuments. This was the first legal protection extended to buildings other than churches. The following years saw the establishment of the National Heritage Board, tasked with managing both secular buildings and monuments. In 1943, the law was expanded to protect older church furnishings and privately owned buildings, which could be expropriated in extreme cases. Further amendments in 1960 strengthened the protection of privately owned heritage buildings. The 1989 Cultural Heritage Act (Kulturminneslagen, KML) consolidated previous legislation, emphasizing the importance of keeping cultural heritage alive. Around the same time, laws concerning environmental and natural resource management, as well as land, water, and construction planning, were enacted (Geijer, 2004).

On the international front, Sweden has committed to the Granada Document, which outlines definitions and protective measures for cultural heritage (*konvention-om-skydd-for-byggnadskulturarvet-i-europa-granada-den-3-oktober-1985.pdf*, u.å.; Robertsson, 2002). Other documents, such as the Venice Charter, are recommendations and serve as guidance.

2.2. Thailand

Ideologies regarding restoration in Thailand date back to the 600s, although they were not formally codified in law or written records. Art and architecture were primarily created in service of Buddhism, regarded as acts of merit within the religion. Repairing and maintaining objects was not viewed as problematic but as an act of preserving their condition with respect to religious practices. The maintenance of objects and buildings was seen as a demonstration of good Buddhist conduct, earning merit, which in turn contributed to one's spiritual progress toward nirvana. Enhancing, enlarging, or improving objects to gain additional merit was also considered acceptable. Information regarding restoration was traditionally passed down orally, with a limited number of written sources detailing proper restoration practices (Sae-Wang, 2017). A stone inscription from around 1345 documents a restoration led by Prince Mahathera Srisattha at Wat Mahatat, which was in ruins. Among other efforts, he raised a stupa and added stucco ornaments (Baker, 2013). The restoration

of religious sculptures is described in detail, noting that various parts that had separated needed to be lifted by multiple men, transported on carts, and reassembled using lime mortar (Khanjanusthiti, 1998).

Other repair efforts are documented, such as the renovation of Maha That in Lamphun in 1447, where a new structure was built over the old one, consistent with Buddhist tradition. Nearly two centuries later, in preparation for the Cula Sakarat millennium, King Prasat Thong of Ayutthaya conducted extensive repairs on the kingdom's major temples. He claimed that rebuilding and repairing these temples would appease the gods, thus benefiting the people. The renovations included preserving some original structures and enhancing the height of others, aligning with contemporary views of beauty and improvement. Similar efforts were made in the 1600s when all temples in the Lop Buri region were to be restored to their original appearance (Baker, 2013).

In 1727, a Buddha sculpture was at risk of destruction due to its location on a collapsing riverbank. The sculpture, a 20-meter-long reclining Buddha made of brick, plaster, and gilding, was at risk of falling. King Taisa proposed dismantling and relocating it to a safer site. However, monks acting as advisors objected, considering disassembling the sculpture akin to disassembling the Buddha itself. They decided instead to move the sculpture intact, while the vihara, the structure housing it, was demolished. The value of the sculpture was seen as religious, not material, and the surrounding building was deemed merely a storage space (Khanjanusthiti, 1998).

When King Rama I designated Bangkok as the capital in 1782, he sought to construct a city that reflected the grandeur of the Ayutthaya period (ca. 1350-1767). Thousands of sculptures were transported from Ayutthaya to be incorporated into the new monastic buildings in Bangkok. Many of these sculptures were in poor condition and were restored by adding new parts and altering their faces for enhanced beauty (Khanjanusthiti, 1998). Similarly, the large sitting bronze Buddha from Sukhothai was restored and placed in the new Wihan Luang temple at Wat Suthat. Rama I, dissatisfied with the original representation of the hands and face, had them altered (Baker, 2013).

In the years that followed, restoration efforts primarily focused on renovations aimed at enhancing the beauty of buildings, often disregarding older layers. Khanjanusthiti argues that these efforts were not about restoring buildings to their original material state but about recreating the essence of the original architecture. She notes:

> *"The nature of the intervention always involved the demolition of old structures and their replacement with new architecture in the style of the period"* (1998).

Baker makes a similar observation, referring to the centennial celebration of Bangkok as the capital when all stupas in the city were renovated and murals repainted:

> *"...traditional methods of conservation do not mean consolidation or preservation of the original state of the monument. Reconstruction and rebuilding were the norms."* (Baker, 2013)

2.2.1. Management of religious buildings

The management of religious buildings in Thailand has traditionally been controlled by monarchs, with monks acting as advisors. The work was typically carried out by temple slaves, known as *Kha Phra*, who were often prisoners of war or individuals who opted not to join the military, particularly after conflicts with Burma. When slavery was abolished in 1874, a new system for temple maintenance was established, categorizing temples based on their significance. The most important temples, particularly those in the capital that were built as royal temples, received varying levels of funding annually for maintenance. The other three categories received fixed annual amounts based on their importance (Khanjanusthiti, 1998). A separate system for monitoring the condition of temples and monasteries was also implemented. In 1854, King Rama IV (Mongkut) instituted a policy requiring those living within 80 meters of a temple to report any damage or incidents. If someone from outside the area reported damage first, the nearby residents were responsible for paying for the repairs. This system ensured continuous monitoring of buildings for deficiencies. During this period, the reasons for restoration began to shift, with a movement away from purely religious motivations toward the inclusion of nationalist purposes (Baker, 2013).

2.2.2. Changing ideologies

King Rama V (Chulalongkorn), who ruled from 1860 to 1910, introduced a new approach to restoration. At that time, the concept of cultural heritage had not yet been established in Thailand, where all properties were considered the property of the crown, and public debate on the renovation of temple areas was nonexistent (Sae-Wang, 2017; Siriphatthanakun, 2022). King Rama V initiated systematic archaeological excavations, documented objects, collected artifacts, and studied them. These objects were displayed in the former king's palace, which remains a museum today. European archaeologists likely influenced Thailand's development in this field. English and French officials had been present in the region since the 1850s, studying sites like Angkor in present-day Cambodia. These foreign archaeologists were particularly interested in stone ruins and paid little attention to wooden structures

such as monasteries and temple complexes, which were in use. This oversight allowed archaeologists and monks to work alongside each other without significant interference (Khanjanusthiti, 1998).

During the restoration of the Phra Prang temple, efforts adhered to the principles outlined by Italian restoration architect Camillo Boito. King Rama V decreed that no decisions would be made without his consultation, and both original materials and forms were to be respected. He believed that aging parts should not be altered to appear new or modern. Older structures were now seen as representations of the nation, marking a shift from their previous association with religion (Baker, 2013).

2.2.3. New century, new management

In the early 20th century, King Vajiravudh established the Fine Arts Department (FAD) to manage royal temple areas, focusing on repairs and the creation of new Buddha sculptures. A few years later, an archaeological department was added to document, study, and restore archaeological sites and ancient objects, thus shifting responsibility for cultural heritage management to the state. The Royal Institute, led by Prince Damrong, oversaw these efforts.

In 1930, principles for the preservation of historical sites and objects were formalized. These principles emphasized the respect for original forms, disallowing alterations to form or decoration. New constructions were not to demolish existing structures; if a new building were to be erected, it should be positioned away from the old one to ensure the preservation of the original. The Royal Institute did not aim to restore buildings to their original state or reconstruct demolished structures; instead, it focused on conservation through methods like concrete buttresses. Repairs were carried out using the anastylosis method, which combined original materials with new ones to rebuild monuments (Baker, 2013).

Following Thailand's 1932 revolution, which transitioned the country from a monarchy to a democracy, FAD was granted greater responsibilities. In 1934, a policy document for the conservation of cultural heritage was established, formalizing the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiquities, Objects of Art and National Museums (Siriphatthanakun, 2022).

2.2.4. Regulations and The Act

The Act was the first comprehensive law addressing both sites and objects, although it was preceded by earlier regulations. One of the earliest laws concerning cultural objects, specifically religious ones, is the 14th-century Three Seal Law, which focused on penalties for theft, destruction, or alteration of objects such as Buddha sculptures and temple areas, emphasizing protection rather than management or restoration. In the 19th century,

regulations were introduced requiring local residents to report damage or loss at temple sites. The first legislation addressing the management of monuments and cultural heritage emerged in 1923, which recommended methods and materials for monument conservation.

In 1926, when FAD became a subdivision of the newly formed Royal Institute of Art, Literature, and Archaeology, new legislation was introduced, primarily defining and managing antiquities. The looting of temples and royal areas became a national issue, with many cultural artifacts being smuggled abroad.

Following the 1932 revolution, the Royal Institute was split, and FAD became an independent organization. The Act, once formulated, became the primary legislation, superseding earlier regulations. Like its predecessors, it specifies penalties for the destruction of cultural objects and defines terms such as antiquities, cultural monuments, and museums. The Act required the registration of monuments and objects on specific lists, regardless of ownership. For objects with unknown ownership, FAD was tasked with assigning them to appropriate museums. Concerning management, owners were responsible for the preservation of monuments, though they needed FAD's permission for any interventions (Sakulpanich, 2012).

In 1961, significant changes to the law were made. The definition of "monument" was revised, and FAD was granted full control over interventions on cultural objects, meaning no actions could be taken without its approval (Baker, 2013). The Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiquities, Objects of Art, and National Museums remains the governing legislation for cultural heritage in Thailand.

In 2017, an amendment known as the *Promotion and Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Act* was introduced. This law, focusing on intangible cultural heritage, was a welcomed addition to Thailand's cultural heritage governance. However, many critics argue that the Act's definition of "ancient monument" is too narrow, excluding populated urban environments. Only Ayutthaya is protected under The Act as an urban environment, likely because historic cities are seen as living entities rather than monuments (Siriphatthanakun, 2022).

Other laws and regulations also address older buildings, urban environments, and monuments. For example, the *Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act* allows local authorities to protect areas of cultural significance, including those near monuments designated by FAD and protected by The Act (Akagawa, 2005).

2.2.5. After the revolution

After the 1932 revolution, Thailand sought to build a strong nation, with one goal being the revitalization of Ayutthaya to attract new inhabitants. This effort led to the demolition of 23 monasteries to make way for housing and infrastructure development, with conservation not

a primary focus. A shift occurred after Thailand joined UNESCO in 1949, and numerous conservation projects were undertaken (Baker, 2013). In 1953, a major restoration project at Sukhothai renovated several temples. While the principles of minimal intervention were advocated, the result often involved more aggressive restoration. Buildings were restored to their original form but made to appear aged, which sometimes distorted shapes due to new plaster layers and added stucco ornaments. In some cases, buildings were completely reconstructed, despite the principles suggesting that structures in ruins should only be consolidated (Khanjanusthiti, 1998). This led to the creation of a "Sukhothai style," as reconstructed buildings resembled one another, often based on incomplete examples from the area.

The 1960s also saw heavy restoration in other regions, including the use of the anastylosis method instead of simply consolidating existing material. Criticism arose from various sources, including claims that the 1964 Venice Charter was disregarded and that the restorations were carried out by individuals lacking formal conservation training.

During the 1960s, Thailand experienced extensive social development, which led to the destruction of several culturally significant areas to accommodate infrastructural projects. Architect Sumet Jumsai was a prominent critic of these demolitions and advocated for preservation over destruction. He also helped establish an architect's organization dedicated to conservation efforts (Baker, 2013).

In the 1970s, FAD reorganized, and aspects of the Venice Charter were adopted. The focus shifted to ensuring that conservation and development proceeded simultaneously, allowing for historical sites to be developed while still preserving them. However, less emphasis was placed on sections of the Charter that stress respect for original materials. A significant restoration project during this time was the development of Sukhothai into a historical park, where buildings were restored, archaeological investigations conducted, and earlier celebrations revived to attract tourists.

Mural paintings in Ayutthaya and Sukhothai were also reconstructed in a similar manner, with damaged areas being supplemented despite uncertainty about their original appearance. The 1961 changes to The Act allowed for a broader interpretation of cultural heritage, especially regarding religiously consecrated buildings. International criticism emerged regarding the aggressive restoration methods and the extensive additions made for religious purposes. In the 1980s, new conservation methods were introduced through ICCROM, which Thailand had joined in 1967. Mural conservator Wannipa Na Songkla worked with monks to develop techniques balancing new methodologies with preserving the liturgical narratives in the paintings. She employed the *tratteggio*[19] technique, which clearly indicates new additions up close but forms a homogeneous surface when viewed from a distance (Bayle, 2011).

A similar approach to Sukhothai was planned in the 1970s for central Bangkok. This included restoring or reconstructing older buildings to their original state, or, if this was not possible, demolishing and rebuilding them. New construction was prohibited, and efforts were made to reopen previously developed park areas that had become market spaces. Social sustainability was secondary to a historicizing vision. The 1985 Bangkok Charter further clarified the definition of restoration, providing more flexibility in interpreting the term "original." Restoration was defined as the "act of returning to a former state," and if prior restoration efforts were thought to have diminished a building's value, the changes could be removed, and the structure restored to its previous state (Baker, 2013).

2.2.6. The 2000s

After the 2006 coup, there was a shift in how cultural heritage issues were addressed, with advancements in technology contributing to a more democratized approach. FAD developed a new system for categorizing heritage, including categories such as agricultural landscapes, historic cities, and architectural heritage. However, intangible and tangible heritage were still treated as separate categories. Value-based systems for categorization began to be used, though they were not widely implemented. A notable example is Mahakan Fort, part of the fortification system built when Bangkok became the capital. In the early 20th century, the area surrounding the fort developed into an important trading hub, with many wealthy residents constructing homes, leading to interesting architectural development. Over time, the socio-economic status of the area changed, and by the early 2000s, the fort was slated for restoration. Plans included demolishing houses built in both Thai and European styles, reconstructing park areas, and displacing the local population. Despite protests from various groups, these plans were carried out in 2018 (Siriphatthanakun, 2022).

Despite the Mahakan Fort example, where historicism prevailed over social values, Sumet Jumsai and others note that the 21st century is characterized by greater social involvement. Social sustainability plays a significant role, and intangible cultural heritage is allowed to exist independently of the material. He cites an instance where the construction of dikes and sluices blocked a river, negatively affecting the livelihoods of local people dependent on fruit farming, floating markets, and river tourism. Protests led to a halt on further constructions along the river. In this case, the lifestyle of the population was valued as intangible cultural heritage, which was prioritized over infrastructural development projects (Jumsai, 2013).

Regarding mural paintings and their conservation, Bayle notes a shift from an object-

19 The technique involves using small strokes in various colors rather than painting with a uniformly mixed, solid color.

based methodology to a subject-based approach, where assessments rely on a value-based system that incorporates input from various stakeholders. It is essential to be responsive to social changes, as these, along with political shifts, continually influence cultural heritage work. Bayle also mentions climate change as a challenge, particularly the increasingly humid climate, which affects the murals and requires more frequent conservation cycles. This raises discussions about the materials and methods needed for sustainable interventions (Bayle, 2011).

3. Conclusion

Conservation ideologies in Sweden and Thailand share both similarities and differences. This discussion highlights several key features that structure the comparison.

3.1. Similarities

- Identified similarities:
- Time and globalization
- Shift from expert-led to socially integrated approaches
- Parallel tracks in conservation efforts (efforts made in different ways simultaneously)

Modern conservation ideologies emerged in both countries around the turn of the 20th century, evolving through regulations and international affiliations. Neither Sweden nor Thailand was colonized, although neighboring countries to Thailand were exposed to Western influences. For example, French archaeologists showed interest in Thai sites, while Swedish scholars studied abroad in Italy, England, and France. Globalization and technological advancements have facilitated cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange. Academic exchanges through universities, projects, and organizations have increased transparency in cultural heritage management practices and contributed to the development of international guidelines. Both countries are active in global organizations such as UNESCO and ICCROM, which work to improve cultural heritage management worldwide. However, concerns have been raised that increased globalization could impact cultural heritage. As Weeraphan Shinawatra states:

> *"...the tide of Western culture sweeping the country pose a risk to national cultural heritage"* (2006)

This concern is understandable but somewhat misguided, as intangible cultural heritage is constantly evolving. Younger generations may not share the same interest in traditional dances, foods, or rituals as their predecessors, though this is a regrettable development for those who advocate for preservation.

Historically, conservation in Sweden has been expert-driven, often led by prominent figures whose opinions shaped outcomes. In Thailand, the king, in consultation with monks, held the greatest influence over decisions regarding monasteries and cultural heritage sites. Major changes in both countries began in the 1960s when infrastructure projects led to the demolition of older buildings. These actions sparked public debate, with key figures symbolizing resistance to demolition. This period marked the shift from top-down governance to a more democratic approach, involving citizens in decision-making processes. Regulations now often require citizens to initiate conservation efforts.

While the trend has been toward a more socially sustainable approach to heritage conservation, some current projects still reflect a top-down approach, where experts make decisions without consulting stakeholders. However, these projects are increasingly scrutinized due to faster information exchange and wider access to news, which can shape public opinion.

Historically, differing ideologies have operated in parallel, with opposing views guiding conservation efforts during the same periods. New conservation ideologies developed alongside traditional ones. The adoption of these new ideas was gradual and often met with resistance, leading to the coexistence of multiple approaches. This dynamic was not linear but cyclical. In both Sweden and Thailand, earlier methods that were initially rejected were later revisited and re-applied. Several principles coexisted in different projects, often reflecting the tension between an object's historical age and its functional role. The former is often associated with aesthetic and physical value, while the latter is tied to intangible cultural significance.

3.2. Differences

- Ruins/buildings in use
- Religion guides interventions
- Intangible/tangible

When Western scholars began studying historical remains in Thailand at the end of the 19th century, they focused primarily on "dead" buildings, such as ruins and abandoned temples, rather than occupied monasteries and palaces. These abandoned sites were not "dead" to the

local people who lived nearby, cultivated the land, and used the surroundings. When a new king ascended the throne, it was customary to build a new monastery or repair an existing one, and these living sites were of little interest to Western scholars, who found them too ornate. The Thai state also showed little interest in the abandoned sites, allowing Western scholars to work on them without conflict with monks or the royal authority (Khanjanusthiti, 1998). In Sweden, conservation efforts similarly focused on "dead" cultural environments. The Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities concentrated on preserving non-functional objects throughout the 19th century (Geijer, 2004). Had major church restorations involved buildings still in use, different decisions may have been made. In contrast to Sweden, resources in Thailand were directed toward maintaining living spaces, while in the West, abandoned sites received more attention.

Religion has long influenced conservation practices in both countries. In Sweden, however, secularization has reduced the role of religion, with few active visitors to churches. Churches are now regarded more as cultural sites than places of worship. Many buildings, though old and worn, are maintained without attempts to restore them to their original state. In Thailand, where Buddhism plays a central role, the practice of merit-making continues to influence conservation, particularly in monasteries. For example, the "eye-opening ceremony" imbues sculptures with spiritual power, reinforcing their connection to Buddhist teachings (*Nichiren Buddhism Library*, u.å.). Here, maintaining objects, such as repainting or re-gilding, is viewed as a way to sustain their spiritual vitality and benefits for donors.

The prevailing view in the West focuses more on the physical aspects of cultural heritage, while in Asia, there is greater emphasis on the intangible. In Thailand, the renewal of materials is integral to religious practice, symbolizing respect for the object's spiritual significance. In contrast, the Swedish approach tends to honor an object's dignity by allowing it to age naturally, with minimal intervention. Although maintenance and repair are accepted, they are typically conducted in a way that preserves the object's patina.

Focusing solely on material cultural heritage risks creating museum-like environments that disconnect buildings from their original context. Restricting changes that support continued use can alienate cultural heritage from the local community. However, preserving tangible values may be the only way to ensure that future generations experience genuine built heritage.

Adopting a historicist perspective and attempting to return objects to an "original" appearance may disregard newer traditions and lifestyles. Reconstruction that neglects the current needs of residents should not be considered conservation, as it fails to respect both tangible and intangible values. As Chris Baker (2013) writes:

"By destroying the present, it hopes to recreate the past.
But that past never existed as a part of Thai culture" (2013)

While this past never existed in Sweden either, similar practices are evident in efforts to make old town centers appear more "genuine" or "authentic."

The discussion of cultural heritage becomes more complex when considering unofficial heritage. This includes the ways in which local communities use abandoned temple areas or how urban minorities use public spaces for meetings. Traditions, often intangible, are closely linked to tangible places, making it difficult to separate the two. This complexity exists in both official and unofficial heritage, but it is more challenging to manage heritage that is not officially recognized.

In conclusion, conservation decisions cannot be uniform for all environments, objects, and buildings. Preservation must sometimes give way to change, but decisions should respect both tangible and intangible values and involve dialogue with affected stakeholders. Understanding the perspectives of other cultures and countries broadens the scope of potential conservation ideologies, providing opportunities for learning. This is a positive effect of globalization, which should be embraced rather than viewed as a threat to national heritage.

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4

Cultural Packaging of the Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival

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Abstract

The Pahiyas Festival is one of the most popular festival tourism destinations in the Philippines, attracting thousands of local and international visitors. Despite its significance as a cultural event for both the people of Lucban and the broader Philippine community, the Pahiyas Festival and its contemporary cultural value have been underexplored in empirical research. This study examines the discourses surrounding the Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival by analyzing how the festival is culturally presented at the local level by participating households and the local government unit and at the global level through mass and new media platforms. Ethnographic fieldwork, guided by Jaworski and Pritchard's [2005] framework on the intersection of discourse, tourism, and culture, provided data from interviews, participant observation, and multimodal representations. The findings reveal that locals present the festival as a celebration of gratitude to the divine, community collaboration, and artistic expression, symbolized by kiping, indigenous materials, and images of St. Isidore the Farmer. While its religious roots remain central, media coverage often emphasizes the festival's secular and commercial aspects, creating a disconnect that may alter its identity and significance. Rising material costs and declining participation present challenges, underscoring the need for intergenerational involvement and support to preserve the festival's authenticity while maintaining its cultural relevance and appeal to both locals and tourists.

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1. Introduction

The Pahiyas Festival, as it is known today, is a religious celebration influenced by Spanish colonization in honor of San Isidro Labrador, the patron saint of farmers (Antolihao, 2014). Most famously held in Lucban, Quezon Province, the festival is recognized for its vibrant display of farm produce, creatively arranged on the façades of houses along the procession route of the statue of St. Isidore the Farmer.

Despite its historical significance, published accounts of the Pahiyas Festival have primarily focused on promotional aspects. While it is an important cultural event for both the people of Lucban and the Philippines, the festival's contemporary cultural value has largely been overlooked as a subject of empirical research.

This study explores how discourses surrounding the Pahiyas Festival are constructed and used to represent the local cultural community. Specifically, the study aims to:

① Investigate the linguistic and visual strategies employed in the portrayal of the Pahiyas Festival and the local community.
② Examine the role of traditional and modern media in shaping perceptions of the Pahiyas Festival and, by extension, the local community's representation.
③ Analyze the socio-cultural implications of these discursive constructions, particularly their impact on identity formation and community cohesion among locals.

In an era marked by global flows of resources that cause tensions between the 'local' and the 'global' (Appadurai, 1990), it is crucial to study cultural events such as the Pahiyas Festival from a social and critical perspective. Analyzing the discourses produced by local participants, organizers, commercial establishments, and tourists can illuminate how the Pahiyas Festival is culturally packaged and the consequences of these representations for local identity. This research aims to contribute to the sustainability of Lucban's cultural heritage and provide a counter-hegemonic perspective on the prevailing consumerist views of festival tourism (see O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002).

2. History and Development of the Pahiyas Festival

Lucban, a town in Quezon Province, is home to thriving farming communities and benefits from a microclimate ideal for agriculture, as it lies at the foot of the majestic Mt. Banahaw. Farming has been the primary livelihood in the municipality since pre-colonial times. The introduction of Christianity by Spanish colonizers, along with their rituals and traditions, laid the foundation for the celebration now known as the Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival, or simply the Pahiyas Festival. Historical records indicate that the festival originally took place within the Catholic Church (Del Rosario, 2019, p. 209). On the feast day of St. Isidore the Farmer (May 15), farmers would bring their harvests to the church as an offering of thanksgiving and to seek blessings for a bountiful harvest. However, as the number of devotees increased, overcrowding prompted the parish to suggest that farmers display their produce in front of their homes for blessing as the parish priest passed by with the statue of St. Isidore. This practice led to the creative displays of produce that are now iconic regarding the festival.

In 1973, the "San Isidro Fiesta" (see Figure 1) was transformed into the "Pahiyas Festival" (Antolihao, 2014), attracting local and international tourists. This rebranding signaled the shift of the event into a festival tourism destination, where visitors come during the festival period to engage in the cultural "experience economy" (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998) typical of cultural and heritage tourism destinations (see Alejandria-Gonzalez, 2016). To maximize the festival's economic potential, the local government expanded the celebration to include secular activities and competitions. Festival events now begin in early May, with the highlight—the decoration of houses—taking place on May 15. In the 1990s, the local government introduced prizes, initially in kind and later in cash, to encourage greater participation. Year after year, the festival draws large crowds, both local and international, making it a key case for examining the discursive construction of the 'local' by participating families and tourism stakeholders, especially in relation to tourists' cultural perceptions.

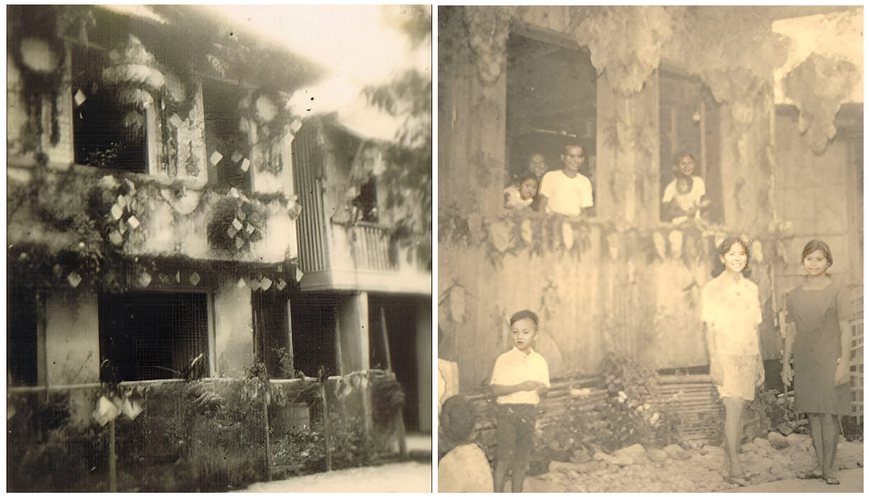

Figure 1. Old photographs of the San Isidro Fiesta (Left, 1920; Right, 1960s)
Image Source: Marvin Calimutan Verano

Over the last five decades, the Pahiyas Festival has evolved into a highly commercialized, secular tourism spectacle. This transformation has obscured its origins as a religious and agricultural ritual (Antolihao, 2014; Del Rosario, 2019, p. 209) and neglected the struggles of farmers who may not be experiencing bountiful harvests in recent years (Santos, 2020, p. 84). The extent to which locals and tourists share similar views remains a critical area for further investigation.

3. Framework and Methods

The study is grounded in the framework of Adam Jaworski and Annette Pritchard (2005, pp. 5:3–7), which explores the intersection of discourse, tourism, and culture. It employs a research design from discourse studies—specifically, hermeneutics and interpretive research, carried out through ethnographic fieldwork. According to Blommaert and Dong (2010), ethnographic fieldwork focuses on local rationalities (micro-level dynamics) and their relationship to broader social constructs (macro-level dynamics), assessing how these constructs enable, constrain, inform, shape, or are shaped by communities of practice. Ethnographic fieldwork does not rely on a standardized data-gathering toolkit but rather employs a variety of methods such as interviews, walking surveys, participant observation, and document analysis to collect comprehensive data that addresses the research questions. Key concepts for analyzing the Pahiyas festival discourse and its cultural interrelations include ideology, genre (and rhetorics), and communities of practice.

Ideology refers to "any constellation of fundamental or commonsensical, and often normative ideas and attitudes related to some aspect(s) of social 'reality'" (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 25, cited in Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005, p. 5). In this research, it is addressed through the following methodologies:

- Conducting interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders involved in organizing the Pahiyas festival, as well as with local community members, tourists, and media representatives. This qualitative approach offers insights into perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to the festival and its representation.
- Conducting visual analysis of images, videos, and other representations of the Pahiyas festival to explore how visual elements communicate cultural meanings and portrayals of the local community. This includes analyzing the use of symbols, colors, and imagery in promotional materials, advertisements, and festival documentation.

Genre refers to the distinct forms of media produced in specific ways to convey particular messages. In this study, it is examined through a walking survey along the Pahiyas route, photographic documentation of house decorations and cultural products, and textual analysis of event programs. Content analysis of archival materials, historical documents, and media coverage of the Pahiyas festival is also conducted to trace its evolution over time and identify patterns in its representation and discursive framing.

Communities of practice refers to groups of people united by a shared purpose and communicative practices. This is explored through participant observation, which captures data on how the festival is organized, experienced, and represented by different actors. This approach helps contextualize practices, rituals, and interactions that shape the festival's discursive framing and mobilization.

Data collection methods include interviews, walking surveys, participant observation, and document and visual analysis. Participants consist of 40 tourists, seven cultural bearers, and two government officials. Data sources include recorded and transcribed interviews, photographs, field notes, and media coverage from the past decade. The study's data-gathering protocol was reviewed and approved by the SLSU Ethics Review Committee (Reference Number: ER-2024-01). The next three sections present the results and analysis of the fieldwork data.

4. Linguistic and Visual Elements

The Pahiyas festival serves as a grassroots-level display of the Lucban people's cultural heritage, artistry, and religiosity. Each participating household is free to incorporate elements in their designs that reflect their unique interpretation of the festival, guided by criteria emphasizing key symbols such as kiping and indigenous materials. As demonstrated below, linguistic and visual elements associated with the Pahiyas festival have evolved across generations, with creative reimaginings of important elements such as kiping and farm produce (Section 4.1), as well as religious rituals, imagery, and texts (Section 4.2).

4.1. Kiping and farm produce as key festival symbols

Kiping, the bright, multicolored leaf-shaped wafers made from rice, is a symbol that uniquely distinguishes the Pahiyas festival from other harvest festivals. It is crafted using indigenous materials (e.g., rice hulls, vegetable harvests) and artistic derivatives (e.g., aranya, mosaics), and is prominently featured in the festival decorations, as noted during interviews with local participants (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Kiping and artful decorations made out of it

"Una, ah, yung pinakang-material… edi kiping tapos ay 'yung mga harvest katulad nung mga gulay, prutas, kung ano-ano pa…"
(First, ah, the material, is kiping and then the harvests like vegetables, fruits, and others…) - Participant 5 (Cultural Bearer)

"Ay di nagpapayas laang kami ng mga ano, native na mga gulay (laughs), mga kalabasa, di ang pinakasentro namin ay yung kiping."
(We make decorations with what we have, like native vegetables [laughs], like squashes, but the center of our design is kiping). - Participant 1 (Cultural Bearer)

Figure 3. Farm products and artful decorations made out of it

The importance of kiping and indigenous materials is also reflected in the festival's judging criteria, where the "dominance of kiping" and the "use of indigenous materials" each contribute 30% of the total score. This is alongside "artistry and creativity" (30%) and "overall impact" (10%).

However, the rising cost of kiping and farm produce, due to a shrinking number of kiping makers and local farmers displaying their products at the festival, poses a significant threat to the festival's sustainability.

"…sobrang mahal ng kiping ngayon trese dose pambili na ng pagkain ng ibang tao yon…"
(…kiping (rice wafers) is very expensive now 13, 12 (pesos) which can be used to buy food for other people) - Participant 2 (Cultural Bearer)

"Baling mahal ng gulay…ee...bilang magsasaka ay hindi ko pwedeng ipayas lang lahat at ipagbibili ko syempre para sa aking pamilya."
(Vegetables are expensive…as a farmer, I will not display them all but sell some of them for my family.) - Participant 12 (Cultural Bearer)

"Wala naman kaming taniman, kaya bibili kami sa mga magsasaka para laang magpahiyas… ay wag mo ng itanong kung magkano at mahal talaga…ang mahalaga ay kami ay nagpahiyas."
(We don't have a farm, thus we need to buy from farmers for the Pahiyas…don't ask how much because it's really expensive…what is important is we have 'pahiyas') – Participant 13 (Cultural Bearer)

To address this issue and encourage greater participation, the municipal government partnered with kiping makers to reduce costs. Following several consultation meetings, the local government agreed to subsidize kiping production, purchasing the wafers from the makers and selling them at a substantially lower price. While the current market price for kiping ranges from Php 12-15 per piece, the municipal government offers them for Php 5 each. As noted by Mayor Agustin Villaverde in an interview, this initiative aims not only to preserve the unique symbols that differentiate the Pahiyas Festival from other celebrations honoring Saint Isidore but also to protect the livelihoods of kiping producers.

4.2. Displays of religiosity: Rituals, imagery, and text

Unlike other religious festivals in the Philippines, whose activities may seem disconnected from their religious origins and values, the Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival remains firmly rooted in religious tradition, as highlighted by cultural bearers during our interviews.

"Ang Pahiyas festival yung sa Isidro, yan ay simula ng makagisnan ko na dito sa Lucban, yan ay bilang pasasalamat ng mga magsasaka sa kanilang good harvest at saka yung mga, ano, ipinapa-binibigay na kaloob ng Diyos para sa Lucban."
(The Pahiyas Festival of San Isidro, since the first time I learned about it here in Lucban, it has been about the thanksgiving of farmers for a good harvest and for the grace God has given to Lucban.) - Participant 2 (Cultural Bearer)

"...yan ay sa umpisa pa lang ay yaan ay kay San Isidro Labrador, ng magsasaka. Siya ang nagbibigay ng ano sa tao, para ang ating bayan ay para maging masagana."
(This (Pahiyas Festival) is even at the beginning for Saint Isidore the Laborer of the farmers. He gives the people of Lucban what they need so that the municipality is bountiful.) - Participant 1 (Cultural Bearer)

On May 1, the farmers of Lucban gather for a ritual of thanksgiving to Saint Isidore, celebrating the previous year's bountiful harvest and praying for another prosperous year. This ritual culminates in the tagayan (drinking) dance. The following days feature long-standing religious practices, including the procession marking the ascension of the cross to Calvary, the procession of Santa Elena, and a Holy Mass.

On May 15, the feast day of Saint Isidore, the festivities begin with an early morning mass at the centuries-old St. Louis Bishop Church in the town center. This is followed by a procession featuring the image of Saint Isidore the Farmer, accompanied by the parish priest and devotees along the festival route. As the procession passes, the priest blesses homes with holy water, and households light candles and offer prayers as the saint's statue passes by.

Figure 4. St. Isidore represented in various modalities

In addition to the procession, the image of Saint Isidore is central to the Pahiyas Festival (see Figure 4). Participating households typically decorate their homes with agricultural products, with a sculpture or creative representation of the saint often forming the focal point. Along with the saint's image, households also display the words "SAN ISIDRO LABRADOR," emphasizing that the festival honors the saint above all else.

In the Pahiyas Festival, the connection between religiosity and creativity is evident in the decorations. Religious imagery, such as depictions of Saint Isidore the Farmer and the Christ the Redeemer image from the Kamay Ni Hesus Healing Church in Lucban, along with textual expressions of devotion and gratitude, such as "Ipanalangin mo po kami" (Pray for us) and "Thank you, Lord," underscore the festival's spiritual significance (see Figure 5). Despite the religious diversity in Lucban, both Catholic and non-Catholic participants join in the celebration to express gratitude for the town's bountiful harvests.

"I am not after kung anong religion, kung anong ganun, kasi kaya ang message ko ay 'Thank you Lord', before ay nung dumaan ang nakamessage ko ay 'Jesus is the Lord of harvest', kase although tayo ay may iba-ibang paniniwala, meron naman tayong iisang God sa Kanya tayo nag-o-offer"
(I am not after one's religion, that's why the message I use is 'Thank you Lord', and in the previous years, I used 'Jesus is the Lord of harvest', because even though we have different religious affiliations, there is one God to Whom we offer)
-Participant 3 (Cultural Bearer)

For participating households, the inclusion of religious imagery is a conscious choice, as they emphasize that their involvement in the festival is primarily a sign of thanksgiving.

Figure 5. Linguistic expressions of gratitude and faith

"Yung San Isidro Labrador kasi s'ya ang pinaparangalan… As much as possible may poon, or image kung wala nung mismong poon."
(St. Isidore the Laborer because He is the one being honored. As much as possible there should be a figure of the saint, or an image if there is none.) - Participant 5 (Cultural Bearer)

"Yung ano, yung pangalan ng San Isidro, yun ang pinagdiriwang ng ano, ng Lucban. Yun ang dapat na hindi nawawala sa design."
(The name of Saint Isidore, the saint that's being honored by Lucban. It should always be included in the design.) - Participant 7 (Cultural Bearer)

By highlighting the beauty and faith of Lucban, the Pahiyas Festival serves as a vivid reminder of divine blessings, encouraging gratitude and spiritual reflection among all who engage in its events. The festival's ability to blend tradition, creativity, and spirituality creates a powerful experience that resonates deeply with both participants and observers.

5. Role of Indigenous, Traditional, and New Media

The popularity of the Pahiyas Festival is driven by indigenous, traditional, and new media. Tourists from across the Philippines and the world are drawn to Lucban, Quezon, through narratives shared by "Lucbanins" residing in various locations, festival participants from previous years, local and national television stations, and social media.

5.1. Indigenous and traditional media

Indigenous media plays a significant role in promoting the festival. People learn about the event through word of mouth and recommendations from acquaintances, friends, family, and romantic partners who have first-hand experience of attending the festival.

"...nalaman ko ang Pahiyas Festival dahil sa kanya sa partner ko. Inindorse niya lang ako dito kasi, talagang first time ako nakarating ng province kaya, sabi ko sige punta tayo. So dun ko nalaman, dun ko naistart malaman kung ano ang Pahiyas."
(...I learned about the Pahiyas Festival because of her, my partner. She endorsed it to me, this is really my first time visiting the province, so I decided to go this year. That's how I learned about the festival, and how I found out about what Pahiyas is.) - Participant 3 (Tourist)

"Ayun, bukod dun, sa word of the mouth na, ma-malalaman- na alam na nila yung Pahiyas Festival, talagang nakakaabot din siya kahit sa mga hindi pa alam."
(Aside from that, word of mouth really helps in letting people know what the Pahiyas Festival is, it really helps reach people who do not know about the festival.) - Participant 11 (Tourist)

Traditional media also remains a crucial tool for disseminating information about the festival. Various media organizations in the Philippines cover the event, with several featuring the festivities on news and magazine shows during the morning of the festival (see Figure 6).

"Siguro dati sa ano sa, GMA. And then ngayon kasi is diba siyempre lumalawak na yung social media so kumbaga may mga vloggers na rin na nagsho-showcase nung ano about sa Pahiyas Festival ayun."
(Before, I learned about the festival from GMA. And then, it is different now because of the pervasiveness of social media since there also are vloggers who showcase the Pahiyas Festival.) - Participant 4 (Tourist)

"Just recently actually, ahm my son re- travels a lot. He was aware of the festival. I am not sure if he had been here or not but he travels a lot, and he knew we were in Nasugbu, and he, ahm mentioned to us, that there was this festival here on the 15th of May and he thought that, we would find it very interesting" - Participant 8 (Tourist)

"I ah already heard about the fe-this festivity, in Quezon, Lucban Quezon, particularly in Lucban City no? So dati nakikita ko lang siya on, TV on, commercials…"
(I ah already heard about the fe-this festivity, in Quezon, Lucban, Quezon, particularly in Lucban City? Before, I just see the festival on TV, on commercials…) - Participant 9 (Tourist)

Beyond their role in information dissemination, indigenous, traditional, and new media influence systems of knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, and identities (Fairclough, 2006, p. 2) through three ideological functions: representation, identities, and relations. Fairclough (2006) utilizes the dialectical-relational approach, which incorporates Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistic. Building on this, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) developed the three metafunctions of visual grammar—representational, interpersonal, and

compositional—based on Halliday's ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. These metafunctions clarify how media texts (including images) represent specific topics and issues.

This section examines the representation of the Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival and its local cultural community in the broadcasts of traditional national media organizations from 2014 to 2024 (see Figure 7).

Over the past decade, *kiping* has emerged as the most prominent decorative element featured in live broadcasts of the Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival (see Figure 8). On two occasions, 2013 and 2019, *Unang Hirit*, a morning news show on GMA Network, highlighted the process of making multicolored rice wafers. In 2021, the Lucban Local Government Unit livestreamed the festival on Facebook, with GMA Network also featuring the event. The livestream prominently displayed *arangya* (chandeliers) made from *kiping* in the broadcast.

The media also emphasized the use of local produce as decorations, such as *luntiang ani* (green harvest) vegetables, which were sewn into house facades or shaped into various forms. *Gintong butil* (golden grain), and dried rice stalks, were also showcased in the montage of designs (see Figure 9).

Additionally, local products such as *langgonisang Lucban* (pork sausages), *hardinera*, and *pancit habhab* (noodles) were featured in media coverage, along with *broas* (shortbread), *embutido*, and *tikoy*.

Traditional national media agencies portrayed the Pahiyas Festival primarily as a secular event aimed at attracting tourists to Lucban, Quezon, rather than as a religious observance. This secular framing is evident in the occasional appearances of Saint Isidore the Laborer (see

Figure 6. Screenshot of a National Television Coverage of Pahiyas Festival 2024 via GMA Network's morning show, Unang Hirit aired May 15, 2024

Figure 7. Kiping in Live Broadcasts of Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival (Top-left: 2015 Unang Hirit, GMA Network; Top-right: 2016 Umagang Kay Ganda, ABS-CBN; Bottom-left: 2016 Unang Hirit, GMA Network; Bottom-right: 2021 24 Oras Weekend, GMA Network)

Figure 8. Farm produce foregrounded in the coverage of Lucban San Isidro Pahiyas Festival (Top-left: 2015 Unang Hirit, GMA Network; Top-right: 2016 Umagang Kay Ganda, ABS-CBN; Bottom-left: 2023 iJuander, GMA Network; Bottom-right 2022 Balitang Southern Tagalog, GMA Regional TV)

Figure 9. Local products foregrounded in the coverage of the San Isidro Pahiyas Festival (Top-right: 2013 Unang Hirit, GMA Network; Top-left: 2015 Unang Hirit, GMA Network; Bottom-right: 2023 iJuander, GMA Network; Bottom-left: 2024 Unang Hirit, GMA Network)

Figure 10), where a disconnect between the narration and the images shown on screen is apparent.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argue that the mode of expression—whether visual or textual—affects the audience differently. Although the narration emphasized the religious nature of the celebration, the images did not reflect this. This reinforces the analysis that media coverage depicted the festival as a secular, tourist-centered event, likely due to the diverse audience, some of whom may not be Roman Catholics.

Image	Text (Narration)
	"Mayroon din syempre na mga ibinibidang mga ani nila, kanilang mga ani, bilang pagbibigay pugay at pasasalamat kay San Isidro Labrador, ang kanilang patron saint…" (00:52-01:03) (Of course, there were also their harvests, their harvests, as a tribute and thanks to Saint Isidore the laborer, their patron saint.)

Figure 10. Frame from a 2015 Coverage of San Isidro Pahiyas Festival (Unang Hirit, GMA Network)

5.2. New Media: Spreading the festive and spiritual essence of Pahiyas

Visitors are encouraged to immerse themselves in the unique celebration, where vibrant decorations and expressions of faith create a deeply spiritual experience. These colorful designs, intimately connected with the community's faith, offer a form of spirituality that transcends geographical boundaries. The "instagrammable" nature of the decorated households invites visitors to take photos and share their experiences online, amplifying the festive and spiritual essence of the Pahiyas Festival.

"Ahm I just heard about it through, mga ano, mga online communications, things like that, and I've-I'm an avid traveler so I get to hear about these things."
(Ahm I just heard about it through online communications, things like that, and I've-I'm an avid traveler so I get to hear about these things.) - Participant 7 (Tourist)

"Yes, totoo. Malaking factor talaga ngayon yung social media para, sa-makaengganyo ng mga ano, ng mga pupunta sa isang bayan. So yun."
(Yes, that's right. Social media is a really big factor nowadays to encourage people to go here.) - Participant 10 (Tourist)

Media organizations such as *Philstar* begin covering the festival as early as the last day of April, contributing to its growing prominence in the national consciousness. Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and others play a crucial role in spreading awareness of the festival, especially in an era where information is readily available and consumed on these platforms (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Facebook post of Philippine Star, a national print and online media organization in the Philippines

6. Socio-cultural Implications on Identity Formation and Community Cohesion

The Pahiyas Festival continues to attract growing numbers of tourists each year, yet its sustainability is threatened by declining local participation, primarily due to the rising costs of farm produce and other materials. This challenge is exacerbated by the aging population of kiping makers and the family members responsible for designing and decorating homes. In a walking survey conducted on one street, several households were observed without decorations. According to one informant, a former barangay (village) official, local leaders and community members would, whenever possible, decorate the facades of non-participating houses. This, he explained, is done to project an image of community cohesion to festival spectators.

Despite concerns over waning interest in participation, some households emphasize that the cash prizes do not adequately cover the rising costs of labor and materials for decorations. However, others argue that their involvement is not driven by monetary rewards but by a desire to express their family's gratitude to the divine for a comfortable life. Regardless of financial considerations, participants view the festival as an opportunity for family and community members to collaborate and share resources in decorating their homes.

"Aba ay ang pinakamahalaga ay marunong kang magbigay, tumanggap, at magpasalamat. Yuon ang ano natin."
(Oh, the most important thing is we know how to share what we have, accept what is given to us, and know how to express gratitude. This is what we really want) - Participant 2 (Cultural Bearer)

"Siguro po yung mga ganito, yung mga pagpapahiyas po talaga kasi parang nagkakaroon din ng parang tradisyon po ba sa pamilya na nagkakasama-sama, nagtutulong-tulong."
(Perhaps, this, the practice of decorating because it has become a tradition in the family to get together and help each other.) - Participant 4 (Cultural Bearer)

"Sa practices, mas okay sana siguro yung ano, yung pagtutulungan ng family o kaya ay nung mga kamag-anak o kaya kapitbahay kasi yun talaga yung kalimitang nakikita ko before eh."
(Regarding the practices, I think it is the collaboration among family members or the extended family, and even the neighbors because I have seen this practice even before.)
- Participant 5 (Cultural Bearer)

The Pahiyas Festival serves not only as a platform to showcase the artistic talents of Lucbanins, residents of the so-called "Art Capital of Quezon Province," but also as a demonstration of their devotion to their patron saint, Saint Isidore the Laborer. Additionally, it strengthens community bonds as residents work together toward the common goal of honoring their patron saint through thanksgiving (see Figure 13).

Figure 12. Communities and families working together

7. Conclusion

The Pahiyas Festival is framed and mediated by locals in ways that linguistically, visually, and materially emphasize its roots in gratitude to the divine, community collaboration, and creative expression. The festival illustrates how a community unites to preserve traditions, support local artisans, and create a vibrant celebration that captivates both locals and visitors with colorful, heartfelt expressions of faith and creativity.

Despite its religious and communal origins, the festival's portrayal in mass and digital media often downplays the locals' efforts to highlight religiosity, familial unity, and community cohesion. Instead, it tends to focus on secular and commercial aspects, with only brief mentions of its dedication to St. Isidore. This disconnect between local intentions and global representations may influence community identity, shifting perceptions toward a more commercialized narrative.

Amid rising material costs and decreasing participation, supporting intergenerational involvement and providing resources and incentives for local artisans can help preserve the festival's authenticity. Such efforts will ensure its continued cultural relevance and appeal for future generations.

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Other Deliverables in this Project:

Website:
https://sites.google.com/view/pahiyas/home

5-year Sustainability Plan:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RgbjFnw4MYTzhIv8q9cU7gxexuUvfGvG/view?usp=sharing

Audio-Visual Presentations:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CdJGyn7Cw33wKaQtE7ADDnzzdMAjLcNV/view?usp=sharing
https://drive.google.com/file/d/19fm-K920xXS4sQMB0jTWdWo32xfcX3Jo/view?usp=sharing

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5

How does tourism pollution affect the management of cultural heritage sites? - A comparative case study between Seoul and Stockholm

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Abstract

Tourism and cultural heritage are intrinsically linked, with cultural destinations representing a significant portion of global tourism. However, the issue of "tourism pollution" has gained increasing attention due to its negative impacts on local communities, heritage authenticity, and site integrity. This study examines how urban cultural heritage sites manage the social effects of tourism pollution, focusing on Bukchon Hanok Village in Seoul and Gamla Stan in Stockholm. By comparing management practices, this research identifies strategies for preserving authenticity, promoting community well-being, and mitigating the adverse effects of tourism. The analysis draws on international frameworks from UNESCO and ICOMOS, providing insights into how differing conservation ideologies address tourism challenges. The findings emphasize the importance of stakeholder collaboration, community engagement, and sustainable tourism practices to balance conservation and development goals, offering recommendations for global heritage management.

Keywords: Tourism pollution, Urban Cultural Heritage Sites, Management, International Frameworks, Case Studies

1. Introduction

In the spring of 2024, while walking through Bukchon Hanok Village in Seoul, I encountered a sign urging visitors to respect the residents of the area, which had become a bustling tourist destination (Figure 1). This experience prompted further inquiry into how urban cultural heritage sites manage the social impacts of tourism. Notably, in a Swedish context, such signage was absent, raising an important research question: How do different cultural heritage sites manage the pressures of tourism pollution?

Tourism and cultural heritage are closely interconnected, with heritage destinations comprising 40% of the global tourism industry. This research examines the phenomenon of tourism pollution, which initially referred to environmental impacts such as CO2 emissions and waste. However, the term has expanded to include social consequences, such as overcrowding, inappropriate visitor behavior, and the prioritization of tourist-oriented services at the expense of local residents. This study focuses on these social aspects, excluding environmental effects like emissions or infrastructure strain.

The research explores how tourism pollution is incorporated into the management plans and strategies of cultural heritage sites in urban environments, specifically Bukchon Hanok Village in Seoul and Gamla Stan in Stockholm. These sites were selected because they share similar historical and cultural significance but differ in their management practices to mitigate tourism's impact.

This study aims to explore how tourism pollution is addressed in the management plans of urban cultural heritage sites and assess the effectiveness of these strategies in preserving authenticity, integrity, and community well-being. A comparison of the Korean and Swedish contexts can highlight different management approaches, offering a broader perspective on managing cultural heritage amidst increasing tourism pressures. UNESCO and ICOMOS international guidelines will contribute to understanding how tourism and cultural heritage are managed at the global level.

A hypothesis suggests that discussions surrounding tourism are more prevalent in the Korean conservation context than in the Swedish context.

1.1. Research aim

This study aims to explore how tourism pollution is defined, perceived, and managed at urban cultural heritage sites through case studies in Seoul and Stockholm.

Figure 1. Photo of the sign in Bukchon Hanok Village, by: Sandra Säger

1.2. Research objectives

- To analyze how international frameworks, such as those by UNESCO and ICOMOS, address tourism pollution and its social effects.
- To examine case studies of Bukchon Hanok Village in Seoul and a comparable site in Stockholm, focusing on their management strategies.
- To determine whether the term "tourism pollution" is explicitly used or indirectly addressed in local conservation and tourism strategies.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in preserving authenticity, integrity, and community well-being.

2. Literature Review

This literature review synthesizes research on the effects of tourism on cultural heritage, aiming to define the concept of "tourism pollution" and explore its implications for

management strategies at cultural heritage sites. It serves as a foundation for the study, examining existing literature on tourism pollution, cultural heritage management, and relevant international guidelines.

2.1. Concept of tourism pollution

Initially, tourism pollution was conceptualized as the environmental degradation caused by increased tourism activity, including CO2 emissions, waste, and strain on local infrastructure. However, the term has evolved to address a broader range of social impacts, such as overcrowding, gentrification, and the disruption of local communities' ways of life. These impacts can undermine the authenticity and cultural significance of heritage sites, as tourism-driven development often prioritizes visitor needs over the preservation of local cultural values. This report focuses on the social impacts encompassed by the term "tourism pollution."[24]

2.2. Tourism and its relationship with cultural heritage

Tourism is one of the largest global economic sectors,[25] with cultural heritage tourism accounting for 40% of all tourism and projected to grow by 20.7% annually from 2023 to 2027.[26] This sector emphasizes exploring tangible and intangible cultural assets and fostering connections with cultural identity.[27] Previous research suggests that tourism depends on cultural heritage as a crucial source for tourist destinations.[28]

Tourism can have both positive and negative effects on cultural heritage. Positive effects include the economic benefits that tourism generates, which can be reinvested into site conservation and local community development. Tourism also promotes cultural exchange, allowing visitors to experience the heritage of a region while fostering mutual understanding.[29] However, the negative impacts of tourism are significant and include:

- *Loss of Authenticity:* The commercialization of cultural heritage sites to cater to tourist expectations often leads to a loss of authenticity and diminished visitor experiences.[30]
- *Overcrowding:* Excessive tourist numbers can strain infrastructure, maintenance, and services, leading to overcrowding and degradation of both tourist experiences and residents' quality of life. Overcrowding occurs when a site exceeds its capacity.[31]

24 Dallen J, 2011; Germier-Hamel, 2018; Nilsson & Johansson, 2017; European Commission, 2019; Akel & Shairf, 2024; Brooks, 2001–2002
25 Brooks, 2001–2002
26 Akel & Shairf, 2024; Grigol Robakidze University, 2024
27 Ahmed, 2023, ss. 45–46; Grigol Robakidze University, 2024
28 European Commission, 2019, ss. 16, 24
29 European Commission, 2019; Dallen J, 2011; Brooks, 2001–2002; Ahmed, 2023; Akel & Shairf, 2024; Jong, 2018
30 Dallen J, 2011
31 European Commission, 2019; Germier-Hamel, 2018; Dallen J, 2011

- *Gentrification:* Tourism-driven demand can result in the displacement of local residents, as rising property prices, local inflation, and the commercialization of areas push out long-time inhabitants.[32]
- *Cultural Disruption:* Large numbers of tourists can disrupt the social fabric of local communities, altering cultural dynamics and leading to the loss of tradition, integrity, and significance.[33]
- *Conflicting Goals:* Divergences between conservation priorities and tourism development can overshadow cultural, social, and aesthetic values, often leading to conflict between local residents and tourists' expectations of the site.[34]

These negative impacts create disharmony between tourists and residents. While local communities must share their space with others, a gap exists between how locals and tourists perceive the site. Locals often relate to the site as part of their identity, while tourists view it as a product. Previous studies suggest that tourism often becomes a necessity for the local community.[35]

2.3. Stakeholders and their roles

Effective management of cultural heritage sites requires collaboration among various stakeholders:

- *National Management Authorities:* Overseeing policy and strategic frameworks.
- *Local Communities:* Custodians of many sites, with significant stakes in preserving cultural identity.[36]
- Tourism Operators and Developers: Responsible for sustainable practices and local engagement.[37]
- *Cultural Heritage Sector:* Practitioners, institutions, and organizations responsible for preservation and conservation.[38]
- *Visitors:* Expected to adopt ethical and responsible behaviors that respect the local community and heritage conservation.[39]

32 Akel & Shairf, 2024; Brooks, 2001–2002; Dallen J, 2011
33 European Commission, 2019
34 European Commission, 2019; Akel & Shairf, 2024; Brooks, 2001–2002
35 European Commission, 2019; Dallen J, 2011
36 Brooks, 2001–2002; European Commission, 2019; Dallen J, 2011
37 Nilsson & Johansson, 2017, s. 13
38 Nilsson & Johansson, 2017, s. 13
39 European Commission, 2019

2.4. Management strategies for sustainable cultural heritage tourism

Research highlights the need for integrated, sustainable management approaches that balance tourism development with heritage conservation. Sustainable management practices have been developed to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism while preserving cultural heritage and respecting local communities.[40] Key strategies include:

- *Community Involvement:* Engaging local communities in tourism planning and management ensures that heritage conservation efforts reflect local values and priorities.[41]
- *Capacity Management:* Establishing limits on visitor numbers and promoting off-peak tourism can alleviate overcrowding and reduce strain on heritage sites.
- *Integrated Management:* Effective management requires collaboration between stakeholders, including local authorities, heritage professionals, tourism operators, and the local community.[42]

Recommendations for managing cultural heritage sites that are also tourist destinations are consistent in previous research and international documents:

- *Inclusive Governance:* A bottom-up approach that engages all stakeholders.[43]
- *Evidence-based Planning:* Scientific research on tourism impact and site capacity.[44]
- *Balanced Site Management:* Strategies that reconcile visitor access with conservation goals.[45]
    - *Education and Awareness:* Initiatives targeting tourists, local residents, and youth to foster sustainable practices.[46]
    - *Local Empowerment:* Supporting communities in creating site-specific businesses and cultural offerings.[47]
    - *Seasonal Distribution:* Expanding tourism seasons to create stable employment and reduce site strain.
    - *Cross-Sector Collaboration:* Integrating cultural, economic, and regional policies to align objectives.[48]

40 European Commission, 2019
41 Brooks, 2001–2002; European Commission, 2019
42 Ahmed, 2023; European Commission, 2019
43 European Commission, 2019
44 European Commission, 2019
45 Ahmed, 2023; European Commission, 2019 European Commission, 2019
46 European Commission, 2019
47 European Commission, 2019
48 European Commission, 2019; Nilsson & Johansson, 2017, s. 13

These strategies are essential for sustainable cultural tourism, where management practices must consider the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism.[49]

2.5. Tourism's impact on urban heritage: Management principles from UNESCO and ICOMOS

International frameworks from UNESCO and ICOMOS advocate for the integration of sustainable practices in the management of cultural heritage sites. These guidelines emphasize the importance of maintaining the authenticity and integrity of heritage sites while promoting economic growth through tourism. They highlight the necessity of aligning tourism development with the needs of local communities and the preservation of heritage values. These frameworks prioritize sustainable practices, community involvement, and the protection of both tangible and intangible heritage.[50]

2.5.1 UNESCO

Urban heritage encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, which contribute to improving the quality of life in urban areas and play a key role in economic development and social cohesion, particularly in a globalized world.[51] The UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme (2012) addresses the challenges of managing tourism at World Heritage sites, aiming to create sustainable tourism models that protect universal values while benefiting local communities. The program outlines several key challenges:

- A lack of understanding of cultural values,
- Inadequate policymaking that fails to recognize sustainability and local community needs,
- Insufficient institutional support for managing sustainable heritage destinations,
- Limited local ownership and capacity to implement sustainable policies,
- Poor communication and understanding between stakeholders.[52]

UNESCO provides strategic approaches for managing sustainable tourism, with the following core principles:

49 European Commission, 2019; Nilsson & Johansson, 2017
50 UNESCO, UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme, 2012; UNESCO, Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, 2011; ICOMOS, The Declaration of San Antonio (1996), 1996
51 UNESCO, 2011
52 UNESCO, 2012; Nilsson & Johansson, 2017

- *Collaboration and Core Value:* Emphasizing the preservation of a site's unique cultural, social, and environmental values through collaboration with all stakeholders.[53]
- *Strategic Steps:* A systematic process focused on understanding tourism the cultural heritage site and developing actionable strategies, engaging local communities, and ensuring effective communication and infrastructure development while considering local conditions.[54]
- *Local Community Engagement:* Actively involving local communities is crucial for fostering authenticity, preserving cultural integrity, and building a sense of shared responsibility.[55]
- *Economic Development:* Balancing the economic benefits derived from tourism with the welfare of local communities.[56]

2.5.2 ICOMOS

The International Charter of Cultural Heritage Tourism aims to enhance the protection of cultural heritage and strengthen the resilience of local communities through sustainable tourism management. In response to the growing tourism industry at cultural heritage sites, the charter acknowledges concerns regarding the deterioration of both tangible and intangible aspects of sites, including social, aesthetic, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts. It underscores that tourism itself can contribute to the unsustainable use of the planet's resources, including cultural heritage, and calls for effective management of tourism at heritage sites.[57]

Through various charters and documents, ICOMOS stresses the dual objectives of heritage preservation and sustainable tourism.[58] Key principles include:

- *Heritage-Centered Management:* Ensuring that cultural heritage is central to strategic tourism planning and site management. This management involves all stakeholders, including governments, tourism companies, destination managers, site management authorities, planners, heritage professionals, civil society, and visitors.[59]
- *Sustainability and Community Resilience:* Balancing tourism benefits with the risks of overtourism by building resilience, addressing climate actions, and conducting risk assessments. Cultural heritage plays a central role in sustainable development.[60]

53 Nilsson & Johansson, 2017; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2012
54 Nilsson & Johansson, 2017; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2012
55 Nilsson & Johansson, 2017; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2012
56 Nilsson & Johansson, 2017; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2012
57 ICOMOS, 2022
58 ICOMOS, 2022; ICOMOS, 2008
59 ICOMOS, 2022; ICOMOS, 1996
60 ICOMOS, 2022; ICOMOS, 2010; ICOMOS, 2011; ICOMOS, 2018

- *Local Community Rights:* Reconnecting and involving local stakeholders in heritage management while promoting the equitable distribution of tourism benefits and recognizing the right of local communities to their tangible and intangible heritage.[61]
- *Integration of Traditional Knowledge:* Recognizing the importance of traditional practices in achieving sustainable heritage management.[62]

2.6. Literature review summary

"Tourism pollution" refers to the complex negative impacts of tourism on cultural heritage, including overcrowding, gentrification, and threats to authenticity. Addressing these challenges requires sustainable management practices that prioritize collaboration, local community involvement, and a balance between conservation and economic development. By redefining stakeholder roles and adopting innovative, inclusive strategies, cultural heritage sites can thrive as both preserved treasures and viable tourist destinations.

3. Methodology

This research combines qualitative methods, including desktop research and case study analysis. The following section outlines the methodological approach, including data collection techniques, criteria for case study selection, and analysis methods. Limitations of the methodology are also discussed.

3.1. Data collection approach

The primary method of data collection is desktop research, which involves gathering secondary data. The literature review defines and explores the concept of "tourism pollution" in relation to cultural heritage management, drawing on academic publications, studies, and reports. Additionally, UNESCO and ICOMOS publications, such as charters, programs, and reports, were reviewed. The keywords used in the search for relevant information included "tourism," "tourism pollution," and "cultural heritage." For the case studies, data was collected from local management strategies, tourism impacts, and stakeholder involvement, along with information describing the sites. Government reports and websites served as primary data sources for the case studies.

61 ICOMOS, 2022; ICOMOS, 1975; ICOMOS, 2008; ICOMOS, 2010; ICOMOS, 2014; ICOMOS, 2017; ICOMOS, 2018
62 ICOMOS, 2022; ICOMOS, 2017

3.2. Case study selection criteria

The study employs a comparative approach, selecting two case study sites: one in Seoul and one in Stockholm. The following criteria were used to ensure comparability and relevance between the sites:

- *Type of site:* Cultural heritage sites attracting significant tourism.
- *Historical use:* The historical significance and original function of the site.
- *Current use:* The present-day function, particularly concerning tourism activities.
- *National recognition:* The degree of national importance or recognition of the site.
- *Documented cultural value:* The cultural, historical, or symbolic value documented in literature or heritage registers.
- *Management strategies:* Existing strategies for managing both the site and tourism impacts.
- *Tourist destination status:* The site's designation as a major tourist attraction.

By adhering to these criteria, this study ensures the selected case studies are comparable and represent sites with similar levels of tourism and cultural significance.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The research at each case study site utilized multiple methods, including:

- *Historical Context and Evolution:* A historical overview of each site to understand its development over time, addressing demographic structures both historically and currently. This section also examines the tangible and intangible cultural heritage contributing to the site's significance, while addressing issues like gentrification, tourism's impact on local communities, and overcrowding. This analysis aids in assessing the social and cultural integrity of the site over time.
- *Management Strategies:* Evaluating conservation strategies, including local community involvement, and how these strategies address tourism-related challenges. The local management plans detail how the sites' cultural and physical integrity are preserved amid growing tourism pressures.
- *Comparative Analysis:* Drawing comparisons between the two sites' approaches to managing tourism pollution, identifying key similarities and differences. UNESCO and ICOMOS programs, guidelines, and charters serve as the framework for this comparative analysis. The concept of "tourism pollution" will also guide the comparison.

3.4. Methodological limitations

Despite the comprehensive nature of the methodology, several limitations must be acknowledged:

- *Absence of Primary Data:* This study relies on secondary data, lacking primary field research or direct observations at the case study sites. First-hand perspectives from local communities, visitors, and heritage and tourism managers were not obtained.
- *Case Study Selection and Comparability:* While the selected case studies provide a valuable comparison, they may not represent all types of cultural heritage sites facing similar tourism-related challenges. The findings may not be generalizable to other regions or cultural heritage sites. Efforts to ensure comparability between the sites (Bukchon and Gamla Stan) may be influenced by differing socio-political contexts and tourism management systems in each country, introducing potential biases.
- *Data Availability:* The reliance on published studies and reports means the quality and comprehensiveness of the data vary. Some sites may lack detailed or updated management plans or demographic data, which could limit the accuracy of the analysis.

4. Results from Case Studies

The selection of case studies for this research was based on specific criteria to ensure comparability between the chosen sites in Stockholm, Sweden, and Seoul, South Korea. These criteria include cultural and historical significance, the existence of management plans, data accessibility, and the presence of active residential populations affected by tourism. Table 1 summarizes the evaluation of the selected sites based on these criteria.

4.1. Bukchon Hanok Village

Bukchon, meaning "North Village," features houses that stand close together, with narrow alleys serving as the village's public space.[63] The high walls of the houses enclose the private sphere for the residents. This section summarizes the site's historical context and cultural significance, current use and tourism impact, as well as management strategies and preservation efforts. The information is based on management plans, official websites, and previous research.

63 Min, 2023

Table 1. Criteria for cases

Criteria	*Bukchon Hanok Village*	*Gamla Stan*
Type of site	Historic residential village	Historic residential town
Historic use	Residential housing for powerful families during the Joseon Dynasty	Residential housing, including the royal castle of Stockholm
Current use	Residential area and tourist destination	Residential area and tourist destination
National recognition	Historical and Cultural Heritage District	National Interest in Cultural Heritage
Documented cultural value	Yes	Yes
Management strategies	Yes	Yes
Tourist destination status	Yes	Yes

4.1.1 Historical context and cultural significance

Bukchon Hanok Village is a historic district characterized by traditional Korean hanok houses. Established during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897), it was home to noble families associated with the dynasty. Its strategic location between Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung Palaces highlights its historical significance. Over time, the area underwent significant transformation, especially during the Japanese colonial period and the rapid urbanization of Seoul in the 20th century. The village faced challenges such as overdevelopment and gentrification, which altered its landscape and community dynamics. Concerns over preserving traditional buildings emerged in the 1970s.[64]

The hanok houses reflect architectural and social elements from the Joseon Dynasty and Yi Seong-gye's era.[65] During the Japanese occupation, the demand for housing increased due to rapid population growth in Seoul, which led to the privatization of land and the incorporation of modern materials in hanok construction. Despite these changes, many residents remained connected to power, including members of the Enlightenment Party and the independence movement.[66] After Korea's independence, Seoul's continued population growth and urban transformation further impacted the village's infrastructure. The reorganization of Seoul in the 1970s altered the use of existing buildings in Bukchon.[67]

Bukchon represents a continuum of cultural heritage from the Joseon Dynasty to the present. The tangible elements, such as the hanok houses and street patterns, combined with intangible aspects, including community traditions and identity, underscore its historical importance. In 2009, the site received the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for its preservation efforts. The village's narrow, winding streets and vibrant community life

64 Min, 2023; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, u.d.
65 Hanok Village: Bukchon, u.d.
66 Hanok Village: Bukchon, u.d.
67 Hanok Village: Bukchon, u.d.

contribute to its cultural value.[68]

4.1.2 Current use and tourism impact

Bukchon Hanok Village has become a mixed-use area, combining residential functions with tourism-related commercial activities. The hanok houses now serve as private homes, guesthouses, museums, and artisan workshops. Approximately 73% of the buildings are used as residences, 9% as multi-purpose buildings, and 6.4% for commercial activities. The area also contains a mix of traditional and modern multifamily houses.[69]

The village is the third most-visited site in Seoul, attracting both domestic and international visitors, with its cultural heritage as the main attraction. Initiatives such as the "Fair Travel Campaign" aim to mitigate overtourism by promoting sustainable visitor experiences, such as historical walks, and focusing on quality over quantity. These initiatives are incorporated into the village's tourism strategies. Additionally, the city has purchased properties to help protect the site's authenticity while maintaining its appeal to tourists. Tourism has brought economic benefits but has also led to overcrowding and gentrification. Property prices have risen, displacing some local residents and altering the community's social fabric. In recent decades, efforts have focused on balancing the local community's quality of life, maintaining the hanok houses, and preserving the village as a tourist destination.[70]

4.1.3 Management strategies and protection

In the 1970s, concerns over the preservation of traditional buildings in Bukchon led to the implementation of conservation measures. Initially, these measures were top-down, creating tensions between the local community and government authorities. In 1983, Bukchon Hanok Village was designated as a Historic and Cultural Heritage District by the Seoul Metropolitan Government. In the 1990s, regulations were modified to allow multi-story buildings, exacerbating structural changes in the village landscape. In 1999, many traditional buildings were demolished. In response, later policies emphasized collaboration among stakeholders, including local residents, NGOs, and the Seoul Metropolitan Government, a demand from the local association.[71]

Bukchon's conservation strategies have evolved in the 21st century to address the dual pressures of preserving cultural heritage while accommodating tourism. Through the "Downtown Management Plan" (2001) and a conservation project from 2001-2004, current management efforts focus on collaboration between local governments, residents, and heritage professionals. Regulations on building height and financial incentives for heritage

68 Min, 2023; The Bukchon plan, u.d.
69 Min, 2023; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, u.d.; Jong, 2018; The Bukchon plan, u.d.
70 Germier–Hamel, 2018; Min, 2023; The Bukchon plan, u.d.; Min, 2023
71 Jong, 2018; Seul Metropolitan Government, u.d.; Hanok Village: Bukchon, u.d.

preservation have been implemented, minimizing the risk of demolition. In 2018, measures such as limiting tourist hours were introduced alongside other tourism management actions. Despite these efforts, tensions between residents and tourists persist, highlighting the ongoing challenge of balancing tourism with local community needs.[72]

The "Downtown Management Plan" also included the registration of traditional houses as part of the financial incentives. The plan has been successful in fostering cooperation between stakeholders for the protection of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism.[73]

In South Korea, there are four classifications for cultural heritage: State-Designated Heritage, City/Province-Designated Heritage, State-Registered Cultural Heritage, and City/Province-Registered Cultural Heritage. Bukchon is protected by several regulations and zoning laws aimed at preserving traditional architecture and living conditions. The city plan prohibits the construction of tall buildings. A key element of the conservation strategy is to integrate modern and traditional buildings, achieving both aesthetic and functional harmony. Additionally, the city has been purchasing properties in sensitive areas, transforming non-hanok buildings into hanok structures, and striving to restore the original characteristics of the site.[74]

4.2. Gamla Stan

Gamla Stan, meaning "Old Town," is characterized by tall houses lining alleys that radiate from the waterfront toward higher central areas in a herringbone pattern. Most of the blocks are fully developed, with a few featuring smaller enclosed courtyards.[75] This section summarizes the site's historical context and cultural significance, its current use, and the impact of tourism, as well as its management strategies and protection. The analysis is based on management plans, official websites, and justification texts for the site's protection.

4.2.1 Historical context and cultural significance

Gamla Stan is a well-preserved urban area with medieval origins. During the medieval period, it was enclosed by a protective city wall, containing trade dwellings. From its inception, it has been a center of commerce, politics, and culture in Sweden and serves as the historical core of Stockholm, with origins tracing back to the mid-13th century. The site is located on an island between Stockholm's northern and southern parts, completely surrounded by water. During the Hanseatic trade era, the medieval settlement was Sweden's largest city. Gamla Stan has played a central role in the development of Stockholm as the nation's capital. It has long been a political hub, home to the Royal Palace, the House of Nobility, the Parliament, and Storkyrkan (The Great Church), situated near a strategic trade location. The site reflects various historical layers, from medieval archaeological remains and street structures to 17th-century stone buildings and later developments from the 18th and 19th centuries. These layers contribute to the site's historical diversity, forming a unique cultural landscape.[76]

Historical events, such as the great city fire of 1625, marked pivotal moments in the site's development. The fire prompted the construction of the 17th-century buildings that stand today. However, during the 19th and 20th centuries, Gamla Stan fell into disrepair, with insufficient maintenance and the introduction of modern materials and techniques. During this period, much of its cultural and historical significance was lost. In the 1960s, there was even debate about demolishing the old town, as part of a city sanitation program aimed at removing unsanitary buildings and providing healthier housing for the population. Fortunately, this did not occur, as it did in other parts of Stockholm.[77]

Gamla Stan encompasses both tangible and intangible heritage, serving as a historical testament to the events that unfolded there. Stockholm's identity is deeply connected to Gamla Stan, with its cultural significance primarily embodied in the historic buildings and street patterns.[78]

4.2.2 Current use and tourism impact

Today, Gamla Stan remains a vibrant residential area and a major tourist destination. Many of its historic buildings house cafes, souvenir shops, and hotels, offering visitors a combination of historical landmarks and modern amenities. Tourism has driven up property values and rental prices, making it increasingly difficult for local residents to remain in the area. While tourism generates significant revenue for the city, it has also led to the loss of local businesses and a decline in the area's identity and authenticity. The residential population has steadily decreased over the past decade, alongside a decline in accommodations for residents. The city's political power remains centered in Gamla Stan, with the Parliament House and the Royal Palace, which are also prominent tourist attractions.[79]

Gamla Stan attracts visitors both nationally and internationally, as well as from other parts of Stockholm. It offers a historic urban site that showcases Stockholm's history.[80]

72 Min, 2023; Jong, 2018; Seul Metropolitan Government, u.d.; The Bukchon plan, u.d.
73 Min, 2023; Jong, 2018
74 The Bukchon plan, u.d.; Min, 2023
75 Stockholm Stad, 2024; Stockholm Stad, Översiktsplan för Stockholm stad, 2018
76 Riksantikvarieämbetet; Stockholm Stad, 2018; Stockholm Stad, 2024
77 Stockholm stad, 1978; Lilja, 2016; Stadsbyggnadskontoret, 2020
78 Stockholm Stad, 2018
79 Stockholm Stad, 2023; Stockholm Stad, 2018
80 Stadsbyggnadskontoret, 2020

4.2.3 Management strategies and protection

The 1978 building plan for Gamla Stan remains a guiding document for the area's physical development. It regulates the design and use of the site, emphasizing that the Old Town holds significant cultural and historical value that must be preserved. According to the plan, no action may be taken that risks diminishing the area's cultural and historical significance. Modifications require building permits or notifications, and the city may mandate consultation with a conservation expert to assess the potential impacts on cultural and historical values.[81] In 2020, the City of Stockholm adopted a joint building ordinance, serving as a strategic document for urban planning. This ordinance stresses the importance of developing the city while respecting cultural heritage and existing buildings, aligning with UNESCO's recommendations for historic urban landscapes. Management strategies primarily focus on physical restrictions concerning buildings and the surrounding landscape.[82]

Stockholm's comprehensive plan emphasizes combining historical preservation with modern functionality, highlighting the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders, particularly the local community. For Gamla Stan, the plan identifies three key features: its rich cultural heritage, distinct identity, and historic buildings. It also calls for strategies that enhance the area as a tourist destination while preserving its character.[83]

Gamla Stan is protected under several national laws. The City Museum has designated the site as having high cultural heritage value, and it is included in the national interest for cultural heritage preservation, "Stockholm's Inner City with Djurgården," as a core value area. The site is also protected under the Cultural Heritage Act, with properties designated as listed buildings. Under the Swedish Planning and Building Act, buildings with cultural and historical value must not be altered in ways that distort their character, and any maintenance or modifications should be carefully carried out with respect for these values. As the entire Old Town is designated as culturally and historically valuable, these legal guidelines apply to the area as a whole.[84]

5. Discussion of Results

An analysis of the cases reveals that both sites share common challenges and opportunities related to tourism and cultural heritage. Table 2 outlines these challenges and opportunities, along with associated comments for each case.

81 Lilja, 2016; Stockholm stad, 1978
82 Stadsbyggnadskontoret, 2020
83 Stockholm Stad, 2018
84 Lilja, 2016

Table 2. Challenges and opportunities

Challenges and Opportunities	*Bukchon Hanok Village*	*Gamla Stan*
Commercialization	Tourism-related commercial activities, such as guesthouses, museums, and artisan workshops, have increased. Some traditional uses have been replaced with more commercialized functions.	Commercialization is evident, as historical buildings house cafes, souvenir shops, and hotels, impacting the area's authenticity.
Gentrification	Gentrification has altered the community dynamics, displacing local residents due to rising property prices.	Gentrification has led to higher rents and property prices, displacing local businesses and residents, and eroding the area's identity.
Change in Use	Hanok houses have shifted from residential homes to guesthouses, museums, and commercial properties, altering the community structure.	The buildings in Gamla Stan have been repurposed for commercial use, particularly for tourism-related businesses, impacting its residential character.
Collaboration Models	Collaboration between local government, residents, and heritage professionals has been encouraged to protect cultural heritage while accommodating tourism.	Collaboration among stakeholders, including the local community, aims to protect cultural heritage and ensure sustainable tourism.
Heritage Preservation	The site's cultural and architectural heritage is protected through various regulations, including recognitionand conservation strategies.	The site is protected by national laws and regulations, such as the Cultural Heritage Act, emphasizing the need to preserve cultural and historical values.
Conservation and Modernization	Efforts have been made to preserve traditional houses while accommodating modern functions and aesthetics through urban planning.	The city combines historical preservation with modern functionality, with physical restrictions on buildings and landscapes to maintain heritage integrity.
Tourism and Cultural Exposure	Tourism brings economic benefits but also overcrowding, leading to tension with local residents. Strategies like the "Fair Travel Campaign" aim to mitigate negative impacts.	Tourism significantly contributes to the local economy but also leads to the loss of local businesses and the erosion of the area's identity. Strategies focus on sustainable tourism.
Economic	Tourism benefits the economy, though rising property prices and displacement of local residents are concerns. Financial incentives for heritage preservation have been introduced.	Tourism generates revenue, but rising property values make it difficult for locals to afford to live in the area. Efforts have been made to protect the area's heritage while accommodating tourism growth.

The comparative analysis highlights that both sites face tourism-related challenges, such as overcrowding, gentrification, cultural disruption, and loss of authenticity. Bukchon also experiences periods of conflicting goals between stakeholders, including local residents, authorities, and visitors. The extent to which these challenges are addressed varies between the two sites. In Bukchon, collaborative efforts involving local residents, government authorities, and heritage professionals have resulted in comprehensive management plans, restrictions on visiting hours, and financial incentives for preserving traditional architecture. These actions align with the UNESCO and ICOMOS guidelines for sustainable heritage management, emphasizing local community rights, heritage-centered management, sustainability, resilience, and engagement.

In contrast, Gamla Stan benefits from strong legal protection under Swedish heritage laws but lacks tailored tourism management strategies. The Swedish model is aligned with UNESCO and ICOMOS guidelines in its integration of traditional knowledge. However,

the management does not include local communities as recommended by international frameworks. This lack of engagement is not as clearly reflected in Gamla Stan's management plans as it is in Bukchon's. International frameworks emphasize balancing heritage preservation and sustainable development. Both sites demonstrate partial alignment with these principles, but gaps remain in addressing the broader social impacts of tourism.

The concept of tourism pollution, primarily recognized through overcrowding and social tensions, underscores the need for adaptive management approaches. Bukchon's proactive measures, such as the "Fair Travel Campaign," demonstrate the effectiveness of targeted strategies that align tourism practices with community well-being. In contrast, Gamla Stan's reliance on traditional planning frameworks and its limited engagement with tourism-specific challenges suggest a need for more dynamic, participatory approaches. Integrating community voices into decision-making processes and implementing flexible, site-specific strategies could enhance the management of tourism impacts. Furthermore, raising awareness among visitors about ethical tourism practices is crucial to sustaining the cultural and social fabric of heritage sites.

6. Conclusion

International charters, recommendations, and earlier studies do not directly address the term "tourism pollution," but the social and cultural impacts of tourism on cultural heritage sites are widely recognized. It is important to emphasize that the effects of tourism are two-sided, like a coin: there are both "pollution" and benefits. Management plays a crucial role in mitigating the negative aspects while maximizing the positive outcomes of tourism. This study highlights the need for nuanced and inclusive approaches to managing urban heritage sites under tourism pressures. Bukchon exemplifies the potential of collaborative governance and incentive-based conservation strategies to reduce tourism pollution. Gamla Stan's experience demonstrates the importance of integrating tourism-specific frameworks within established legal protections to ensure holistic management.

"Tourism pollution" underscores the critical need to balance tourism's socio-economic benefits with its impact on authenticity, integrity, and community well-being. Effective management requires a multi-stakeholder approach rooted in sustainability that transcends legal and cultural boundaries. Future research should explore broader comparative analyses and incorporate primary data to validate and refine these findings.

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6

Immersive turn of the museums of the former international concessions in Tianjin[85]

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1. Introduction

Former international concessions in Imperial China, established following the 19th-century unequal treaties after China's defeat in the Opium Wars, have been characterized as 'semi-colonialism' (Goodman, 2004). Osterhammel defined 'semi-colonial' conditions as a situation in which a metropolitan country exerts influence in an asymmetrical relationship without assuming full sovereignty over the peripheral country (Osterhammel, 1986, p. 308). Tianjin exemplifies this system, with nine foreign concessions coexisting in the city from 1860 to 1945 (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2023; 2024) (Figure 1).

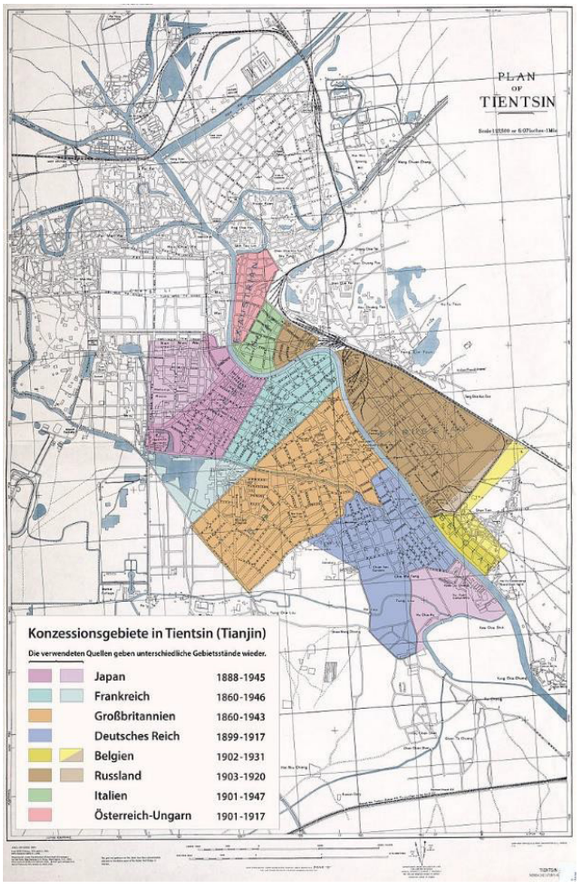

Figure 1. China: Karte der Konzessionsgebiete in Tientsin (Map of the Foreign Concessions in Tianjin), US Army Map Services, Washington DC, 1945, corrected and colorized by Maximilian Dorrbecker. Khu'hamgaba Kitap (CC BY-SA 4.0)

85 This research is the second part of a project initiated and published in 2023.

Figure 2. Views of the British, German, Italian, and French concessions. Postcards

Figure 3. Zhangyuan (left) and Commander's Zhang Mansion (right), Tianjin. © M. Gravari-Barbas, 2023

The concessions occupied more than nine times the area of Tianjin's old city and significantly altered its spatial structure. Each country developed its concession according to its own planning standards and architectural styles, reflecting its traditions and characteristics (Figure 2). This produced a "transnational" urban landscape, or "Cosmopolis," as termed by historian Pierre Singaravelou (2017). Although the concessions are now recognized as heritage by Chinese authorities, they represent a 'dissonant' heritage, shaped by the colonial presence of nine foreign powers over several decades.

This research aims to explore how museums and interpretation centers in contemporary Tianjin present international concessions to the Chinese public. Based on an analysis of eight museums in the former concessions, our previous research within the KNUCH framework identified three primary narratives (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2024):

- One narrative reexamines the concession period as the beginning of modernity in China, highlighting the introduction of modern urban elements.
- Another treats the concession period as a foreign, dreamlike past, viewing it as a "foreign land" and a context alien to contemporary China. This narrative focuses on the thematic and leisure value of Western architecture.
- The third narrative focuses on heroes of the Republic of China and the post-1949 People's Republic of China, often incorporating "Red narratives."

This study particularly investigates two immersive experiences in Tianjin museums: Commander Zhang's Mansion in the former French Concession and Zhangyuan in the former British Concession (Figure 3).

The study adopts the perspective of dissonant heritage (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996) to critically engage with the discourses and scenography of these museums. The dissonance is understood through the historical complexity embedded in the materiality of the buildings,

their architecture, and the planning of the Western concessions, which reproduced urban models from their respective countries. These material and intangible elements form the foundation of the museums' exhibits.

The primary research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

- What are the main narratives supporting the immersive experiences in the former international concessions?
- What factors contribute to the popularity of these immersive experiences, particularly in contemporary China?
- How can we interpret the relationship between these immersive visits and Tianjin's dissonant heritage from the international concessions?

Several methodological tools were employed in this research. Interviews were conducted with developers or managers of immersive activities in both museums, including the manager of a catering group responsible for the former residence of Commander Zhang (September 2023 and October 2024), and the manager of a state-owned performance company responsible for Zhangyuan (October 2024). Additional interviews were conducted with guides (four interviews with the immersive guide of Zhang's Mansion) and visitors. The authors also participated in the immersive game/visit at Commander Zhang's Mansion (2023) and the immersive visit and immersive theatre at Zhangyuan (2023 and 2024).

The theoretical framework connects recent trends in tourism, particularly cultural and heritage tourism. It begins with an analysis of the experiential turn in tourism, then connects this with evolving understandings of authenticity, and finally links these developments to the rise of immersive approaches in contemporary museum practices.

The study is organized into four parts: The first section examines the implications of experiential approaches for heritage tourism. The second section explores the connection between experience and authenticity. The third part introduces the immersive turn in museums and exhibitions. Finally, the fourth section presents the two case studies from the former concessions.

2. Experiential Approaches of Heritage

2.1. Experience tourism and new heritage consumptions

Experience can be defined as "something felt or learned through personal contact" (Oxford English Dictionary), reflecting the subjective mental state of participants. Otto and Ritchie (1996, p. 166) define experience as "the subjective mental state felt by participants" during service encounters or events that "engage individuals in a personal way" (Bigné & Andreu,

2004, p. 692). Thus, 'experience' can be understood as both the subjective mental state felt by individuals (Beeho & Prentice, 1997) and the relationship that tourists form with heritage sites.

Since the 1970s, experiential elements of tourism—such as feelings, sensations, and consumer thoughts (e.g., excitement, thrill, fear, and challenge)—have become significant areas of investigation. According to O'Dell and Billing (2005, p. 13), tourism experiences have undergone a paradigm shift, evolving from "simply a value-adding aspect of more concrete goods and services to valued commodities in and of themselves." "Experiential tourism" has shifted consumption away from the traditional 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990, p. 219), with tourists increasingly concerned not merely with "being 'there,'" but with actively participating, learning, and experiencing the places they visit (Beeho & Prentice, 1997). This approach transforms heritage tourism from passive observation to a more involved and empathetic engagement with heritage sites.

As a result, there is a notable shift in tourist practices from traditional, positivist approaches toward more interpretive, qualitative, and reflexive modes of inquiry (Ateljevic et al., 2005). Current analyses of tourism experiences recognize that 'products' are not solely produced by formal entities such as museums, heritage sites, or intangible heritage performances. Instead, these products are co-created by consumers' imaginations, making tourists' imaginaries a reflexive component of experiential tourism. Experiential tourism involves differentiated and engaged consumption. It contrasts with producer-led, standardized products sold to mass consumers. Tourists are encouraged to explore and discover, "personally finding surprises or 'hidden' worlds, seeking adventure, admiring grandeur, sharing secrets, sampling flavors, and uncovering mysteries or solving enigmas" (Prentice, 2001).

One key aspect of this approach is discovery, particularly sensitive discovery. Experiential tourism opposes the traditional "keep off—don't touch" approach. In this regard, role-playing, smelling, learning, listening, and talking are emphasized. Promoters of experiential heritage tourism invite visitors to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell, fully engaging their senses. Experiential cultural tourism offers personal experiences on a broader scale. Moreover, experiential cultural tourism is co-produced between tourism providers and tourists, with the latter utilizing cultural capital to select, develop, and sometimes alter the tourism products offered by destinations.

2.2. Everyday narrative and experiential tourism

The reframing of historical narratives shifts focus from grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) to ordinary experiences. Since the 1960s, historians have emphasized the "ordinary" experiences

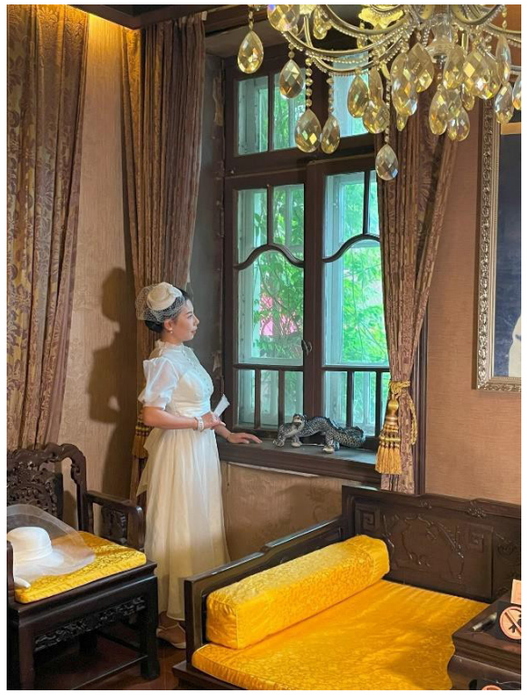

Figure 4. Visitor Photographed with early 20th century cloths at Commander Zhang's Museum © MGB, Sept 2023

of individuals who "lived" history, with living history promoting empathetic responses. In museological and heritage contexts, historical narratives are reframed, and sensory experiences are used to communicate these narratives, offering alternative ways of learning history. This shift is explored in heritage literature, which moves away from academic knowledge systems in favor of broader themes highlighting commonalities between past and present peoples as a foundation for creating understanding. An examination of connoisseurship has led to a shift toward 'cultural relativism' (Pearce & Perring, 1994, pp. 25–27), where all subject matter related to human activity is considered equally valuable, rather than ranked hierarchically.

For instance, this shift has altered attitudes toward the relationship between historically significant individuals (considered superior) and the broader population (considered inferior). Both are now regarded as equally valuable sources of historical interest, with a focus on their human conditions rather than their historical roles. The reframing of historical narratives centers on people, their histories, their lives, and their relationships, recognizing the experiences of ordinary individuals as relevant in representing the past. This approach encourages visitors to relate to history through dialogue rather than the more limited

academic monologue. This representation of the past becomes meaningful to a broader section of society, moving away from intellectualism as the sole basis for communication. The emphasis shifts from didacticism to a more effective educational model, which has been described as the activity of drawing out an individual's "intellectual, creative, social, and spiritual potential," rather than merely dispensing facts through instruction (Maton-Howarth, 1990, p. 177). Experiential learning focuses on developing first-hand knowledge through interaction between the individual and their environment. This approach connects the body, sense-making, and narratives of self and space, integrating cognitive and affective dimensions to create personal understandings and stories (Figure 4).[86]

This is particularly relevant in heritage, where understanding is increasingly grounded in bodily and sensory experiences. Tourism is deeply impacted by this experiential turn. In experiential tourism, the services offered are experiences (see Table 1).

In the "experience economy," museum visitors are increasingly willing to pay for unique cultural encounters, such as street games, outdoor and "secret" cinema events, or escape rooms (Kidd, 2018). The "immersive experience," part of the experience economy, has become a compelling draw for museums and heritage institutions.

Table 1. Economic distinctions and place of experiential tourism

Economic Offering	Goods/Products	Services	Experiences
Economy	Industrial	Service	Experience
Economic function	Make	Deliver	Stage
Nature of offering	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
Key attribute	Standardised	Customised	Personal
Method of supply	Inventorised after production	Delivered on demand	Revealed over duration
Seller	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
Buyer	User	Client	Guest
Factors of demand	Features	Benefits	Sensations

© Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 9)

86 http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10548400903276897

3. Experiential Tourism and Experiential Authenticity

Authenticity plays a central role in the experience-based approach to heritage, particularly within the context of experiential tourism. Selwyn's (1996) distinction between "hot" and "cool" authenticity offers valuable insight here. While "cool authenticity" pertains to knowledge, "hot authenticity" relates to emotional experience. As Selwyn (1996) elaborates, tourists seek both authentic social relationships and sociability ("hot") as well as knowledge about the destination's nature and society ("cool").

Selwyn's concept of "hot authenticity" is tied to the identification between the tourist and the destination, as well as the mechanisms of representation employed at "warm" heritage sites. In this context, cultural identity and collective memory influence the experience of selfhood. Wang (1999) expands on this idea, introducing the notion of "existential authenticity." He defines "existential" as a state of being in which one seeks to be true to oneself. Moving beyond objective or constructed authenticity, Wang argues that tourists focus on achieving an authentic state of being. This form of authenticity arises from active participation in and interaction with elements of the host culture (Wang, 1999). Tourists are less concerned with the authenticity of the objects they encounter; instead, they seek to connect with their authentic selves through these objects and activities (Wang, 1999).

This perspective shifts heritage authenticity from the object itself—often viewed as inauthentic—to the relationship that can be built with the object, which is perceived as authentic. This reorients the focus of the tourism experience from the historically accurate product conceived by others to the personal, empathetic relationship that the visitor forms with the site (Breathnach, 2006).

A concept of "simulational authenticity" emerges when visitors engage in hands-on storytelling, with sensory experiences becoming central to the process. This form of authenticity not only provides new knowledge but also offers a novel way to access the past. The generation of this knowledge combines social interaction with emotional, mental, and physical experiences.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) underscores that simulated authenticity does not diminish a person's experience, as traditional museum displays might. Instead, it amplifies the experience, with the use of media and entertainment activities often enhancing, rather than detracting from, educational value. Visitors engage emotionally, mentally, and physically, with these experiences often reinforcing one another.

Experiential authenticity (Penrose, 2018) involves a combination of visual, tactile, vocal, and aural interaction. Social interactions, where visitors engage with other participants or re-enactors as well as exhibits, also contribute. Emotional, cognitive, and physical experiences

are seen as interconnected, stimulating new forms of knowledge. The past becomes more immediately accessible through these interactions with objects (Lowenthal, 1985).

The concept of "insightfulness," introduced by McIntosh and Prentice (1999), adds another layer to this discussion. According to the Collins English Dictionary, "insight" refers to the ability to perceive clearly and understand mental processes. Insightfulness describes the psychological outcomes that arise from visitors' subjective experiences of heritage, which are shaped by active, mindful questioning of the environment and the personal meanings and perceptions that emerge.

Insightfulness marks the end state of personal understanding gained through heritage visits, where visitors acquire emotionally charged, value-laden perceptions. This process involves an imaginative perspective and a deep, sensory immersion that shapes the meaning and understanding of the place (Moscardo, 1996).

4. Museums, From Existential to The Immersive

4.1. Immersive turn of museums

Museums are prime examples of "hot" and experiential/existential authenticity, reflecting the profound evolution of heritage in contemporary societies. These institutions serve as key sites for engaging with the past.

In recent decades, museums have undergone significant "audience-centric shifts" aimed at diversifying and personalizing the visitor experience. These shifts include the introduction of "affective," "participatory," "immersive," and "sensory" approaches (Bertrand & Salter, 2024). These changes mark a departure from what museologist Laura de Caro (2015) describes as "Western visualism," in favor of more emotive, interactive, and multisensory experiences.

Among the most notable developments in museums are "immersive" activities. For instance, the "Van Gogh Immersive Experience," which invites visitors to step into a painting, has achieved worldwide success, with exhibitions held in over 30 cities. This phenomenon warrants further analysis.

Jenny Kidd (2018) identifies a "triple museum turn," comprising the following:

① **A Narrative Turn:** A broader range of media and voices are utilized in museums, diversifying the stories and perspectives represented.

② **An Affective Turn:** A focus on understanding how museums influence emotions and how these feelings may—or may not—translate into real-world actions.

③ **A Ludic Turn:** An increasing interest in integrating play and game mechanics into museum activities.

4.2. Immersive heritage practices in museums

Immersive heritage practices in museums are characterized by story-driven, audience-centered, multimodal, and multisensory experiences that are attuned to their environments (Kidd, 2018). Although any heritage experience could be considered immersive, recent museum developments have specifically embraced this approach. Traditionally, museums have emphasized visual and textual resources, but immersive experiences now explore a range of sensory modalities, including aural, haptic, olfactory, and kinesthetic elements. The goal is for meaning making to become a holistic, embodied process. The concept of "embodied museography" encapsulates this shift (Kenderdine et al., 2014).

However, these immersive experiences raise important ethical questions:

- What kinds of narratives can be constructed within and around museums?
- How do immersive narratives relate to the broader narratives of the museum?
- Can immersive tours convey new or different narratives?
- How do immersive experiences challenge the boundaries between fact and fiction in museum settings?

5. Immersive Turn in Tianjin4s Former Concessions' Museums

In China, the museum and gallery sector has experienced significant growth, fueled by the integration of immersive and interactive technologies. These innovations offer diverse experiences that increase both on-site and online visitation (China Daily, 2019). Immersive museum experiences allow audiences to "step into another world" (Cornacchio, 2021, quoted in Kwon et al., 2023), fostering a dialogical approach to storytelling that helps visitors navigate historical content. This approach enhances communication between exhibits and viewers, making culture more accessible to a broader audience (Kwon et al., 2023).

5.1. Commander Zhang's mansion: Example of the Ludic turn

Zhāng Xuéliáng (1901-2001) was a Chinese military leader and warlord, known as the "Young Marshal." He became de facto ruler of Manchuria after the assassination of his father, Zhang Zuolin, in 1928. Zhang organized the Xi'an Incident and was imprisoned by Chiang Kai-shek for much of his life (1937-1990). In China, he is considered a national hero.

Despite the mansion's association with Zhang, there is no evidence that he ever lived there. The connection to Zhang was fabricated by his grandnephew, who claimed that the Young Marshal had resided in the house. As such, the mansion serves more as a branding tool to attract visitors.

The museum regularly hosts an immersive game at an adjacent former merchant's residence. Visitors, referred to as "guests," dress in traditional Chinese clothing (men in traditional robes and women in cheongsams). Mobile phones are prohibited, and participants receive a guidebook detailing the house's layout and a short backstory. The narrative unfolds in Tianjin during the 1930s, during the Republican era. Players are tasked with uncovering a conspiracy linked to several high-profile social events in Tianjin. As the game progresses, visitors solve a series of murders, interacting with actors and other players to uncover clues (Figure 5). The story concludes with the execution of a character associated with the Japanese army, believed to be involved in the assassination of Zhang Zuolin.

Actors provide an immersive experience by focusing solely on the Republican period, excluding any anachronisms. Their intent is to create a realistic and contextually accurate environment. The game features a financial system that allows players to earn money, which they can spend in replicas of traditional food shops or deposit in a bank.

The game encourages interaction between players. In each session, a "Miss Tianjin" is selected, and a vote is held during the ball. The game lasts between four and five hours, but it is impossible to solve all the cases in a single session. Players can record their progress

Figure 5. Commander's Zhang's Mansion, © M. Gravari-Barbas, Sept. 2023

and return to continue the game. Points are awarded, and the scores of frequent players are displayed in the lobby. The museum romanticizes Tianjin's history, highlighting the luxury of life in the concessions: the architectural quality of the concession houses, the opulent lifestyles of celebrities, extravagant clothing, and modern conveniences such as refrigerators, water purification, and heating systems.

The Commander Zhang Mansion, however, distorts the legacy of its namesake, using Tianjin's past as a stage for a heritage-themed game. The city's past becomes a nostalgic substrate upon which an immersive heritage experience is freely constructed. The concessions are presented as an exotic environment in both time and space, accessible only through immersive mediation. The political and discordant dimensions of the era, linked to Western domination, are neutralized by the game, which offers an opportunity to reappropriate the past.

5.2. Zhanguan: A "narrative" turn

Zhangyuan, built in 1916 as the private mansion of Zhang Biao, the provincial commander-in-chief of Hubei at the end of the Qing Dynasty, has a rich history. In December 1924, Sun Yat-sen stayed there during his visit to Tianjin. From 1925 to 1929, Puyi, the abdicated emperor of the Qing Dynasty, resided in Zhangyuan. In 1935, the mansion was occupied by the Japanese army and served as the residence for the commander of the Japanese China Garrison Army, with the building expanded to its current scale. In 1947, Zhangyuan was expropriated by the Kuomintang (KMT) as the Tianjin Garrison Headquarters. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) Tianjin Committee moved in, and the Tianjin Military Control Commission merged with it. On August 11, 1949, the CPC Tianjin Committee officially opened Zhangyuan to the public, making it the first public office site for the committee in Tianjin.

Zhangyuan offers a condensed history of China during the early 20th century. The museum, which opened in 2018, offers several thematic and immersive tours, as well as an immersive theater performance by a state-affiliated theater company. Four different immersive offerings run at Zhangyuan, from morning to night. Here, we focus on the immersive theatrical production that takes place in various rooms and gardens of Zhangyuan.

This theatrical approach aligns with broader trends in the reception of theater in China. Zhangyuan's first attempt at performing outside traditional theaters was driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. When theaters closed, the theater company sought alternative venues to continue its performances, exploring spaces outside traditional theaters. Inspired by immersive plays abroad, such as *Sleep No More* (Ohanyan, 2000; Bisaha, 2021), the company found that, during the pandemic, museums and exhibition halls reopened more quickly than theaters. This provided an opportunity for theater to be staged in new, non-theatrical spaces.

After three years of experimentation, the company recognized that young people's viewing habits had significantly changed. They found it increasingly difficult for young audiences to remain focused in a traditional theater setting for two to three hours without using their phones. During this period, young people had become accustomed to watching short videos at home, leading to shortened attention spans. As a result, the company decided to focus on immersive tourism projects that redefined the performer-audience relationship (Interview, November 2024).

In Zhangyuan, the company launched an immersive theater experience based on the fictional story of the supposedly lost earrings of Soong Mei-ling, wife of Chiang Kai-shek (see Figure 6). The audience is divided into four groups, each taking on a specific role and attempting to solve the mystery of who stole the earrings. While the earrings are central to the story, they serve more as a pretext for the audience's exploration of the museum, participating in four simultaneous theatrical scenes. It is important to note that Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling never lived in Zhangyuan, and their characters do not appear in the play. They merely provide the historical context for the immersive experience.

Figure 6. Soong Mei-ling's earrings. Immersive theater performance, Zhangyuan © M. Gravari-Barbas, November 2024.

6. Discussion

The analysis of these two case studies, framed by the theoretical insights developed in parts 1 to 3 of this paper, leads to several key observations.

Nostalgia as a Framework for Understanding Heritage

After the Cultural Revolution's vandalism, President Xi Jinping, in 2013, emphasized the importance of urbanization policies that would help people "remember nostalgia" (ji de zhu xiangchou 记得住乡愁), responding to the postmodern expansion of aesthetic sensibility that encourages a proactive appreciation of the past (Hu, 2013; Cui, 2023).

Nostalgia in the Context of Republican China

Interest in life writing about individuals from Republican China surged in the late 1990s. As more people became intrigued by the lives of figures from this period—ranging from women and politicians to scientists and ordinary citizens—publications on pre-1949 Republican China peaked around the 100th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution in 2011. The opening of previously restricted archives, such as the Chiang Kai-shek archives in Taiwan, played a crucial role in this surge of interest (Shen, 2016).

The Concessions as an Epicenter of Nostalgia

International concessions provide a stage for immersion into this nostalgic past. According to the manager of a state-owned performance company, also responsible for Zhangyuan's management (Interview, October 2024), there is a clear connection between the architecture of the concessions and immersive theater:

"Although Tianjin started late in immersive performances compared to cities like Shanghai, it is very suitable for immersive performances themed around the Republican era due to its rich historical background and numerous concession sites. Tianjin's many small Western-style buildings have complex histories, providing abundant story resources. (...) Overall, Tianjin is highly suitable for immersive performance projects due to its unique historical background and rich cultural resources. Through these projects, we aim not only to protect and utilize historical buildings but also to provide visitors with unique cultural experiences, enhancing their emotional connection with the city of Tianjin".

In line with the framework discussed earlier, immersive visits are characterized by "hot authenticity," where the visitor's experience takes center stage. The concessions provide the ideal setting for interpretative, nationalistic storytelling.

7. Conclusions

This study leads to four main conclusions:

① **Digital Media is Not Determinative**

Although immersive tourism literature often emphasizes the digital dimension of immersive experiences, in the former Tianjin concessions, the physical environment—architecture, design, and urban planning—dominates. The technological (digital) infrastructure is not the most remarkable aspect. Instead, the emphasis is on history, participation, and environmental resources such as architecture, furniture, clothing, accessories, and actors.

② **Narrative Distances Itself from History but Impacts Historical Understanding**

Both museums present narratives that diverge from historical accuracy. The immersive experiences at Commander Zhang's mansion and Zhangyuan provide an imaginary understanding of Tianjin during the Republic of China under Chiang Kai-shek. However, the inclusion of real historical elements, such as the fictional earrings of Soong Mei-ling, anchors the story in a specific historical period.

③ **Immersive Visits Help Defuse Dissonant History**

In both cases, the former concessions transform into imaginative, nostalgic worlds that honor a fantasized past filled with qipaos, hybridized architecture, and international intrigue. The concessions become an appropriable stage for visitors, with no mention of the conditions that facilitated the construction of these mansions in early 20th-century Tianjin.

④ **Immersive Visits Contribute to the Transmission of "Red" Messages**

Despite the fantasy elements, these visits are designed, offered, and organized by the state (Zhangyuan) or encouraged by the state (Commander Zhang's Mansion). The political dimension is central. Beyond romanticized narratives, both sites serve as platforms for state propaganda and "Red tourism" visits.

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7

Parks in the Concessions of Tianjin: History, Hybridization, and Consumption (Part II)[87]

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PP. 162-211

Abstract

Parks are a new form of public space in modern Chinese cities, originating in the West as venues for recreation and entertainment. Unlike Chinese private gardens, which emphasize privacy, parks are designed to be open to the public and equipped with various facilities to promote a modern urban lifestyle [Zhang et al., 2012]. Between the Second Opium War and the early 20th century, nine foreign countries established concessions in Tianjin, the city with the most concessions in China. In these areas, colonists built 10 distinctive parks reflecting the cultural influences of the time. These parks serve as both a mirror to modern history and valuable cultural heritage for Tianjin. However, recent urban renewal efforts have led to the damage or demolition of some of these parks, endangering this heritage [Meng & Chen, 2014]. Amid rapid economic development and urbanization, understanding the history and characteristics of these parks is crucial for protecting these sites, meeting the needs of a modern urban lifestyle, and preserving the city's identity. This study examines Tianjin's former concession parks from three perspectives: their historical evolution [creation, development, and renovation]; the hybridization of space through Chinese and Western influences; and their past and present usage. The findings show that although each concession sought to assert its distinct identity vis-à-vis China and other foreign powers through the arrangement of space, the parks were not simply imported or synthesized. Instead, they were localized and adapted to the Chinese context, resulting in a diverse range of unique landscapes and functions.

87 This research is the second part of a project initiated and published in 2023.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose

In the West, parks serve as civic amenities designed to mitigate the detrimental effects of industrialization on urban areas. The value of open spaces for improving air quality and alleviating social tensions was first highlighted in a British parliamentary committee's report in 1833. By the latter half of the 19th century, the parks movement gained momentum. In 1853, Napoleon III and Prefect Haussmann planned Paris's system of parks, while Olmsted completed the design of Central Park in New York in 1858, marking the beginning of urban planning innovation in the United States. The park concept gradually spread to Asia, with the Japanese government including parks in the 1885 Tokyo City Improvement Ordinance as part of the effort to modernize Tokyo during the Meiji era.

In the late 19th century, the establishment of foreign concessions brought parks to China's treaty ports, including Tianjin. These parks, introduced as modern amenities, represented a new form of public space in Chinese cities. Unlike private Chinese gardens, which emphasize privacy and introversion, modern parks are public spaces equipped with facilities for education, entertainment, and sports, promoting a civilized and healthy urban lifestyle. They were closely integrated into the daily lives of residents, subtly influencing social norms and acting as instruments of social control (Wang et al., 2014). For Western expatriates, visiting parks became an essential leisure activity, and park construction in concessions was almost a requirement for urban planning. Between the 1880s and 1930s, 10 parks were established in Tianjin's foreign concessions. These parks reflect the regional characteristics of their respective colonial powers, blending both Western and Chinese cultural influences.

However, the condition of these parks has deteriorated over time due to events such as the socialist transformation, the Cultural Revolution, and the Tangshan Earthquake. Some parks have been restored following renovation efforts, while others have been repurposed or destroyed. Although the concessions symbolized invasion and humiliation for many Chinese, since the mid-2000s, the Tianjin municipal government has actively pursued preservation and renovation efforts, including for the former concession parks, to enhance the city's image, improve residents' quality of life, and create attractive tourist destinations. This has made it increasingly urgent to understand, protect, and repurpose these parks, necessitating a thorough study of their historical evolution, spatial characteristics, and use patterns.

These concession parks represent a pivotal shift from traditional Chinese classical gardens to modern public parks. They also provide a critical case study for understanding the modernization of Chinese parks, public spaces, and urban environments. Not only did these parks serve the residents of the concessions, but they also embodied the national image. Analyzing the historical development of these parks and their contemporary role offers valuable

insight into the social and cultural changes of modern and contemporary China.

This study focuses on the parks in Tianjin's former concessions, analyzing their historical evolution, spatial hybridization, and visitor experiences to promote their preservation and adaptation to the needs of contemporary urban life in China. In the first phase of this research, we examined the history, hybridization, and aspects of park usage. This second phase offers a deeper, more critical analysis of the parks' consumption patterns. It is important to note that six of the original 10 parks are still extant and relatively well-preserved, making them the primary focus of this research. Not all parks are analyzed in equal depth, as the availability of materials varies.

1.2. Theoretical framework

1.2.1 Consumption of space

Consumption, in its narrowest sense, refers to the act of using a good or service in such a way that it is no longer available to others. More broadly, the term has been used to describe the experience of consuming various social, cultural, and environmental contexts (Jayne, 2006). Urry (1995) elaborates on this idea in the postmodern context, arguing that places are not only sites for consumption activities but also objects of consumption themselves. In the realm of experiential consumption, space plays a pivotal role, serving as a medium for "total immersion in an experiential context" (Carù & Cova, 2006, p. 103).

1.2.2 Tourist experience

Boorstin (1964) defines the tourist experience as a popular form of consumption, with tourism being a key component of the experience economy. The tourist experience is inherently "multi-conditional," influenced by both the performance of producers and the interactions of individual visitors, all of which shape the unique tourist experience (Shaw & Williams, 2004). Cohen (1979) further emphasizes that different tourists seek distinct experiences, each imbued with varying meanings. Ryan (1997) expands on this by suggesting that the tourist experience is a multifaceted leisure activity, engaging not only sight but all the senses.

1.3. Research methods

This research employs traditional methodologies from geography and social sciences, combining in-depth observation and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders.

① **Observation**

Observation is an essential tool for understanding the complexity of space and

activities at the park sites. Initial observations offer a general sense of the atmosphere, street appearance, and architectural identity of the area. Observations of visitor practices are organized along three axes: the circumstances of the visit (e.g., individual, couple, family, or group); spatial practices (e.g., walking, resting, taking photos, or contemplating landscapes); and the general demeanor of visitors (e.g., pace, focal points, facial expressions). To document these observations, numerous photographs and videos were taken.

② **Interviews**

Following data collection through observation, several interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to update and refine the findings. The primary goal was to gather and compare perspectives from various actors, including both producers and consumers (i.e., visitors), to understand their roles in the production and consumption of these spaces.

1.4. Outline of the report

This report examines the parks in the former concessions of Tianjin through a cultural geography lens, proposing a three-tiered analysis—contextual, spatial, and social—of these heritage spaces, as redefined for modern urban life. The analysis proceeds in the following stages:

① An introduction to the subject, objectives, and theoretical and methodological frameworks;
② Contextualization of these issues to better understand the historical background and evaluation of Tianjin's concession parks;
③ An examination of the hybridization of space within these Western-style parks, influenced by the Chinese context, in terms of layout, architecture, and vegetation;
④ An analysis of past and present park functions and visitor practices, adapting to contemporary needs; and
⑤ A focus on the experiential dimension of visitors in these requalified spaces, exploring related issues and conflicts regarding park usage.

The first phase of this work, presented in a previous report, covers the history and hybridization of the concession parks. This second report builds on that foundation, focusing on space appropriation, visitor experiences, and the challenges facing these parks.

Fieldwork conducted in 2024 included on-site observations and interviews with local stakeholders. These observations were aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the parks' current condition, characteristics, and visitor motivations. Interviews with visitors and other stakeholders were structured to explore how these sites are consumed and the experiences of those who use them. The findings from these interviews, complemented by feedback from social media, contribute to a more critical analysis of the parks' space appropriation, visitor experiences, and the tensions in park usage.

2. Development of the Parks in the Concessions of Tianjin

2.1. Field of "hybridization": Concessions in China

International concessions emerged in key commercial cities of East Asia between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, with China serving as a prime example. By the 20th century, 27 foreign concessions (Figure 2-1) were established across China (Liu & Deng, 2000), with Shanghai, Tianjin, and Hankou being the most significant. Following the signing of a series of unequal treaties, parts of these cities were designated for foreign settlement, with independent administrations, judicial systems, and urban planning. In contrast to the imperialist paradigm of oppression and resistance, these urban enclaves—referred to as "semi-colonial" places by Osterhammel (1986)—highlight complex political, social, and spatial tensions between locals and foreigners, as well as among different empires. Through negotiation, compromise, and confrontation, these areas offer an alternative narrative of globalization

Figure 2-1. Concessions in China in 1902 Illustration by LU Yue (2023)

(Singaravélou, 2017). Acting as a "laboratory of modernity" (Marinelli, 2009, p. 417), they were sites of urban planning and architectural experimentation. Western planners provided the infrastructures, supplies, and techniques, marking early steps in the modernization of Chinese urban development (Falser, 2021). The concession areas were not simply copies of Western models but expressions of eclectic aspirations, needs, and societal struggles (Li, 2013).

The concessions not only offer a distinct perspective on global urban and architectural history but also shape the transformation of colonial cultural heritage. While the history of these areas may evoke painful memories, they have come to symbolize China's opening, globalization, and modernization in the post-1990 urban development agenda. Their distinctive economic and symbolic capital has fueled the restoration, transformation, and reconfiguration of concession areas into cultural heritage sites aimed at boosting urban development. These areas' historic architecture and urban characteristics have been reconstructed as exotic cultural theme parks, attracting tourism and fostering economic growth, while establishing an international, metropolitan identity as a creative consumption hub.

This post-colonial relationship involves ongoing cultural, economic, and power dynamics between former colonial powers and colonies, with these interactions evolving through continued social change. Given the increasing scholarly focus on concession studies, this research aims to critically explore tourism development and heritage studies in the context of globalized circulation, particularly within the digital urban spectacle.

2.2. Foreign concessions in Tianjin

Tianjin, located 120 kilometers southeast of Beijing, is notable for its significance in modern Chinese history and its economic dynamism. It is also a city dedicated to heritage protection, particularly with regard to the politically delicate heritage of its former concessions. Heritage preservation and enhancement stem from contrasting goals: erasing the "century of humiliation" while preparing for potential World Heritage status, alongside creating trendy leisure districts that incorporate early 20th-century architectural styles. Following the Second Opium War, Tianjin became one of China's port cities designated for Western concessions (Figure 2-2). It was the city with the most numerous concessions, as nine foreign powers (Great Britain, France, the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Belgium) established residential areas, hotels, factories, banks, schools, hospitals, and businesses. Between 1860 and 1945, Tianjin became a global microcosm, blending Chinese and Western influences (Singaravélou, 2017). Over nearly a century, Tianjin grew into a metropolis and a laboratory of modernity for both Western powers and Chinese political leaders and city officials.

The city presents a contrasting landscape. Although Tianjin's local government began

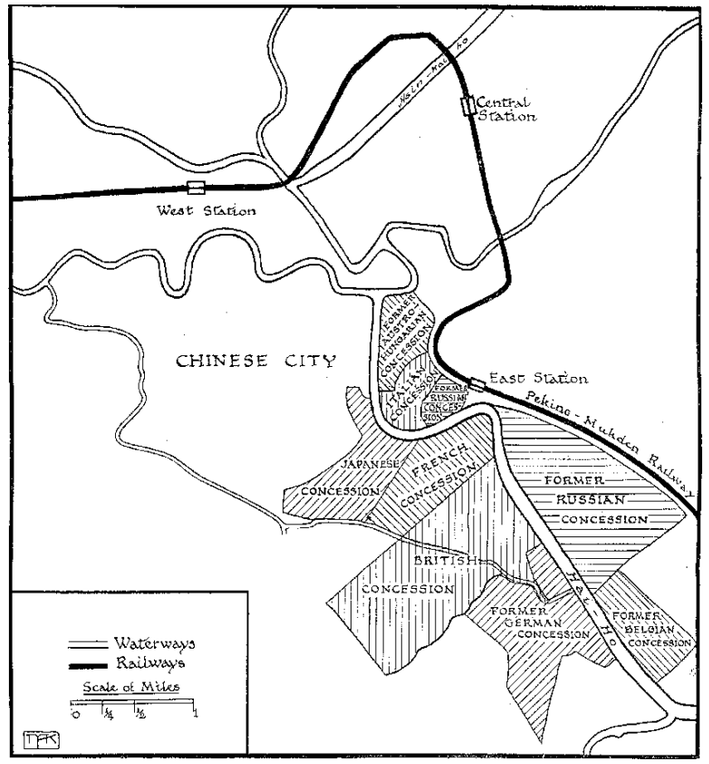

Figure 2-2. Map of Tianjin showing concessions (around 1940)
Source: (Jones, 1940, in Marinelli, 2009)

considering heritage protection in 1986, the real process of heritagization and renovation did not begin until the early 21st century. Since then, urban heritage enhancement has reflected broader trends in China, such as accelerated tourism development and the search for distinctive historical and cultural identities, amidst national identity and domestic consumption becoming critical economic concerns.

2.3. Creation and evolution of the concession parks in Tianjin

Following its designation as a treaty port in 1860, Tianjin saw the establishment of Western concessions. It became the forefront of northern China's opening and the base of the country's "Westernization" movement. Key modern advancements—including the military, railways, telegraphs, telephones, postal services, mining, modern education, and justice systems—were pioneered here. Tianjin grew into China's second-largest industrial and commercial city and the largest financial and trade center in northern China. The presence of foreigners transformed the old Chinese city, Westernizing its lifestyle, and introducing

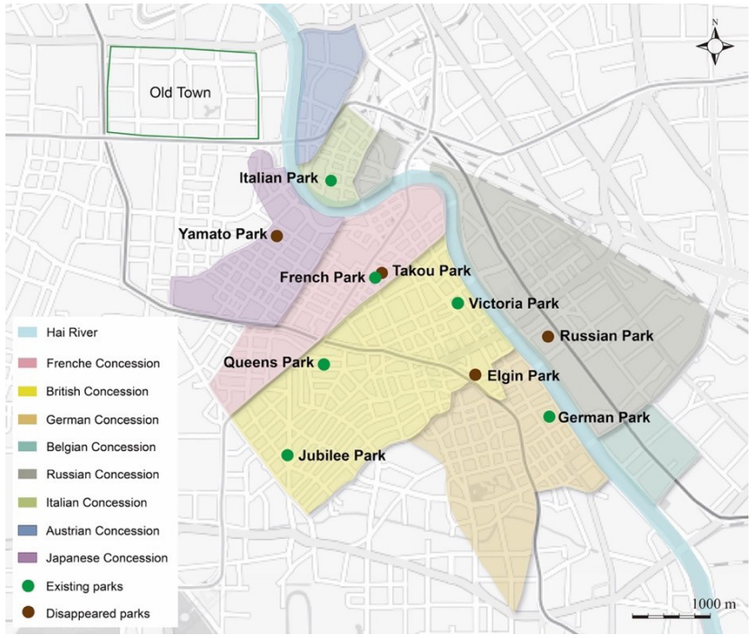

Figure 2-3. Parks in the former concessions of Tianjin Illustration by LU Yue (2023)

Western food, fashion, entertainment, and architecture. Parks, which had previously been exclusive private gardens for the Chinese elite, also began to appear in Tianjin.

After the concessions were established, various foreign powers built 10 public parks within their designated areas (Tianjin Municipal Editorial Board of Local Chronicles, 1996). These included four parks in the British Concession—Victoria Park, Queen's Park, Jubilee Park, and Elgin Park—along with Takou Road Park and French Garden in the French Concession. Other parks included Yamato Park in the Japanese Concession, Italian Park in the Italian Concession, Russian Park in the Russian Concession, and German Park in the German Concession (Figure 2-3).

In 1880, the first concession park in Tianjin, Takou Road Park, was established in the French Concession and became the city's first public park. However, it was later displaced due to the expansion of the French Concession. Victoria Park, created in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's birthday, was the first public park in the British Concession and became known as "English Park." German Park, now known as "Jiefang South Park," was first built in 1895 and later transformed in 1949 into a Jiangnan-style garden. Elgin Park, constructed in 1897, was a street park with a natural layout and a designated children's area. Russian Park, established in 1901, has undergone significant change, originally serving as a warehouse for a commercial bureau. Yamato Park, built in the Japanese Concession in 1906, was influenced by Japanese garden styles. French Park, constructed in 1917 and later renamed "Joffre Square," featured a layout of concentric circles and radial roads. Italian Park, built in 1924 near present-day Marco Polo Square, was later renamed "First Palace and Garden." Jubilee Park and Queen's Park were also located in the British Concession. Jubilee Park mimicked traditional Chinese garden landscapes, and Queen's Park, built in 1937, featured extensive plantings. Later renamed "Fuxing Park," it became a significant public space (Meng & Chen, 2014) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Parks in the concessions of Tianjin[91]

Concession	Name	Construction Date	Current Address	Area (hm2)	Current Name	Present State
French	Takou Road Park	1880	Intersection of Dagu Road and Chifeng Road,Heping District	1.57	-	The park was destroyed with the expansion of the concession, with no traces left.
British	Victoria Park	1887	Intersection of Jiefang North Road and Tai'an Road, Heping District	1.23	Jifang North Park	The overall layout of the park basically maintains the original style, and the large and small hexagonal pavilions remain.
German	German Park	1895	Intersection of Jiefang South Road and Hangzhou Road, Hexi District	0.76	Jifang South Park	It has been repaired, reconstructed, and reused. Stone pavilion, landscape stones, wooden paving, etc., have been added. Old trees remain.
British	Elgin Park	1897	Nanjing Road, Heping District	0.4	-	Park was abandoned given the expansion of Nanjing Road. Now, it is a square in front of the concert hall.
Russian	Russian Park	1901	-	7.0	-	It was requisitioned by the Japanese army in 1939 and has been abolished, without a trace.
Japanese	Yamato Park	1906	28 An Shan Road, Heping District	0.47	-	In 1961, it was destroyed, and Bayi Auditorium was built on the original site.
French	French Park	1917	Garden Road, Heping District	1.33	Central Park	After a reconstruction, new sculptures were installed. The layout and ancient trees remain, but the original stone pavilion no longer exists.
Italian	Italian Park	1924	No. 47 Minzu Road, Hebei District	0.54	Yigong Park	The Italian Concession was renovated and become Italian- Style Street; the square in the northwest of the park has become Marco Polo Square.
British	Jubilee Park	1927	Intersection of Guizhou Road and Chengdu Road, Heping District	0.74	Tushan Park	After being repaired serval times, the original style is still maintained. The earth hills and ancient trees remain.
British	Queen's Park	1937	Xi'an Road, Heping District	0.95	Fuxing Park	After being repaired serval times, the original style is still maintained. The ancient trees remains.

91 The six better-preserved parks (highlighted in red type) are the focus of this study.

3. Appropriation of Space and Contemporary Activities in Concession Parks in Tianjin

Tianjin's historical parks have undergone significant transformations, reflecting the prosperity of private gardens, the construction of concession parks, and the development of public parks in the Chinese community. These parks were severely damaged during events such as wars, the Cultural Revolution, and the 1978 earthquake, leading to a period of decline. In recent decades, these parks have been restored, with some repaired following the principle of "repairing the old as the old," others partly preserved and renovated, and some rebuilt to accommodate the city's urban development. The primary concern now is how the old concession parks are renovated and repurposed to meet the needs of contemporary urban life, including the preservation of original space and activities. This examination focuses on the appropriation of space and contemporary activities in these renovated leisure spaces. Parks in former concessions retain traditional functions while also adapting in innovative ways. These spaces have been renovated to meet societal demands and local government needs. Generally, there are three main categories of space based on current functions: neighborhood parks for daily civic life, spaces for collective activities, and areas emphasizing propaganda.

3.1. Neighborhood parks for daily life

The layout of most parks is designed to meet users' daily needs.

3.1.1 Classic functions

Fuxing Park (formerly Queen's Park) serves as a public space for leisure, entertainment, and fitness. The park's spatial organization is well-structured, featuring various functional areas: green spaces with a variety of trees and flowers, walking and running paths, recreational facilities such as a children's play area and fitness equipment, and several benches for relaxation and socializing. The appropriation of space in Fuxing Park prioritizes different activities for distinct age groups, sometimes segregating them by gender (see Figure 3-1). There is a clear division of spaces for activities like gymnastics, dance, tai chi, and cards for the elderly, children's games for families, and spaces for mixed-age groups engaging in walking, badminton, and resting. Although some areas suggest mixed-gender participation, certain activities are still traditionally associated with specific genders and age groups, reflecting cultural norms. This division may lead to potential conflicts, an issue that will be explored further in Chapter 5. In traditional Chinese society, landscape environments primarily served the garden owners, a minority group. Modern city parks have disrupted this exclusivity, offering richer, more varied activities and influencing the lifestyles of urban residents. With

the accelerated pace of contemporary life, public parks in former concessions provide spaces for relaxation, recreation, social interaction, and leisure, offering respite from the stresses of work. These parks play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life in Tianjin and have left a lasting impact on the city's urban landscape, culture, and daily life (Yang, 2019).

The small parks built by foreigners in the former concessions are now frequented by citizens for activities such as morning exercises, walking, playing badminton, and meeting friends (Figure 3-2). These spaces align with the original intentions of their creators: small, public, leisurely, and easily accessible. Today, however, the main users are Chinese residents. One resident fondly recalled:

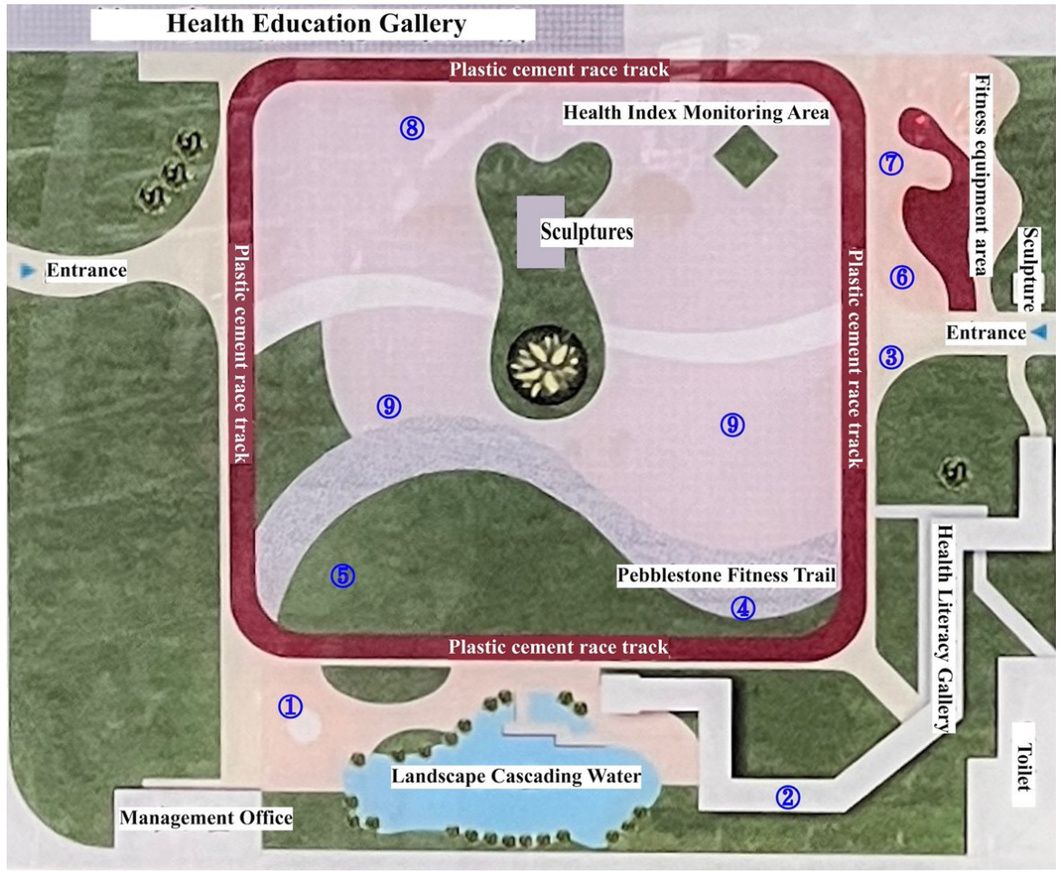

Figure 3-1. Layout and distribution of activities in Fuxing Park
Source: Illustration by Yue LU in 2024 based on the draft by Maria Gravari-Barbas in 2023
① Gymnastics, elderly women / music dance for several groups ② Music, elderly men ③ Sparring, elderly women ④ Danse, middle-aged women ⑤ Tai chi, elderly women / Yangko / Swordplay ⑥ Children's games ⑦ Sports equipment for adults ⑧ Gymnastics, elderly women ⑨ Badminton, elderly

Figure 3-2. Activities in Fuxing Park in the former British Concession of Tianjin
Source: Yue LU in 2023

"If a park can save some of the city's memories, then Fuxing Park carries Tianjin people's happy time of childhood for several generations. As early as in the 1940s, Fuxing Park built a standardized children's playground, which has since become a place for generations of children to play during their childhood. In 1987, a monument gallery was built on the west side of the park, which collects the handwriting of 42 nationally renowned calligraphers and celebrities for the enjoyment of visitors. In 2010, the municipal government upgraded and renovated Fuxing Park... Then the park introduces history and culture with rockery and water into the whole landscape, so that the public can experience the mood of classical gardens in leisure and entertainment activities. Although Fuxing Park has been renovated and changed several times, it is still the same as in one's memory. The children who used to play in the park have now become seniors; they get together in the park to play chess, dance, and talk about the world, and their grandchildren run around them happily. Fuxing Park thus preserves this carefree time and will be forever engraved in the memory."[92]

3.1.2 Original activities

Historical parks are often located in crowded city centers, where green and open spaces are scarce. As a result, these parks are largely managed by the city and serve contemporary, special-use functions (Sun, 2009).

1) Traditional civic culture

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, city parks became important venues for civic activities. Certain spaces within parks, particularly those most suited for public use, reflect aspects of traditional civic life. Activities in these parks often serve as a microcosm of broader social life, with open spaces, dense tree cover, and free paths aligning with the traditional habits of Chinese residents (Liu, 2016).

For example, in traditional towns, street artists perform in public squares and streets, often earning a living by performing for passersby. Spectators gather to watch these performances, including Chinese opera and martial arts, in parks such as Fuxing Park (formerly Queen's Park), Jiefang North Park (formerly Victoria Park), and Central Park (formerly French Park). People observe the performances either individually or in groups. Similarly, beneath tree canopies or in open spaces within parks, people often gather to play cards or chess, with onlookers surrounding them (Figure 3-3).

2) Public square dance

Since 2013, "square dance" has become a popular term in China's internet searches. Square dancing is a rhythmic group activity performed in open spaces such as squares and parks, usually accompanied by electronic remixes of popular Chinese ballads and pop songs. This low-cost activity, which requires minimal facilities and skills, is particularly popular among middle-aged and elderly women and has become a significant social phenomenon. Our observations indicate that square dancing is especially common in concession parks, where various types of dance, such as aerobics, Yangke, ethnic dances, and ballroom dancing, are practiced regularly and for extended periods (Figure 3-4).

Overall, both traditional and contemporary Chinese customs have influenced the use of urban parks. Over time, Tianjin's citizens have integrated elements of both traditional and modern "civic life" into the park spaces, creating a distinctive local and national cultural lifestyle. This process reflects the spontaneous re-creation of the city's concession parks (Liu, 2016).

Figure 3-3. Citizens playing cards and chess in Fuxing Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

92 https://www.sohu.com/a/325744809_120207161


Figure 3-4. Residents' square dancing in Fuxing Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

3.2. Appropriation of space for "innovative" activities

The second category involves innovative practices occurring at key spatial locations, such as squares and entrances.

3.2.1 Organized events

The former French Park, now Central Park, serves as a prominent leisure space in the former French Concession. The park, which has a circular layout with a diameter of about 135 meters, retains the radial road system from the concession period (Yang, 2019), as shown in Figure 4-7. At the park's center is the Cultural Square, renovated at the end of the 20th century, which serves as a primary leisure area. The square features a musical fountain at its center, surrounded by radial pathways leading to six entrances and exits along Garden Road. The park is adorned with seven statues of musicians, and a statue of Ji Hongchang is positioned near his former residence.

Central Park is a representative example of collective civic activities. In 1995, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Ji Hongchang's birth, a bronze statue of the anti-Japanese general was erected at the southeast side of the park, replacing a previous statue of Jeanne d'Arc. The park is not only a venue for leisure and children's play but also serves as a patriotic education base.[93] On important memorial days, such as September 30, 2023, during the tenth Chinese National Martyrs' Day (Figure 3-5). Central Park hosted an event where about 20 people gathered in front of Ji Hongchang's statue to commemorate his anti-Japanese efforts and celebrate his patriotic legacy; that is, to "*deeply commemorate the martyrs, inherit and carry forward the fine revolutionary tradition spirit*."[94]

93 https://csgl.tj.gov.cn/zl/cslhjs/qsgy/202009/t20200922_3777807.html
94 https://www.tjnh.gov.cn/ztzl1/ztzl/nhqcjwmsq/202210/t20221002_6001657.html


Figure 3-5. Memorial event for Chinese National Martyrs' Day in the Central Park of Tianjin
Source: Yue LU in 2023


Figure 3-6. Stall of vegetables and car trunk coffee shop in front of Munan Park
Source: Yue LU in 2024

3.2.2 Spontaneous commercial behavior

Parks in China are typically regarded as public services and welfare facilities, and commercial activities are generally prohibited (Interview with LIU Hongjie, 2024). However, in recent years, particularly in the post-epidemic era, economic challenges have prompted people to seek "flexible employment" or additional income. A notable phenomenon has emerged at park entrances: street vendors. Parks are ideal locations for relaxation and exercise, with significant foot traffic that creates sales opportunities. Setting up a stall, compared to opening a store, is a cost-effective alternative, as it avoids high rent and maintenance expenses. However, many areas in Tianjin, particularly those near parks, have strict regulations regarding street vending, requiring vendors to apply for licenses. These vendors often face the risk of being fined by urban management authorities. Since these "retail" stalls typically operate without registration with industrial and commercial departments, they lack official recognition, creating a situation of "unknown identity." One vendor who sells coffee from her car trunk even embraces the internet celebrity trend, broadcasting live while selling goods (Figure 3-6). She explained that her mobile "stall" offers flexibility, allowing her to quickly

drive away if urban management authorities arrive for an inspection.

3.3. Parcs with emphasis on thematic propaganda and education

Since the 2010s, several parks in the former concessions of Tianjin have taken on official roles in promoting specific themes through propaganda. As a result, these parks are now equipped with publicity boards and propaganda materials on various themes, such as health, drug control, anti-corruption, and demographics. This policy is particularly evident in Jiefang South Park and Tushan Park.

3.3.1 Jiefang South Park

During the "Eleventh Five-Year Plan" period (2006–2010), Tianjin's Hexi District incorporated demographic culture into its advanced cultural development strategy, offering policy support and funding. Over 5 million yuan was invested in constructing population and family planning service centers, demographic culture bookstores, and a demographic culture park. Completed in 2010, the "Demographic Culture Park" is located in Jiefang South Park (formerly the German Park) and spans 8,000 square meters. The park features 13 demographic culture sculptures and six communication boards on demographic culture (Figure 3-7). According to Hexi District's government, Jiefang South Park provides a unique leisure space for citizens, stating, "*Rich humanistic sculptures fill the park with a cultured atmosphere and the elegance of life, which enables the people to subtly feel the influence of demographic culture while relaxing, creating an artistic demographic culture atmosphere for Hexi District.*"[95]

Figure 3–7. Communication boards about demographic culture in Jiefang South Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

95 https://news.yuanlin.com/detail/72386.htm

Figure 3–8. Anti–drug communication boards in Tushan Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023 & 2024

3.3.2 Jiefang Tushan Park

Another example is Tushan Park (formerly Jubilee Park). In June 2018, the Narcotics Control Office of Heping District, in collaboration with the Municipal Environment and Parks Management Committee, established an outdoor "Anti-Drug Propaganda and Education Base" in Tushan Park, investing over 1 million yuan in the project. The park features a corridor dedicated to the history of drug control, more than 20 communication boards presenting anti-drug knowledge and regulations along its pathways (Figure 3-8), and a designated drug display area. This park has become a significant anti-drug education hub for primary and secondary students, volunteers, and employees of public institutions and businesses. The initiative "*has led to a new climax of anti-drug propaganda work in the district, and created a good social atmosphere in which everyone participates in the anti-drug effort, so that the anti-drug work in the district has stepped up to a new level.*"[96]

4. Experiential Dimension of the Consumption of the Parks

Beyond examining activities in the concession parks of Tianjin, this study seeks to uncover the meanings of these practices, with a particular focus on the individual and social motivations that influence the choice of such spaces. From the visitors' perspective, what

96 https://www.app.tjyun.com/jinyunhao/system/2023/06/20/054033439.shtml

importance do they place on the heritage context of these sites? What imaginaries are associated with these spaces? How do the experiences in these parks compare to those in other urban parks? To what extent do visitors interpret the values embodied by these parks? This chapter aims to explore the sensations of visitors from an experiential and imaginary perspective. Our research, based on Chinese tourist social networks, provides initial insights into the significance and perception of these parks. Building on this qualitative foundation, we conducted a quantitative analysis through interviews with a diverse group of visitors to deepen our understanding. This exploration revealed four key aspects that define the experiential dimension of visiting the parks in the former concessions of Tianjin.

4.1. Site with good accessibility

During the First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957), Tianjin experienced significant progress in the construction of parks and green spaces, with a growing number of small green spaces built in streets each year. The "Three Small Constructions" initiative (small green spaces, small gardens, and small streetscapes) marked the beginning of this effort. By 1988, Tianjin had 92 medium-sized parks (2–10 hectares) and small parks (less than 2 hectares), covering a total area of 68.07 hectares. These parks vary in style and function. According to a survey, large parks in Tianjin receive an average of 0.05 to 0.2 visitors per square meter daily, whereas small and medium-sized parks attract 0.5 to 1 visitor per square meter, five to 10 times more (Sun, 2009). Among these, the concession parks, which retain a Western-style layout while incorporating modern elements, are an important part of the city's green spaces. Historical parks, often located in crowded city centers, are scarce in green space and thus highly valuable, as they assume important contemporary functions.

Visitors' positive feedback underscores the importance of the parks' accessibility in their daily lives. Many emphasized that they walk or use electric vehicles to reach these parks, making leisure and social activities more convenient. This accessibility not only enhances the overall park experience but also encourages regular use among residents. It plays a critical role in promoting a healthier lifestyle by facilitating activities such as walking, outdoor sports, and relaxation in green spaces without the need for long commutes. Additionally, the opportunity to enjoy nature and fresh air improves mental health, especially in urban environments where stress levels are high.

Interview with visitor 6, male, 40-60 years old, Fuxing Park

"If a park is large and situated far from residential areas, it can create significant barriers for individuals who wish to visit. In such cases, people may need to rely on transportation options like driving to reach these parks, which can be less convenient and time-consuming. This is especially true for those who desire to engage in regular physical activities, such as morning exercises. For instance, the majority of individuals who come to enjoy morning workouts or jogging at local parks tend to live in close proximity. The convenience of having a nearby park allows them to easily incorporate physical activity into their daily routines without the added hassle of a lengthy commute.
Moreover, while younger individuals, especially long-distance runners, might be more inclined to travel to larger parks that offer expansive running trails, most casual exercisers prefer locations that are easily accessible. These individuals often seek out parks within walking distance to ensure they can maintain a routine without the challenge of extended travel."

The accessibility of parks is particularly important for elderly visitors, many of whom have mobility challenges. These individuals often prioritize parks that are easy to reach, as proximity impacts their ability to enjoy outdoor activities and engage with their communities. For the elderly, local parks are crucial for maintaining independence and ensuring safety. Visitors expressed that proximity to parks reduces the risk of fatigue or injury from long journeys, empowering them to maintain regular exercise routines.

Interview with visitor 3, female, 60-80 years old, Tushan Park

"In fact, I believe it would be greatly beneficial for cities to develop more community parks, as these spaces provide essential venues for children, families and especially the elderly population who often faces mobility challenges, which can restrict their ability to travel far from home. For many older adults, everyday activities like taking a leisurely stroll or sitting in a park can become significant challenges if they have to navigate long distances. While larger parks can offer diverse activities and attractions, they typically require drivers or lengthy trips, making them less accessible for those who may not have the stamina or resources to travel. Moreover, especially in urban settings, it is unlikely to find expansive parks within the bustling city center. This situation underscores the importance of smaller, carefully designed green spaces that can be integrated into neighborhoods. Establishing community parks, city gardens, or small green areas within residential zones can significantly enhance the overall environment. These spaces would not only improve local aesthetics but also provide a vital resource for residents, making it easier for elderly individuals and children alike to find a welcoming place to spend time outside. Conversely, if the urban landscape consists of limited large parks situated only in the suburbs, this lack of accessibility can lead to feelings of exclusion among those who live in the city. The overall quality of life would fall short, as not all residents would have equal opportunities to enjoy the benefits offered by parks."

4.2. Pleasant place

The term "pleasant" frequently appears in visitors' descriptions of their park experiences,

serving as a key indicator of their emotional and sensory engagement with these spaces. To better understand this concept, we explore the experiential qualities that define a "pleasant" park experience.

For local visitors, the parks are primarily seen as beautiful spaces that enhance the urban landscape. As noted, the concession parks in Tianjin have undergone significant renovation, incorporating modern functions to transform them into essential social, physical, and cultural hubs. This development includes the creation of expansive green areas, pedestrian-friendly pathways, and new facilities that accommodate diverse activities. These improvements have revitalized the parks and enhanced the aesthetics of the surrounding areas. Thoughtful landscaping, public amenities, and contemporary architectural elements contribute to the visual appeal of the parks, which are often praised for their vibrant atmosphere, lush greenery, well-maintained flower beds, and inviting walkways.

Respondents consistently highlight the aesthetic value of the concession parks, often describing them as urban oases where they can escape the hustle and bustle of city life. Visitors associate the beauty of these spaces with tranquility and serenity, finding joy in the natural elements that provide a stark contrast to the urban environment.

Interview with visitor 11, female, 20-40 years old, Jiefang North Park

"We just moved to Tianjin three days ago, and this is our first time visiting this park. Upon arriving, I was immediately struck by how inviting and well-maintained it is. The layout is very organized, with clear paths that lead to different areas while providing easy access to various attractions within the park, making it simple for visitors to navigate. I appreciate the attention to detail in the design, as it creates a nice atmosphere conducive to relaxation and enjoyment. The greenery is lush and vibrant, contributing to a pleasant environment where one can escape the rush of city life. If there were no larger or more elaborate parks nearby, I believe we would choose to come here on a more regular basis."

The parks' abundant greenery and open spaces play a crucial role in visitors' experiences (Figure 4-1). The lush lawns, vibrant flower beds, and well-maintained trees offer a refreshing contrast to the concrete and asphalt of urban life, fostering a sense of tranquility and serving as a peaceful retreat. This connection to nature also provides practical benefits, such as air purification, noise reduction, and a cooler microclimate, which is especially appreciated during the hot summer months. Visitors often immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, and fragrances of nature, engaging multiple senses that contribute to the park's perceived "pleasantness."

Figure 4-1. Jiefang North Park with well-organized green space
Source: Yue LU in 2024

nterview with visitor 6, male, 40-60 years old, Fuxing Park

"I think that those large parks, such as the ones constructed more recently in Tianjin, are still in the early stages of greening, right? This means that the trees and plant life in these parks are not yet fully developed or lush. Many of the newly planted areas have yet to reach their full potential, which can result in a somewhat empty feeling in comparison to more established parks. It's evident that these large parks may need some time to mature and create the inviting ambiance that many visitors seek. When we visit these smaller, older parks, we notice that they are significantly more mature. The trees have had years—if not decades—to grow and flourish, resulting in a verdant landscape that feels much more welcoming and comforting. The extensive tree cover in these parks not only provides shade but also creates a sense of enclosure that fosters a peaceful atmosphere."

The concept of "pleasant scale" is also evident in the feedback from visitors, with many noting the harmonious relationship between the parks and their surrounding environments. The relatively small houses in the former concession areas create a friendly, inviting neighborhood atmosphere (Figure 4-2). This architectural scale enhances the parks' sense of community, as visitors feel more connected to their surroundings and enjoy longer visits. The smaller layout of the area fosters a welcoming environment conducive to social interaction, making the parks ideal places for socializing.

Figure 4–2. Relative small–scale buildings around Tushan Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

Interview with visitor 8, male, 18-20 years old, Fuxing Park

"The smaller houses surrounding these parks contribute significantly to this pleasant atmosphere. Their quaint architecture and lower heights create a cozy, welcoming environment that fosters a sense of community. This arrangement helps to humanize the space, making visitors feel more at ease as they stroll through the parks. In contrast, if there were high-rise buildings in the vicinity, it would dramatically change the character of the neighborhood and could lead to feelings of confinement and depression. Tall buildings often overshadow green spaces and create a sense of separation, making people feel small and disconnected from their environment."

4.3. Sociability atmosphere

For many visitors, the parks function as community hubs where individuals can forge and strengthen connections. These green spaces provide a relaxed setting for social activities, whether it be meeting friends, spending time with family, or enjoying outings as couples (Figure 4-3). The parks' inviting atmosphere encourages meaningful interactions and fosters a sense of belonging among visitors.

The presence of diverse visitors and activities significantly contributes to the vibrant atmosphere of the parks. A thoughtfully designed layout of trails, rest areas, and activity zones enables visitors of various ages and interests to find appropriate spaces for their activities. This layout is essential for accommodating the diverse needs of the community, allowing everyone—from families with young children to active seniors—to fully enjoy the

park's offerings. Additionally, the variety of activities within the parks enhances the social experiences. From organized events like exercise classes and cultural performances to casual picnics and children's games, the diversity attracts people from different backgrounds.

Some visitors note that the parks are particularly lively, with the vibrant interactions and behaviors of the crowd enhancing the overall appeal (Figure 4-4). The sight of children playing, groups of friends engaging in lively conversations, and couples strolling hand-in-hand create an atmosphere filled with energy and warmth. This dynamic environment enriches the experience for everyone, adding a unique quality to each visit. Furthermore, the crowd's behavior becomes an integral part of the park's landscape. As visitors engage in various activities—such as exercise sessions, dance classes, or spontaneous games—these moments intertwine with the natural beauty of the surroundings, creating a captivating scene. The sounds of laughter, music, and conversation merge to form a vibrant symphony, making the park a more attractive destination for both regulars and newcomers.

Figure 4–3. Old friends meeting in Jiefang North Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

Figure 4–4. Coexistence of different activities in Fuxing Park and Tushan Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023 & 2024

Interview with visitor 3, female, 20-40 years old, Tushan Park

"The relationships among neighbors in historic neighborhoods tend to be much stronger and more meaningful. People are often more engaged with one another, leading to a sense of community that is difficult to foster in high-rise living situations. In such buildings, you may rarely know your neighbors by name; interactions are often limited to brief exchanges in the elevator or in the parking lot. Each day becomes a routine of taking the elevator up and down, living in a more isolated bubble where true connections are harder to come by.
In contrast, old neighborhoods, especially those that feature historical parks, offer numerous small public spaces where people can gather, socialize, and interact. These parks serve as community hubs where residents can enjoy leisurely walks, participate in community activities, or simply sit and chat with friends and neighbors. The atmosphere in these settings is generally more inviting, and I've found that people are often more friendly and approachable. The smaller, more intimate environment encourages conversations and fosters camaraderie, allowing for organic relationships to flourish."

Interview with visitor 8, male, 18-20 years old, Fuxing Park

"Although this park is not particularly large, its compact size is complemented by a diverse range of facilities and activities that cater to all age groups. It truly embodies the saying: small but complete. There are various designated spaces within the park, such as areas for dancing and singing, which add to the lively atmosphere. The sight of people of all ages—young children, adults, and seniors—engaging in activities is a delightful aspect of our visits. From lively dance groups twirling to upbeat music to individuals practicing tai chi or fitness routines, the variety of pursuits on display creates an inclusive environment. It's heartening to see so many people come together, forging connections and fostering a sense of community within the park."

Interview with visitor 10, male, 60-80 years old, Fuxing Park

"It's wonderfully lively here, filled with many people enjoying the vibrant atmosphere. There's a palpable sense of happiness that comes with the presence of others, and I believe that the more people there are, the more joy it brings to everyone around, right? Just look around—people are engaging in a myriad of activities that bring them delight. You can see individuals dancing to lively music, children playing ball, older adults practicing Tai Chi in the shade. How fantastic is that? It's invigorating to witness so much expression and enjoyment taking place in one space! In the afternoons, you'll find several groups gathered, intently playing cards, their laughter and friendly banter filling the air. This sense of camaraderie is infectious, as it emphasizes the importance of connection and leisure in our lives. It's a beautiful reminder that people need to carve out their own fun and enjoyment, especially as they navigate the challenges of daily life."

Moreover, many visitors regard the parks as vital social platforms. These spaces not only host leisure activities but also foster a sense of community by facilitating social interactions. For elderly residents, the parks provide a space to gather, chat, reminisce, and share stories, strengthening bonds and promoting social well-being (Figure 4-5). The presence of other seniors fosters a sense of belonging, reducing the isolation often associated with aging. For children, the parks offer a safe environment to interact with their peers, engage in games, play on swings, or explore the playground—essential activities for their social development. These interactions help children develop critical social skills such as teamwork, empathy, and communication.

This social atmosphere transforms the parks into more than places for relaxation; they become dynamic centers for community engagement. Visitors often describe the rich tapestry of lives that intersect in these spaces, where friendships are formed and community ties are strengthened. Whether through group exercises, impromptu dance sessions, or simple conversations over a game of cards, the parks foster connections that enhance the quality of life for all visitors.

Figure 4–5. The social atmosphere in Jiefang North Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

Interview with visitor 5, female, 20-40 years old, Fuxing Park

"There are many children here in the park, and it's wonderful to see them interacting with one another. The park serves as a vibrant social space where kids can come together, play, and forge new friendships. Unlike the gated residential community where we live, which has a relatively limited number of children, the park provides a much larger and more diverse playgroup. In our residential area, the children typically interact with the same small group of peers, which can sometimes limit their social development and experiences. In the parks, however, children from various neighborhoods come together, offering them the chance to meet new friends and engage with peers they might not encounter otherwise. The variety of activities available enables them to have diverse experiences that enhance their creativity and social skills.

4.4. Layer of nostalgia?

The historical remnants of the concessionary districts in Tianjin offer a microcosm of China's modern history (Liu, 2013). These areas reflect the complex interplay of cultural influences shaped by foreign presence, which has significantly impacted the city's identity. Among the historical legacies of the concessions, the parks serve not only as serene spaces of natural beauty but also as repositories of rich cultural connotations that narrate the region's evolution.

The parks are imbued with historical significance, serving as reminders of the past and the diverse communities that have coexisted within them. Visitors strolling through these green spaces encounter a landscape that reflects the fusion of Eastern and Western architectural styles—evident in park buildings, pathways, and landscaping inspired by various

Figure 4-6. Historic buildings around the Central Park
Source: Yue LU (2023)

cultural traditions. This blend of influences fosters an appreciation for both the natural environment and the intricate history surrounding it. Statues, trees, and monuments within the parks often commemorate important figures or events, further enriching the visitor experience and creating a sense of connection to the past (Figure 4-6). In this way, the parks are vital to the social fabric of the concessionary districts, offering opportunities for reflection and engagement and inviting individuals to explore their historical roots while enjoying the beauty of nature.

For some visitors, particularly those over 60 who lived in the former concessions, the parks evoke nostalgia. These individuals are often moved by a particular historical atmosphere, resonating with the landscapes of their youth. However, many of these visitors express sorrow over the loss of old objects and landscapes in the parks, which have diminished their childhood memories. This issue will be further explored in the next section.

Interview with visitor 8, male, 18-20 years old, Fuxing Park

Maybe the parks in the historical districts have a bit of an ancient style and flavor, which I think is better. There's something uniquely charming about these parks, as they often incorporate design elements and landscaping that reflect the rich history of the area. This historical ambiance is not only visually appealing but also evokes a sense of nostalgia and authenticity that makes these spaces feel special.

Interview with visitor 3, female, 20-40 years old, Tushan Park

I am used to living in historic neighborhoods. I think old neighborhoods are better because firstly, the cultural environment is greater, and the neighbor relationship is better. In high-rise residential buildings, you may not know anyone. Every day, you just take the elevator to go out and go home. Then, in old neighborhoods, such as historical parks, although there are many small spaces, I feel more comfortable, especially some people are more friendly.

In contrast, our interviews reveal that at least half of the visitors are unaware of the parks' historical background. This lack of awareness suggests a disconnect between the rich historical narratives embedded in these spaces and the everyday experiences of the visitors. While some visitors sense the historic atmosphere and possess a general understanding of the park's context, their knowledge is often limited. For example, one visitor remarked, "I think it is part of the former concession and has a history of several decades... That's all. I don't know much about the specific history" (Interview with Visitor 15, male, aged 60-80, Jiefang South Park).

This sentiment is echoed by other visitors who acknowledge the parks' cultural significance but struggle to articulate their historical relevance. Their responses indicate

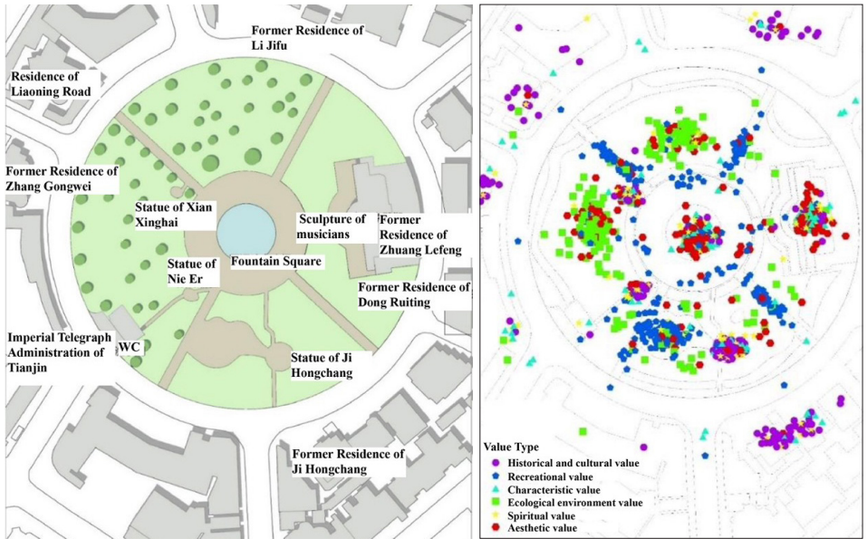

Figure 4-7. Layout of the Central Park and overall distribution of visitors' cognition of the landscape value
Source: (Zhang, 2017)

that while they appreciate the parks' aesthetic and recreational value, many remain unaware of the deeper historical narratives that enrich the environment. This gap in knowledge presents an opportunity for improved public engagement, such as educational programs and informational signage, to bridge the divide between the parks' historical significance and visitors' understanding.

This lack of awareness is further supported by a doctoral dissertation on the value recognition of Central Park in Tianjin. The study reveals that, despite the parks' rich historical and cultural context, a significant portion of the public remains uninformed, which may detract from the overall appreciation of the parks. According to the dissertation (Zhang, 2017), 63.5% of respondents believe that Central Park is old and has a historical atmosphere. However, respondents also identify the sculpture of Ji Hongchang as the park's most historically valuable feature, followed by three groups of music-related sculptures. Historic buildings around the park, such as the former residences of Ji Hongchang, Li Jifu, and Zhang Gong, are also perceived as valuable landmarks. Notably, while the statue of Ji Hongchang is a symbol of patriotism education, the three music-related sculptures have no direct connection to the park's history (Figure 4-7). Consequently, although the old buildings around the park contribute to perceptions of historical and cultural value, some of the landscape landmarks with supposed historical significance were created or reimagined during subsequent renovations and selections.

5. Issues and Conflicts in the Concession Parks in Tianjin

The representation of heritage landscapes conveys a variety of ideologies that often conflict in terms of their values and positions (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). Maria Gravari-Barbas discusses the tensions arising from the relationships between different stakeholders, noting that living in the city holds distinct meanings for different individuals (Gravari-Barbas, 2013). While the municipality generally views the renovation of old neighborhoods in a positive light, it is crucial to consider the resistance from local residents, who often defend the quality of the renovations, reflecting broader concerns about heritage. Tianjin's concession parks, built during the concession period, have undergone multiple renovations. However, in addition to the benefits mentioned earlier, the process of their use and transformation has given rise to various problems and conflicts. This chapter explores the criticism and dissatisfaction voiced by visitors based on their experiences.

In recent years, the number of urban parks in Tianjin has increased (Meng & Chen, 2014), and existing modern concession parks have also undergone renovations. While the city has ensured sufficient green space, these parks face challenges such as the loss of historical features, gentrification, and landscape homogenization.

5.1. Lack of comprehensive consciousness of historical and cultural heritage protection

Heritage must first be valued to be protected. Despite being located in historical and cultural districts, the relevant governmental departments in Tianjin lack a comprehensive protection framework for the renewal of concession parks. Issues such as improper maintenance have led to the loss of the parks' unique historical features and landscapes.

5.1.1 Concession parks swallowed up by urban development

Protection and renewing historic parks can highlight the distinctiveness of historical and cultural landscapes, which, in turn, can emphasize a city's unique character (Yang, 2019). However, during urban development, some original concession parks were "innocently" displaced. A prime example is Ping'an Park (formerly Elgin Park) in the Xiaobailou area, where the last green space was demolished in 1974 to make way for Nanjing Road. Another instance is Jiefang South Park, in the former German concession, where part of the land was repurposed for the construction of Haihe Middle School (Meng & Chen, 2014). Similarly, Yamato Park, originally in the former Japanese concession, has entirely lost its original form (Figure 5-1).

In Tianjin's historical and cultural preservation efforts, the focus has primarily been on historical buildings, with insufficient attention given to the research and restoration of

Figure 5-1. Original Yamato Park and current site of Yamato Park
Source: https://www.sohu.com/a/517985335_121123801 (left) and Yue LU in 2023 (right)

historic parks (Meng & Chen, 2014). For example, in the early 2000s, while Marco Polo Square was restored in the former Italian Concession and the Statue of the Goddess of Peace was rebuilt, the former Italian Garden, a significant part of the square at the time, has yet to be restored. The surrounding environment is now disordered and unrecognizable, and the garden still awaits restoration.

5.1.2 Heritage elements in disrepair given lack of maintenance

One of the primary issues facing Tianjin's concession parks is the destruction and loss of park heritage. Long-time residents, particularly those who grew up in the former concessions, lament the disappearance of landscapes that were once rooted in their childhood memories. Beyond the loss of heritage, the disrepair of certain features and the disappearance of some landscapes have also led to local dissatisfaction (Figure 5-2).

Interview with visitor 12, female, 60-80 years old, Jiefang North Park

"Well, can this be improved? I often stayed here when I was a child. The wooden pavilions are in a bad condition and in disrepair for many years. The broken seats were not repaired but just pulled up. This park was originally the Municipal Party Committee Garden. Later, the building next to it was turned into a hotel. They also have management, but don't know where the park belongs exactly. You see that it is broken here, can't they just repair it? But in the end, they took the easy way out and didn't repair it properly. Look at these two seats… It's different now. We have photos from in the past. There used to be big peonies here, well, they are gone. The peonies were as big as bowls and had grown for many years. Later, it was turned into a pool, and a tree was placed in the middle. The pool never had water, and then it was removed. We have been playing here for more than 20 years. Now the only old objects left are these two pavilions, and they are not well maintained."

Figure 5-2. Historic elements in disrepair in Jiefang North Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

Many elements, such as objects and facilities, which could be considered cultural relics, are not properly maintained or repaired. Moreover, there are no heritage protection signs at park entrances. Another issue is the improper restoration of heritage elements. A notable example from Jiefang North Park involves the missing stone lions (Figure 5-3).

"*The stolen stone lions located in front of the hexagonal pavilion in Jiefang North Park in Heping District are made of white marble. Each is about 1.3 meters high and weighs about 1 ton. The two stone lions originally belonged to Gordon Hall, a building in the former British Concession which was built in 1887 on the north side of Jiefang North Park. In the early 1970s, due to the construction of the new municipal government building, the original building Gordon Hall was demolished, so the two stone lions were moved to Jiefang North Par. They have a history of more than 100 years and have extremely high historical and cultural value. In early August 2010, a thief stole a pair of stone lions in Jiefang North Park, cut the park door lock with pliers, and then used square wood or bare hands with his accomplices to push down the pair of stone lions and load them into a small truck.*"[97]

97 https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/w-F1fJMih1yscapunrr3vA

Figure 5-3. The stolen stone lions of Jiefang North Park
Source: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/w-F1fJMih1yscapunrr3vA

Although the original stone lions were recovered a month later, they were never returned to their original positions. Instead, two new stone lions were created, but they lacked historical authenticity and were deemed somewhat artificial.

Interview with visitor 12, female, 60-80 years old, Jiefang North Park

"The two stone lions were stolen. They are cultural relics, so there must be a market for them. The stone lions were beautiful. How much money would it cost to make one? They were so slippery after being touched by people and they have a sense of history. Later, they were recovered, but not brought back to the park. They were replaced with fake ones… Now the fake lions' heads are bigger than the original ones and a bit out of proportion."

5.1.3 Loss of distinct characteristics due to improper renovation

Many important historical elements or landscapes have been improperly modified or replaced, diminishing their historical value. Since 2009, Tianjin has initiated the renovation of several historic parks, focusing primarily on "hardware" upgrades, such as replacing old facilities, planting new vegetation, and repairing the grounds. However, the renovations have paid insufficient attention to the parks' historical and cultural significance. Government officials, contractors, and designers often emphasize the parks' functionality, incorporating modern elements that make the parks appear more fashionable, but these changes can compromise the parks' historicity and cultural identity (Yang, 2019).

Central Park, for example, has undergone numerous protection and development projects, as outlined in Table 5-1. However, these projects have largely concentrated on the garden houses and public buildings around the park, with little attention given to the park itself. Development plans have prioritized tourism, commerce, and economic growth, while the authenticity and integrity of the landscape and cultural heritage have not been adequately recognized.

Table 5-1 History of protection and development of the Central Park area in Tianjin

Date	Protection/ Development	Project Name	Main Contents
1985	Protection	"General Planning of the municipality of Tianjin", Central Park Cultural Heritage Protection Area	The area is designated as one of the eight cultural heritage protection areas of Tianjin, with the former residence of Ji Hongchang's as municipal cultural heritage
1996	Protection	"Historical and Cultural City Protection Planning" in the "General Planning of the municipality of Tianjin"	The area is listed as one of the 11 key protection districts for historical and cultural city
2003	Development	Tianjin French Architecture Tourism Zone Project Development Plan	The area is designated as the starting point of the French architectural tourism zone
2004	Development	The Second Phase of the Comprehensive Economic Development Project of Hai River	The area is designated as one of four scenic areas for protective restoration
2004	Development	Planning of 'North Five Avenues' in Heping District, Tianjin	The area is listed as one of the three key areas in the CRD core area
2004	Protection	"Historical and Cultural City Protection Planning" in the "General Planning of the municipality of Tianjin (revised)"	The area is listed as one of 14 key historical and cultural protection areas
2013	Protection	"Controlling Planning for the Protection of the Central Park Historical and Cultural District"	Restrictions are imposed on the land use, architectural density, and height in the Central Park Historical and Cultural District
2015	Protection	"Central Park Area Protection and Utilization Planning"	The area is determined to have a protection and utilization method guided by policies, with partial renewal and utilization driving the development of the entire block. The planning positioning is to focus on displaying French-style features and featuring high-quality commercial, cultural, and leisure industries

Source: (Yang, 2019, p. 57)

Relevant departments sometimes lack awareness of the significance of concession parks as century-old landscape cultural heritage (Meng & Chen, 2014). During the renovation of the former concessions, core elements of park landscapes were altered. For instance, Central Park, originally designed in a distinct French classical garden style with a regular, symmetrical layout, was altered. The park featured a European-style stone pavilion at its visual center, surrounded by a large lawn, reflecting the geometric patterns of French gardens. However, during renovations in 2008, these features were largely destroyed, replaced by a dry fountain square that lost much of the original French garden character (Figure 5-4). The green planting in the park is insufficient, and some visitors have expressed concerns about the lack of shade and variety in plant species, as well as the absence of seasonal changes.

Interview with visitor 14, male, 60-80 years old, Jiefang North Park

"It was better before. It was an old park without this ground. The changes to the Central Park are so disgusting. The Central Park was much better then, with small low walls, but now they are gone, and it's connected in all directions. That means there's no place to take shelter when it rains, no shade in the summer, and no windbreak in the winter. All the good trees were cut down. We are patriotic too, but let's be honest, is this okay in foreign countries? Can you just cut them down? My sister's child is in Australia, and she said that you can't just cut down the trees even planted in your yard."

In addition, some former concession parks have undergone recent renovations with new themes. A notable example is Jiefang South Park (formerly the German Garden). The park spans more than 7,000 square meters and was renovated in 2008. Thirteen sculptures and 12 propaganda boards were added, emphasizing demographic culture and eugenics. However, the renovation disregarded the park's original style. The new European classical-style pavilion at the center, along with the diverse sculptures scattered across the lawn, creates a stark contrast with the park's earlier aesthetic (Figure 5-5).

Figure 5-4. Aerial view of former and present Central Park in Tianjin
Source: Sun, 2009 (left) and https://tj.sina.cn/news/2019-11-04/detail-iicezzrr7033270.d.html (right)

Figure 5-5. New landscape elements added in Jiefang South Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

5.2. Gentrification of surrounding areas of the former concession parks

In historic neighborhoods, old buildings are not merely spaces of habitation; they are places where residents have lived for decades, fostering a deep physical and psychological sense of home. As Jane Jacobs argued in the 1960s, small shops cannot be replaced by large-scale commercial organizations. Convenience stores are not only commercial spaces but also social centers that contribute to transforming urban neighborhoods into communities, rather than mere dormitories (Jacobs, 1961). The destruction of these spaces severely damages the community. Jacobs also criticized large-scale urban renewal as a process of "unslumping" and "self-destruction of diversity," a phenomenon now known as "gentrification" (Ibid.). Regrettably, some surrounding areas of the concession parks are undergoing this process.

5.2.1 New constructed high-end buildings in the surrounding area

The area surrounding Jiefang North Park has been significantly impacted by gentrification. After the Tangshan earthquake of 1976, the Gordon Hall next to Victoria Park was damaged and demolished in 1981. The Tianjin Municipal People's Government building was constructed on this site. At the time, only the Tianjin British Concession Fire Brigade building, located behind Gordon Hall, remained. Around 2010, extensive renovations began on Jiefang North Road. The Tianjin Municipal People's Government building was demolished, and the former British Concession Fire Brigade building, located to the east of the original Gordon Hall, was also removed. By 2013, the luxurious Ritz-Carlton Hotel had been built on the site of Gordon Hall (Figure 5-6). The original blue brick facades were replaced with red brick veneers, and most notably, the building's scale was expanded. The two-story Gordon Hall was enlarged to four stories, disrupting the proportions of various

architectural details and creating a sense of discomfort.[98]

Simultaneously, high-rise buildings known as Tai'an Road 5 Courtyards emerged to the west and south of the original Gordon Hall. In fact, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel is part of the larger Tai'an Road Five Courtyards Project, which aims to establish Tianjin as a core area for modern finance, business tourism, and service industries. In the early 2000s, Tianjin's municipal government planned to invest RMB 5.1 billion in the construction of the Tianjin English-Style District, also known as Tai'an Road English-Style District, along Tai'an Road. This plan organized the area around parks and five courtyards, with commercial functions focused on high-end retail, boutique hotels, and office headquarters. The five courtyards are divided as follows: Courtyards No. 1 and No. 3 are high-end residential areas; Courtyards No. 2 and No. 5 serve as business and commercial zones; and Courtyard No. 4 houses a hotel complex, with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel as its central building. Courtyard No. 1 contains 8-9 story buildings with luxury apartments ranging from 200-400 square meters, while Courtyard No. 3 consists of 4-8 story buildings with apartments ranging from 170-700 square meters, some equipped with private elevators for nannies (Figure 5-7). The five courtyards project is located in a protected area and is said to emphasize the preservation and transformation of historical buildings, coordination with the surrounding landscape, and improvement of the environmental atmosphere.[99] However, the construction of high-rise buildings, combined with exorbitant housing prices and upscale business activities, has led to clear gentrification, transforming the area into an exclusive enclave that is inaccessible to most residents.

Subsequently, the former British Concession Fire Brigade building was rebuilt on the northeast side of the hotel, becoming an isolated, small gray structure, "proudly" overshadowed by the towering buildings above (Figure 5-8).

Figure 5–6. Gorden Hall in an old postcard and current Ritz-Carlton Hotel
Source: (Liu, 2016) (left) and http://rwtj.tianjin8.com/pic/view/type2/55/id/131.html (right)

98 https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/yh2cNGgNXIPPSyIF6Uygag

99 https://www.zmcat.com/mweb/community.html?id=646

Figure 5–7. The project of Five courtyards of Tai'an Road
Source: (Ji, 2018) (left) and Yue LU in 2023 (right)

Figure 5–8. Reconstruction of the former British Concession Fire Brigade
Source: (Ji, 2018)

Although less affected than Jiefang North Park, Tushan Park seems to face similar gentrification challenges.

Interview with visitor 4, male, 60-80 years old, Tushan Park

"In this Tushan Park, there are nothing left but a few trees. Oh, and there is also that little hill. I feel that this place is not as good as it was after the Liberation. It was good in the 1950s, 1960s, and until the 1970s, but it was not so good in the 1980s. At that time, there were no such buildings, and the surrounding environment was good. In the past, there were only small buildings, small low buildings, but they were all demolished. The environment is much worse than before. It has all given way to business.
Overall, I feel that it is not as good as when I was a child. Now that high-rise buildings have been built around, my heart is not as open as before, and it is a bit depressing. I only see high-rise buildings, but how many people actually live in them? People can't afford to live here without money. An appartment is more than 200 square meters. It is a school district house, near Yueyang Road Primary School. The cheapest one is not less than 40,000 yuan per square meter, and it must be 60,000 or 70,000 yuan."

5.2.2 Disappearance of public facilities

Jiefang North Park, now a prominent urban public space, has undergone significant changes. Since the 1980s, the park gradually added large mural sculptures, circular fountains, flower stands, and rockeries. Later, public restrooms and recreational amenities were introduced, and the southern lawn was transformed into an activity area with children's play equipment and sports facilities like ping-pong tables. One resident recalled: "*When I [was] a child, my mother often took me to this park to play, and sometimes I would ask my classmates to play ball there after school, which left me a lot of good memories in the park in those days*" (Ji, 2018). However, in 2010, Jiefang North Park was demolished and rebuilt to resemble its original "Victoria Garden" appearance, eliminating the people-friendly recreational features (Figure 5-9).

Fun Fact 11 -- "Elephant Slide and Carousel" (see Figure 5-10)

"As far as I can remember, I know that there is an iron slide for children near the big pavilion in the "Municipal Party Committee Garden". It is not very big, 1.8 meters high, and the slide was 3 meters long. At that time, the children around rushed to line up to slide, and the children who slid down quickly ran back to line up again. It can be said that this was the most popular amusement facility for children at that time. Later, the iron slide was demolished and a new cement-cast slide was built. The shape is an elephant with a long nose. This slide is about 3 meters high and has more than a dozen stairs. Everyone climbed up the stairs from the entrance of the elephant's butt, stood on the small platform of the elephant's head, and slid down one by one in an orderly manner. The slide is the elephant's trunk stretched out about 4-5 meters, with a cement polished surface. The children often slide on it, and the slide becomes smooth. After I went to primary school, I often went to play on it. As I grew older and became braver, I slid down while standing. Although it was dangerous, it was very exciting. There were also brave children who slid down like us. There is also a carousel made of an iron frame next to the slide. There are sheep, horses, and cows on the head of the carousel. The children who can't play on the slide come to play on the carousel. Parents reach out to turn the carousel, and the children sit on it and spin happily. When I grew up and became braver, I jumped from the ground to the fast-spinning carousel. I often spun on it for dozens of times." (Zhang, 2021)

Figure 5-9. Jiefang North Park was once a sports park
Source: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/w-F1fJMih1yscapunrr3vA and https://mp.weixin.qq.com/mp/appmsg/show?search_click_id=13089547197487586387-1701014071914-3328631807& biz=MjM5MDA1OTQ3OA==&appmsgid=10013155&itemidx=1&sign=d11c72dcf136c68216643d89bbdbbfa8#wechat_redirect

Figure 5-10. A similar elephant slide in Jiefang North Park in the past
Source: (Zhang, 2021)

The former Italian Park once had a children's playground and a sports field, but these were eventually removed. The park later became a stamp market. Today, it has been transformed into a small square with a sculpture at Marco Polo Square, surrounded by villas. As part of the New Italian-Style Town, it has become a vibrant nightlife area in Tianjin, but it no longer provides facilities for children or adults to engage in physical activity.

5.3. Social conflicts in the concession parks

Social conflict is a specific form of social interaction. As public spaces, parks have long been sites of dynamic and ongoing social struggles since their inception in Europe. With the transplantation of parks to mainland China, these spaces have become venues for various social conflicts. These conflicts often arise from different racial, economic, and user groups (Sun, 2016).

5.3.1 Problem between Chinese and Westerners in the old days

In China, concession parks became primary battlegrounds for conflicts between the Chinese and Westerners. Since their establishment, these parks often imposed restrictions on Chinese people, leading to frequent confrontations. The "park movement," fueled by regulations such as "Chinese and dogs are not allowed to enter," has led to the perception of concession parks as symbols of colonialism. These restrictions made Chinese people acutely aware of colonial policies, leaving a lasting historical imprint (Ibid.).

Victoria Park, the first park in Tianjin, became a focal point for social conflicts. Between 1895 and 1896, the Beijing-Tianjin Times published over 10 articles discussing Victoria Park, examining the conflicts and their impact on the park's material space. Initially, Victoria Park was created to serve the needs of British Concession residents. Its beautiful environment, along with frequent band performances and celebrations, gradually attracted local Chinese residents. The Municipal Council's initial park regulations did not prohibit Chinese entry but required them to dress neatly in long robes. As the population of Chinese residents in the concession grew, tensions between them and the foreign residents escalated. In July 1895, two letters were published in the Beijing-Tianjin Times. A writer identifying as "White Man" expressed concern that the increasing number of Chinese visitors was distressing to many foreign residents, suggesting that the Municipal Council protect the park from being overwhelmed by the growing Chinese population. Another writer, "A Mother," lamented that the park, the only place for children to play in Tianjin, was becoming overcrowded with non-upper-class Chinese, which caused panic among mothers. In response, the Municipal Council issued a regulation in August 1895 requiring Chinese visitors to obtain a ticket from the Foreign Affairs Office one day in advance and prohibited entry after 5 p.m. This policy significantly reduced interactions between Chinese and foreign visitors (Zhang, Li, & Sun, 2012).

Additionally, many concession parks built by foreign powers such as Italy, France, Germany, and Japan included discriminatory clauses restricting Chinese entry. Even parks without overtly colonial monuments or statues bore the imprint of the colonial culture (Liu, 2016). For instance, although the design, gardening, and park features of the Italian Park closely mirrored those of Italian gardens, its functional zones were segregated, with distinct areas for Chinese and Western users (Figure 5-11).

As the park movement spread across China and issues such as "Chinese and dogs are not allowed to enter" became more widespread, concession parks came to symbolize colonial exclusion. The inability of Chinese people to enter these parks highlighted the colonial policies at play, transforming the parks into symbols of nationalistic resistance. Over time, the political significance of these parks overshadowed their original social function, becoming central to cultural, political, and social conflicts between China and the West (Sun, 2016).

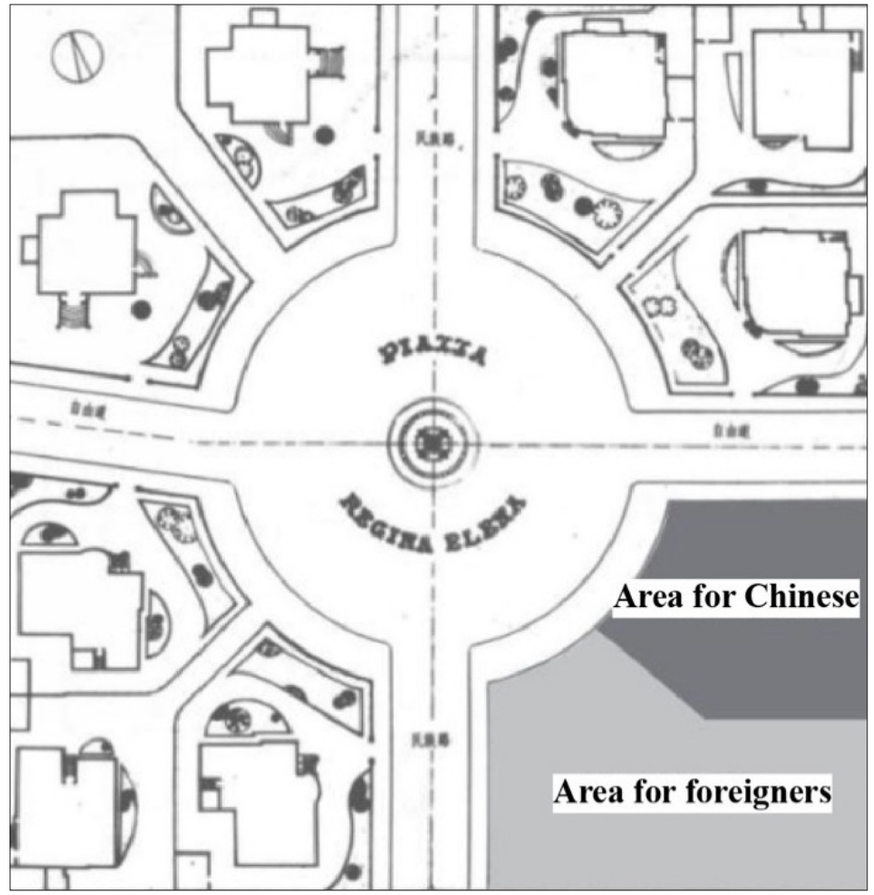

Figure 5-11. The separated usage zones of Italian Park in the past
Source: (Liu, 2016)

5.3.2 Fight between current users

The use and control of concession parks have become a battleground for various social groups. The establishment and management of parks reflect the ideologies of those in power, but they also result from the struggles of multiple social factions. Different groups have distinct understandings of space usage, making parks sites of co-design between managers and the public.

After several renovations, the public, recreational, and ornamental parks in the former concessions of Tianjin have become spaces for relaxation, recreation, sports, socializing, and overall life improvement. Fuxing Park, in particular, clearly illustrates this blend of activities. Citizens engage in morning exercises, walking, playing badminton, meeting friends, and interacting with children. However, beneath this harmonious scene, conflict persists. During our research, we observed a heated debate between an exercise group and a dance team. The

Figure 5-12. The debate between different users in Fuxing Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023

exercise group argued that the park should primarily be for leisure and exercise, while the loud background music from the dance team disrupted their focus. They requested that the dance team lower the volume or leave. The dance team, however, insisted that the park was for everyone, and they had every right to dance and play music. Some "enthusiastic" residents joined the debate (see Figure 5-12). The argument ended with police intervention, who explained the park's functional zones and reprimanded both parties. Ultimately, both groups left disappointed.

Interview with visitor 13, male, 60-80 years old, Jiefang North Park

"There are many other users in this park, for example, some people are sing operas, some are taking a walk, etc. This must be mutual tolerance, because, singing make sounds, and dancing equipment also makes sounds, you have to tolerate each other. This is a park for everyone, so you have to be aware of this. Some people don't quite understand, but over time, they realize that this park is not their own home, and it cannot be quiet as they want. Because this park is for everyone, most people can tolerate each other, you sing your song, I dance with my music, and he walks as his wish."

Conflicts between group events and everyday park users are also evident. One notable example is the "matchmaking corner" in Central Park, a public space where parents hang their children's "CVs" to exchange contact information with potential suitors' families. On

Figure 5-13. Matchmaking corner around Central Park
Source: Yue LU in 2023 (left) and (Salabert, 2013) (right)

weekends, parents and "matchmakers" from various districts gather to create an informal market for matchmaking (see Figure 5-13). During our initial fieldwork, we were surprised to witness a large crowd of elderly individuals in the summer heat, surrounded by papers containing personal information about potential spouses—age, height, career, income, property ownership, etc. This site serves as a meeting place for Tianjin's "matchmakers," creating a relaxed atmosphere for individuals to tout the qualities of their unmarried family members.

However, these weekend matchmaking activities create noise, encroach on the park's original spaces, and disrupt transportation, resulting in dissatisfaction among other park visitors.

Interview with visitor 14, male, 60-80 years old, Jiefang North Park

"This park is relatively good and relatively quiet. Some of the parks' changes are messy. For example, the Central Park has matchmaking activities on Saturdays and Sundays. There are a lot of people and it is very crowded. The roads are blocked and traffic becomes very inconvenient."

The conflict between tourists and residents is also a growing concern, particularly during tourist festivals that draw large crowds (see Figure 5-14). Commercial activities such as

Figure 5–14. A scene of Tianjin's annual Begonia Festival, Jiefang North Park
Source: Chensi Shen in 2024

outdoor markets and pop-up stores frequently occupy significant portions of public spaces, disrupting daily leisure activities for locals. The influx of tourists intensifies competition for limited space, heightening tensions between visitors and residents who wish to enjoy the parks. Additionally, the volume of people and vehicles generated by these festivals leads to severe traffic congestion in nearby areas. This congestion hinders residents' ability to navigate their neighborhoods and access essential services, thus diminishing their quality of life during these events.

Consequently, park use and management involve more than a single party's design; they reflect the input of many social groups. Individuals of different classes, genders, and backgrounds bring their recreational needs and preferences to the park's use.

6. Conclusion

During the modern period, Tianjin was transformed into a global city, a microcosm of the world where Western and Asian peoples coexisted and exchanged after having previously clashed (Singaravélou, 2023). As a unique product of this period, the parks in the former concessions of Tianjin recorded a painful chapter in China's history. However, they also served as windows to the world, introducing Western culture and lifestyle and influencing park design and use thereafter. Today, the surviving parks in these former concessions have undergone numerous renovations, continuing to serve society in a new capacity.

On one hand, these parks retain the essential functions of modern parks, supporting a variety of leisure activities such as walking, resting, exercising, socializing, and playing. A diverse range of people of all ages and backgrounds coexists within these spaces. On the other hand, the Chinese public has developed specific or "innovative" uses for park space, including collective events, spontaneous commercial practices, and political propaganda, in response to contemporary public and governmental needs. These "innovative" uses do not preclude the multifunctional nature of park spaces.

In addition to examining the appropriation of space in concession parks, this study sought to uncover the meanings behind these practices, particularly the experiences of visitors that justify their choice of park space. The environment and atmosphere of these parks—characterized by accessibility, natural beauty, comfortable spaces, social ambiance, and nostalgic connotations—attract visitors of all ages, particularly the elderly and families with children. Parks thus not only serve as venues for leisure and relaxation but also act as vital centers for community interaction and cultural practices. Together, these factors make the parks in Tianjin's former concessions vibrant and attractive public spaces.

However, the construction and use of these parks, both historically and in the present, have been marred by social conflicts. These conflicts reflect social hierarchies and may influence the materiality of park spaces. Therefore, these parks are not merely urban landscapes but also possess urban and national significance, holding a special status (Sun, 2016).

This research highlights that concession parks represent a unique park type in China, shaped by distinct historical contexts, evolutionary processes, and cultural implications. At different stages, these parks have been imbued with varying contemporary values and meanings, reflecting societal development and ideology. The study of Tianjin at the turn of the century reveals the profound impact of imperial globalization. While Tianjin is not representative of all of China, its status as an enclave illustrates a potential path toward modernization and globalization, inspiring Chinese policymakers in the implementation of new strategies. In this way, Tianjin's concession parks embody a potential future for China (Singaravélou, 2023).

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Development of the concessions in Tianjin

Concession	Date	Area (hectare)	Area (hectare)	Area (hectare)	Area (hectare)
British	1860–1945	32.6	108.7	270.7	412.1
French	1861–1945	29.3		133.4	162.7
American	1862–1902	8.7			
German	1895–1919		69.0	211.2	280.1
Japanese	1896–1945		111.2	32.7	143.9
Russian	1900–1924			365.1	365.1
Italian	1902–1945			54.7	54.7
Belgian	1902–1931			49.9	49.9
Austrian	1903–1919			68.7	68.7

Appendix 2. List of interviews with visitors in concession parks of Tianjin

Visitor	Sex	Age	Park	Concession	Date
1	Female	60-80	Central Park	French	09.2023
2	Male	60-80	Central Park	French	09.2023
3	Female	20-40	Tushan Park	British	09.2023
4	Male	60-80	Tushan Park	British	09.2023
5	Female	20-40	Fuxing Park	British	09.2023
6	Male	40-60	Fuxing Park	British	09.2023
7	Female	60-80	Fuxing Park	British	09.2023
8	Male	18-20	Fuxing Park	British	09.2023
9	Male	60-80	Fuxing Park	British	09.2023
10	Male	60-80	Fuxing Park	British	09.2023
11	Female	20-40	Jiefang North Park	British	09.2023
12	Female	60-80	Jiefang North Park	British	09.2023
13	Male	60-80	Jiefang North Park	British	09.2023
14	Male	60-80	Jiefang North Park	British	09.2023
15	Male	60-80	Jiefang South Park	German	09.2023
16	Female	20-40	Jiefang South Park	German	09.2023
17	Female	60-80	Tushan Park	British	10.2024
18	Male	60-80	Tushan Park	British	10.2024

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8

The "WangHong" History of Heritagization and Touristification of Post-colonial Heritage: Tianjin Wudadao

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Abstract

Tianjin Wudadao, a former British concession, is now recognized as an important historic district and tourist attraction in China, notable for its distinctive architectural styles and the former residences of prominent political and cultural figures. Following the decline of Tianjin's industrial and economic significance, the municipal government has promoted tourism, with Wudadao at the center of city development, particularly through social media-driven "Wanghong tourism." Colonial history, once viewed as a painful chapter, has been reimagined as a selling point for a destination with "Western characteristics." This study examines the touristification and heritagization of Wudadao, focusing on the pre-history and aftermath of how social media tourism has influenced and transformed the district. It also explores the heritage image and identity that have developed as a result. The discussion is framed within the broader context of cultural heritage tourism development and urbanization in China since the 1980s. Using ethnographic methods, this research investigates how these dynamics manifest in tourism practices and their impact on the local heritage landscape.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

This study extends and builds upon last year's research, titled *The Changing Heritage Landscape Influenced by Wanghong Urbanism: Former Concessions as Internet-Popular Destinations*, funded by the 2023 Korea National University of Cultural Heritage's *UNESCO CHAIR Research Grant*. While the previous study focused on Wanghong urbanism in former concession areas like Wudadao, the current research expands upon those findings, positioning itself as both a prequel and a sequel.

1.2. Research purposes

1.2.1 Prequel perspective: Tracing the roots of Wanghong urbanism

As a prequel, this study explores the historical processes of heritagization and touristification that contributed to Wudadao's emergence as a Wanghong destination. These processes involved the strategic selection, reinterpretation, and commodification of cultural elements to align with broader urban development goals. In the late 20th century, Wudadao's colonial-era architecture and cosmopolitan associations were re-evaluated and reimagined within the context of China's economic reforms and opening up. The area's transformation reflects how heritage and tourism interacted, generating layered meanings and identities for Wudadao before the rise of social media.

This prequel investigation underscores the significance of China's policy shifts in the 1980s and 1990s, during which the country sought integration into global trends while rediscovering its colonial and modern history. In Wudadao, these shifts unfolded in a post-colonial context, where its legacy as an "exotic" concession area posed both challenges and opportunities. Heritagization fostered a new form of historical appreciation, while touristification facilitated the economic capitalization of its past. These dual processes laid the foundation for the Wanghong discourse, demonstrating how local narratives were reframed to serve national and global aspirations.

1.2.3 Sequel perspective: Challenges in the post Wanghong era

As a sequel, this research also examines the ongoing transformations in Wudadao following the peak of its Wanghong-driven popularity. The pervasive influence of Wanghong urbanism, shaped by platforms like TikTok and Xiaohongshu, has reshaped tourism practices, heritage narratives, and economic patterns in recent years. While Wanghong trends initially brought significant visibility and economic benefits to Wudadao, they also raised concerns such as superficial engagement with heritage, over-commercialization, and unsustainable development.

This study further reflects on the opportunities and challenges in the emerging post-Wanghong era. As social media-driven tourism reaches saturation, the focus is shifting toward integrating cultural creativity and heritage management in more meaningful ways. This transition introduces questions about sustainability, authenticity, and inclusivity. The research explores whether creative cultural industries can offer alternative solutions to the shortcomings of Wanghong tourism or whether they will merely perpetuate the same commodification and homogeneity in a new form.

2. Background

2.1. Field of "Hybridization": Concessions in China

International concessions emerged in some of East Asia's major commercial cities between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, with China serving as a prominent example. Following a series of unequal treaties, portions of these cities were designated for the settlement of foreigners from various colonial powers, establishing independent administration, judicial systems, and urban planning. Contrary to the imperialist paradigm of oppression and resistance, these urban enclaves, which Osterhammel (1986) refers to as "semi-colonial" spaces, highlight the complex political, social, and spatial tensions between locals and foreigners, as well as among different imperial powers. They offer an alternative history of globalization (Singaravélou, 2017), serving as "laboratories of modernity" (Marinelli, 2009) where experiments in urban planning, architecture, and infrastructure were introduced by Western planners (Falser, 2021), marking the initial steps toward modernizing Chinese cities. The concession areas were not direct imitations of any "Western model" but were expressions of the eclectic aspirations, needs, and struggles of various societal sectors (Li, 2013).

The concessions provide a unique lens through which to examine urban and architectural history in a globalized context. The forces shaping the transformation of colonial cultural heritage are drawn from the symbolic value of historical spaces. Though the history of the concessions is often painful and traumatic, it is also recognized as a significant narrative driving China's post-1990 urban development agenda, contributing to the country's opening, globalization, and modernization. With their distinct economic and symbolic capital, these areas were restored, transformed, and reimagined as cultural heritage sites by municipal governments to stimulate urban development. Their historic architecture and urban characteristics were reconstructed as exotic cultural theme parks, attracting tourism and generating economic momentum by presenting these areas as international, metropolitan destinations for creative consumption.

This post-colonial relationship involves ongoing cultural, economic, and power dynamics between former colonial powers and their former colonies, along with the modifications brought by social change. Given the growing scholarly interest in concession studies, this research examines how such studies can offer critical insights into tourism development and critical heritage studies within the context of globalization and digital urban spectacles.

2.2. Foreign concessions in Tianjin

Tianjin, a river city located 120 km southeast of Beijing, is significant both in the history of modern China and for its economic dynamism. It is also a city engaged in heritage protection, which includes the complex heritage of its former foreign concessions. The city's heritage management reflects conflicting logics: a desire to erase the "century of humiliation" and efforts to prepare for World Heritage candidacy, alongside the creation of trendy leisure districts featuring buildings from the early 20th century.

Following the Second Opium War, Tianjin became one of China's port cities that hosted foreign concessions. With nine foreign powers (Great Britain, France, the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Belgium) establishing residential areas, hotels, factories, banks, schools, hospitals, and businesses, Tianjin became a "global microcosm" (Singaravélou, 2017) from 1860 until the Second World War. Over half a century, Tianjin evolved into a metropolis and a modernity laboratory for Western powers, Chinese officials, and Japanese occupiers (1937-1945).

With the establishment of the Binhai New Development Zone along the seashore, Tianjin became a leading industrial port in the Jing-Jin-Ji economic region, linking Beijing, Tianjin, and the neighboring Hebei province. The region's economy is driven by industries such as aeronautics, telecommunications, and chemicals. Tianjin's total area, covering the city and its suburban districts, spans nearly 12,000 km² (equivalent to the Ile-de-France region), and the city has a population exceeding 15 million. Like Beijing, Chongqing, and Shanghai, Tianjin is directly administered by the central government.

Since the early 21st century, Tianjin's efforts to enhance its urban heritage reflect broader national trends: rapid tourism development paired with the search for distinctive historical and cultural identities, within a context where national identity and domestic consumption have become central to China's economic agenda.

2.3. Tianjin Wudadao

In 1860, following the Second Opium War, the area around ZiZhuLin in southern Tianjin was designated as the British concession, initially covering 460 acres. In 1870, anti-Catholic

sentiment in Tianjin led to a wave of foreign settlement in the concession. By 1888, the British concession was described by Alexander Michie as "long straight central streets, lined with double rows of elms... The appearance of these large and beautiful foreign houses initiated the emergence of a distinctive structure in the Concession" (Tianjin Local History Editorial Committee, 1996, p. 21). The concession remained intact until 1947, operating as a de facto enclave governed by the Council and the British Works Ministry, except for the period 1941-1947 when it was under Japanese control.

The Wudadao district, which became part of the British concession's third extension in 1903, was designed by prominent English architect and engineer Henry McClure Anderson. Influenced by the garden city movement, Anderson's design emphasized zoning, architectural control, and a healthy, hygienic urban layout, drawing inspiration from Edinburgh (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2020). The concession featured essential infrastructure, including power plants, underground water systems, and green belts. These developments contributed to making Wudadao one of northern China's most desirable residential areas, offering residents the world's most advanced living conditions at the time, such as flush toilets, heating boilers, bathtubs, electricity, waste disposal, and fire protection. The area became a symbol of an "aristocratic enclave" and a "laboratory of modern life" (Chauffert-Yvart et al., 2020). Its high-quality living environment, along with the special political status of the Concession, attracted many prominent political, military, and cultural figures, making Wudadao a significant site in modern Chinese history.

2.4. A brief history of the touristification and heritagization process of Wudadao

2.4.1 Deconstructing the face of the "aristocratic enclave": 1949–1976

Between 1948 and 1949, following political unrest, some Wudadao residents emigrated, and their properties were taken over by the new government. These houses were repurposed for public sector offices and workers' housing. The construction of new workers' housing increased the proportion of industrial land (Yang, 1996). As a result, the area's "upper-class seclusion" gradually faded, and Wudadao became a more common residential and industrial area for ordinary citizens. This shift led to the influx of "Tianjin accent speakers" into spaces previously dominated by "non-Tianjin accent speakers" (Feng, 2007), further eroding the distinct attributes of the Wudadao enclave.

The effects of war further damaged many buildings, and as the properties became publicly owned, different parts of the villas were allocated or rented to various tenants. Attics, basements, and kitchens were repurposed as additional living spaces. Wudadao became a shared living environment for ordinary Tianjin residents, who began modifying the area by removing flowerbeds, hedges, and European-style lampposts to create new, utilitarian

spaces (Guo et al., 2017). In 1976, a major earthquake caused extensive damage in Tianjin. Wudadao's residential areas, once an elite enclave, became overcrowded as people sought shelter, further degrading living conditions (Zhang & Han, 2014). After the earthquake, undamaged buildings were reinforced with side beams, leading to a fragmentation of the architectural style and a shift from an enclosed area for the wealthy to a more common living space for ordinary citizens.

2.2.2 Strategy of the tourist town defines the image of the heritage site: 1976–2005

After the economic reforms of 1978, tourism emerged as a strategic sector for economic modernization and a key area for attracting foreign investment (Chauffert-Yvart et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the government sought to restore order to the city by establishing a unified management system and planning guidelines (Qiao, 1994). From 1994 to 2002, the Tianjin Party Committee and municipal government aimed to revitalize the state economy, transform enterprises, introduce foreign investment, and implement modern business practices (Party History Research Office of the CPC Tianjin Municipal Committee, 2018). After 2003, Tianjin continued efforts to shape its image as a modern, international port metropolis (Dai, 2006).

Colonial heritage, which had contributed to Tianjin's modernization and cultural exchange between East and West, became a key element in promoting the city globally (Lu et al., 2019). In 2005, Mayor Dai Xianglong called for the protection of "negative and colonial" heritage (Zhang & Han, 2014). In the 2006 Eleventh Five-Year Plan for Tianjin's Economic and Social Development, he proposed leveraging the Beijing Olympics to showcase Tianjin's rapid growth and enhance tourism by branding the city as "Tianjin and Modern China." This included developing iconic tourist attractions, such as Wudadao (Dai, 2006).

By the early 2000s, Wudadao's unique architectural style, described as a "museum of universal architecture," became part of Tianjin's narrative of modernity and urban transformation. In 1984, Tianjin Mayor Li Ruihuan proposed the creation of an urban planning office for Wudadao. In 1986, the State Council approved a draft plan designating Wudadao as a protected area (Chauffert-Yvart et al., 2020). A survey of the Heping district in the same year highlighted urban problems such as high population density, low living standards, and illegal construction (Qiao, 1994). Consequently, industrial enterprises in Wudadao were demolished, residential land was reduced, and the area's land-use shifted toward commercial, office, and educational purposes (Li, 2009). Wudadao's location in Heping, now the most cosmopolitan district in Tianjin, became known for its entertainment venues and shopping centers (Liu & Chen, 2004). Despite these changes, Wudadao retained its low-density urban structure, distinguishing it within the emerging commercial district.

Wudadao increasingly became a heritage site. In 1993, the General Office of the Municipal Government issued a notice on strengthening the management of XiaoYangLou, positioning it as a "historical architecture of precious style and cultural heritage" and forbidding its sale or transfer (Yang, 1996). In 1994, the "Protection Plan for the Construction and Management of Wudadao" adopted a comprehensive approach to conservation, curbing demolition and new construction.

The Wudadao Improvement Plan (1999-2000) initiated pilot renovations, designating Wudadao as a historical conservation area with special protection measures. The plan also identified 160,000 square meters of post-earthquake construction as unauthorized and slated for removal (Zhang & Han, 2014). In 2006, the Tianjin municipal government passed the Regulations on the Protection of Historic Buildings, which established a legal framework for the preservation of historical architecture. This led to the renovation of historic buildings, the redesign of commercial signage, and the underground installation of infrastructure, which collectively helped restore Wudadao to its concession-era appearance (Zhang & Han, 2014).

2.4.3 Property development and tourism in conflict: 2005-2014

In early 2008, the Tianjin government launched the "JuKeMaoDi" project on Wudadao, covering an area of approximately 113,000 square meters. The government planned to demolish several non-"legally protected" buildings to create a tourist center offering a blend of restaurants, accommodations, sightseeing, culture, museums, and entertainment. This initiative conflicted with the desires of the volunteer group working to preserve the urban landscape. Between 2000 and 2010, numerous conflicts arose over development and preservation.

In 2004, the 'Memory of Tianjin' volunteer group was established to launch the 'Restore Our Lost Tianjin' campaign, sharing historical narratives via platforms such as WeChat and blogs. Influential scholars like Feng Jicai initiated efforts to preserve heritage, both academically and socially.

They appealed to the national government, arguing that while the project complied with local regulations for the conservation of historic buildings in Tianjin, it violated the principles of "conservation integrity" set forth in the national regulations for the protection of historic cities, which took effect on July 1, 2008. The National Administration of Cultural Heritage convened experts to review the project, ultimately halting the "JuKeMaoDi" development, which means a good zone which could attract tourists. This incident garnered national attention, and Wudadao's conservation plan was elevated to a national priority.

In early 2010, the "Experimental Zone for the Protection and Use of Wudadao" replaced the extensive "JuKeMaoDi" construction project as one of Tianjin's 10 key tourism

initiatives. The project, spanning 3.3 hectares with a construction area of 36,500 square meters, consists of two parts: the QingWangFu site and the Xiannong site. The large-scale, ambitious plan was ultimately scaled down to a smaller development. During this phase, Tianjin Historical Architecture Renovation Department (THARD) managed several notable projects, such as the QingWangFu clubhouse (2010-2011), the MinYuan Stadium as a civic cultural center (2012-2014), the Xiannong Courtyard as a restaurant and creative enterprise (2008-2013), and the MinYuanXiLi Cultural and Artistic Quarter (2009). While no buildings were demolished during this phase, the district underwent significant reorganization. For instance, new "XiaoYangLou" structures were constructed in open spaces, and the Minyuan Stadium was redesigned into a Romanesque-style square with a sunken plaza and colonnade.

Volunteers believe their resistance yielded positive results. In 2011, the Tianjin Historic and Cultural Districts Protection Plan was introduced, marking a victory for comprehensive protection. This principle mandates that "all development and construction activities are strictly controlled and must not destroy the character of historic buildings" (LaoMuCaoTang, 2012). Conversely, THARD faced pressure to find methods of conservation and practical use within the legal framework (LaoMuCaoTang, 2012). Their aim was "to explore the historical and cultural values and the potential for commercial use," while giving the buildings "a modern urban lifestyle." This approach also "contributed to the success of the subsequent application for a 4A tourism rating."

However, national and local cultural preservation policies, along with high development costs and "slow returns on project capital," presented significant challenges for THARD (LaoMuCaoTang, 2012). Wudadao's complex property rights, high land prices, and maintenance costs compounded these issues. Furthermore, institutional fragmentation led to unclear roles between the Tianjin Cultural Heritage Bureau, the Land Resources and Housing Administration, and the Tianjin Planning Bureau, each reporting to different national ministries, with limited interaction. This lack of coordination created overlaps and conflicts with tourism institutions (Chauffert-Yvart et al., 2020).

At this stage, visitor feedback remained largely negative. Criticism centered on three main points: (1) most of XiaoYangLou is closed to the public and lacks cultural information and tourist guides; (2) the area is prohibitively expensive, with clubs and restaurants catering primarily to the "local institutional class" and overpriced "specialty" restaurants; (3) the development model has erased the essence of "Tianjin," leaving local residents marginalized in the renovation process.

The ordinary resident's memory has been overshadowed by the renovation. For example, the MinYuan Stadium, once the home of the Tianjin Taida football team and a

source of community identity, has been transformed. What was once an affordable venue for the public to enjoy football matches is now a "Romanesque" stadium surrounded by high-end cafés and imported product supermarkets, which many Tianjin residents feel has replaced their "old Minyuan" (Interview with residents at Wudadao, 2022).

2.4.5 Seeking to transform tourism through creative discourse: 2014–2019

In 2013, the "Tianjin Wudadao Modern Architecture Complex," including Wudadao's historic buildings, was selected as the seventh national key cultural relics protection unit (Tianjin Daily, 2013), securing legal protection under the Cultural Heritage Protection Law and the Historical Cities Protection Regulation. This provided a legal foundation for comprehensive landscape preservation. In 2014, the "Wudadao Cultural Tourism Zone" received a 4A rating from the National Tourism Administration.

The growing purchasing power of visitors, combined with efforts to preserve and enhance heritage quality, contributed to the promotion of Wudadao's tourism image. According to the Wudadao Management Committee, the area attracted three million tourists in 2016. However, the 2014 Tianjin Statistical Yearbook highlights the issue of weak market demand and insufficient economic growth dynamics. It suggests that the sustainability and growth of the tourism sector need further consolidation. In 2009, the Tianjin government identified "soft and creative industries" as a key area for revitalization and adjustment (Liu, 2009).

2.4.6 Creating a WangHong destination in a "WangHong City": 2019–2021

The integration of terms like "creative city" and "WangHong city" reinforced Wudadao's emerging identity. From July to August 2019, the WeChat site for Wudadao featured terms like "influencers" and "TikTok," along with promotions for the "MinYuan" Creative Market and various specialized restaurants (WeChat Wudadao platform, 2018). Images of music festivals, night markets, creative bars, and craft stalls appeared alongside iconic buildings on streaming platforms. Wudadao also organized events such as the "Ice Cream Contest" (WeChat Wudadao platform, 2019) and the "Thousands People Project: Take the Best Wudadao Photo" (WeChat Wudadao platform, 2019) to further strengthen its image as a city of influence. Additionally, Wudadao began hosting consumer festivals like the "Bon Beer" and "Xiannong Summer Cultural Market" as part of the "JinCheng Night Market Consuming Festival" (Sina Tianjin, 2020). In April 2021, the Wudadao Tourism Zone was designated as one of the "New Tianjin Landmarks" following public voting on five online platforms, with netizens and celebrities promoting the area to boost physical tourism (Tianjin Daily, 2021).

However, resistance emerged alongside this "WangHong" trend. For example, a bookstore near Minyuan Stadium refused to sell bestsellers or allow influencers to take photos inside, aiming to preserve the essence of Wudadao. Similarly, the owner of the Western restaurant "Decent" rejected ratings from popular review sites, insisting on promoting the restaurant through personal recommendations and emphasizing Western food culture. These business owners, often with strong economic or social backgrounds (e.g., Decent's owner, a descendant of Cao Kun, a senior Kuomintang official), aim to preserve Wudadao's heritage identity, resisting its transformation into a "tourist destination."

3. Methodology

The primary objective of this research is to adopt an anthropological and sociological approach, linking the processes of touristification as a social dynamic with the spatial heritagization of architecture and urban landscapes. The research aims to examine the history of social dynamics throughout different stages of tourism development in China after the 1980s. It also seeks to understand the externalization of landscape spaces, their superimposition, and the mechanisms of interaction between tourism and the spatial regeneration of heritage. The methodology combines textual analysis and fieldwork.

3.1. Textual analysis

By analyzing historical materials related to the British Concession, this study explores how Wudadao historically shaped the Concession with its stylistic characteristics. Key sources include the British Concession Archives series published by the Tianjin Publishing House.

Policy texts, laws, and regulations from the Tianjin government provide insights into power relations, the attributes of power and responsibility, and patterns of cooperation from a textual perspective. Important sources include the *Historical Almanac of the City of Tianjin* and the Tianjin Newspaper database. By reviewing policy changes and proper names, this research examines how the Wudadao heritage site has evolved at the governmental level. Additionally, analysis of demolition announcements, investment documents, and tourism promotion texts reveals the spatial development process. The study also includes company advertisements, self-promotion materials, and tourists' comments on social media to explore how the spatial image of Wudadao has developed, changed, and been shaped by various spatial actors.

Existing academic research texts are reviewed to identify the main research interests and keywords used by scholars, exploring the academic perspectives that have influenced the development of Wudadao.

3.2. Ethnological approaches

The empirical investigation is based on qualitative research, which is divided into two primary components: interviews and ethnography.

The qualitative interviews predominantly involve semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The participants include:

① **Visitors**: These are categorized into Tianjin residents who frequent Wudadao for daily consumption, visitors from outside China, and foreign tourists.
② **Government staff involved in planning decisions**: These include individuals from the Planning Bureau, Housing Bureau, Heritage Bureau, and Tourism Bureau.
③ **Traders operating on Wudadao.**
④ **Residents**: These are divided into three categories: original residents and their descendants from the Republican era, residents from post-1949, and new residents who moved in after 2000.
⑤ **Representatives of the owners of administrative institutions.**
⑥ **Experts and researchers.**
⑦ **Volunteer preservation teams,** including the Tianjin Memory Team.
⑧ **Cultural workers,** such as designers, craftsmen, and self-publishers involved in promoting the area's image.

Participatory observation involves monitoring the urban and residential environment, focusing on typical locations like B&Bs, bars, cafés, and art studios, as well as observing planning and decision-making bodies. Spatial observations are categorized into the following layers:

① **Urban scale:** Observations of the urban landscape and the activities of visitors and residents.
② **Neighborhood scale:** Analysis of the integration and juxtaposition of neighborhoods, destination choices, and visitor routes.
③ **Individual building scale:** Examining the variation and character of building facades, interior spaces, the use of courtyards and block spaces, architectural transformations, and the behavior of people using and transforming these spaces.
④ **Signage and symbolic scale:** Observing logos, branding, and internal imagery.

4. The heritagization and touristification projects at Wudadao: The pre-history of Wanghong tourism

4.1. Development of historical protection in Tianjin

The term "historical landscape" (历史风貌) first appeared in *Tianjin Daily* in 1984, initially referring to Yueyang Tower in Hunan Province. The article described the renovation of this culturally significant building, noting that it was being restored according to the principle of "repairing the old as it was," marking the early stages of historical landscape protection in China (*Tianjin Daily*, 1984).

Six months later, in 1985, *Tianjin Daily* published an editorial on the protection of ancient buildings in Tianjin. This editorial focused on structures in the city's old town, such as the Tianhougong (1326), Yuhuang Pavilion (1427), Wen Miao (1436), the Great Mosque (1703), and Lüzu Hall (1719). The editorial emphasized the preservation of local culture and folk traditions, while also discussing the protection of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional restaurants and shops. It concluded by stressing the importance of preserving historical heritage amidst economic reforms and the rise of high-rise buildings (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1985).

That same year, the first historical preservation project in Tianjin, the Ancient Culture Street project, was completed. This Qing Dynasty-style architectural complex, located at the confluence of three rivers in the old town, was designed to attract tourists and preserve national culture, spirit, and traditions. The project raised concerns about the relationship between modernization and Westernization, a topic that became central to the discourse on cultural heritage in Tianjin and across China (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1985).

In August 1986, Tianjin implemented institutional reforms that decentralized power to individual districts, giving them financial autonomy. These reforms spurred urban construction and renovation, leading to two major changes. First, districts were allowed to build commercial housing, creating space to relocate residents from historical areas and accumulate funds for fiscal construction. Second, the reforms energized local districts to renovate streets and historical buildings and improve hygiene and environmental conditions (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1986).

By the end of 1986, Guyi Street, one of Tianjin's earliest commercial hubs with over 400 years of history, had undergone restoration. The number of traditional buildings increased nine-fold, from 12 to 106, and the number of commercial outlets grew from 60 to 131. Renowned old businesses, such as Qianxiangyi and Ruifuxiang, were restored to their former glory with characteristic architectural features, including iron flower awnings and large eaves. Today, Guyi Street offers over 50,000 types of products, including specialty and brand-name goods from across China (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1986).

In 1987, the State Council declared Tianjin a "famous historical and cultural city" (历史文化名城). A September editorial hailed the restoration of ancient buildings and their conversion into museums as exemplary efforts in cultural preservation. This period marked the formal introduction of tourism as a goal, with an emphasis on preserving Tianjin's historical beauty while promoting modernization to attract tourists. The discourse at this stage focused on Tianjin's indigenous historical architecture, particularly the residences of cultural figures (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1987).

"The Sanchakou Scenic Area (the confluence area) should be developed and combined with exhibitions on early settlements in Tianjin. The Tianhou Palace could be used to introduce ancient canal transport, while the Dagu Fort could help visitors relive the anti-invasion battles. The Wenmiao is related to early educational initiatives, and the Zhou Family Ancestral Hall could introduce the Beiyang industrial enterprise. The old Chamber of Commerce site should be preserved to reflect the historical status and role of the national bourgeoisie... There are also cultural figures like Yan Xiu, Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, Zhang Boling, Ma Qianli, and Li Shutong—either their residences should be preserved, or statues should be erected in their memory" (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1987).

During this period, traditional-style buildings were constructed along Nanmenwai Street, which was transformed into a tourist area with hotels, restaurants, and attractions. However, discussions also began regarding the proper methods for renovating urban areas.

"Recently, I visited an exhibition hosted by the Berlin branch of the Association of German Cities on the careful restoration of urban buildings, and I was greatly inspired. The images showcased their achievements and experiences in renovating old urban buildings. Rather than superficially applying fashionable architectural decorations, they scientifically analyzed the objects to be restored, taking into account the newness, style, and individuality of each building, as well as the regional environment and the city's historical character. A design scheme had to undergo repeated research, comparison, and validation by scholars, experts, local representatives, and users before it could be approved, ultimately creating satisfying architectural images and social environments. Their cautious approach helped avoid the pitfalls of blind and hasty decisions...While our situation in Tianjin differs from that of Germany, we should not blindly imitate their methods. However, their careful consideration of these issues is certainly something we can learn from. Isn't that what the word 'cautious' at the forefront of their restoration methodology represents? Isn't that something we can reference and adapt to our context?" (*Tianjin Daily Database*, 1987).

In 1989, an article titled *Local Scene – A Discussion on Developing Tourism Culture* highlighted the need for dynamic promotion of historical sites to better reflect Tianjin's history and struggles. However, it noted that the lack of effective promotional methods prevented tourists from forming lasting impressions (Tianjin Daily Database, 1989).

In 1998, the Tianjin Municipal Government established the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Leadership Group. This group was tasked with overseeing the protection, management, planning, renovation, and replacement of historical buildings across the city, initially under the jurisdiction of the Tianjin Housing Management Bureau. In 1999, the group launched the renovation of the Wudadao (Five Great Avenues) area. The decline of Wudadao's architecture resulted from three key processes:

① **Post-1949 Changes:** After 1949, many elites and influential figures left or relinquished their properties in Wudadao to the new government. Western-style residences were repurposed as offices or dormitories for government officials. Increased housing demand led to multiple families sharing single homes.

② **Political Reforms and Upheavals:** Subsequent political reforms and unrest led to more common people moving into Wudadao, further subdividing homes. This transformed the area's population from elites to ordinary citizens.

③ **Post-1976 Tangshan Earthquake:** After the 1976 Tangshan earthquake, the open spaces and large courtyards in Wudadao were used to house refugees, further diversifying the area's residential arrangements (Zhu, 2012).

During this period, parts of Wudadao were repurposed for new construction, particularly worker housing.

In 1998, the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Leadership Group articulated a significant shift in perspective. They described Wudadao as *"the area with the most concentrated high-end residential architecture in coastal open cities in China during the early 20th century, reflecting the transformation of China from a traditional closed society to a modern open society... It showcases the evolution of modern Chinese residential architecture and lifestyles, making it a rare living history book with potential world cultural heritage value."* (Interview with the director of Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Leadership Group, 2024)

Following China's early reform and opening-up, the focus on heritage evolved. Tianjin's leadership shifted from emphasizing local, folk, and anti-colonial heritage to recognizing treaty-port style architecture, with colonial elements, as part of its heritage. This change was influenced by the old city's population density, destruction, and overcrowding, while

Wudadao's relatively better preservation and historical significance contributed to its survival through periods of upheaval.

As early as 1994, historical protection efforts for Wudadao had begun. The 1994 *Wudadao Construction Management Protection Plan* designated the area as a "Western Classical-Style Landscape Protection Zone." Although this definition was somewhat limited and failed to account for the area's modernist influences, it treated Wudadao as a unified historical district, with targeted protection and management measures.

Following the formation of the Historical Landscape Protection Leadership Group, renovations in Wudadao officially began in 1999, starting with Munan Avenue. This was followed by broader efforts across the Wudadao area. In 2000, the renovation of Machang Avenue commenced, and by 2001, Dali Avenue, Changde Avenue, and Chongqing Avenue were targeted for restoration. In 2001, the original *Wudadao Area Construction Management Protection Plan* was revised. In 2003, the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Office was established under the Housing Bureau to coordinate the protection and renovation of historical architecture citywide. The same year, a member of the Tianjin Municipal People's Congress proposed legislation to manage historical architecture. This effort began with a survey of historical buildings, followed by drafting a legal proposal and soliciting public input. Training and mobilization initiatives were launched by the municipal government, Housing Bureau, and community management groups (Cai et al., 2016).

In 2004, zoning maps for historical protection areas were compiled, with a particular focus on areas like Jingyuan, Wudadao, and Jiefang North Road. The mayor and deputy mayor of Tianjin showed strong support for these initiatives, which helped advance both the protection efforts and legislative work. This initiative garnered the "China Habitat Environment Award" and was promoted in Hong Kong to raise Tianjin's international profile (Interview with the bureau leader, 2024).

In 2005, the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Leadership Group was reorganized into the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Committee. It began demolishing non-historical buildings in Wudadao, conducting repairs, and regulating commercial activities. Wudadao became a symbol of Tianjin, showcased at the China Tianjin Economic Cooperation and Investment Fair. That year, the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Regulations were passed, approving 323 historical buildings. The Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Usage and Management Measures also permitted the relocation of residents, and the Tianjin Historic Architecture Restoration and Development Co. (THARD) was established to facilitate these relocations (Cai et al., 2016).

In 2006, the governance of Wudadao expanded to address illegal structures within

courtyards. The second batch of 205 historical buildings was approved, and plaques were affixed to the first batch of buildings. Six historical landscape architecture zones were officially designated, including Wudadao, Jiefang North Road, Central Garden, Quanyechang, Yigong Garden, and Ancient Culture Street (Interview with the bureau leader, 2024).

In 2007, the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Committee, Tianjin University, and the Municipal Bureau of Land Resources and Housing Management jointly organized an international conference on the protection and sustainable development of historical architectural heritage. By 2008, the comprehensive governance of Wudadao's landscape was completed (see Figure 1). Over seven years, from the formation of special working groups to the creation of legislation, Wudadao's renovation and governance took a total of 13 years to complete (Interview with the bureau leader, 2024).

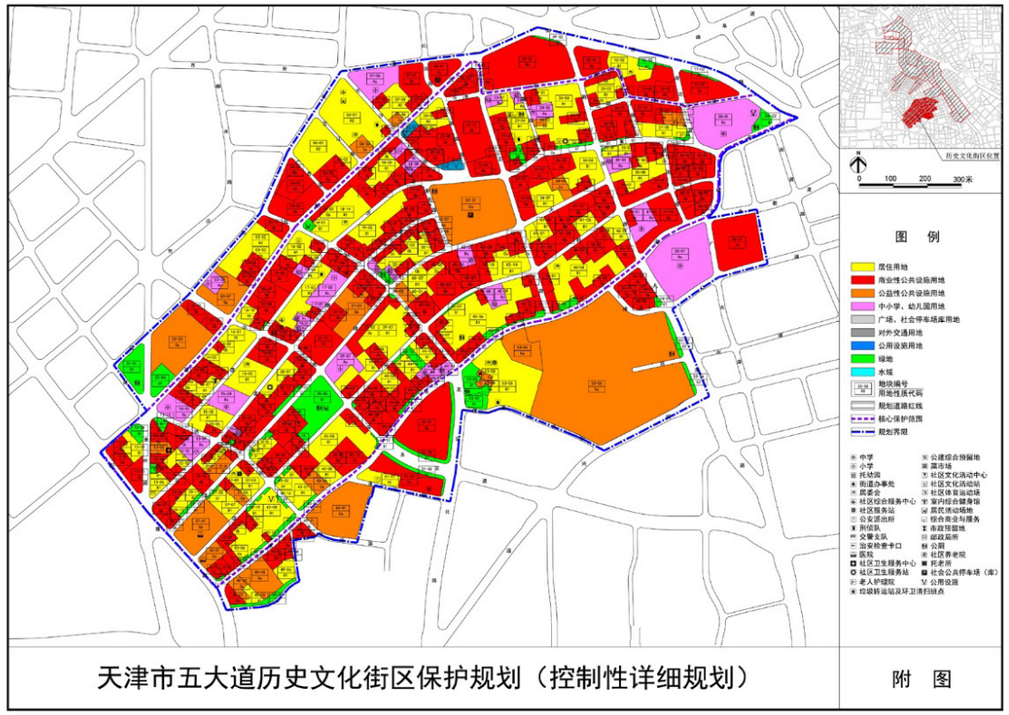

Figure 1. Tianjin Wudadao historical planning, Tianjin planning information center, 2014. The yellow represents the housing area, the red represents the commercial area, the orange shows the urban service, and the pink shows the schools. Retrieved from https://ghhzrzy.tj.gov.cn/ywpd/cxgh_43015/ghgb/202012/t20201206_4507430.html

4.2. Case of Minyuanxili

In Wudadao, aside from elite private residences, several building complexes were constructed by Chinese and foreign enterprises that had established factories and companies in Tianjin. These enterprises built modernist-style, minimalist dormitories for their employees, blending both Chinese and Western classical decorative elements. Crucially, these buildings introduced modern functional planning concepts, including the incorporation of kitchens, bathrooms, private bedrooms, and workspaces centered around living rooms. As a result, the concession areas became testing grounds for modern architecture, with Minyuanxili and Xiannong Courtyard as prime examples.

Minyuanxili Cultural and Creative District is located at 29-39 Changde Road, Wudadao, Heping District, Tianjin (formerly Colombo Road in the British Concession). Built in 1939 and designed by renowned modern architect Shen Liyuan, the complex consists of two rows of terraced British-style lane houses, totaling 17 units, each with its own courtyard but interconnected. The buildings are constructed with gray exposed brick, ensuring privacy through inward-facing doors behind a main entrance. Each unit includes a courtyard, kitchen, bathroom, living room, bedroom, servant's quarters, dining room, and storage room, with wooden floors and other amenities. The two-story brick-and-wood structures also feature some three-story sections, concealed by dark metal doors (THARD site, retrieved 2024).

Both buildings in Minyuanxili are considered tangible cultural relics and are classified as historical landscape buildings under general protection in Tianjin. The total land area is 1,693.05 square meters, with a construction area of 1,848.86 square meters. Originally, each unit was an independent residential space, offering a villa-like living experience with high privacy and independence. Minyuanxili was funded by the Lumu Zhai family business, Tianjin Jian Real Estate Co., Ltd., and primarily rented to middle-class and upper-class intellectuals. The fusion of Chinese and Western architectural styles makes it a distinctive representative of Tianjin's historical building clusters (THARD site, 2013).

"Minyuanxili is the most well-preserved alley... Due to its good condition and intact preservation, we chose Minyuanxili as one of the first renovation projects" (THARD Director, 2022). The renovation began in February 2009 and was completed in May of the same year, transforming it into a cultural and creative street in just three months.

During the renovation, the construction team strictly adhered to the Tianjin Historical Landscape Architecture Protection Regulations, combining technical assessments with expert recommendations. The renovation followed the principle of "repairing the old as the old," preserving architectural details such as multi-sloped roofs, external glazed brick facades, door and window styles, interior cornices, strip flooring, skirting boards, and wooden

staircases. After restoration, Minyuanxili became a cultural and artistic district open to the public within Wudadao.

- By 2009, Minyuanxili housed various businesses, including:
- New York Storefront Architecture Art Gallery
- POP UP 3D Gallery
- Huinong Agarwood Art Museum
- 51 Boutique Hotel
- 31cups Café
- Emma Wine Cellar
- LOMO Camera Display and Experience Center
- Shibo Consulting
- SPOT International Advertising Company
- Minyuan 33 Boutique Hotel
- Cafe Sambal (Malaysian Restaurant)
- Bedbar
- Global Travel Report

These businesses ranged from architectural art galleries and museums to boutique hotels, cafes, and international media and consulting firms, forming a high-end commercial cluster. The activities at Minyuanxili also catered to an upscale demographic, with events such as the "Storefront Architecture Art Gallery Poster Retrospective" and the "Patrice Butler Tri-city Artists Exhibition" (THARD Director, 2022).

Although the initial plan was to transform Minyuanxili into a high-end cultural and creative district, the area did not achieve the expected commercial success due to a lack of suitable business models and consumer demand in Tianjin. In 2017, Tianjin Historic Architecture Restoration and Development Co. (THARD) began shifting the focus to make Minyuanxili a more "accessible" cultural district. They introduced more affordable business models, such as replacing Emma Wine Cellar with the well-known local cultural brand "Sangqiu Bookstore," which successfully established a cultural presence in the district. In the same year, a management office was established for Minyuanxili, and newly introduced businesses, such as Zhuyi Café and a vintage goods store, became popular cultural destinations. THARD SITE, the management office, and private enterprises collaborated to host the "Ganxiangzi" Market, a creative market that invited independent artisans and entrepreneurs to foster a friendly and dynamic atmosphere within Minyuanxili's streets. As these events grew in popularity, Minyuanxili became a cultural and creative hotspot, frequently featured on social media. However, the increase in attention led

Figure 2. Tourists taking photos at Minyuanxinli, photo taken by Chensi Shen, 2024

THARD to raise rents, placing financial pressure on creative businesses like the bookstore, which risked being unable to afford the higher costs and facing the possibility of displacement (Director of Xiaorizi Research Group, 2024).

The renovation of Minyuanxili (see Figure 2) serves as a classic example of artistic gentrification. While the initial high-end gentrification did not fully meet its objectives, the culture-driven gentrification proved quickly successful. However, the rise in rents once again posed a threat to the area's artistic and cultural vibrancy.

4.3. Xiannong Courtyard

In 1901, British entrepreneur Ding Jiali, in partnership with seven major shareholders including Li Hongzhang, Cai Shaoji, and Herbert Hoover (who later became the 31st President of the United States), founded Xiannong Engineering Co., Ltd. This was the earliest and largest real estate company established by foreign capital in Tianjin. Completed in 1925, Xiannong Courtyard was designed by British engineer Reed. It served as a model for middle-class housing, featuring functional, comfortable layouts. The facades were simple and elegant, with double-sloped red tile roofs and red brick walls, creating a warm, Western-style

aesthetic. The site incorporated a variety of historical architectural styles, including eclectic Western-style villas, British terraced houses, British standalone villas, Art Deco Chinese villas, and modern buildings. The block's proportions were pleasing, complemented by tall trees and a tranquil, elegant environment. Its large, unified courtyard made it an ideal candidate for redevelopment as a cohesive unit (THARD SITE, retrieved 2024).

Before restoration, Xiannong Courtyard housed 130 residents and five separate entities, and the buildings were in severe disrepair. The facades were damaged, and due to multiple families occupying individual buildings, the interiors also suffered extensive damage. Furthermore, the block lacked essential infrastructure, such as water, electricity, and gas services. In 2006, planning for the restoration of Xiannong Courtyard began, with an architectural competition inviting firms from the United States, Denmark, Shanghai, and Tianjin. The proposals varied, with some advocating for demolition and rebuilding, others suggesting on-site restoration, and some proposing partial demolition. One such proposal, advocating for partial demolition, met strong opposition from Tianjin's historical architecture protection volunteers. They argued that demolishing historical buildings would erode the historical character and streetscape of Wudadao. This resistance led the State Council to designate Wudadao as an integral historical landscape area (THARD SITE, retrieved 2024).

The renovation of Xiannong Courtyard took eight years and was completed in three phases. The first phase covered Xiannong Courtyard and No. 9 Hunan Road, with a construction area of 8,600 square meters. The second phase included Xiaoguangming Lane, Hunan Road, and Hebei Road, covering 16,400 square meters. Due to the significant deterioration of the buildings, the renovation began with architectural surveys, followed by facade repairs and desalination, using historical blueprints for reference. The process also involved drawing on other buildings from the same period in Wudadao to inform restoration efforts. A major challenge during construction was the scarcity of original materials. Consequently, all bricks from the old buildings were dismantled, and those that could be salvaged were cut and reused in the walls. Additionally, infrastructure lines were reorganized by relaying underground pipes. Although the renovation aimed to preserve the original appearance, certain compromises were made due to budget constraints (THARD SITE, 2013).

The commercial positioning of Xiannong Courtyard was described as "culture-driven," with diverse and complementary functions. The district attracted high-end restaurants, including the Starbucks North China flagship store, Hong Kong Legend Cantonese Cuisine flagship store, Mediterranean restaurants, and Italian restaurants. International luxury home goods retailers and leading cultural and museum enterprises were also drawn to the area, with the goal of creating a cultural exchange hub that reflected both regional and historical

values. The commercial and marketing strategy sought to recreate the lifestyle and social interactions of the upper class during the British concession era, both in terms of architecture and contemporary living styles (Director of Xiaorizi Research Group, 2024).

Despite some businesses, such as Starbucks, thriving, the district's overly high-end positioning led to struggles in its overall commercial success. Over time, many high-end stores were replaced. THARD introduced a new brand, "Jianliangji" (简良集), a green lifestyle market emphasizing simple living and craftsmanship. This market focused on original lifestyle products. New businesses such as Creative Restaurant, Xianghe Pastry Shop, handmade silverware stores, and leather goods shops were introduced, prioritizing quality of life and incorporating more accessible, daily-living elements. THARD also collaborated with the "Xiaorizi Research Society," a private company specializing in organizing markets, to host creative markets at the courtyard, enhancing its popularity (Director of Xiaorizi Research Group, 2024).

In 2018, during the second phase of Xiannong Courtyard's renovation, efforts were made to attract high-tech internet companies to use the space as office locations or brand showrooms, in alignment with Tianjin's goal of attracting more high-tech companies for urban transformation. However, the small villa environment proved unsuitable for the large-scale office needs of these companies, resulting in many properties remaining vacant or functioning as underutilized museums. In 2022, this strategy was revised, and THARD introduced the lifestyle brand "Mianli" Coffee, which encompassed an art gallery, creative shops, a green fitness center, and other projects. Mianli also organized outdoor concerts, operas, pet markets, and other events, contributing to the growing popularity of the second phase of Xiannong Courtyard. Currently, a creative hotel is in development. Xiannong Courtyard has undergone a transformation from a largely overlooked area to a highly sought-after, creative cultural destination, evolving from a high-end consumption district to one that is more accessible and diverse (see Figure 3) (Interview with the Mianli Café, 2023).

4.4. Qingwangfu and Shanyili

Qingwangfu (Prince Qing's Mansion) is located at No. 55 Chongqing Road, Heping District, Tianjin. Built in 1922, it was originally designed by Xiao Dezhang, the Chief Eunuch of the Qing Dynasty. It was later purchased by Zai Zhen, the fourth-generation Prince Qing of the Qing royal family, who moved in with his family, giving the mansion its name. The mansion covers 4,327 square meters, with a building area of 5,922 square meters. It is a two-story brick-and-wood structure, including a basement, arranged in a courtyard layout. The architecture blends Western elements with traditional Chinese cultural imagery, making it a prime example of the fusion of Eastern and Western styles found in Wudadao's villas.

Qingwangfu's architectural style is eclectic, incorporating both Chinese and Western elements. The main building features sulfur brick exterior walls and a red-tiled sloping roof, giving the structure a stately yet elegant appearance. The interior is luxuriously decorated with intricately carved details. Notably, the central hall of the main building, located in the courtyard block, has a 12-meter-high ceiling and covers an area of 350 square meters. It is adorned with a grape chandelier imported from Germany, adding an air of luxury and romance (THARD SITE, 2024).

The original site of Qingwangfu now houses the Qingwangfu Cultural Exhibition Hall. This three-story Western-Chinese hybrid mansion retains its original brick-and-wood structure, with a building area of 4,325 square meters. The central area features fan-shaped stone steps and a raised platform. Both the first and second floors have corridors, while the top floor contains a hall for ancestor worship. The mansion is equipped with terrazzo floors, patterned ceilings, hardwood doors and windows, and stained-glass windows. The garden to the east includes rockeries, caves, and a hexagonal pavilion (THARD SITE, 2024).

In 1949, Qingwangfu was repurposed as the headquarters of the Tianjin Military Command. Subsequently, it served various purposes, including as the headquarters for the Tianjin branch of the China-Soviet Friendship Association, the Tianjin People's Foreign Affairs Association, the Tianjin Foreign Economic and Trade Commission, the Tianjin Commercial Commission, and the Tianjin Foreign Affairs Office (THARD SITE, 2024).

In 2010, the THARD began a two-year restoration project, guided by principles of authenticity, completeness, reversibility, recognizability, and minimal intervention. The restoration preserved the building's original exterior appearance, courtyard vegetation, and landscape while protecting historical elements such as precious wood carvings, terrazzo and wooden floors, doors, metal components, glazed Chinese columns, paintings, and stained-glass windows. A sand injection cleaning technique restored the building's facade, and damaged areas were repaired using strict material specifications, ensuring that the restored walls maintained their original texture and color (Interview with THARD manager, 2022).

Qingwangfu has hosted major international events, including the Summer Davos Forum and the 30th International Action Council Annual Meeting. Additionally, it has been used for dining, receptions, and multifunctional halls. However, like other sites in the area, it has struggled with low visitor turnout and underutilized resources. Despite functioning as a museum, commercial uses were less prominent, and many surrounding shops remained vacant.

Adjacent to Qingwangfu is Shanyi Li, a courtyard-style complex with seven rows of 33 terraced villas, covering 5,000 square meters and a building area of 8,009.62 square meters. Listed as a historical landscape building under general protection in Tianjin, Shanyi Li (originally called Sanyi Li) was built in 1937 by Chen Yifu, a modern Chinese cement

Figure 3. The Jianliangji Brand store at Xiannong Courtyard, photo taken by Chensi Shen, 2022

industrialist and general manager of Qixin Cement Company, and his sons Chen Fanyou and Chen Dayou. Designed by Chen Fanyou, a graduate of Beiyang University's Civil Engineering Department, the complex was initially a real estate project rented out to white-collar professionals before becoming a residential area.

Both Qingwangfu and Shanyi Li adopted different strategies to address the challenges of low visitor turnout and resource underutilization. Qingwangfu introduced "Eastgate," a bar and café designed to attract social media influencers and make the mansion a popular destination. A Western restaurant on the mansion's garden side also transformed the space into a venue for events like yoga sessions and weddings. In contrast, Shanyi Li was initially operated as a boutique hotel but was later converted into office spaces due to poor management. Many of the companies that moved in faced financial difficulties, leading to several properties experiencing financial shortfalls. In 2022, Shanyi Li became part of a revitalization plan aimed at creating a high-end business district and attracting well-known entrepreneurs through the development of executive apartments (Interview with THARD SITE, 2022).

As of 2024, THARD has further enhanced Qingwangfu's cultural operations by bringing in a professional team from the Tianjin Modern Art and Cultural Exchange Service Center. This team aims to raise the mansion's cultural profile, promoting integrated cultural and tourism development unique to Tianjin. THARD has also engaged professional

organizations through an open bidding process to manage Qingwangfu's operations, with the service center emerging as the successful bidder. With extensive experience in managing cultural heritage sites, the service center has organized national and local events such as the "China Good Host" series and the "National Geographic Silk Road World Image Exhibition." Upcoming plans include launching "Qingwangfu Banquets," immersive exhibitions, and collaborations with renowned Tianjin brands such as Lao Meihua, Jingwanhong, and Guishunzai. Additional plans involve the development of creative cultural products, immersive exhibitions, and continued growth of the surrounding Wudadao district (Interview with THARD SITE, 2024).

Both Qingwangfu (see Figure 4) and Shanyi Li have undergone significant transformations, evolving from exclusive venues to accessible cultural and creative destinations. This shift reflects a broader trend of adapting historical sites to contemporary cultural and commercial needs.

The selected cases—Minyuanxili, Xiannong Courtyard, Qingwangfu, and Shanyi Li—illustrate the complexity of integrating cultural heritage preservation with modern urban development. Each case highlights the delicate balance between maintaining the historical integrity of the sites and adapting them for contemporary commercial, cultural, and residential uses.

Minyuanxili, with its blend of modernist and classical architectural styles, was originally intended as a high-end cultural and creative district. Although the first development phase did not meet commercial expectations due to insufficient consumer demand, it was later repositioned to attract a broader audience. The introduction of local cultural brands, creative markets, and community activities revitalized the area, transforming it into a popular cultural destination.

Xiannong Yard, a middle-class residential complex with eclectic architectural styles, also faced challenges during its restoration. After years of neglect, the renovation required significant efforts, including architectural surveys, facade repairs, and the reuse of original materials. The area's original vision to become a hub for high-tech companies and high-end cultural activities—similar to its role during the British concession era—was not fully realized. However, the introduction of cultural and lifestyle businesses, such as Mianli Coffee, breathed new life into the area. The popularity of simple yet rich lifestyle brands reflects the area's shift toward a more community-centered and creative use.

Qingwangfu, blending rich Chinese and Western architectural elements, serves as a unique case of historical preservation. The meticulous restoration of the mansion preserved its architectural integrity while repurposing it as a multifunctional cultural space. Despite its cultural value, the site continued to face challenges in maintaining commercial viability.

However, by introducing social media-driven experiences, such as high-end dining, weddings, and traditional opera performances, Qingwangfu successfully transformed into a popular destination, though it increasingly focused on entertainment and social media appeal.

Shanyi Li, after struggling as a boutique hotel and office space, was converted into executive apartments and a creative community hub. Management and long-term investment sustainability posed significant challenges for Shanyi Li.

Adaptive reuse of historical buildings is essential for their long-term preservation and sustainability. While the initial high-end commercial positioning—perhaps in an attempt to return to the historical image—did not meet expectations, shifting toward more inclusive, community-driven models allowed these sites to thrive. The introduction of cultural activities, creative markets, and lifestyle brands helped transform these historical spaces into vibrant cultural centers that resonate with both locals and tourists. However, this evolution has raised concerns about overtourism and the oversimplification of historical narratives.

Strict adherence to historical preservation standards, such as restoring original materials and facades, is essential to maintaining the authenticity of these sites. However, restoration is only one part of the equation; commercial adaptation and management are equally important to ensure the ongoing cultural viability of these sites in the modern urban context.

5. The Wanghong challenges within these sites

5.1. Qingwangfu

The Qingwangfu site has been divided into distinct functional areas. The main building, preserved as a museum, was transferred to private ownership, transforming it into a revenue-driven institution. Surrounding the museum, various commercial ventures have emerged, including a café and beer bar, which gained popularity as Wanghong (internet-famous) photo destinations due to their unique offerings and designer interiors. Despite their fame, these businesses failed to generate substantial financial returns. The café, in particular, closed due to operational losses and the property owner's decision to reclaim the space, marking the end of its Wanghong appeal.

Meanwhile, the former garden area of Qingwangfu has been converted into a Western-style restaurant and a venue for weddings and commercial events. Branded as "Wangfu Garden," this project has been actively promoted throughout Tianjin and achieved financial success. For example, the garden collaborated with a luxury car brand to host exclusive yoga sessions, with participants sharing their experiences on social media. The historical architecture and setting of Qingwangfu enhanced the project's appeal, increasing its profitability.

Figure 4. Tianjin Qingwangfu, THARD SITE, retrieved https://www.thard.com/?lm2/. 2024

However, the exterior of Qingwangfu has sparked controversy. To attract more visitors and revenue, private operators introduced decorative elements to the façade that were inconsistent with its historical authenticity. These "social media-friendly" modifications faced online backlash, with critics accusing them of diminishing the heritage value of the site. This incident highlights the ongoing tension between heritage preservation and commercial interests.

5.2. Minyuanxili

The renovation of Minyuanxili adhered to principles of minimal intervention and low-cost restoration, avoiding major changes to the main structures. As a result, Minyuanxili has retained its original alley-style layout, characterized by narrow, deep pathways. This structure has not fostered a significant Wanghong (internet-famous) commercial scene but instead provided a tranquil, culturally rich atmosphere for businesses. For instance, the renowned Sangqiu Bookstore and a private stone museum have become cultural landmarks within Minyuanxili.

Although Minyuanxili has not been overtaken by Wanghong culture, its alleyways have been used for creative markets. In 2024, THARD secured new funding to further enhance Minyuanxili's environment. With the entry of more "trendy" stores, businesses have employed creative strategies, such as altering shop decorations and using projections, to attract customers. Additionally, brightly painted food trucks on the streets adjacent to Minyuanxili have started to draw patrons.

The success of these newer businesses has led to rising property rents, driving gentrification. As a result, cultural establishments, such as bookstores, have struggled with the increasing costs and were forced to relocate. This phenomenon underscores the tension between preserving cultural identity and accommodating commercial success in heritage districts like Minyuanxili.

5.3. Xiannong Courtyard

Following the success of Phase I as a commercial complex, Xiannong Courtyard's Phase II originally aimed to attract high-tech enterprises to boost Tianjin's economic development, but this plan ultimately failed. Instead, Phase II rebranded itself as a Wanghong (internet-famous) destination under the "Mianli" brand. The Mianli brand implemented several strategies to attract visitors and establish its Wanghong appeal. These included a mix of businesses such as restaurants, cafés, art galleries, theaters, and children's art education centers. Creative installations, such as sculptures and murals, were placed around the courtyard, and large banners with "Tianjin" themes became particularly popular for

photography during holidays. Mianli also organized themed creative markets (see Figure 5), such as vintage furniture fairs and pet markets, which attracted visitors interested in unique photo opportunities and shopping. Outdoor concerts and operas occasionally took place, enhancing the cultural atmosphere. Additionally, Mianli leveraged online communities to engage young audiences, promoting events and fostering connections through social media platforms. While Mianli has successfully generated revenue and attention as a Wanghong hotspot, the quality of its cultural offerings remains a topic of debate. Critics argue that, despite its popularity, cultural products and experiences often prioritize commercial appeal over meaningful cultural value, raising concerns about the sustainability of such a business model.

6. Conclusion

The development of Wudadao illustrates the complex dynamics of heritage preservation and urban development within China's post-1978 urbanization context. Transitioning from a semi-colonial area to a "Wanghong" heritage tourism destination, Wudadao has undergone several stages of transformation. The establishment of heritage legislation and top-down restoration efforts laid the foundation for Wudadao's evolution as a cultural tourism destination rather than a site of somber historical reflection. Over time, heritage spaces have been adapted to serve contemporary urban agendas, with their heritage significance reshaped to support city branding and economic growth.

Under the influence of Wanghong culture, policy guidance, and social media have driven the latest phase of Wudadao's heritagization and touristification. Heritage restoration provides the backdrop for Wanghong activities while offering cultural references with an "elite" connotation. However, while top-down renovations often focus on large-scale construction, the tourism revenue generated by social media and creative culture has facilitated public-private capital cooperation, transforming smaller heritage spaces. This flexibility, however, often comes at the cost of weakened historical authenticity and the commodification of cultural meaning, highlighting tensions between heritage preservation and utilization.

The development of Wudadao also reveals significant social stratification. Emerging middle-class groups dominate the heritage economy through creative industries and commercial activities, while original residents are marginalized due to unequal distribution of economic and social resources. The Wanghong economy has driven increased visitor traffic and economic benefits, injecting vitality into the heritage site. However, the short lifecycle of

Figure 5. Creative market at Mianli, part of the Xiannong courtyard project. Retrieved from the media of Mianli.

commercial models and the homogenization of cultural products limit the sustainability of the site, while entertainment-focused narratives dilute its historical depth and cultural value.

The case of Wudadao underscores that heritage is not only a carrier of historical and cultural values but also a critical tool for social, economic, and cultural restructuring. It offers valuable insights into balancing historical preservation, commercial development, cultural dissemination, and social needs.

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