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A LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR  
AN ISLAND CITY STATE**

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**CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM IN SINGAPORE:  
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FOR AN ISLAND CITY STATE**

**P.P. Wong and Peggy Teo\***

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism has developed into an important economic sector for many small islands and island states. In the main, sun, sea and sand have constituted the core bases for tourism growth, especially for islands located in the tropics. In contrast, cultural tourism in island tourism has fewer examples and has been more successful on larger islands, e.g. Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Bali (Conlin and Baum, 1995; Butler, Harrison and Filho, 1996; Hoyle and Biagini, 1999).

Singapore ranks as one of the few islands that has banked on cultural tourism to develop as a destination, especially after the 1980s. It is a small island state of about 650 km<sup>2</sup> and is one of a few countries that has received tourists numbering almost twice its population. Except for declines in 1983 due to structural problems, and again in 1997-98 due to the Asian economic crisis, tourist arrivals have been steadily increasing and reached a record 7.6 million in 2000 (*Straits Times*, 4.1.2001). The factors for the successful development of tourism in Singapore have been identified and discussed in several analyses. The government has been singled out as a significant factor not only in providing the basic infrastructure but also in various roles in the planning, development, marketing and promotion of tourism (Low and Toh, 1997; Wong, 1997; Khan, 1998).

Singapore's tourism is best described as city state tourism, urban tourism or city tourism. In terms of tourist attractions, the island lacks natural tourism resources such as beaches and is short of interesting historical and cultural heritages such as historical ruins. Shopping, once a significant attraction, is slowly losing its pull due to high costs in the retail industry and competition from other destinations. Such factors have probably contributed to the short length of stay among tourists, dropping from 3.7 days in 1978 to 2.9 days in 1998 (STB, 1999a). Cultural attractions have been ranked low according to the usual surveys on tourists' response to attractions. For example, in the 1998 survey on the purpose of visit to Singapore, pleasure/vacation (39%), transit (19.2%), business (18.2%) and stopover (10.2%) were ranked high compared to shopping (0.9%) and culture and heritage attractions (0.2%) (STB, 1999b). In the survey of leisure attractions for the period January-June 1999, the 16<sup>th</sup> conducted since 1990, the rankings were as follows : island resort 23.7%, wildlife/oceanarium/insectarium 38.8%, theme-based attractions 16.4%, museum/heritage/history 13.8% and gardens 7.3% (STB, 1999a).

These statistics do not, however, indicate the real position of cultural and heritage tourism. For example, "pleasure and vacation" may include tourist visits to cultural attractions; "stopover" packages often include Chinatown as a site visit; and "theme-based attractions" can include ethnic districts. Culture and history are therefore more consequential attractions than the surveys suggest. In the light of this unclear situation, this paper sets out to examine several aspects of cultural tourism in Singapore. It starts off with some basic concepts and issues that have a relevance to Singapore's culture and its development of cultural tourism. Three examples of Singapore's cultural tourism will be discussed: the conservation programme, local food, and in recent years, the arts festival and associated cultural activities. These examples cut across the cultural spectrum and includes the built environment, ethnic culture/traditions and cultural events. From these examples, it is hoped that the experience and the lessons learnt would enable cultural tourism to play a more significant role in tourism development in the island city state.

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## II. CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM

Culture is a complex concept and can be defined in various contexts, although it is best approached historically. In its widest and modern sense, it would refer to the collective material, intellectual and artistic forms, practices and expressions of a particular human group (Johnston, Gregory and Smith, 1994). This wider level of generalization goes well with place-specific tourism as culture represents "the common set of values, attitudes and thus behaviour of a social group" (Ashworth, 1995: 270). Cultural tourism would be tourism developed to take advantage of the culture(s) of a destination.

Singapore is multicultural with many ethnic groups. Its modern history began in 1819 when the British established a trading base that eventually became the capital of the Straits Settlements that included Malacca and Penang. By the early twentieth century, it was an economic force which rapidly attracted Chinese, Malay and Indian migrants. Singapore became self-governing in 1959, was part of Malaysia from 1963-65, before becoming an independent nation in 1965. Today, it is one of the economic "little dragons" (others being Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong) and has the second highest standard of living in Asia (after Japan). The total population has increased to more than 4 million in 2000, but the ethnic composition (also referred to as the CMIO) has remained relatively stable with Chinese at 77%, Malays 15%, Indians 6% and Others 2% (Moore, 2000).

It is the ethnicity, the diversity of the ethnic "traditions" such as the lifestyles, food, religious rituals, and customs that form the basis of cultural attractions in Singapore (Leong, 1989). This is particularly true in the "built environment" or cultural enclaves of Chinatown, Little India and Arab Street (Muslim/Malay). In these places, buildings for worship, for business, for residence and for other local government served as extensions of a country they left behind. During the early stages of tourism development, tourists were particularly drawn to the ethnic enclaves within the city and to the cultural and historical buildings built by the British for administration. From the "death houses" and funeral parlours of Sago Lane in Chinatown to the unsavoury Bugis street where transsexuals and transvestites were popularized in the movie *Saint Jack* (based on the novel by Paul Theroux (1973)), tourists came as curious onlookers to a diverse cultural scene. These have since disappeared under urban redevelopment but cultural attractions live on in other forms, a testimony to the vibrancy and dynamics of the term "culture" as an evolving rather than static concept.

Newer terms, such as "heritage tourism" and "arts tourism" have emerged in the tourism literature and are used in the industry interchangeably with cultural tourism, creating some confusion in the terms (Hughes, 1997). "Heritage tourism" is a rather loose term, defined as "tourism which is based on heritage where heritage is the core of the product that is offered and heritage is the motivating factor for the consumer...heritage means history, culture, and the land on which people live" (Swarbrooke, 1994). "Art tourism" refers to quality artistic products and performances and can be subsumed under heritage tourism (Ashworth, 1995). A major difference between "cultural tourism" and "heritage tourism" is that the latter has been enlarged to include the physical environment, e.g. indigenous wildlife, flora and fauna. For Singapore, cultural tourism would seem to remain as a useful general term although heritage and arts tourism identify more specific components within cultural tourism.

Swarbrooke's (1994) analysis includes a few important comments which are relevant and applicable to Singapore: for the tourist industry, heritage focuses on attractions of historical and cultural appeal; there has been a rapid growth in recent years in heritage tourism; the public sector realises that an economic contribution can come from heritage tourism. All these have costs and are hotly debated (Swarbrooke, 1994), e.g. sacrificing history to nostalgia, providing non-authentic heritage experiences, heritage becoming more entertainment than education, commoditization, cultural change, ethical issues, role of media, funding, and sustainable tourism. The work on heritage in Europe (Ashworth and Larkham, 1994) has further confirmed the relationship and acceptance of heritage to tourism and economic gains. Heritage has been found to be highly successful in formulating and reinforcing place-identities and governments have already assumed responsibility for them.

This chapter deals with socio-cultural resources as they are transformed by the producers (in this case, the state and we refer to this process as cultural production) for consumption by the tourists (cultural consumption). For the tourists, sensory and more especially, visual experiences are important; thus, food, theatres, museums and concerts are important (Dietvorst and Ashworth, 1995). Cultural production deals with issues such as heritage and private sector investments, culture and nation-building/representation and politics of heritage. Cultural consumption can deal with heritage and authenticity and the issue of commoditization.

### III. CONSERVATION AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

McGee (1971) refers to the process of urbanization in Singapore as "deliberate" in view of the fact that nature has endowed only a small amount of land. In this respect, the state has two objectives in urban planning: to optimise land utilisation while maintaining a balance between urban and economic growth on the one hand and a good quality of life on the other. This definition is not far from that adopted by tourism authorities who strive to be "reconciliatory", striking a balance between the economic goal of attracting tourists, and the social objective of raising the quality of life of residents. Some degree of "mutuality" must be struck between creating a "saleable tourism product" on the one hand, and an "environment for living and working" on the other (Burtenshaw *et al.*, 1991:218). Achieving this balancing act has made the allocation of land in Singapore an intensely political activity because questions automatically arise as to "what do we optimise and optimization for whom?" and in matters of conservation, "what do we conserve and for whom are we conserving?"

In the early years of its independence, when economic goals were the principal concern of the state, the drive was to make Singapore an international or cosmopolitan city with an efficient infrastructure that would service world-wide linkages. Shophouses, old buildings and residences, backyard activities and activities on five-foot ways that characterized older Singapore were eliminated in favour of high-rise commercial structures and residential blocks that are functional, cost effective and of good standard. Everything from food selling to retail had to be sanitized for "modern" Singapore. In the process, Singapore developed into what Keys (cited in Powell 1992:41) described as "faceless and homogenous in appearance". Other critics refer to this phase in Singapore's urban renewal as the brick and mortar plan.

By the 1980s however, it became clear that Singapore had lost its "oriental mystique" (MTI, 1984:6) and that travellers no longer found Singapore attractive. Thus, in the interest of bringing back and retaining the tourists, the state launched into a programme of conservation that included bringing back the trades, customs and traditional activities. Culture and heritage was repackaged from incidental attractions to a full-fledged tourism theme. Instead of itemising cultural attractions such as "Seaspray Kelong, Jade Garden and Tiger Balm Gardens as fine examples of our...varied cultures and traditions...in our multiracial society" (Lam, 1969:23-24), historic and ethnic landscapes were redefined as repositories of tradition, culture and local values that would attract tourists and also strengthen Singaporeans' sense of identity.

Temples such as Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple in Little India, the Thian Hock Keng Temple in Telok Ayer Street (Singapore's oldest Chinese temple) or Masjid Sultan on North Bridge Road (the focal mosque of local Muslims) have always been key cultural and heritage attractions for Singapore in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, these were thematized as part of an exotic "Instant Asia" where Chinese, Malay, Indian and "Others" of Eurasian descent showcased a melting pot of Asian traditions (manifested in dress, cuisine, festivities, craft souvenirs and ethnic districts) in the midst of a modern Singapore (Chang, 1997).

The more Singapore became cosmopolitan and modern, the more traditions, customs and built landscapes of these various ethnic groups were threatened. Rather than continue in the myriad of cultural groupings, the state took it upon itself to unite the people while providing a simplified and easy to remember tourism marketing image. As Leong (1997:93) explains, "mass tourists are not anthropologists who seek a textured understanding of another culture; rather, they often want a formula of an abbreviated culture." Thus the

ethnic districts of Little India, Kampong Glam and Chinatown came under the scrutiny of the planning body for conservation.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the national conservation and central planning board, was tasked with the job of identifying buildings and areas of historical interest for conservation; preparing a master conservation plan; and guiding the implementation of this plan by the public and private sectors. Some conservation areas identified included: Kampong Glam, Chinatown, Little India, Civic and Cultural District (CCD), Fort Canning, Singapore River, Emerald Hill, and Kampong Bugis. Whole areas based on ethnic and historical reasons were selected for conservation because these could better preserve the richness of the cultural landscape than individual monuments.

The first conservation project started at Peranakan Centre at Emerald Hill. The project aimed to conserve a particular style of architecture that mixed colonial influences with Malay and Chinese culture. Traditions in the form of food and customs were also showcased in this project. Chinatown, Singapore River, Little India, Kampong Glam and the CCD followed suit. Conservation manuals and guidelines were published for developers interested in rejuvenating these places. They were guided by Singapore's first tourism masterplan, the "Tourism Product Development Plan" which was conceived in 1986 (MTI, 1986). The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and the STB, together with eleven other statutory boards contributed to this blueprint, and a total of S\$1.0 billion was pledged for development. Five themes were chosen for development emphasis: "Exotic East" (S\$187 million for the redevelopment of ethnic-historic districts like Chinatown, Little India, Kampong Glam, as well as Singapore River, Bugis Street and Haw Par Villa); "Colonial Heritage" (S\$260 million for the Heritage Link/Civic District, Raffles Hotel etc.); "Tropical Island Resort" (S\$470 million); "Clean Green Garden City" (S\$30 million); "International Sporting Events" (S\$1 million); and other contingent projects.

Under the auspices of cultural and heritage tourism, "Exotic East" and "Colonial Heritage" advocated conservation and revitalization of historic landscapes. This meant that where it was not possible to conserve traditional activities and dilapidated buildings, or retain old tenants, new but compatible activities would be introduced. These included foodstalls, handicraft shops and street activities that will usher life back to Chinatown or Little India. The Plan also advocated the adaptive reuse of old buildings to house museums, interpretative centres, exhibition centres and theatres. In Chinatown, for example, a "festival plaza" would be constructed to promote roadside festivals, bird-singing contests, *wayangs* (Chinese operas), puppet shows and trishaws. At Singapore River, the facades of buildings and warehouses were to be preserved to house new residences, entertainment and food/beverage outlets. While the Development Plan urged caution not to convert historical landscapes into "theme parks or static museums" (MTI, 1986:16), it had no qualm to inject new life, activities, land uses and place identities to these landscapes.

In the recreation of Singapore's past, it is apt to ask if conservation of Singapore's cultural heritage has paid off. In Kampong Bugis, the original colourful Bugis Street that was famous for its transvestites no longer exists but its vivacity lives on near the MRT (mass rapid transit) station. The state purposely reinvented the sights and sounds of Bugis Street -- roadside stalls selling food and drinks, a *pasar malam* (night market), a beer garden, a cabaret and dance hall. In structure, the recreation may be accurate but in spirit, Bugis did not take off because the social relationships and interactions that used to exist are no longer present. What was once a neighbourhood is no longer there. It is now replaced by a patron-client relationship whereby developers or shopowners own space which are rented out for a price. Conservation districts have inevitably become commercialized.

Tanjong Pagar as part of the Chinatown conservation project has incurred a great deal of money in restoring the buildings to their former glory. Attention has even been paid to intricacies such as appropriate street furniture and lighting to create the correct ambience. However, the activities that occupy the shophouses in Tanjong Pagar are far from our heritage. Pubs, advertising and architectural firms have invaded the project. Tanjong Pagar is a victim of the press of economic veracity.

Apart from the CMIO categories embedded in the heritage districts, cultural tourism in the 1990s also embraces attractions which have little to do with Singapore's history apart from being broadly Asian in theme. A case in point is the Chinese theme parks of Tang Dynasty City and the Haw Par Villa Dragon

World. While the former simulates the city of Chang-An, the ancient capital of China, the latter is styled as a Chinese mythological theme park complete with Disney-inspired rides (Teo and Yeoh, 1997). Both attractions claim to commemorate Chinese culture and to showcase tradition, but what is being marketed is actually a canonized Chinese mythology based on images of dragons, fairy maidens, deities and dynasties with little or no suggestion of Singaporean heritage. Theme parks such as these clearly arise from the reworkings of culture to capture the imagination of tourists regardless of their links to local society and history. In the wake of tourism, the question we must ask is the extent to which tourism consumption shapes cultural production. Bugis Street and Tanjong Pagar may seem kosher but they are far from the heritage they are supposed to represent. Tang Dynasty City has gone into receivership and Haw Par Villa Dragon World is being reviewed for yet another re-make. The fine balance between cultural production and consumption needs to be better understood, especially when tourism comprises a large sector of the economy.

#### IV. LOCAL FOOD AND FOODSCAPE

Tourists to Singapore have seldom failed to notice the local food scene and the popularity of eating-out. In travel literature and travel guides on Singapore, specific mention is often given to *satay* (pieces of meat on skewers grilled over charcoal and dipped in a thick peanut sauce), the curry served in the celebrated *Tiffin* (Anglo-Indian word for light lunch) Room of Raffles Hotel and Indonesian *rijstafel* (rice table) (e.g. Sharp, 1981; *All-Asia Guide*, 1991). The variety and quality of local food and the wide range of eating places have continued to be promoted as a tourist attraction for Singapore and qualifies the destination's name as the "United Nations of food" (*Business Line*, 8.3.1999). The popularity of dishes such as Hainanese chicken rice, *satay*, *roti prata* (type of Indian flat bread), *martabak* (Indian pastry filled with onions, mutton and egg) clearly reflects our ethnic diversity. For one particular hotel, the Hainanese chicken rice dish alone generated S\$5million in sales in the year 2000 (*Straits Times*, 29.12.2000). The diversity in food reflects not only the Chinese, Malay and Indian heritage but also the unique contribution of the *Peranakan*, descendants of the ethnic Chinese who married Malays and are found mainly in Malacca, Penang and Singapore. Singapore also excels in seafood as it has access to imports of fresh seafood and a growing aquaculture. Chilli crab and pepper crab are favourite dishes.

The rich foodscape in Singapore is the result of several historical socio-cultural developments (Lee, 1992). As a leading trade centre, the various ethnic groups can obtain food ingredients to create and recreate their culinary culture. Even today, despite the lack of space and local agricultural products (e.g. pig farms were phased out by 1990), the variety of food has increased. While inherently Chinese, e.g. Chinese teahouses in Chinatown served typical Chinese cuisine, cross-cultural exchanges in ingredients and cooking techniques have occurred, e.g. bread substituted rice as a breakfast meal for the Chinese in the 1960s. With vast improvements in the socio-economic conditions, particularly in the last twenty years, eating has developed into a major form of social interaction and is considered "a national pastime" (Swinstead and Haddon, 1981 : 32).

The local foodscape consists various distinctive components (Lee, 1992). The most distinctive are the hawker centres arising from a series of measures to deal with street hawking which had its origins in providing cheap food to feed a migrant society. Cooked food hawkers first congregated in several areas in the central urban core and were easily accessible to the working population of the city. Although there were a few sheltered centres during British administration, hawker centres became important in 1970s for reasons of public health and environmental control. In addition, surveys carried out in the early 1980s showed that hawker centres were popular with workers as they provided economical lunches. As such, modern hawker centres with proper facilities were constructed by the Ministry of Environment, HDB (Housing and Development Board) and JTC (Jurong Town Corporation). By the 1980s, hawker centres were a ubiquitous part of Singapore's landscape, providing excellent and inexpensive local fare. Perhaps the most well known to most tourists is the Newton Circus Food Centre. There are other "specialized" hawker centres in town that appeal to the tourists, e.g. *Lau Pat Sat* (the old market) where hawkers are housed in a conservation Victorian cast-iron building.

Food courts constitute a second component of the foodscape. They are the result of the privatization of hawker centres. The first food court was established in 1985 (Lee, 1992). Unlike the hawker centres, they provide a variety of hawker food and fast food in cafeteria-style and in air-conditioned comfort. They were associated initially with the downtown shopping areas but quickly spread to other parts of Singapore. To some extent, the traditional Chinese coffee shop (equivalent of the low-budget western café) serving beverages and some food (Chinese porridge, curry rice, pork chop) had been forced by competition to upgrade and modernize, e.g. provision of a better variety of food stalls within an air-conditioned environment.

The traditional ethnic areas of Chinatown (Chinese), Geylang Serai (Malay) and Little India (Indian) have retained a mixture of restaurants, food stalls in coffeshops and food courts, although the housing programme in the 1970s helped to redistribute the population and thus the food areas (Lee, 1992). For example, Geylang/Bedok is now well-known for Malay and Chinese *halal* (Arabic for "allowed") restaurants, Holland Village caters to the palates of expatriates, and seafood restaurants line the beach on the East Coast. Additions to the foodscape of Singapore include the conservation areas, e.g. Singapore River and Pasir Panjang are peppered with pubs and speciality restaurants.

Several factors are likely to influence the future development of the local foodscape. As Singapore opens up to global forces, there is an increasing internationalization of food. Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Mongolian, French, German, Dutch, Mexican and South African cuisine have made their way into Singapore. This trend is the result of various developments: demand by the local population who have a wider experience in food in their overseas travel; lifestyle change, e.g. *al fresco* dining; increased numbers of foreign workers in Singapore; and tourists who expect Singapore to be more cosmopolitan and modern. The internationalization of food tastes has ranged from mass-produced food, e.g. hamburgers and fried chicken, to more exotic fare in restaurants. Themed restaurants have also made their appearance (*Business Times*, 27.8.1999).

Although Singapore is clearly a culinary paradise and international cuisine is readily available, local food has not reached the level of international cuisine. Hawker food at best is still considered as rudimentary cuisine. There is a relative absence of *haute cuisine*, e.g. Chinese food has not developed to the level of Hong Kong for fine Chinese food. There are some good Singaporean chefs but they have not yet attained an international repute and require more exposure to the international scene. The situation has not been helped by the poor image of the profession (*Business Times*, 25.4.98). Also attempts to create new cuisine have not always worked: a "New Asia Singapore Cuisine" was introduced at the 1996 Salon Culinare by fusing Chinese, Malay and Indian cuisines to suit the palates of foreigners (*Straits Times*, 27.4.1996) but this has not made much headway. "Fusion cuisine" which is a combination of east and west cuisine has been around for several years and only some restaurants do it well.

Standardized rating systems and critics can be powerful forces in shaping the future of the culinary landscape in Singapore. In 1998, the Ministry of Environment graded 20,000 food stalls and restaurants based on their level of hygiene. This was a very stringent exercise as only 1.3% of 17,080 stalls obtained "A" grade. Nearly three-quarters of the food stalls in the hawker centres, coffee shops, canteens and food courts received a "C" grade, while almost half of the restaurants had obtained a "B" grade. All the food stalls and restaurants have to display the rating, thus putting some pressure on them to improve or maintain standards. This is useful but the rating was not extended to the quality of food (*Straits Times*, 16.4.98). As yet there is no standardized rating system for restaurants akin to the well-known Michelin guide. This is partly due to several difficulties: local food is multiethnic, and it is difficult to find well informed, independent, serious food critics. Local food guides and reviews are not critical enough although some rating is given, e.g. in *Makansutra* (Seetoh, 1999). Some recommendations and complaints have been registered on web sites. In general, restaurant services and food in restaurants are still rated high by tourists, after immigrant clearance, airport facilities/services and the MRT (STB, 1999b).

The promotion of food as a tourist event and attraction in Singapore continues to benefit from the strong support by the state. Singapore is probably the only country in the world to have a month-long food festival as one of its major tourist events. Since 1997, it also holds a World Gourmet Summit, the objective being to



establish Singapore as a gourmet capital of the east and to promote culinary art by appealing to both the interests of the trade and the consumer. In 2000, this event was moved forward to coincide with the Food and Hotel Asia 2000 trade exhibition. The positive impact of food on visitor arrivals is evident; the three food events (Food Festival, World Gourmet Summit, Food and Hotel Asia trade exhibition) and PATA Travel Mart were responsible for a 21% increase of visitors in April 2000 compared with the same period in 1999. A supporting role to globalize the Singapore food has come from the national airline SIA (Singapore Airlines) to create signature dishes for its passengers. Its catering institute is also the largest in Southeast Asia.

## V. ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Although the local scene has its cultural traditions and activities as part of people's lives, for many years, there were not enough stage and cultural events and performances for tourists to enjoy. The *Instant Asia* show, which is an example *par excellence* of staged performance of manufactured traditions, did not help to improve this situation. The impression that the island lacks culture and arts is not totally true if one were to look at the history and overview of visual arts (Kwok, 1996) and in recent years into the processes of artistic and critical practice (Lee, 1995; Lee, 1996; Gumpert, 1997). A more valid view would be that arts and cultural activities were underdeveloped and ignored by the government; these were suppressed by its zeal for economic growth and political sanction. The situation reversed within the last decade as active support from the government, particularly since mid-1990s, has changed the "arts scene from invisible to explosive" (*New York Times*, 25.7.1999).

Why has there been such a marked change? The likely answer is that tourism and culture can have a strong relationship and that culture and arts are money spinners, a feature already noted in the promotion of arts in Europe. Several measures were taken from mid-1990s for Singapore to be a global city for the arts (STB/MITA, 1995). The major aim was to develop a visual and performing arts industry. These would include development of new businesses in auctioneering (e.g. Sotheby's and Christie's have set up shop in Singapore), museum and gallery ownership and management, and professional theatre and other support services (e.g., freight, insurance, restoration, etc.). Incentives for businesses and individuals to this industry have been freely given e.g. since 1991-95, about 50 foreign talents have been granted PR (permanent resident) status. More international standard shows such as *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and Verdi's *Aida* have made it to Singapore together with draws such as Michael Jackson, Westlife, Coco Lee and Jackie Cheung. Asian art and Chinese antiques have also been exhibited alongside the works of Dali, Hockney and Chagall as examples of Singapore's efforts to place itself on the international map of performing and visual arts.

As noted earlier, the economic gains from the arts and cultural activities cannot be overlooked. For Singapore, it was the strong economic justification as arts and cultural activities contribute significantly to the economy, particularly to the tourism sector. Studies showed that every S\$1 spent on the box office generated S\$1.70 on the local economy on travel, hotel and restaurants. A study commissioned by the STB in 1997 showed a potential generation of S\$1.80 on the local economy for every S\$1 spent on arts and culture in 2002. In a MITA 1998 survey of 152 expatriates, 72% indicated that cultural vibrancy would be a significant factor in locating offices and regional headquarters (MITA, 2000). The output multiplier of arts and cultural activities was estimated at 1.655 for 1998. Direct and indirect value of arts and cultural activities amounted to S\$608 million or 0.4% of GDP (Ooi and Chow, 2000). In the Arts Festival of June 2000, which was actively supported by the STB, art for business's sake was taken care of by STB's arts and entertainment department. Tourists formed nearly 10% of the audience at ten key productions. About 30% of the museum visitors were from overseas (*Straits Times*, 18.7.2000). In particular, arts in Singapore has developed a strong association with tourism in three areas : strengthening arts marketing and cultural tourism, development of an international arts events hub, and increase in incentives for arts sponsorships.

The role of state is almost paramount in the development of arts and cultural activities in Singapore. This is most clearly seen in the recent cultural blueprint and strategy for the future in which Singapore is envisaged



as a renaissance city (MITA, 2000). The aims are to establish Singapore as a global arts city and to provide cultural ballast in nation-building. The state is aware that the current per capita funding at S\$7.27 by government on arts is half of Victoria (Australia) and one-third of Hong Kong. It proposed to put in S\$50 million into the local arts scene in next five years, raising the per capita fund on arts to S\$10. All these are to be achieved through six strategies : develop flagship arts companies, provide good infrastructure and facilities, groom local talent, develop a strong arts and cultural base through education, overseas promotion and developing an arts economy. The Theatres on the Bay (S\$600 million) are scheduled to be completed in 2002 to attract major international acts and programmes.

The heavy dependence on government support and the role of the government have generated several issues relating to the future development of arts and cultural activities in Singapore. Can the arts scene be treated and developed at the same pace as the economic sector? In terms of development, this seems still a long way. The potential is there but it depends on the critical mass of audience, artists, reviewers, sponsors, officials, attitudes, etc. Two different but yet related aspects can be crucial to its development. First is the economic or market factor, in which art, especially visual art, can be particularly affected by commercialization. There is a need to separate the exhibition (curatorial) from the sale (commercial) components in visual arts. The dominance of market forces could lead to the promotion of works that are appealing only to consumers and poses a threat to innovative experimental works (Kwok, 1996). Second, the political factor has to be considered. Can art be successfully cultivated through a mandate? Too much dependence or direction by the government on the arts community can result in the loss of artistic autonomy and this is not expected to produce meaningful artistic traditions or explorations (Savage, 2000)

## VI. DISCUSSION

Several lessons can be learnt from the Singapore experience in the development and promotion of cultural tourism relating to conservation, food, and arts and cultural activities. The island city state has limited tangible and intangible cultural resources available for cultural production. In cultural production, the results confirmed those reported elsewhere, particularly in European cities (Ashworth and Larkham, 1994). A strong economic justification is fundamental for cultural and heritage tourism. Historic preservation has assumed an economic justification and is "officially" beneficial to Singapore (Lew, 1998).

Within the island city state, there is a growing trend in the diversification of cultural production. Cultural tourism is more than just preservation of historical buildings, foods and ethnic traditions. The festivals of the ethnic groups are now major events in the tourist calendar; there is official "lighting up" for Chinese New Year, Christmas and Deepavali. The development and promotion of arts and cultural activities has also been extended to active support for cultural industries. The future of cultural tourism will also depend on the implementation of the concept of "Renaissance Singapore" with different implications for the individual, society and the nation (MITA, 2000).

Cultural production obviously caters to *global* taste and in this chapter, specifically to the tourist as consumer. However, culture and heritage are inherently *local* in nature. Thus in conservation, researchers ask if conservation serves the interests of tourists or of locals (e.g. Teo and Huang, 1995; Leong, 1997; Smith, 1999). The link of conservation projects to tourism seems to be double-edged. Conservation is necessary to prevent the loss of heritage and a drop in tourist numbers, as has happened in the early 1980s. At the same time, if the conservation projects become too commercialized, Singapore stands to lose the very tourist traffic it seeks to retain (Teo and Huang, 1995). More critical, the question that surrounds conservation is ownership. Surely conservation aims to protect what local people want because it is all about heritage to begin with. A balance must therefore be found between what is authentic and what the tourist as short-term consumer wants to absorb in his/her whirlwind encounter with a local culture.

Similarly in our exposure to food culture, Singaporeans have benefited from the variety of cuisines that have made their way into the country. The trick to this treat is to prevent international franchises like McDonald's, Burger King and Starbucks as well as speciality restaurants from other parts of the world to

take over and demolish local cuisine. As it is, land is expensive in Singapore and local restaurants and food stalls have to compete exorbitant prices to rent spaces to set up shop.

Commoditization in an active cultural tourism programme raises the political issue of whether cultural tourism can have a role in nation-building. In promoting the visual and performing arts, there has been an increase in exposure to non-local culture and cultural activities. The state has allowed a certain scope for "alternative" cultural forms to develop and a slow relaxation of certain restrictions, e.g. "X-rated" movies and basking. If tourism consumption shapes cultural consumption, and given the growing share of the tourism sector, then are we moving from "what is culture of the locals is culture for the tourists" to "what is culture for the tourists is culture for the locals"? In the long term, heritage tourism loosens up a society, opens it to external influences and exposes it to the danger of a "progressive political notion" (Heng and Devan, 1994).

## VII. CONCLUSION

Singapore's experience in cultural tourism differs from some larger islands. Unlike many of these islands, Singapore has a short history, lacks a national identity and has a diverse ethnic background. In trying to shape the cultural landscape of Singapore, some mistakes have been made e.g. there has been unhappiness expressed over some of the government's conservation efforts and its support of western art rather than local experimental art. In developmental terms, Singapore is at the early stage of heritage tourism growth and has still a long way to go. There is scope for both the private and public sectors to work with public participation. The bold strategy to develop a renaissance city will be crucial in determining the nature and direction of future heritage tourism and also decide whether heritage tourism can contribute to nation building.

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