

**TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN VIETNAM
HOIAN, A CASE STUDY**

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A THESIS SUBMITTED

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAMME

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin this grateful acknowledgement with a thank you note to my supervisor. I am deeply indebted to him, Associate Professor John N. Miksic, who guided me ever since the beginning of this research. He has always given me his support, encouragement and empathy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his kindness, concern, understanding and patience when my research speed was so slow. I'm also thankful for Mrs. Heimun Miksic for her encouragements during my course.

Secondly, I would like to thank the National University of Singapore for giving me the chance of pursuing my research with a Research Scholarship, without which I would not have been able to complete my study.

Thirdly I would like to extend my gratitude to the staff of the Southeast Asian Studies Programme, who have become my good friends after almost 3 years, especially Lucy Tan, Rohani J., and Rohani S. for their humour and willingness to help whenever I come and disturb them with my endless questions.

I am also grateful for the help and guidance of Dr. Bruce Lockhart, who speaks such good Vietnamese that I sometimes had to ask him how to put my thoughts into words; Professor Chua Beng Huat, Dr. Goh Beng Lan for encouraging me through my study; Mr. and Mrs. Kwa Chong Guan who have always taken an interest in the progress of my work – making me guilty enough to continue my quest.

Without the help and assistance of the local people and tourists - who have now become dear friends – whom I met during my field trips in Hoian, I would not have been able to finish this thesis. Many thanks to Mr. Nguyen Su, the Chairman of the Hoian's People's Committee for granting me more than 1 interview; to Mr. Vo Phung, Director of Hoian Centre for Culture and Sports; Mr. Tran Anh, Director of Hoian

Centre for Monuments Management and Preservation; Ms. Thu, Director of Hoian Hotel; to Ms. Bich Lan and her husband, chi Hien, Vu Trong Nhan and many other local Hoianese and tourists I met during my stays there. I will always remember how warm and welcomed I felt when I was in Hoian.

I would like to thank my partner, Anthony, for everything he did for me: proofreading, consolidating data, going on field trips and so on. He has been my unofficial secondary supervisor at home and has shared the family's financial burden for the 3 years I have been in the graduate studies programme. Thank you.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to these two special people in my life. I am deeply grateful to my parents whom I love dearly. They always provide the best for me and have always wanted to see me completing my study to the best of my ability. Without them, I would not be where I am today. Ba me, thank you. I love you.

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SUMMARY

Hoian has always been on the top list of tourists' favourite destinations in Vietnam. It was a renowned international trading port set up late in the 16th century. It is the only place in Vietnam to have many of its original streets and architectures preserved intact, typical of an old seaport town in Southeast Asia.

With its rich culture and the great potential for tourism, in 1999, Hoian was honourably inscribed by UNESCO for "being an exceptionally well preserved example of a South East Asian trading port from the period of the 15th to 19th centuries".

This thesis will examine the important role that tourism management plays in the preservation of cultural monuments in the face of growing cultural tourism. Although Hoian is 'exposed' to the world (i.e. listed by UNESCO) for only a few years, it has already implemented policies to balance the influx of tourists against the needs to preserve its cultural heritage. This would suggest the presence of good tourism management practices is vital to achieving success in addressing the sometimes-conflicting needs of tourism and preservation. In addition, it would also suggest that the attitudes of the local people and government play an important role in making this possible.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has its roots in the concept of sustainable development generally, defined by the Brundtland Commission as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.¹ Since then it has been adopted and applied in a wide range of human contexts, in an attempt to address simultaneously both developmental and environmental imperatives. The common question is: can tourism grow in a sustainable manner? This is not to say that sustainable tourism has been the experience on the world scene to date. Any number of examples can be quoted of the expansion of tourism in a fashion which is clearly unsustainable, especially in the developing countries. For the tourism sector, the concept of sustainability implies meeting current uses and demands of tourism without impairing the natural and cultural heritage, or opportunities for collective enjoyment of tourists of the future.² This is a study of the concept of “sustainable tourism” in the Vietnamese context.

There have been comprehensive studies from neighbouring countries that measure the economic impact of tourism and its linkages to other sectors in the economy. Bali, Singapore, and Thailand offer three examples which can be used to create analogies with Vietnam.

In Bali, the locals are able to have economic resources to preserve their local dances and traditions because the tourists travel long distances just to appreciate Balinese culture. Without cultural tourism, Bali would have to rely on other forms of development which would generate a much higher rate of negative effects on the local

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 4.

² Hawkes, S. and Williams, P., The Greening of Tourism, Burnaby BC: Simon Fraser University, Centre for Tourism and Policy Research, 1993.

culture, and the local customs, architecture, clothing, food, and other kinds of businesses would have given way to more competitive global brands. Some worry that Bali has become too touristic and the traditional cultures are showing signs of touristification – that is, the culture is being altered to suit the expectation of tourists. Others believe that Bali is one of the more successful examples of incorporation of tourism into a culture's total adaptation to the environment.³

Bugis Street, Singapore⁴ originally was a cultural landscape filled with tradition, glitter and a chaotic atmosphere of enjoyment, eating and shopping. In the 1980s the Singapore government authorities wanted to integrate the old ways with modernity, while eliminating what some perceived as the less desirable traditional aspects of the area such as common displays of transvestitism. They also sought to revitalise the traditional activities and communal activities in the area. They set up a service infrastructure to ensure hygiene standards were kept, and food prepared by the hawkers was of high standards. Shop-houses were replicated and given a weathered look to make them look more authentic. The night market was retained. However, the efforts failed to perpetuate the atmosphere which attracted tourists. Activities were too planned and coordinated and the chaotic atmosphere which was the charm of Bugis Street all disappeared only to be replaced by strict laws and regulations. It was the perfect example of how physical infrastructure may be reconstructed but relationships and social interactions cannot be so easily engineered. The management of Bugis then decided to bring back the infamous transvestites.

However, this was met with heavy resistance by other members of the public in favour of morality. The government also refused to budge an inch. Singapore was

³ Picard, M. "Cultural Tourism in Bali: The Construction of a Cultural Heritage." In Wiendu Nuryanti, ed. Tourism and Heritage Management. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1997, p. 147-164.

⁴ Kuah Khun Eng. "Bugis Street in Singapore: Development, Conservation and the Re-invention of Cultural Landscape." In M. Askew and W.S. Logan, eds. Cultural Identity and Urban Changes in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays. Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1994, p. 167-186.

marketed as a clean and moral society and the government refused to consider the deviant lifestyle as a highlight of any of its tourist spots. Today, Bugis is only beginning to be frequented by the locals. The whole area is now focusing on new social activities and highlighting its night market as bohemian. The younger generations are experimenting with setting up their own retail business in the night market and the new shopping centre. Although the traditional buildings still stand, the Bugis area is undergoing social changes.

In the case study of Singapore's Bugis Street, the government defined heritage conservation as the preservation of architecture and ambience. Conservation plans involved the improvement of the physical environment in the areas of walkways, landscaping and hygiene standard of the area. Lastly, conservation included the enhancement of the character of the area. This could be in the form of introducing new activities while sustaining the old traditional activities of touristic value.

The Singapore policy in conserving an area also requires the active efforts of the private sector. Some, however, have argued that Singapore concentrates too heavily on buildings while neglecting culture. This has been asserted in the case of Chinatown for instance.⁵

Shophouses are the primary feature of Chinatown's landscape and Chinatown's value lies in the shophouses' contribution to the larger urban texture. The shophouse is essentially a pre-industrial urban unit and a characteristic building type of 19th and early 20th century Southeast Asian towns, cities and commercial centres. Residents were 're-located' outside the 'traditional' Singapore Chinatown in order for the authorities to recreate the unique 'Chinatown' experience.⁶ Sites like People's Park

⁵ Historic districts in the Central area : a manual for Chinatown conservation area. Singapore : Urban Redevelopment Authority , 1988

⁶ Kwok, Wee and Chia, eds. Rethinking Chinatown and Heritage Conservation in Singapore. Singapore: Singapore Heritage Society, 2000.

Complex, Thong Chai Medical Hall and Yung Cheng School were not included in the Singapore Tourism Board's plans. These places were milestones in the development of early Chinese migrant society and People's Park contains old businesses like watch-repairing, selling of textiles, hardware shops. Thus with just the buildings conserved and not the activities and businesses, Chinatown lost its vibrancy and became a 'soulless' place.

Chiang Mai, Thailand⁷ faced a real estate boom in the 1980s due to tourism. Hotels and condominiums were built to support the migration of people into the area. However, this development had negative effects on heritage conservation as residents from Bangkok and foreigners from China and Japan made their way to Chiang Mai. The Bangkok residents bought up the properties for investment while the Chinese and Japanese needed accommodation for business stays and also for property speculation. This inflow of investment did not benefit the Chiang Mai residents at all. They were pushed out of their homes and into the outskirts. The traditional way of life has given way to speculative investment in construction. Heavier traffic resulted in air and noise pollution. City dwellers switched to motorbikes to avoid traffic jams. This made the noise pollution more intolerable.

The new habitats also brought other social problems. The peace and serenity of Chiang Mai seemed more evasive. To add more problems, household refuse and liquid wastes were emptied into the nearby Ping River. It was only as recent as 1990 that the local authorities took a firm stand against the further degeneration of Chiang Mai. A council was set up to find solutions for ending investors' harmful activities. They sought to slow down development of new construction, took measures to preserve

⁷ Lubeigt, Guy. "Traditional and Recent Aspects of the Urban Development of Chiang Mai, Thailand." in M. Askew and W.S. Logan, eds. *Cultural Identity and Urban Change in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays*. Geelong: Deakin University Press, 1994; p. 117-134.

tourist sites and protect the composition of the region. Strategies included prohibiting buildings more than sixteen stories within a hundred meters of the monasteries. Buildings of more than twelve stories were disallowed on the banks of the river. The authorities also began the restoration of traditional houses. There was also a revival of the traditional wood trade and the maintenance of ancient techniques. These were also sustained by the growing interest of tourists in antiques and old dwellings. The preservation of the old traditional ways would not have been successful if it were not for the market demand for these products.

Chiang Mai's case study is a perfect example of how tourism can encourage and sustain a traditional way of life. However, the renewal of craft activities may be superficial. The industry of Chiang Mai may change with the winds of fortune. In other words, it is not yet possible to conclude that Chiang Mai's model of development will be culturally sustainable. Whatever our conclusions, Chiang Mai's new development in tourism has forced its inhabitants to enter a way of life they are unfamiliar with.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Vietnam started to open up to the world only in the early nineteen-nineties. The increased preference for more authentic heritage and natural experience by tourists, and the continued interest in Vietnam as a tourist destination, fuelled the Vietnamese tourism industry. The investment profile for tourism development which traditionally focused on hotel and resort developments has now broadened to a wider range of investments. Although it is well recognised that the tourism industry will be playing an important role in the Vietnamese economy, little is known about the magnitude of the impact tourism might bring. Nevertheless, Vietnam can draw on the experiences of

other Asian countries that have walked the same path, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore.

In order to ensure development while sustaining cultural resources, it is logical to argue that Vietnam should strive to focus its tourism policies in terms of economic integration and linkages to trade through the promotion of a country's image, cultural development, investment in media, communications and technology, entertainment industries and sustainability of the natural environment. However, due to the ignorance and greediness of the local people as well as the lack of proper policies and directional guidance from the authorities, a number of sites in Vietnam have been exploited for tourism in an unsustainable manner and therefore, had their original beauties destroyed.

Dalat which used to be the "Paris of the East" – a temperate city located in the highland of Vietnam which the French frequented during their weekend getaways during the late 19th and early 20th century, has now become too touristic. It was altered to meet what planners assumed were tourists' expectations. Dalat is known for its natural beauties of waterfalls, pine forests, beautiful temperate flowers and significant French colonial-style villas. But now the French-style villas are giving way to ugly and tasteless new shophouse-style buildings built to function as motels and guest houses. The waterfalls were not spared exploitation either. Instead of using natural materials to complement the look and feel of the waterfalls, steel and cement were used unsparingly, from ticket booths to staircases and viewing platforms.

Ha Long Bay (Vietnam's first natural heritage endorsed by UNESCO) also has experienced the same fate. The beauty of Ha Long Bay lies in its thousands of offshore islands that can only be reached by boat out in the open sea. However, Tuan Chau

Island, the nearest island to the mainland, is now connected by a road built straight out to the sea, which horrifies tourists and conservationists.

Other places were altered in ways that were assumed would attract tourists, but in actual fact chased them away after their first visit. The services were not of sufficient standards and the basic infrastructure for tourism did not exist. This is a common scene at most tourist sights in Vietnam. Although the number of tourists coming to Vietnam grows every year, tourists comment that Vietnam still has a long way to go in order to improve its tourism services. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the governmental body that controls tourism in Vietnam, has emphasised the need to promote tourism to the world:

“Article 17

The State shall adopt policies and measures to boost tourism promotion under the following major contents:

Widely propagandising, introducing the country, Vietnamese people, beauties, sceneries, historical relics, revolutionary sites, cultural heritage, human creative labour works, national cultural identity to people from all walks of life in the country and international friends;

Raising social awareness of tourism, creating civilised, healthy, safe environment of tourism, bringing into full play the tradition of hospitality of the people;

Developing diversified and unique tourism resorts and attractions of high quality, imbued with cultural identity of different ethnic groups of the whole country, of each region and locality;

Developing infrastructures, physical-technical facilities for tourism, diversifying and improving the quality of tourism services.

Article 18

The State shall implement policies to encourage and facilitate organisations and individuals to invest in the following areas:

- Training and human resource development in tourism;
- Advertisement and publicity in tourism;

- Scientific research, application and development of advanced technologies in tourism;
- Modernisation of means of transportation, communications facilities and other tourism-related equipments;
- Construction of infrastructure at tourism circuits, attractions and resorts;
- Building and improvement of physical-technical facilities at key tourism areas;
- Production of souvenirs, handicraft and fine-art goods; restoration and development of traditional trades;
- Improvement of quality services of travel, tour-guiding, tourism accommodation and transportation;
- Exploitation of tourism potential in areas where socio-economic conditions are difficult or extremely difficult.

Article 19

The State shall carry out policies to encourage voluntary contributions in cash or labour from organisations, individuals inside and outside the country for tourism promotion, protection, retrofitting and development of tourism resources.

The Government shall set up a tourism development fund by using part of the annual State revenues originated from tourism business activities and contribution from organisations, individuals doing tourism business, and other organisations, individuals inside and outside the country. Management and use of this fund shall be regulated by the Government.”⁸

Below are the statistics of tourism in Vietnam from 1990 to 2003:

Category	1990	1991	1992
Total Non Vietnamese Overseas	181,175	217,410	359,142
USA	10,425	12,510	14,563
France	23,650	28,500	19,204
Taiwan	45,000	54,000	70,143
Japan	15,975	19,170	19,119
China	3,525	4,230	2,738
Other	81,500	89,000	233,235
Total Vietnamese Overseas	68,825	82,590	80,858
USA	35,142	42,170	2,910
Australia	8,968	10,761	3,520
France	5,430	6,516	3,840
Other	19,285	23,143	70,588
Total	250,000	300,000	440,000

Table 1: Statistics of Tourism from 1990 to 1992
(Source: Vietnam Administration of Tourism)

⁸ State Management on Tourism, Legal Orders of Tourism, Vietnam Administration of Tourism: Online. Available: (www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn).

Category	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total	669,862	1,018,244	1,351,296	1,607,155	1,715,637	1,520,128	1,781,754
Vietnamese Residents	152,672	194,055	261,300	196,907	272,157	232,211	281,692
By Nationality							
China	17,509	14,381	62,640	377,555	405,389	420,743	484,102
Taiwan	96,257	185,067	224,127	175,486	156,068	138,529	173,920
Hong Kong	16,485	24,223	21,133	14,918	11,573	8,573	9,172
Japan	31,320	67,596	119,540	118,310	124,862	95,258	113,514
Thailand	16,695	23,838	23,117	19,626	18,526	16,474	19,410
France	73,935	126,557	137,890	87,795	81,513	83,371	86,026
U.S.A.	180,916	261,914	189,090	146,488	147,982	176,578	210,377
United Kingdom	20,231	39,237	52,820	40,692	47,491	39,631	43,863
Others	216,514	275,431	520,939	626,285	722,233	540,971	641,370

Table 2: Statistic of Tourism from 1993 – 1999
(Source: Vietnam Administration of Tourism)

Category	1999 (1)	% diff. (2)&(1)	2000 (2)	% diff. (3)&(2)	2001 (3)	% diff. (4)&(3)	2002 (4)	% diff. (5)&(4)	2003 (5)
Total	1,781,754	120.1	2,140,100	108.8	2,330,050	112.8	2,627,988	92.4	2,428,735
By means of transport									
By Air	1,022,073	108.9	1,113,140	116.2	1,294,465	119.0	1,540,108	90.6	1,394,860
By Sea	187,932	136.2	256,052	111.2	284,612	108.6	309,080	78.0	241,205
By Land	571,749	134.8	770,908	97.41	750,973	103.7	778,800	101.8	792,670
By purpose of visit									
Leisure	837,550	136.0	1,138,200	107.6	1,225,161	119.2	1,460,546	84.8	1,238,584
Business	266,001	157.8	491,646	80.37	395,158	112.8	445,751	105.1	468,429
Visiting	337,086	118.7	399,962	97.57	390,229	110.4	430,994	91.0	392,256
Others	341,117	53.2	181,572	175.9	319,502	91.0	290,697	113.6	330,514

Table 3: Statistic of Tourism from 2000 – 2003
(Source: Vietnam Administration of Tourism)

Surprisingly, there is one place in Vietnam which has been spared such exploitation. This thesis will investigate the current situation of tourism management in Hoian in terms of the preservation measures that have been implemented. Particularly, the first part will focus on (1) the original buildings and forms that Hoian possesses, and (2) the cultural practices that have been applied here.

Next, the research will explore the possible threats of overloading a site with tourists who can potentially damage its unique culture and heritage. With this risk that such an occurrence is likely to happen in the future, the research will study the government's current and future role in the preservation of these world's heritage sites.

The thesis will provide an in-depth analysis of Hoian tourism management and the participation of the local people. While I have identified tourism management in general as the crucial factor in Hoian's success, the aim of the thesis is to uncover the specific policy decisions that were taken to bring about this success. In doing so, I hope to obtain a more complete picture of the whole process of tourism management and provide a list of guidelines and sound policies that have greater practical value for other cultural sites. When the people realise that maintaining their cultural heritage and values and keeping the atmosphere of the old city keeps the tourists coming, there is more reason for them to appreciate the conservation efforts and to be motivated to want to keep the old traditions with them to pass to the next generation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

I would like to develop this study based on the concept of "sustainable tourism" for a "cultural heritage site". Vietnam with the history that spans over 4,000 years has great potential in developing cultural tourism. However cultural tourism is a delicate and intangible asset that, without proper care and protection, will be lost and gone

forever. Hoian is a town that contains both historical sites as well as interesting and unique culture and therefore should be studied thoroughly in order to preserve its originality to the maximum level feasible.

A. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL TOURISM

1. Definition of Cultural Heritage

Heritage is “a legacy that we have received from our ancestors”: It can be a relic or a tradition passed down from generations before us. It is a symbol of our history, our lineage as human beings.⁹ For the purpose of my research, the definition of heritage is any product of culture that can be a subject for tourist promotion.¹⁰ This would include landscapes with historical significance, natural history, cultural traditions and manifestations, archaeological sites, artefacts, artistic buildings and all that deserve to be protected as a source of national, regional or local wealth. Heritage is a means of preserving historical values from the past and is viewed as part of cultural tradition.¹¹

Cultural heritage refers to a country’s unique resources whether it is the natural, built or social characteristics that define a nation’s culture and identity. Much of its importance lies in the cumulative build-up of habits, values, traditions, institutions and even social relationships. ‘Each has its own intrinsic values recognized as requiring protection as a source of national, regional or local wealth and conservation for future generations.’¹² These assets are inextricably linked to the perceived quality of life for

⁹ Wahab, Salah. “Balancing Culture Heritage Conversation and Sustainable Development through Tourism.” In Wiendu Nuryanti, ed. Tourism and Heritage Management. Yogyakarta, Gadjah Mada University Press, 1997, p.61

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Idem., p. 62.

¹² Middleton, Victor T.C., "Marketing Issues in Heritage Tourism : An International Perspective." In Wiendu Nuryanti, ed. Tourism and Heritage Management. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1997. p.213.

the residents and their environment, the revenue creating objectives of the government, and the achievement of sustainable tourism development.

2. Definition of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism embraces a whole range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn about the people, the lifestyle, the heritage and the arts. It includes the business of providing and interpreting this experience to visitors in an informed way that genuinely represents the cultural and historical contexts of a country.

Its fundamental nature is dynamic and its demand characterised by diversity in tourists' motivations. Preconception and imagination are the starting point for travellers. Interaction with heritage often results in a reinterpretation of the latter. 'Tourists use the power of their intellect and imagination to receive and communicate messages, constructing their own sense of historic places to create their individual journeys of self-discovery and in essence create their own tourism products.'¹³

3. Relationship between Heritage and Tourism

In essence, the relationship between heritage and tourism parallels the conflict between tradition and development. As built heritage is comprised of man-made, fixed elements possessing historical values and meanings derived from the settings in which they occur and societal values ascribed to them, the static attraction will not be available forever. To reconcile this, one alternative is to draw on the 'people element' to instil some soul to the built heritage.

¹³ Nuryanti, Wiendu. "Interpreting heritage for tourism: complexities and contradictions." In Wiendu Nuryanti, ed. *Tourism and Heritage Management*. Yogyakarta: Gadjadara University Press, 1997, p.114-122.

Heritage and culture can provide outcomes that satisfy curiosity and the search for knowledge and understanding, interpretation and insight, which is an essential part of both domestic and international tourism. Heritage satisfies personal goals of self-development expressed through travel.

Tourism is a “multi-sectored and multifaceted phenomenon”¹⁴ which affects the physical, economical, cultural and social environment of the places involved. Tourism has become the giant that it is today mainly due to advances in related industries such as transportation, technology, and science and electronic media.¹⁵ People are able to travel cheaply to further destinations due to developments in the aviation industry with more air routes being negotiated between countries to ease the inconvenience of getting from point A to point B. The electronic media have bombarded consumers with travel channels. With such easy access to literally millions of websites and travel magazines, an average person has the world at his or her feet and is thus more enticed to travel to see the amazing sights hawked by these travelogues.

Tourism brings obvious benefits for host countries. Firstly, it is able to provide countries with foreign exchange. Money can come in the form of tourist dollars or foreign investments by hotel chains and other tourist related industries. Foreign exchange that enters the local economy helps reduce the tax burden for locals. Also, locals are employed by the tourist-related industries and with higher income; the standard of living will therefore be elevated.

Tourism not only brings material advantages for countries, it also promotes better understanding between different cultures. By travelling to places of different

¹⁴ Haryono, Suyono, "Opening Address at the International Conference on Tourism and Heritage Management." In Wiendu Nuryanti, ed. Tourism and Heritage Management. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1997, p.1.

¹⁵ Idem, p.2.

cultures, people get to meet people coming from all sorts of background; as a result, trust and respect among people will develop. In the long term, people will be more tolerant of cultural and religious differences; tourism will teach people to realise that there is such a magnificent diversity in mankind and how unique each of us is.

Cultural tourism means that at the destination, there is a cultural attraction (material or immaterial) and this attraction is unique or representative of the destination. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, “culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society”¹⁶.

However, tourism can be a double-edged sword. While it can bring in funds and promote world peace, tourism can cause precious resources and natural habitats to be destroyed if the authorities and the people are not mindful of its potential dangers. Natural sites are not renewable resources. Once destroyed, they may never be restored and even if they could be, it would take a very long time. The once beautiful coastline of Malaysia has been badly ravaged by the influx of tourists during the past twenty years. The beaches are overcrowded with tourists and the natural environment is unable to afford the impact of overcrowding. Waste has not been properly managed and led to pollution of the shoreline and the sea, thus affecting marine life. Natural forests were cleared to build hotels to meet the demand of tourism. These treasures of the land will never be fully restored despite the best efforts. Now that most of the beaches are polluted, they have lost their appeal to tourists, and the locals who have been used to the affluent lifestyle brought in by tourism, are left to fend for themselves. Natural and cultural resources have both been squandered through mismanagement.

¹⁶ Wahab, Salah. “Balancing Culture Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Development through Tourism.” In Wiendu Nuryanti, ed. Tourism and Heritage Management. Yogyakarta, Gadjah Mada University Press, 1997, p.62.

This situation calls for attention to the problem of unsustainable tourism development. Much tourism development is designed for short-term profits. Unfortunately, once profit has been reaped, the natural and cultural resources which formed the touristic attraction may be so degraded that they cannot be restored. On one hand, the developers who are often non-locals have profited. On the other hand, the locals are now worse off than they were before because not only is the new source of income from tourism gone, the traditional sources of income from activities such as fishing, farming, craftsmanship and others are also gone. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that tourism development is sustainable? Are there any organisations other than the government's, capable of fulfilling this responsibility?

Sustainable tourism is defined by the World Trade Organisation as: "...that which meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems."¹⁷

Development of sustainable tourism would require the preparation and adaptation of scientific tourism planning that aims at prescribing the ultimate carrying capacity of all resources and in particular heritage sites, thus mitigating the negative impacts of tourism without sacrificing its benefits.¹⁸

Sustainable tourism is able to help countries preserve their cultures, whereas mass tourism tends to destroy cultures by the introduction of global brands such as McDonald's and Starbucks. Much as critics condemn tourism for the demise of local cultures and the growing similarity of countries with different cultures, certain forms

¹⁷ Ibid, p.63

¹⁸ Idem.

of tourism (especially cultural tourism and eco tourism) help the locals preserve their local heritage despite the trends of globalisation and modernisation. By drawing on the experiences of the neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, we would be able to understand the importance of sustainable tourism, and hence, reap the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of tourism development.

Sustainable tourism cannot be separated from the value systems of those involved and the societies in which they exist.¹⁹ It can be achieved only if all environments and elements are dealt with simultaneously and from an integrated and holistic standpoint and not on a sectoral basis.

Surprisingly I noticed that the term ‘sustainable tourism’ (‘du lịch bền vững’ in Vietnamese) was used quite often in most of the internal communications I was able to obtain from the Hoian authorities. However, I cannot find the definition for this term in Vietnamese – or any definition of the idea of ‘sustainability’ in the context of Hoian. This thesis is therefore written to assess the tourism conditions in Hoian, the development of tourism in this site and the sustainability of the site in the years to come. What has been happening here in Hoian in terms of tourism development and what should be done to reserve this place sustainably so that it still can receive tourists in the future without destroying the place.²⁰

‘Sustainable tourism’ in Hoian’s context in a way also is linked to the definition of ‘authenticity’ since it is a historical heritage. One solution to the problem of what ‘authenticity’ means is to use Cohen’s concept to refer to ‘authenticity’ as aspects of a simpler, more unsophisticated native existence.²¹ Hoianese as well as the local authorities are trying hard to reserve Hoian’s assets – tangible and intangible ones

¹⁹ Butler, Richard, *Sustainable Tourism – Looking Backwards in order to Progress?, Sustainable Tourism, A Geographical Perspective*, Harlow, Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998, p.29.

²⁰ Pigram, John J and Salah Wahab, *Tourism, Sustainability & Growth*, London ; New York : Routledge, 1997, p. 4

²¹ Cohen, E. *Rethinking the sociology of tourism*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6 (1), 1979, p.18-35.

– in as authentic a form as possible so that tourists can experience the traditions of the place. ‘Authenticity’ could also be translated as “the possibility of getting past the more usual and contrived tourist experience towards a backstage encounter”.²² Through the interviews with the authorities that will be touched on in Chapter 4, it can be inferred that ‘authenticity’ in this context belongs to the first definition.

B. THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

For the purpose of this paper, ‘community’ is defined as non-specialists or non-governmental bodies.

Community participation is one of the main stakeholders but not the sole player in sustainable cultural tourism. It should be an integrated forum consisting of a network of shop owners, conservationists and other national agencies. However, bureaucratic interventions, wherever necessary, should be minimised and strategically undertaken.

Cultural heritage preservation is, after all, for the people and country. It is one of the most interesting and impressing tourist products as it reveals the historical and cultural characteristics of the country. Therefore, it is essential to organise a happy marriage between heritage preservation and tourism development in order for the community to benefit from a better-preserved heritage town.

Heritage consumption has become an important part of the tourist experience. Historic districts represent a living witness or outcome to the authenticity of history and have been incorporated into the fabric of the locality where they exist. Their existence has become part and parcel of the community’s life and therefore their conservation is an indispensable duty of the state and the local population. The

²² MacCannell, D. The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class, London, Macmillan, 1976, p.91-107.

evolutionary nature of heritage and community development is an important aspect to sustain tourism development. It enables tourism to keep abreast with developments in urban and environmental planning and also encourages 'greater variation' and 'local flavour' in future projects, providing 'respite from the increasing homogenisation of destinations.'²³

C. THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY PARTICIPATION

Although community participation plays an important role in heritage preservation, one cannot deny the great impact of the interventions of authorities. The interventions of authorities can either do much harm to the heritage site or, in this case, can also bring a forgotten town onto the world map of famous destinations.

However, much in-depth study and research should be done by the authorities prior to any policy implementations. Especially in the case of this paper, we will attempt to determine whether the authorities' policies have been sound, and whether implementation of tourism development has been sustainable, and whether they have helped to restore the originality of a town and to promote it to the world.

The government should strive to balance the commitment to conservation with the demands of modernisation by integrating the general plan for the preservation with socio-economic development. The government should act as the mediator to determine the strategic direction of growth for the tourist industry. Cultural diversity can be packaged as a selling point to attract foreigners to the country. It must be noted that the government should not only have an economic interest in cultural diversity, but also engage it as an educational tool for community integration.

²³ Murphy, P.E. Tourism : a Community Approach. London: Routledge, 1985. p.171.

The governmental departments and the community have to work closely together to ensure that the historical features are successfully preserved. It has also been proposed that multiplicities of committees representing different standpoints and performing various functions are set up to provide a more encompassing management plan.

D. MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

For the purpose of this paper, 'success' is defined as results of policies and implementation which on the basis of available data appear to support long-term sustainability of the heritage site. Sustainability is operationally defined in the form of authenticity and adaptability to changed circumstances which provide an imprint for future generations. As Geertz points out 'Cultural heritage of a people, place or a nation is not some solid unmoving block of objects, practices, beliefs and understandings, settled crystalline structure of traditions and customs that time and tourism, development and modernity, can only erode, disrupt, pollute or destroy. It is something that is constantly changing, constantly being reconstructed and recreated, in response to new circumstances and emerging needs.'

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on anthropological fieldwork, using in-depth interviews as qualitative research.²⁴ Anthropological research of a qualitative rather than quantitative nature devoted to tourism has been used widely over the past couple of decades as extracted below:

²⁴ Chambers, Erve, Tourism and Culture, An applied Perspective, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 3

... “the cultural perspective that anthropology bring to our understanding of human institutions and behaviours seems particularly useful...

... Tourism, with its multiple realms of human interaction, provides ample opportunity for the play of cultural processes and for the invention of new forms of cultural expression...”²⁵

... “There is a need for an integrative approach to tourism, incorporating ecotourism, ethnic tourism, and cultural tourism into one concerned not simply with generating revenues for the state and commercial agencies but also with conservation and meaningful local participation and benefiting local communities...”²⁶

The information is generated from my field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos. The qualitative approach was utilized rather than the quantitative method because it was judged that this method would yield more useful data on the sustainability of cultural resources based on current policies. Quantitative methods are less likely to provide such indications of long-term cultural, as opposed to sociological, trends, in such areas as lifestyle, and perpetuation of such intangible, unquantifiable cultural attributes as attitudes and customs, etc.

During the field trips to Hoian in November 2002 and April 2003, several in-depth interviews were conducted with the tourists, the Hoianese, and the Hoian authorities. The respondents included 10 foreign tourists, 3 local authorities, 16 Hoianese (of whom 6 owned businesses inside the old quarter and 2 owned businesses outside the old quarter; 8 out of 16 resided within the old quarter and the rest stayed outside the old quarter or in the suburbs of Hoian Town). I actually had talked to many more tourists and noted down their comments but would like to choose these 10

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ Tan, Chee Beng, Sidney C.H. Cheung and Yang Hui, Tourism, Anthropology and China, Thailand, White Lotus Press, 2001, p.21.

particular people that came from quite distinctive backgrounds and different countries with a more in-depth view points of the site. I had one couple from Holland, one tourist from France, one from Sweden, one American-born-Chinese, two Japanese ladies, one couple from Australia and one from Switzerland. These people are educated, have travelled a lot to different regions of the world and in a way represented different nationalities with different interest.

The questions posed to the various respondents varied according to their backgrounds.²⁷ Tourists were asked more questions regarding the overall feeling towards the site, their opinions on the conditions and restorations, the hospitality of the local people, the accommodations, the food and their experiences while staying in Hoian. For the local people, interviews began with general questions regarding their occupation and their businesses. Usually the local respondents would volunteer information about the story of Hoian, and its conditions before and after the tourist's arrival.

The responses obtained from the interviews will be classified according to tourists, local authorities, and the Hoianese in Chapter 4. Responses from the Hoianese are subdivided based on their residence location (inside or outside the old quarter).

One of the reasons why I chose to use anthological qualitative approach is also because I have the advantage being a Vietnamese and at the same time quite fluent in English. I tried to maximise my linguistic skills into full use and let the people speak for themselves rather than confining them to the questionnaires. It is much easier to start the interview in a more informal way that makes the interviewee more comfortable and from there they would talk more about their own opinions/ideas. The same method was applied to the local people. They tended to feel reserved and do not

²⁷ Detailed questions are listed in the Appendix 1.

want to be interviewed, but once I talked to them in an informal way they would loosen up and tell me much more information than I could obtain in a formal interview. I also wanted them to tell me their point of views and not to impose my views on them. This approach worked especially well when I spoke to the local people and the authorities.

One of the limitations I faced while doing this research was that I could not obtain much scholarly written information about Hoian. Similarly, Vietnamese literature does not contain such written sources either. What I gathered from my field trips were internal communications from the local authorities, articles on Hoian and various write-ups on Hoian from magazines and newspapers and the Internet. This type of primary material is of course much more difficult to obtain, but due to my persistence I was able to acquire sources which are not generally available.

Another problem was the time limit and financial constraint for a Master thesis. I could not conduct surveys to a larger group of tourists and local because I did not stay there for very long (3 weeks each time I came) and could not afford a trip to visit the UNESCO Hanoi Field Office to get more information on Hoian – I did browse through UNESCO's website to search for the documents though but did not find much. I was lucky to become friends with some of the local residents there in Hoian who helped with my interviews but if budget allowed I could have obtained more information through more interviews and surveys with the locals and tourists. Although Hoian's local authorities were one of the few easier-to-approach authorities in the whole Vietnam, they were busy people and it took some time to get an appointment with them for the interviews. However I must thank them for being patient and made time for me, not once but whenever I needed more information.

I also took photos and videos of Hoian to establish the significance of Hoian as a cultural site that attracts tourists and illustrate the attractions of Hoian and the surrounding areas.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF HOIAN

Hoian is situated 30 km south of Danang, by the banks of the Thu Bon River. It was a renowned international trading port set up late in the 16th century²⁸ and was historically known as a prosperous seaport under the various names of Fayfo, Kaifo, Faifoo, Faifo, Hoai Pho and Hoian. It is one of the few places in Vietnam to have many of its original streets and much of its architecture preserved intact and clustered together in one area. Its architecture and layout are in many respects typical of seaports of this period in Southeast Asia.

Current excavations at Hoian have uncovered evidence of a prehistoric culture called Sa Huynh that occupied the central part of Vietnam in the Bronze Age. We are just starting to learn of the relationship between that culture and the Cham people, who later occupied the area.²⁹

The Cham, a Malayo-Polynesian-speaking seafaring people skilled at coastal and river transport, established several kingdoms on the central coast of Vietnam during the period from 500 to 2000 years ago³⁰. The Cham had an "outlook on the sea" that engaged them in international coastal trade.³¹ The estuary of Hoian has an ancient name, Cua Dai Chiem, which means the "Great Cham Estuary".³² It is believed that Hoian was a seaport for the upstream sacred Cham cities of My Son and

²⁸ Phan, Huy Le. "Hoian (Faifo) – Past and Present." The National Committee for The International Symposium on the Ancient Town of Hoian, Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 1993, p.17

²⁹ Southworth, W.A. "The coastal states of Champa." In Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood, eds. Southeast Asia From Prehistory to History, Abingdon and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. Pp. 209-233.

³⁰ Phan, p.17.

³¹ Ho, Xuan Tinh. Cham Relics in Quang Nam. Danang: Danang Publisher, 1998, p.5

³² Vu, V P and Dang, V B. Characteristics and Topography of Hoian and the Suburbs. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishers, 1991 p.87-100

Tra Kieu. The estuary once consisted of many lakes, rivers, and sandy islands.³³ Hoian was founded on the largest and driest of these islands.

From 650 to 800 AD, Sumatra flourished as a connection between China to Egypt, Arabia, and between Persia to the West. Persian and Indian sailors visited ports up and down the coast between India and China.³⁴ Along the central coast in what is now Vietnam, there were more than sixty trading harbours within one hundred miles of one another. Among these ports were the present-day cities of central Vietnam: Phan Rang, Nha Trang, and Hoian. Hoian and its Cham Island were one of the busiest fresh-water and re-supply stops. In addition, traders could buy some Chinese goods there without sailing all the way to China.

Previously a large portion of the trade from China and Europe to the west went by way of the overland "Silk Road". When the Turks gained control of the western part of the Muslim world in the 14th century, they restricted trade through the Eastern Mediterranean. That obstacle pushed European maritime powers to attempt reaching Asia by sea. Europeans sought the precious spices to preserve and flavour their food. In 1498, the first European ship returned from India with an enormous and valuable cargo, stimulating a frenzy of seagoing merchant competition to the East.³⁵

The first Europeans to trade with Vietnam were the Portuguese. They were then the world's best navigators from the West. In the 15th century, Portugal established a navigation school, which provided information on routes and developed practical navigational aids. In 1509, a heavily armed Portuguese fleet appearing in Southeast

³³ Idem.

³⁴ Ibid, p.96

³⁵ Ibid, p. 104.

Coedes, G. L'Archeologie du Tonkin et les fouilles de Dong-son [microform] : a propos d'un article et d'une lettre de m. Emile Gaspardone / par Victor Goloubew ... Avant-propos de George Coedes. Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extreme-Orient, 1937.

Hall, D.G.E. A History of South-East Asia. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964, second edition.

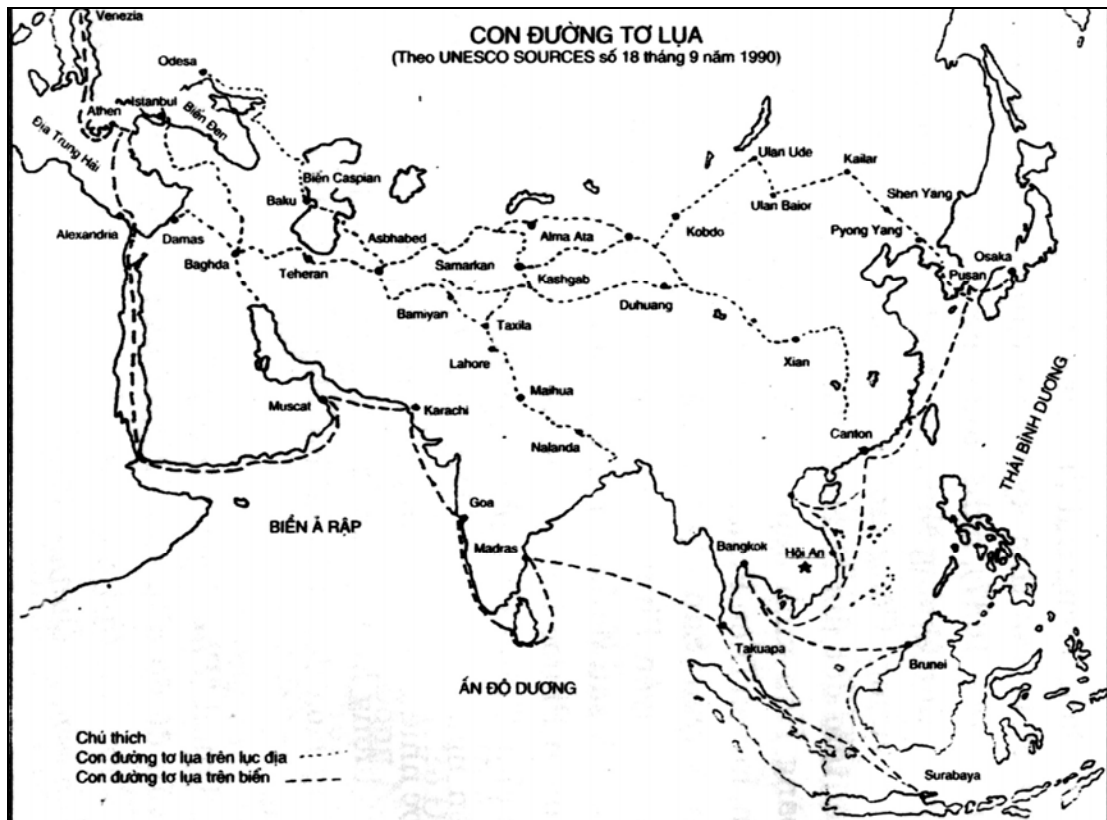
Reid, Anthony ed. Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000.

Asia acted quickly to beat their Spanish rivals. The Portuguese language later became the language of trade and negotiations in many Southeast Asian seaports. However, at Hoian, a Malay dialect continued to be spoken. In 1535, Antonio De Faria anchored in Danang and visited Hoian. He was one of the first Westerners to write about this land. Portuguese ships under his guidance began to visit Hoian regularly.

After the Cham kingdom disintegrated in 1471 and the Cham kings established their capital further south, the Vietnamese came to Hoian with soldier-pioneers.³⁶ In the 16th century, the Dai Viet (Great Viet) kingdom under the Le kings was politically divided into rival groups. The Trinh family ruled the northern part, called Tonkin (Dong Kinh). The Nguyen family ruled the southern part with its capital at Phu Xuan near Hue. Nguyen Hoang was the first of the Nguyen lords who ruled the South. He moved from northern Vietnam to the centre of Vietnam with followers in 1588 and took control of the existing seaports. The Nguyen Lords became quite independent from the Trinh in the North. They had the advantage of a "frontier spirit" free from northern, restrictive Confucian values. The Nguyen Lords reopened foreign trade at Hoian, which stimulated the town's development and resulted in an immigration policy open to a diverse population. Hoian saw its most brilliant stage of development during the time of the Nguyen Lords.

The Nguyen set up their capital on the bank of Huong Giang (Perfume) River in Hue. Since the river was not suited for large international vessels to dock, the sheltered deep-water port of Hoian acquired that role. Foreigners who wanted to trade in Hue were required to dock in Hoian and travel by smaller boats along the coast or over the Hai Van Pass to Hue to negotiate with the Nguyen Lords.

³⁶ Phan, p.18



Picture 1: The Silk Road map passing by Hoian.
 (Source: UNESCO sources Volume 10 September 1990)

Vietnamese silk, ceramics, ivory, cinnamon, eaglewood, sugar, gold, sea-swallow nests, sandalwood, pepper, dried areca nuts, ceramics, timber, tortoise shells, and fish attracted foreign merchants. Muslims and Buddhists in India and Southeast Asia used sandalwood to cremate their dead. Trading of these products in the centre of Vietnam led to farming areas specialising in these export crops. Mulberry farms and silk production developed. Craft villages flourished, including Kim Bong carpentry village, Thanh Ha ceramics village, and Thanh Chau village, which processed sea-swallow nests. In return, foreign ships brought defence-related items, such as saltpetre, sulphur, guns, and cannons.

Because they were less dominated by Confucian orthodoxy than the Trinh in Hanoi, the Nguyen rulers were more relaxed about the Christian preaching that came

with foreign help. Christian missionaries and their Japanese convert arrived in Hoian in the early 1600s after Japan closed its doors. In 1618, Christopher Borri joined the Hoian Mission, which had been founded a few years earlier.³⁷

The French missionary Alexander de Rhodes arrived in Hoian in 1624. He started his work by adding tone marks to the Romanised (Quoc Ngu) version of the Vietnamese language.³⁸

The Dutch and the English followed the Portuguese. Global competition between European maritime powers forced open new markets in Asia. The Netherlands had highly developed financial institutions that supported their trade ventures with accurate information on price fluctuations as well as a business ethic that inspired confidence in their contracts. By 1590, the Dutch had become a great sea power in the Mediterranean, the Near East, and the South Atlantic. Rival Dutch maritime trading companies united into one powerful cooperation: the Dutch East India United Company (called "VOC" from the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), which linked the countries in East Asia, including Vietnam, into a complex trading system. After the Japanese trade ban, the Dutch set up a post in Hoian in 1636 under Abraham Duijker. The Dutch presence in Hoian lasted until 1741.

In 1613, Richard Cocks, chief of the newly established English East India Company in Japan, dispatched two colleagues to Hoian via a Japanese junk to investigate trade possibilities. The English finally arrived as a presence in Vietnam in 1672. They were interested in exchanging silks, sugar, tea, and porcelain for their manufactured woollen cloth.

³⁷ Nguyen, Van Xuan. Hoian. Danang: Danang Publishing House, 2000, p.6

³⁸ Ibid. p.86

The French sent Pierre Poiver to survey the Hoian business scene in 1742, but not much resulted from that trip. Two years later, the French were granted permission to set up a warehouse. Poiver returned to Hoian in 1748 to establish a firm to monopolise the trade in aromatics; however, French influence did not take hold in Hoian until a century later.³⁹

A ceramic trade between Japan and Vietnam in iron-glazed pottery was already flourishing in the 14th century.⁴⁰ When Japanese tea rituals became popular in the 15th century, Vietnamese stoneware kilns opened to produce export ceramics similar to Chinese products in an effort to please a market already accustomed to Chinese ware. The Japanese arrived in Hoian around 1560, which was before the Chinese arrived but also left before the Chinese. However, some Japanese set up long-term establishments, from which grew the expression "Japanese Town". Little is known where exactly the location of "Japanese Town" now since Hoian was burnt down during the Tay Son attack in 1773 but the most prominent architecture that has stood the test of time to date is the Japanese bridge "Lai Vien Kieu".

In 1368, the Ming Dynasty banned direct contact between China and foreign countries. Only the imperial fleet could travel abroad, and only foreigners carrying tribute were allowed to enter Chinese ports. The ban was lifted in 1565; the Emperor, who wanted Vietnam's silk and porcelain, authorised trade with Southeast Asian ports.

Instantly, Chinese traders appeared in Hoian and set up trade organisations and residences. However, Japanese ships were still banned from Chinese ports, and export of important products to Japan was forbidden. Vietnam and especially Hoian became

³⁹ Phan, p.22.

⁴⁰ Seiichi, Kikuchi. Report of Hoian's Excavation. Tokyo: Showa University, 1997, p. 6

a source of silk for Japan through Chinese and Dutch intermediaries trading at Hirado and Nagasaki.⁴¹

In 1644, the Manchu overthrew the Ming Dynasty; Ming loyalists who did not recognise the Manchu newcomers fled China. Some set up businesses in the Chinese Street of Hoian and called their little enclave, Minh Huong (Ming People). In 1683, China ended its "closed door" policy toward Japan. Chinese textiles and ceramics could be exported worldwide and began to compete with those from Vietnam.

China, faced with an adverse trade balance, tried to make up its deficit by acquiring silver bullion. After the Spanish Conquistadors opened the New World to trade, silver mines belonging to the Aztec and Inca empires in what are now Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru in South America became a source of precious metals. Gold and silver were shipped across the Pacific Ocean to Southeast Asia by way of the Spanish colony of Manila, or it reached the East by way of Lisbon. In 1540, a new method using mercury was discovered to extract silver from ore.⁴² Silver mining became a major industry in Mexico and Peru; silver surpassed gold in shipments. It stimulated a boom in trade throughout East Asia, which used the Spanish real and the Mexican silver dollar as hard currency.

In the mid-16th century, Japan's silver and copper mining industries flourished, also stimulating trade in East Asia. China, lacking silver reserves, was forced to make concessions; European traders with silver found the Chinese goods cheaper. In addition, the Chinese so valued their silver that they were reluctant to use it to purchase imports. They preferred to sell their own products, especially silks, for foreign silver.

⁴¹ Idem.

⁴² Domenico Sella, "European industries 1500-1700." In C.M. Cipolla, ed. The Fontana Economic History of Europe: the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Glasgow: Collins, 1974. Pp. 354-426.

At the same time, Japan wanted Chinese silk, which was considered superior to their own product before the 18th century. This combination of the Japanese wanting silk while having silver and the Chinese wanting silver while having silk could have set the base for a healthy direct trade pattern. However, it did not happen.

In 1593, the Japanese rulers attempted to restore the country's devastated economy after internal turmoil and a failed invasion of Korea. The Japanese had intended the invasion of Korea to open relations with China; instead, the invasion made it impossible for Japan to approach China for negotiations.

During the first two decades of the 17th century, Japanese shoguns granted licenses to a few traders for the so-called "Red Seal Ships" - Goshuin-jos.⁴³ Eighty-six such "safe conduct" ships came to Hoian during the 30 years of this license to trade mainly in silk that was used in the increasing pompous ceremonies favoured by the Japanese shoguns and aristocrats.

That brief flourishing of authorised trade lasted until 1637, when the Tokugawa Shogunate restricted Japanese trade. Rebel uprisings had seriously challenged the authority of Japanese rulers, who feared the interference of Christianity and European powers in aiding the rebels.

The country went into 200 years of isolation; foreign trade was then confined to Nagasaki, where a few Dutch, Portuguese, and Chinese were permitted to operate under strictly controlled circumstances. These intermediaries brought silk from Vietnam into Japan.

Chinese-Japanese trade declined. As a result, business in Hoian also declined. Because of enforcement of the isolation policy by the Shogunate of Japan, the Japanese quarter in Hoian gradually disintegrated, but the Chinese quarter continued to

⁴³ Seiichi, p.6.

grow and began to play a central role in the commerce of Hoian.⁴⁴ About 50 Japanese traders remained in Hoian and Hue after the trade ban. By the end of the 17th century, many of the Japanese silver and copper mines had been depleted, and the Dutch intermediary trading network between Japan and China declined. Meanwhile, Japan developed its own high-quality silk looms. In isolation, the Japanese learned to do without Chinese silk and to rely on domestic resources. By the 18th century, Japan had no demand for foreign silk. Hoian's main trade items became dried agricultural and sea products for consumption in China.

A civil war broke out in 1773 in Vietnam.⁴⁵ The Tay Son peasants fought against the power of the Nguyen Lords. By 1786, the Tay Son had taken over the land from Qui Nhon to Hanoi. Hoian was burned in a series of attacks. This explains why now most of the architecture of Hoian reflects Chinese style rather than Japanese style although the Japanese settlement has left some influence on architecture as well. Nguyen Anh (a Nguyen Lord) tried to persuade the French Government to help him regain power, but the French were deeply involved in supporting the American Colonies' War for Independence from England. England and France were rivals at the time of the American Revolution, with France supporting the Colonies' independence, which was achieved in 1776. No French aid came to the Nguyen; as a result, the Tay Son won. Vietnam was unified under the Tay Son leader, Quang Trung. For a few years, the seat of power shifted to Hanoi, leaving Hoian to receive a few Chinese junks each year.

In 1793, Macartney went to China to negotiate the establishment of a British base. During his journey, he stopped in Danang to explore possibilities for close, long-

⁴⁴ Chang, Mark. Cooperation Project for the Preservation of Hoian Ancient Town. Tokyo: Showa Women's University, Institute of International Culture, 2000.

⁴⁵ Nguyen, 1997, p.14

term relations with Vietnam. The British mission saw Cham Island as a possible base. They knew that the Vietnamese pretender Nguyen Anh had sent Prince Canh to France to negotiate concession of Cham Island to the French in return for French help and soldiers to fight against the Tay Son. The British also knew that if the French took Cham Island, there would be no other site for them in Indochina.

The Tay Son rulers received the mission in a guesthouse decorated with British cloth. Their soldiers wore dark red felt shirts made by British factories. A clue to the visitors' long-range intentions was that they called Danang "New Gibraltar". Gibraltar had been occupied by the British since 1704 and already had a British naval base. However, because of political instability, the British mission did not risk an agreement.

After the American War for Independence, French resources were freed up to negotiate trade concessions in the international arena. More successful than the British, the French established a trading post and garrison in Hoian in exchange for French military support of Nguyen Anh's claim to the throne. Nguyen Anh was a descendent of the Nguyen lords who had overthrown the Tay Son and established the Nguyen Dynasty.⁴⁶

In 1804, representatives of the British India Company in Canton attempted to negotiate with Nguyen Anh and again, in 1821 and 1822, with Emperor Minh Mang. The British discussed a base on Cham Island three times but failed. They continued their efforts after the French army attacked a Vietnamese warship in 1847. Hong Kong envoy John David brought letters from Queen Victoria to the king, asking permission to build a fort at the entrance of Danang Bay and to form a British-Vietnamese alliance against the French. The British failed in the end to establish a commercial, diplomatic,

⁴⁶ Idem

or colonial foothold in Indochina, leaving it clear for French conquest. After that, Hoian reverted to a traditional village economy.

At its peak during the 17th and 18th centuries, when Hoian was one of the busiest and most prestigious ports along Vietnam's coast, ships brought treasures from Japan, China and elsewhere. Pagodas, temples and shrines were erected to give thanks to deities and ancestors who smiled upon Hoian from the heavens above.⁴⁷

The international trade port of Hoian reached its peak of prosperity around the middle of 18th century then came the unrecoverable decline as result of the civil wars between Lord Trinh's troops and Tay Son's, followed by those between Tay Son's and Lord Nguyen's. However, the most important reason for the decline of the once most important trade port of Vietnam was the close-door policy introduced by the Nguyen Dynasty kings in the early 19th century. Not only Hoian but all other ports in Vietnam also experienced the same fate extended throughout the 19th century.

The town was a crossroads of economic-cultural flows in Vietnam and Southeast Asia from the end of the 16th century to the early 19th century. It was also the gate through which Buddhism and Christianity were introduced into Vietnam in the 17th century.⁴⁸ In the process, Hoian acquired unique cultural characteristics, which are manifested in its preserved relics and customs until today.

The historical quarter, although only two square kilometres, is still able to charm tourists and researchers from all regions of the world because of the unique architecture and environment. It boasts 194 relics, which include 87 pagodas, temples and communal houses, 82 ancient tube-shaped houses, 24 ancient wells and an ancient tile-roofed bridge. It is centred on three main streets, namely, Bach Dang, Nguyen

⁴⁷ Idem

⁴⁸ History of Hoian, A World Cultural Heritage, Hanoi, VNA (Vietnam News Agency), Dec. 4. 2001.

Thai Hoc and Tran Phu. Tran Phu Street has the oldest appearance and most of the historical architecture, such as assembly halls, is concentrated in this street. The Japanese Bridge (official name: Lai Vien Kieu) is located at the west edge of Tran Phu street.⁴⁹



Picture 2: The Japanese Brigde – Lai Vien Kieu.

Hoian preserves evidence of the establishment and development of Vietnamese towns through the ages. It has characteristics of a typical oriental port town (long and narrow shop houses with the front open to the streets and the back usually facing the river for easier access via water route – can be seen around Asia, like in Malacca of Malaysia or in Chinatown of Singapore) with a tropical monsoon climate. The Hoian historical quarter is an assemblage of ancient urban architecture with an intact population structure. The majority of all the historical structures belong to the local people and are still in use; especially the wooden tube-shaped houses, i.e. shop houses,

⁴⁹ Nguyen, p. 59

which were built between the 17th to 19th centuries, in which generations of owners have lived and continue to stay. Hoian is special because it is a “living” ancient town.

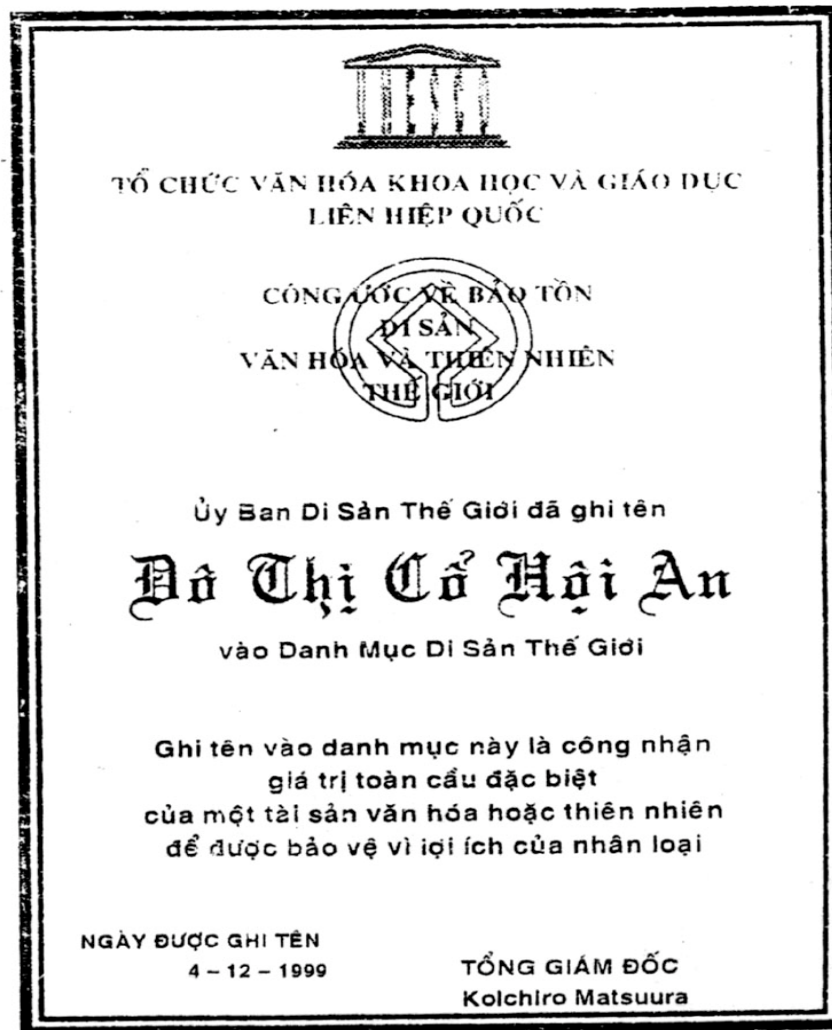
We can classify the existing ancient architecture into three ranges: religious architectural works (temples, shrines, assembly halls, family chapels...), civil structures (ancient wells, markets, bridge, village houses and shop houses – tube houses) and defence structures (ancient walls...). Hoian’s architecture styles from the local Vietnamese people mixed with those of other races such as the Cham, the Japanese and Chinese and created a distinctive “Hoian style”. This is a harmonious blend between the traditional Vietnamese architecture styles and foreign ideas.



Picture 3: Assembly Hall in Hoian Old Quarter

Hoian was lucky enough to have almost all its historical sites intact after 21 years of war between 1954 and 1975. Largely untouched by the wartime devastation visited on nearby Hue, Hoian's poverty and relative isolation kept its buildings remarkably well preserved. Experts from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) concluded that the town met not just one but

two of the Organisation's qualifying criteria: It had an influence on the development of the architecture of the region and embodied important architectural traditions and therefore was named to the world cultural heritage list in 1999. Another accolade followed in 2000, when Hoian received a prize for its preservation efforts at a regional UNESCO meeting in Malaysia. It was one of two winners out of 600 nominees⁵⁰.



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Picture 4:
UNESCO's certificate endorsing Hoian as the world's cultural heritage.

⁵⁰ Ichiro, Nagumo and Hiromichi, Tomoda. "Cooperation Project for the Preservation of Hoian Ancient Town, Summary". Tokyo; Showa Women's University, Institute of International Culture, 2000

Hoian's history was diverse and hence affecting the culture of the place. Hoian's culture is a mixture of the local Vietnamese, the Chinese, the Japanese and other Western countries that integrated and evolved into something uniquely Hoian. The next chapter will look into the current physical and social conditions of Hoian to evaluate the effects of these conditions onto Hoian's culture.

CHAPTER 3

A CLOSER LOOK INTO HOIAN'S CURRENT

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

A. Hoian's physical situations:

We can divide the physical development of Hoian old town into two periods:

1. Before 1985:

After a long period of obscurity followed by almost another hundred years of war, the once famous international trading port town of Hoian almost became extinct or forgotten. The appearance of the town with old and moss-covered walls, long dark shop houses with tons of wooden columns and short roofs were considered old and not suitable for the development of the new and modern society. The town's character was also seen as something too old, too out-of-date which needed to be wiped out to welcome a new chapter of modernization. It was also nicknamed as: "city of the retirees".⁵¹

⁵¹ Tran, Anh. Nhung gia tri lich su, van hoa va dinh huong bao ton di san kien truc nha go trong khu pho co Hoian (Historical, cultural values and orientations of preserving wooden houses' architecture heritage in Hoian's old quarter), Hanoi, Nha Xuat Ban Giao Duc, 2002, p.72.



Picture 5: Hoian's houses with moss-covered walls.

Communal work such as weaving was threatening the historical structures in Hoian.⁵² Assembly halls and temples were used to house the weaving machines. Walls were torn down, wooden pillars in old shop houses were sawn up to make way for weaving machines, wooden decorations were used for firewood, windows were used as parts of weaving machines...⁵³ The historical quarter was in danger⁵⁴.

Next came the “moral reform” of 1981. Hoian was described in provincial and central meetings as having too many temples, pagodas, and assembly halls that were out of balance with the population. Some chapels and temples were either knocked down or closed during this time. The central and local government proposed to knock down Am Bon Pagoda as it was built to worship a Chinese general, and to convert Ngu Bang Temple into a secondary school, to open the historical quarter's streets into

⁵² Nguyen, Duc Minh. *Gap Ghenh Chang Duong Dau (Difficulties from the First Journey)*, “Hoian - Di San Van Hoa The Gioi (Hoian – The World Cultural Heritage).” Danang: Nha xuất bản Thanh Nien 2001, p. 287

⁵³ Ibid, 289

⁵⁴ Ibid, 290

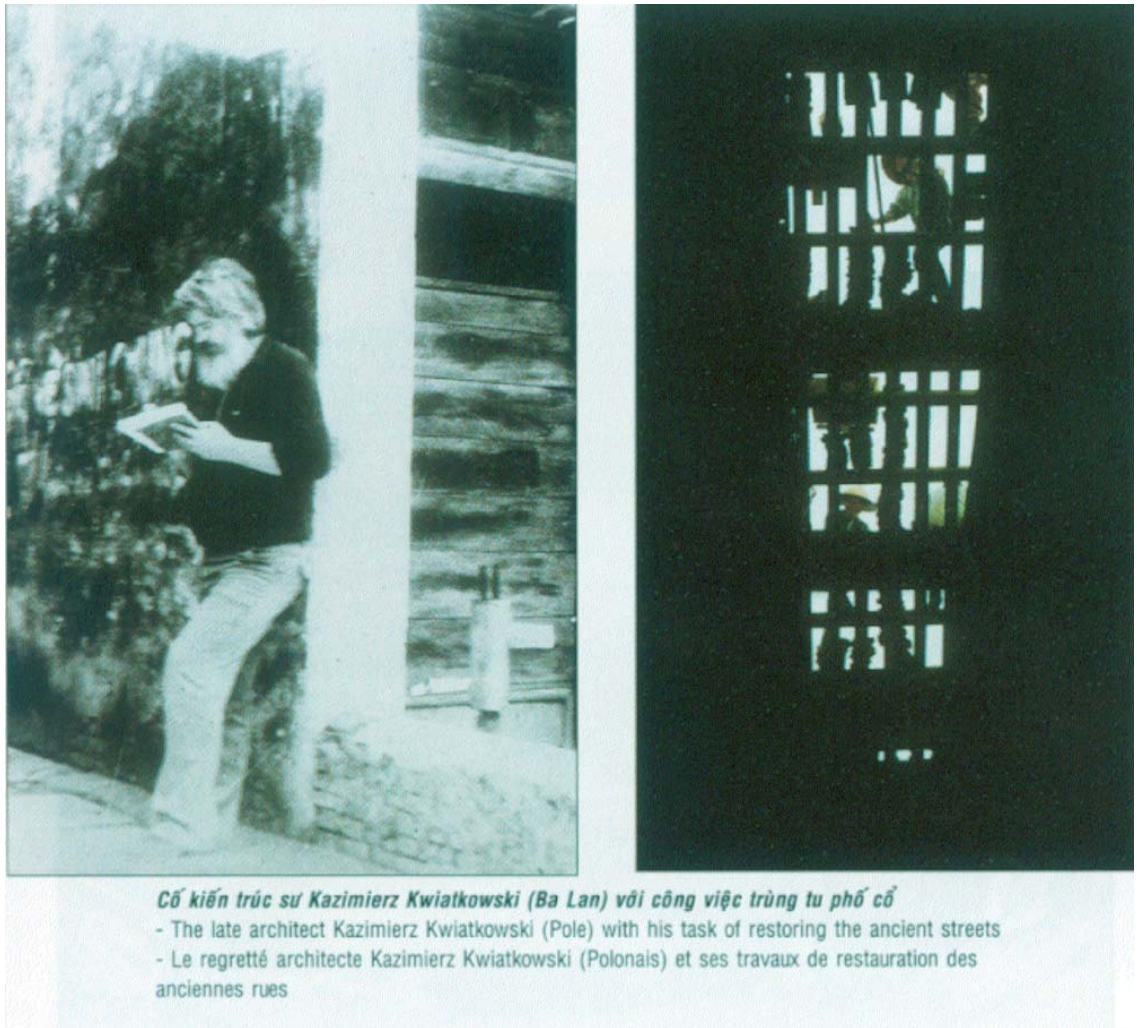
boulevards, to tear down the Japanese bridge to build a concrete one, and wedding and funeral formalities were minimized... Most of the ancient buildings were used for communal work.⁵⁵

Not until the early 1980s did the people of Hoian begin to appreciate the appeal and value of the "old" buildings that they had known all their lives. The “discoverer” was a Polish archaeologist named Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, who often visited the town on a break from restoring a nearby temple complex called My Son (now also a UNESCO cultural heritage site)⁵⁶. Kwiatkowski was so struck by Hoian's dormant beauty that he pressed the local authorities to begin restoring and preserving the old quarter. He wrote some articles concerning the restoration and preservation of Hoian, including “Conservation of the old quarter of Hoian: Polish experience”.⁵⁷ The first step was difficult — getting the national government to recognize Hoian as a place of historic importance despite the fact that it had played no part in the wars of independence.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 291

⁵⁶ Hoian – The Crystallisation Through 5 Centuries. Online. Available: (www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn/e_pages/dulich/camnghi/sungungdong.htm)

⁵⁷ Kwiatkowski, Kazimierz. *Conservation of the Old Quarter of Hoian: Polish Experiences* “Hanoi: The National Committee for The International symposium on the Ancient Town of Hoian” Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 1993, p.199



Picture 6: The late archaeologist Kazimierz Kwiatkowski in Hoian.
Source: Nguyen, Phuoc Tuong, 1997.

In 1983, the Ministry of Cultures appointed some of its best architects to go to Hoian to make drawings, measure, and photograph the old town for the first time and subsequently, together with Quang Nam - Danang Province, to compile a scientific report on the site and file for national historical heritage recognition.⁵⁸ In 1984 a heritage protection zoning strategy was elaborated. This zoning strategy was devised in accordance with the provisions of "legal order" 14/SL dated 31 March 1984 titled "Law on Protection and Use of Historic and Cultural Monuments and Landscapes". On

⁵⁸ Tran, p.72.

19th March 1985 Hoian was awarded the status of national historical and cultural heritage site by the Ministry of Culture.⁵⁹

2. From 1985 until now:

Four months after the important event in March 19th, in July 1985, the People's Committee of Quang Nam – Danang Province, together with the Ministry of Cultures and other related offices, such as Hanoi University (where all the researches concerning historical and archaeological sites was initiated) organized a national conference on Hoian Old Town. In October 1986, the Japanese bridge underwent restoration. This was a significant step forward because the Japanese bridge was the first cultural site in Hoian to undergo restoration using State funds. This was the beginning of the long-term restoration and preservation project for Hoian. In 1987, the Quang Nam-Danang Provincial People's Committee, at the request of the Hoian Municipal People's Committee passed a statute, empowering the municipality to establish an agency to manage the historical part of the town, and hence the “Hoian Service of Vestiges Management” was formed.

An international symposium was held in Hoian in March 1990, and it successfully introduced the town to the world. The symposium made a number of committed friends for Hoian who have been helping them ever since. It also drew more and more tourists to the town. Hoian Tourism and Service Company was born in 1991 with the humble beginning of 8 rooms and 17 beds, signifying the beginning of a tourism industry in Hoian.

⁵⁹ Nguyen, p. 292

Year	Total number of tourists	Day – visitors		Staying – visitors			
		Number	%	Number	%	In which	
						International tourists	Domestic tourists
1991	4,010	3,4010	85	600	15	120	480
1992	8,940	4,784	55.4	3,856	44.6	2,160	1,750
1993	20,367	6,598	32.4	13,769	67.6	11,380	2,389
1994	45,000	21,564	47.9	23,436	52.1	21,728	1,708

Table 4: Visitors to Hoian from 1991 - 1994
(Source: Hoian Chamber of Statistics)

On 16th April 1993, the central government circulated Decree 18/CP, which touches on foreign investment and lifted some restrictions on foreigners travelling to Vietnam. After that, the number of international tourists increased significantly⁶⁰.

In 1995, the central government inaugurated the “Statute of Hoian Monuments Preservation and Promotion”, which actively sought sponsorships and funds for restoration work in Hoian. On 20th March 1997, the People's Committee of Hoian promulgated "Statute of Hoian Monuments Preservation and Promotion" and established the "Hoian Centre for Monuments Management and Preservation" as the agency directly responsible for conserving the built heritage of the town. The town slowly but steadily geared itself up for cultural heritage tourism and realised the strength of the old quarter. The local government and the people of Hoian realised that there would not be any socio-economic development for the town without the old quarter. As such, more and more restoration and preservation projects were carried out, partly funded by the local government and the owners of the houses.

⁶⁰ Nguyen, Hung Linh. Thuc trang va mot so giai phap chu yeu phat trien du lich thi xa Hoi An den nam 2005 (Current Situations and Major Suggestions to Develop Tourism for Hoian till 2005). Hue: Hue University Press, 2002, p.25.

The Hoian people participated in the daily preservation and restoration of the liveliness of this ancient town as part of their own life styles. Endangered traditional crafts such as lantern making, pottery, authentic food making, and tailoring were preserved and brought back to life as tourism grew – since these were popular souvenirs which tourists usually bought.

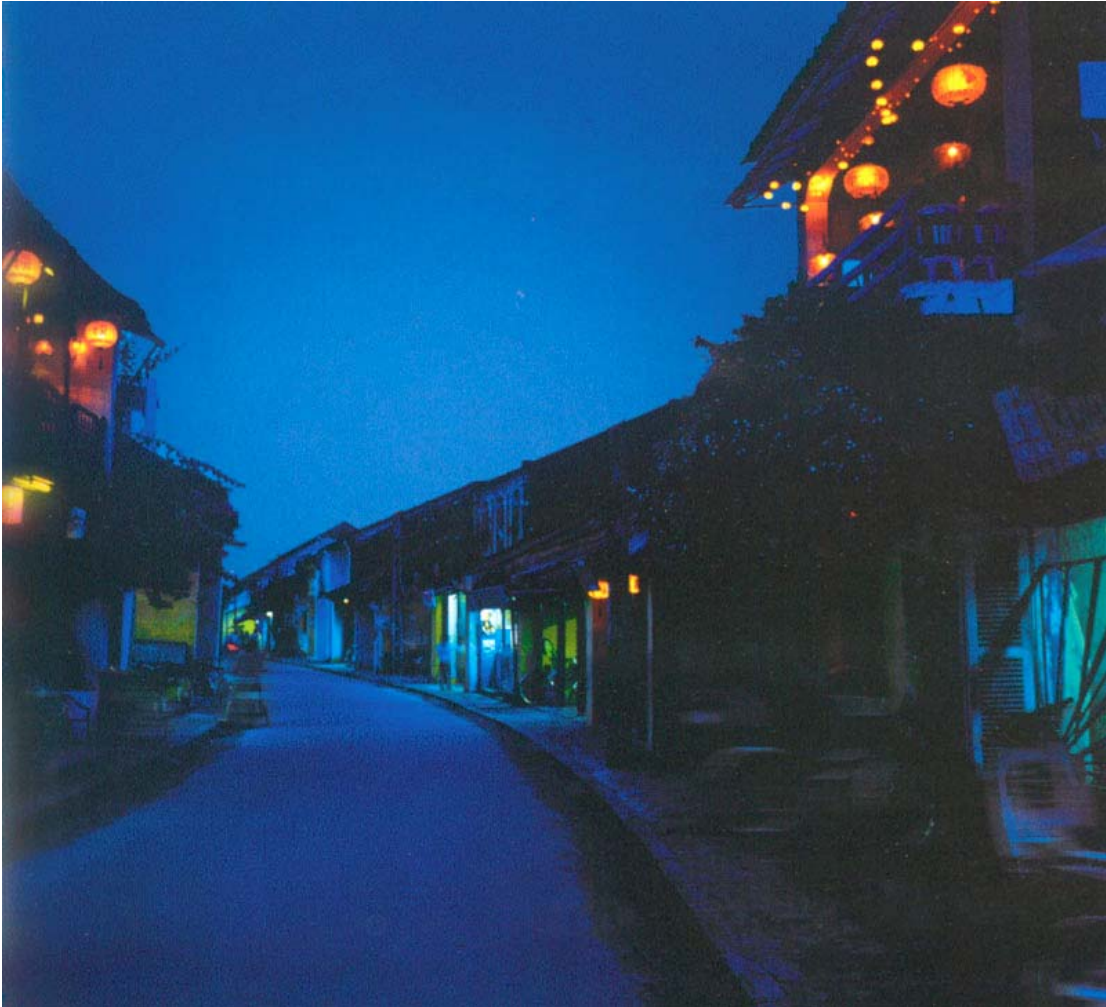
More regulations pertaining to the preservation and conservation work for Hoian and the historical quarter were implemented. Motorcycles and heavy vehicles were not allowed to go into the historical quarter (only “rudimentary transport means” are permitted in the ‘Reserve’⁶¹). More funds were pumped into conservation and preservation, raised by both local government and foreign organizations. The lives of local residents improved as a result of the profits earned from tourism.

Museums started to grow. The Showa Women’s University invested in the Museum of Trading Pottery and Porcelain. The Toyota Foundation sponsored the Museum of Sa Huynh Culture.⁶²

Other spiritual traditions and worship ceremonies were revived. The chairman of the People’s Committee took another step toward the making of Hoian as a major tourist destination by bringing the past to the present. To preserve their town's ancient character, Hoian residents decided to revive the practice of using colourful lanterns. Starting from the fall of 1998, on the 15th day of each lunar month, residents on Tran Phu, Nguyen Thai Hoc, Le Loi and Bach Dang streets will switch off their lights and hang lanterns on their porches and windows. Television sets, radios, streetlights and neon lights are also turned off. Thus this one night of every month is declared a "lantern festival".

⁶¹ Nguyen Duc Minh, p.315.

⁶² Nguyen, Duc Minh, p.316



Picture 7: Hoian by night.

The 15th day of every lunar month is also a Buddhist day of worship. Residents place offerings of food and incense on their ancestral altars and visit the pagodas. The scent of incense and the sounds of people singing add to the town's interesting atmosphere. On these evenings, visitors will be able to catch a glimpse of Hoian in another era. These nights are a welcome reminder of life's beauty. In the ensuing quietness, the streets of Hoian are at their most romantic, the darkness broken only by jewel toned lanterns in all shapes and sizes. It is all the more picturesque since motor vehicles are banned from Hoian's Old Quarter. Traditional food and desserts appear again, more delicious than those in the famine time, attracting curious tourists.



Picture 8: Hoian's Full moon's night.

Hoian was the first city in Vietnam to permit local residents to start up home-stay businesses in 2000 to ease the burden on the small number of hotels in town. Of course, only good families with beautiful houses are allowed to receive foreign guests. Foreign visitors love to stay in 100-year-old wooden houses, listening to the sounds of wooden sabots in a quiet street or the cries of vendors on a tranquil night. For those who come from industrialized countries and are accustomed to crowded streets and air-conditioned rooms, a night stay in an ancient wooden house in Hoian is an unforgettable memory.⁶³

⁶³ Testimonies from several tourists visiting Hoian whom I interviewed during my field trips who chose to stay at the reserved houses.



Picture 8: Old house converted into boutique hotel – Vinh Huong hotel.

Hoian had met UNESCO's requirements and was recognised as the world's cultural heritage in 1999. It was also awarded the excellent project prize for its preservation efforts in 2000. This means that the town has a lot to offer, not only to tourists but also to academics who are interested in the preservation of such civilisation.

Year	Total number of tourists	Day – visitors		Staying – visitors			
		Number	%	Number	%	In which	
						International tourists	Domestic tourists
1995	82,101	41,636	50.71	40,465	49.29	38,516	1,949
1996	189,039	133,406	70.5	55,633	29.5	53,187	2,466
1997	198,693	139,982	70.45	58,711	29.55	54,287	2,424
1998	213,511	146,519	68.62	66,992	31.38	59,752	7,240
1999	235,639	158,315	67.18	77,324	32.82	68,573	8,751
2000	304,654	197,440	64.8	107,214	35.2	95,105	12,109

Table 5: Visitors to Hoian from 1995 - 2000
(Source: Hoian Chamber of Statistics)

Woodcarvings were widely used for decoration and they are impressive not only because of their details and complexity but also of the philosophical values of Confucius that were and are still highly appreciated. Most of the architectural monuments in Hoian are made from wood, a building material with low durability. It is easily destroyed by natural and human factors such as tropical storms, floods, high humidity, insects, plants, and the growth of population and tourism. Hoian is located in the central part of Vietnam, which is well known for harsh weather. Annual storms, floods and all-year-round high humidity make it ideal for wood-eating insects, moss and fungi to attack the invaluable architecture. As such, these wooden frames deteriorate at a rapid rate. According to the experts⁶⁴, within the old quarter's underground is the kingdom of white ants. They exist everywhere and destroy the wooden pillars from inside. Although regular fumigations are carried out, these wooden structures are still highly vulnerable to the white ants.

⁶⁴ Information extracted from the interview with Mr. Tran Anh, the Director of Hoian Centre for Monuments Management and Preservation.



Picture 9: Exquisite wood-carving in one Tan Ky Old House, Hoian.

It can be concluded that high humidity and white ants are two of the most dangerous enemies of Vietnam's historical architecture in general, especially of Hoian's. Out of 93 tube-shaped houses within the old quarter, 11 houses are graded as C (in seriously damaged condition that may collapse anytime), 22 houses graded as B (overall relatively in good condition however some parts need to be repaired or restored), and 60 houses are graded as A (in good condition)⁶⁵.

The ancient town of Hoian comprises a variety of monuments, including communal houses, pagodas, temples, tombs, ancient wells, dwelling houses, congregations, meeting halls, bridges and clan houses. These vestiges reflect the deep imprint of many historical periods and different cultures. However, their practical usages are diversified: public facilities, religious places, dwelling houses, and

⁶⁵ Tran, Anh. Nhung gia tri lich su, van hoa va dinh huong bao ton di san kien truc nha go trong khu pho co Hoian (Historical, cultural values and orientations of preserving wooden houses' architecture heritage in Hoian's old quarter), Hanoi, Nha Xuat Ban Giao Duc, 2002.

workshops... Besides the main structures in the ancient town and several separate vestiges on the outskirts, many vestiges remain underground (ruined architectural buildings and archaeological sites), and we do not have the resources to discover and study them yet.



Picture 10: Clan house in Hoian.



Picture 11: Quan Cong Temple in Hoian.

Hoian is a living museum in terms of both architecture and functionality. The architecture was clearly meant for the lifestyle of previous centuries, and certainly it poses some inconveniences for this modern society. The questions of vehicle parking and even the placement of refrigerators, television sets and other households' appliances in these old pillar-filled wooden houses become real problems. Some better-off families within the old quarter who can afford a car have to rent a parking place outside the quarter just to park the car.

The need to alter and change the original layout and design of the wooden houses to suit the modern lifestyle and taste has started and is becoming an everyday issue in Hoian. Most of these houses are privately owned and are still occupied by their owners. Except for a small portion of well-off heritage site owners who run tourism-related business, the majority of Hoianese are still poor. Many of these heritage sites are in very bad condition and need immediate restoration, however many families cannot afford it. In some cases, although the local government has funded up to 50% of the cost of restoration⁶⁶, the owner still could not afford the balance. In order to restore a heritage building to its original plan, the amount of money needed is three to four times more than building a new house. This is not an easy task for the majority of the Hoianese people.

The returns deriving from these heritage buildings are unevenly distributed. Theoretically, each and every monument plays an equal part in contributing to the uniqueness of Hoian's architecture. But in reality, the returns and interest from these heritage buildings to the individual owners are not evenly distributed. There is a huge disparity in terms of income and profit between those houses located on the main

⁶⁶ Information obtained from interview with Mr. Nguyen Su, the Chairman of Hoian People's Committee.

streets (in which Nguyen Thai Hoc Street and Tran Phu Street are the best) and those that are not. This is another sensitive problem that needs to be addressed carefully.

Funding for restoration and preservation work in Hoian is highly needed. Nationally, funding for heritage preservation projects are approved by the central government, but in actual fact, the real amount given is nowhere near the approved figure. Hoian's master plan for heritage restoration and preservation from 1997 to 2005 was approved by the Prime Minister with the total amount of 122.9 billion Vietnam dong. By the end of 2002, the town had only received 15 billion Vietnam dong for the project⁶⁷. With this rate of funding, it will take 40 years to finish the project. It is not beneficial to the heritage sites as they deteriorate on a daily basis due to natural and human factors.

Population growth is another potential problem for the protection and management of the Hoian Monuments both within the protected zones and in the city of Hoian at large. Today, Hoian Town - as an administrative unit at the district level - has a population of approximately 75,802. Within the old town, this figure is 25,000; and the density of the population is 4,000 people per square kilometre. The rate of population growth in Hoian is also relatively high: 1.45 % annually⁶⁸. Immigrants from surrounding provinces coming to Hoian in search of better jobs and business opportunities together with visiting tourists make the place even more congested. The old tube-shaped house is home to three or four generations. As the population grows, more space and more retail outlets will be needed. This may result in distortion of the architecture. Last but not least, garbage disposals, noise, vibration elevation from

⁶⁷ Information obtained from interview with Mr. Nguyen Su, the Chairman of Hoian People's Committee.

⁶⁸ Information obtained from interview with Mr. Nguyen Su, the Chairman of Hoian People's Committee.

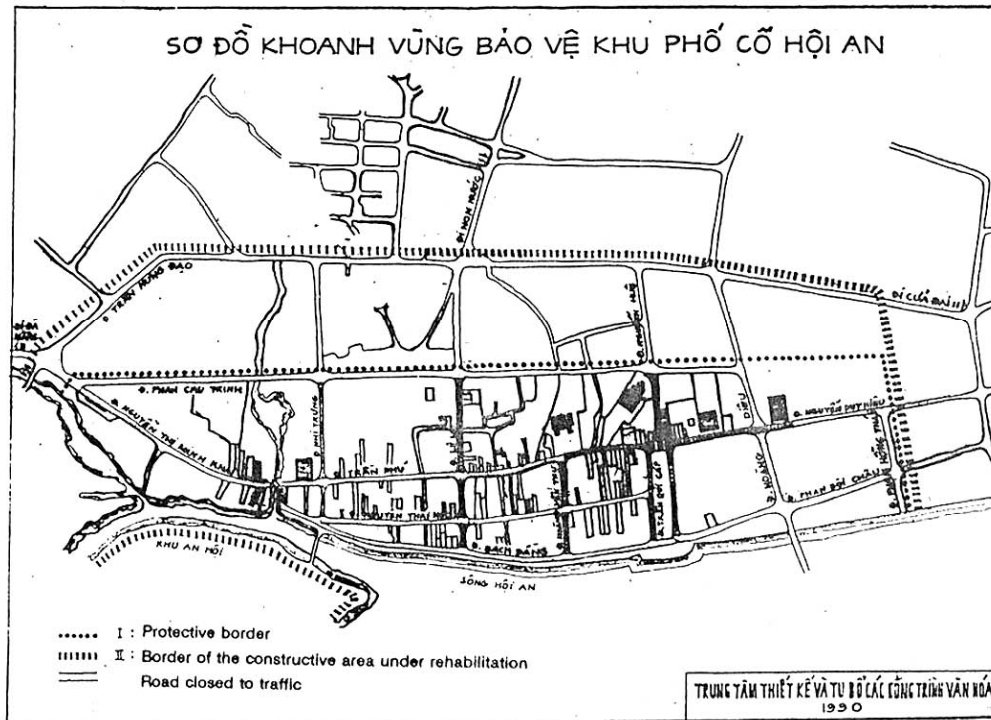
vehicles and other sources pollute the environment and further speed up the deterioration of the site.

At present, the degree of industrialization in Hoian is low and the old quarter is not much affected. However, with the development of the region of Danang, this situation is likely to change quickly. The Hue and Danang Corridor, including Hoian, has been designated for development. This will mean rapid economic and urban growth in the region, which poses potential dangers for heritage conservation from population growth and environmental degradation. Experiences elsewhere in Vietnam, such as Ha Long Bay and Quang Ninh Province, have shown that unregulated erection of buildings, factories, workshops and warehouses quickly spoil the harmony between the city, the monuments and the surrounding natural landscape.

Tourism in Hoian is fairly intensive. The number of tourists visiting the site increased from 3,410 in 1991 to 132,946 (of whom 56,280 were foreigners) in 1996 and to 78,080 in the first 6 months of 1997. This number can be expected to grow further with the economic expansion of the country and the opening of Vietnam to the international market. Economic prosperity has also encouraged more domestic tourists to visit Hoian. This rapid increase in the number of tourists has already strained the limited capacity of Hoian's tourist facilities. This can be clearly seen from the lack of interpretation and paucity of well-trained guides at the more popular but fragile monuments.

The local and national planning authorities are now examining the boundaries of the categories of protected zones at Hoian, with a view to their possible expansion to include the scenic vitas around the old quarter. The nomination for the World Heritage consists of core area Zone I of 0.3 km² (with 682 old houses) and buffer zone

PROTECTIVE AREA FOR THE ANCIENT TOWN OF HOI AN



Picture 13: Protective area of Hoian's Old Quarter.
Source: Communique of the National Committee for the International Symposium on the Ancient Town of Hoian.

B. LIFESTYLES OF THE HOIANESE:

1. Before 1990:

The river gradually became shallow through the accumulation of alluvial soil in the 18th century, threatening Hoian's trading port and caused the economy to decline. Once a bustling trading town, Hoian became a traditional village economy. This happened over a hundred years and was further affected by the war. After the war, there were not enough jobs and Hoianese had to leave the town to go south in search for jobs. The town became smaller, quieter, and lifeless, as only the old stayed to care for the houses. Everything there, from rumours surrounding a beautiful girl to the trouble of a family in the area could be quickly and widely known. After 1975, although some Hoianese returned home and joined communal work in the earlier

years, Hoian remained a small and quiet town, until one day, it was discovered to be an ancient town worth preserving.

The noise of textile machines had stopped because the products could not find a market; even handicraft products made from bamboo and rattan suffered the same fate after the collapse of Eastern Europe's economy – which was the major market for these products. More people had to leave the town in search for jobs.

2. After 1990:

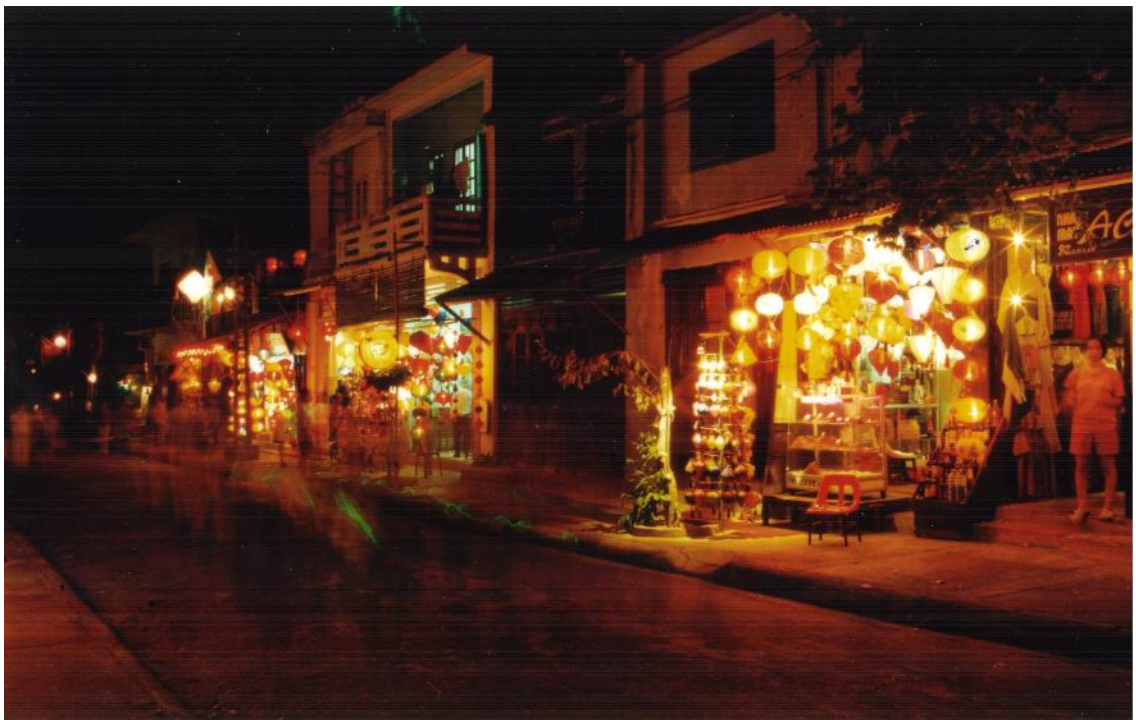
Tourism came to the town and began a new era for Hoian. The development of tourism revived many traditional crafts and services such as traditional carpentry and pottery. More Hoianese started businesses. Those who left Hoian for a better future now realise that the future may lie within their own hometown. Youths return to Hoian to work after graduating from the provincial or central universities. This injects younger blood armed with better education into the ancient town. Immigrants from other provinces stream in, in search for jobs and business opportunities.

Express tailoring in Hoian is one of the fastest developing services. There are almost 200 shops specialising in silks, fabrics, and tailoring in the whole town, which create jobs for almost 2,000 workers. Ms. Bui Thi Huong, owner of Huong Xuan Shop in Le Loi Street, said that foreign tourists loved the tailoring services here. Each shop has a team of 20 to 30 dressmakers in order to cater to the tourists' request for express tailoring within a day, or even a few hours. Many tourists also tailor clothes for friends and family. The internet has recently been used to help promote the shop as well as to keep in contact with customers and get more orders from overseas. Handicraft shops also join the trend and frequently receive orders in large quantities. Lantern making has become specialized. Each year Hoian exports more than one hundred thousand

lanterns. Galleries mushroomed together with boutique hotels. Hoian's cuisine has also revived and is well loved by tourists.



Picture 13: Gallery in Hoian, Nguyen Thai Hoc Street.



Picture 14: Lantern shops in Hoian.



Picture 15: Local food in Hoian – peddler selling sticky rice and other snacks.

With that, the local and foreign investors came into the picture. Hoian Beach Resort, Victoria Hoian Resort, Hoian Riverside, and Cam Thanh Cultural Village with a total investment of more than 100 billion Vietnam dong, not only created more jobs for the locals, but also offered a freshly green and serene environment just minutes away from the old quarter. From a humble beginning with only a few guesthouses and street stalls, Hoian now has a complete service line that stretches from transportation to accommodation, express tailoring services, souvenir shops and sightseeing services. In the last 7 years, the amount invested in this service industry was reportedly not less than 500 billion Vietnam dong. According to Mr. Tran Cong Chuc, the manager of Planning and Investment Chamber of Hoian Town, from the beginning of the year 2002, there are 6 more projects on eco-tourism focusing on the suburbs of Hoian with the capital investment of up to 40 billion Vietnam dong. Besides that, 150 families from Cam Pho Ward, Son Phong Ward and Minh Anh Ward are also applying for lodging services and 20 projects target the beach resort

development of Cam An Beach and Cham Island with the total proposed investment reaching hundreds of millions of US dollars.⁶⁹



Picture 16: Hoian Riverside Resort

⁶⁹ Information obtained from interview with Mr. Tran Cong Chuc, Manager of Planning and Investment Chamber, Hoian in 2002.



Picture 17: Victoria Hoian Resort



Picture 18: The state-own Hoian Hotel.

More and more domestic and foreign tourists have visited Hoian since its first opening. In 1991, the number of tourists was 3,400. This figure increased by 69.3 times in 10 years (235,639 in 1999)⁷⁰. In 2000, tourism arrivals increased by 29.9% (304,654) and in 2001 by 30.60% (397,890).⁷¹ The rate of growth for foreign tourism was higher than domestic tourism, even though the rate of growth for domestic tourism accelerated too. The average length of stay increased from 1.93 days per tourist in 1999 to 2.02 days in 2001. With the average expenditure per day of about USD \$40, which was spent mainly on shopping,⁷² the local economy received a significant impetus⁷³.

Hoian has constantly been one of the favourite tourist destinations in Vietnam.⁷⁴ The following are some of the factors that contribute to the success of Hoian's tourism industry.

1. The history of Hoian.

As described in chapter 1, Hoian started off as a trading port. It has an interesting history; however, this is not the main factor for the success of Hoian.

2. The architecture of Hoian.

The architecture in Hoian is unique in Vietnam, but it bears some similarities with the shophouses in Malacca of Malaysia and China Town of Singapore. This is also a contribution factor in Hoian's popularity, but not the main factor.

3. Availability of academic literature about Hoian.

Although Hoian is well-known to tourists and quite a number of journals mention the site, little academic research has been done on the city. UNESCO and

⁷⁰ Local case study team, *A Case Study on Hoian Vietnam*, Bhaktapur, UNESCO, Office of the Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, April 2000

⁷¹ Figure obtained from Trade and Tourism Chamber, Hoian.

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Information based on interviews with tourists during field work in 2002. Details in Appendix 1

Showa Women's University have sponsored research on Hoian, but their studies mainly concern physical restoration and preservation of sites. Unfortunately, those reports from Showa University are mostly in Japanese with very short English summaries, therefore it is difficult for other researchers or students to obtain information from them. A doctoral dissertation on Hoian by Charles Wheeler on the cross-cultural trade and trans-regional networks in the port of Hoian (Yale University, 2001) is one of the few scholarly studies of Hoian available in English, and it has not yet been published. Most of the websites on Hoian consist of advertisements and hotel bookings. Some tourists with their own websites have included links for their trips to Hoian to share with other fellow travellers. First-time visitors rely heavily on guide books and recommendations from fellow travellers to decide on the destinations and Hoian was mentioned almost instantaneously from tourists who have been there.⁷⁵ Many of the interviewees I spoke to were repeat tourists. This group of "Hoian's old friends" have become live advertisements for Hoian's tourism and culture. They spread the word among other travellers, to their friends and families, and even invited these people to join them on their next visit. One tourist who was a freelance reporter for an English newspaper staying in Hoian invited his uncle and aunt to visit him there. Word-of-mouth dissemination of information has done wonders in bringing Hoian to the outside world, and contributed much to the tourism industry in Hoian. Therefore the availability of literature, though helpful for tourists to discover Hoian, cannot be the main factor that makes Hoian so successful.

4. Accessibility

Hoian is accessible by road from Danang. It is about 30 km south from Danang. It is approximately a 45 – minute ride from Danang airport depending on

⁷⁵ Information based on interviews with tourists during field work in 2002. Details in Appendix 1

traffic conditions. In November 2002, the road was being widened and travel time may be shortened in future. The nearest airport is in Danang, and the nearest seaport is Tien Sa Port also in Danang. Danang airport was under consideration for upgrading into an international airport at the time this fieldwork was carried out, but now is officially an international airport. Thus in the near future, there should be more tourists visiting Hoian due to easier accessibility.

5. Local culture and attitudes toward tourists.

Interviews with tourists in Hoian in 2002 indicated that the culture of the local people was the principal factor which underlies Hoian's success in attracting tourists. The culture of the local people, specifically their attitude toward foreign tourists, seems to be one of the main factors that has led to the success of Hoian. More details on this hypothesis will be discussed in the next chapter.

6. The management board of Hoian

Hoian is managed by local authorities, under the stewardship of the Chairman of the People's Committee. In the earlier days of Hoian restoration, concepts such as cultural tourism and sustainable tourism were new and unfamiliar, thus funds for such purposes were often considered wasteful when the country was still poor. Furthermore, there was also resistance to preserving the "remains of capitalism".

Chapter four will unveil more about this chairman. He is another significant variable which has affected the restoration of Hoian. Without him, Hoian might not have become what we know today. He has helped much in the restoration and conservation of the physical architecture as well as the intangible culture of Hoian. Hoian attracts tourists with its historical architecture and an interesting physical ambience of bygone days initially, however I hypothesise that it is the culture of Hoian

which is more important in giving the place a unique appeal to tourists compared with the rest of Vietnam.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN HOIAN

WITH REGARD TO TOURISTS AND LOCALS

Chapter 3 has yielded some insights into Hoian's current situation and the factors which have made Hoian the most successful tourist spot in Vietnam⁷⁶. According to data obtained from interviews and written sources as well as tour information available online⁷⁷, it is most likely that factors 5 and 6 are far more important and significant than the others in making Hoian uniquely successful in attracting tourists – domestically and internationally.

Based on these preliminary observations, I hypothesise that the success of Hoian relative to other competitor sites both in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia is due to the involvement of the local people and the management board rather than other factors such as the types of attractions available or the accessibility of the site or more.

During the field trips to Hoian in 2002 and 2003, several in-depth interviews were conducted with the tourists, the Hoianese, and the Hoian authorities to test the above hypothesis. This chapter will focus on the interviews and information collected during the field trips to test the hypothesis.

A. TOURISTS' OPINIONS:

Eight out of ten tourists knew of Hoian through guide books (mainly the Lonely Planet) but most of them decided to visit Hoian because of recommendations

⁷⁶ Information based on interviews with tourists during field trips in 2002 and 2003.

⁷⁷ The following are websites with information on Hoian: www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn, www.vnexpress.net/vietnam/dulich, www.hoianworldheritage.org, www.vnrealty.com/ha, www.travel2saigon.com.travel/hoi-an, www.vnn.vn/english/travel, www.pmgeiser.ch/vietnam/places/hoian

from fellow travellers. Seven were first-time visitors, two had visited Hoian more than eight times, and one was there for the third time. All said they enjoyed their stay in Hoian and would definitely return. Those who were in Hoian for the first time did not stay long (approximately around 1 to 1.5 days). When asked what they liked most about Hoian, nine out of ten mentioned the friendliness and hospitality of the local people, the tranquillity and safety of the place. They said Hoian's appeal resulted from a combination of factors: the architecture, the scenery, the greenery, and the friendliness that made Hoian different from the rest of Vietnam. It was also busy but at the same time very peaceful. All respondents had made prior visits to other big cities in Vietnam and they had expected Hoian to be more or less the same – busy, bustling, crowded, polluted and not that safe. Hoian turned out to be different from their expectations.

Most tourists praised the efforts of the local authorities to keep thieves, burglars, pick-pockets, and beggars at bay. They also commented on the friendliness of the Hoianese. Some tourists had been invited for a drink or meal with the local people. They described the children selling post cards as “polite and not pushy”. In other parts of Vietnam, according to tourists' responses, children would not leave the tourists alone until something was bought, whereas in Hoian, the children stop pestering once they were turned down. Hoianese were also honest. According to one tourist, he forgot and left his bag at a shop, and it was there untouched when he came back for it later. One couple described Hoianese as “fine people”. They said Hoianese were friendlier than people elsewhere. They perceived the Hoianese as genuinely concerned and authentically friendly. Hoianese were also perceived to be “caring” – they wanted to know your health, where you went and what you did, and gave the impression that these questions were asked not for the sake of conversation but

because out of genuine human interest. Repeat tourists tend to claim that they have made a lot of very good friends who were willing to let them stay at their houses.

Preferred tourist activities included walking around the town; visiting old houses, temples, museums, trying out food and shopping (the most popular shopping items are tailored clothes). They were impressed with the condition of the old houses and temples. One of the main complaints voiced by all is that the museums were disappointing for a town like Hoian. Artefacts were neither numerous nor varied and descriptions and explanations for the artefacts were insufficient (they noticed that the Vietnamese descriptions and explanations were much longer but the English versions were very short). They saw more artefacts when they walked around the quarter and visited other old houses that were not on the list of recommended houses on the ticket. Some houses were more like museums with many antiques and artefacts to see.

One major activity which repeat visitors prefer is to rent bicycles and cycle along the country roads to the beach which was about 5 km away from the town. Those who had more time also mentioned a preference for sitting by the roadside and watching the daily activities of the people and the old houses.

All of the respondents mentioned the accommodations in Hoian. Two tourists staying at the old conserved house-turned-guesthouse said that although the experience is unique and they liked it, they considered USD\$8 per person expensive. They were also concerned about the hygiene of the place which was often too dark and filled with mosquitoes and other insects. Another couple who stayed at Hoian Hotel (the biggest state-owned hotel in Hoian) also encountered a spider in their room. All who visited Hoian more than once agreed that accommodation in Hoian was expensive, so when they returned, they would stay at their friends' houses.

All of the respondents bought tickets to visit the old quarter. Each ticket cost VND \$50,000, equivalent to SGD \$6.00. It was good for four visits to four different categories under museums, old houses, temples, traditional performances and traditional craft workshops. They found the ticket price reasonable, but a bit restrictive because it only allowed entry into one place for each category. They found the introductions good and they were surprised because at certain places they could find Japanese, Spanish, German, Dutch, French and Chinese speaking interpreters. But a few complained that the old houses were still occupied by their owners and they were only allowed to see a certain part of the house, while the owners escorted them everywhere. They did not feel very comfortable with that. One tourist who was interested in the structure of the house asked the owner for a photocopy of the drawings and was charged \$VND 5,000 for that (\$SGD 60 cents).

Three repeat visitors observed that the number of shops within the old quarter was increasing and expressed worries about this situation. They suggested that the local government should not approve any more shops within the old quarter because there were too many already and they were selling the same things. However, other tourists said that although the goods offered for sale might look the same at first sight, closer inspection showed that they were a bit different – and to them, this was interesting. They felt able to explore all the shops without feeling tired of seeing the same things repeatedly.

Overall, the tourists were satisfied with the experiences they had and wanted to visit Hoian again in order to learn more about the town's history, culture, and people. They also hoped that Hoian would not develop too fast and lose her charms and tranquillity. They were comforted and delighted to learn of the positive effort of the local government to preserve Hoian's unique beauty by not cluttering the town with

hideous overhanging power cables. Although costing more, the local government intended to invest in underground cabling work to free Hoian from the clutter. Such is a positive step toward harmonious infrastructure development that bridges an old town with technological progress.



Picture 19: Unsightly electrical cables lining the skyline of Hoian.

During the nights of full moon, all electrical lights were turned off to make way for traditional lighting sources such as lanterns and oil lamps. It created an excellent ambience and tourists who had witnessed these nights praised the old quarter as romantically beautiful and charming. They also said that the prohibitions on vehicles entering the old quarter on that night favoured walking and observing activities along the streets or even joining in traditional games. Responses were mixed when asked if they find the night of full moon too touristy. Some did not feel so as they noticed that these special nights attracted more local than foreign tourists and it happened only once a month. However, there were other tourists that felt the event too touristy.

Questions on gastronomic matters in Hoian yielded interesting information. All tourists felt that it was more convenient to find a place to eat in Hoian than in bigger cities like Hanoi or Hochiminh City. This is because the quarter is so small that walking around to find food was not a problem, whereas in the big cities, they had to travel a significant distance in order to find varieties of different food. Hoian has a variety of different cuisines for tourists to choose from and the prices were reasonable. However, those who had come here before and returned more than twice discovered that the quality of food was declining and getting more expensive. They felt that mass tourism was the cause for the lowering of standards because more backpackers wanted cheaper food. Moreover, restaurateurs in Hoian were local villagers without much knowledge of running a restaurant. They catered more for mass tourists (back-packers) who most probably would not return, and therefore they did not care much about the standards. All of them agreed that although Hoian offered a variety of cuisines, food in the bigger cities was of better quality.

Tourists' recommendations for Hoian were quite similar. They favoured the permanent prohibition of vehicles within the old quarter to preserve the tranquillity of the place and the crystallization of time. They also suggested that the local authorities limit the number of tourists visiting the site to reduce the possibility of damage to the old houses, family chapels and assembly halls due to over-crowding of tourists. They also recommended that accommodations in Hoian should be improved to meet international standards. Nevertheless, no additional hotels should be built within the old quarter; new buildings should be erected at the outskirts of the town. It was also stressed that no modern types of developments such as theme parks, shopping complexes or casinos should be allowed anywhere near this site. Some felt that the local and central governments should invest more money to restore and preserve the

site because it was very precious not only for Vietnam but also for the world's heritage. It was also suggested that the local government could diffuse the tourists' concentration in the site by developing the outskirts of Hoian with beaches and eco-tourism resorts and Cham Island, as well as linking Hoian with nearby sites such as My Son, Hue and Danang. One tourist even suggested moving the people currently residing out of the old quarter, so that Hoian would be purely for sight-seeing, restaurants, shopping, museums... As such, the Hoianese would enter the old quarter during the day time to work, whereas at night all people would leave the site and go back to their homes outside the old quarter.

All of the tourists interviewed preferred Hoian to remain the way it was. Preservation and maintenance work were encouraged and no tourists were in favour of any modern development to the town. Interviewees' responses suggest that Hoian's success is not primarily due to the hard assets such as the numbers of facilities or amenities it provided, but instead is primarily correlated with its perceived authenticity combined with appropriate policies and maintenance of a delicate balance between conservation and development which has provided the possibility of continued sustainability. Such an outcome cannot be achieved based solely on government policies; it is the result of an intertwined relationship between culture, people and policies.



Picture 20: Tourists enjoyed their experience during the flood season in Hoian.

B. HOIANESE PERCEPTIONS:

1. Locals who stay within the old quarter:

This sample consisted of 8 people who live within the old quarter of Hoian. Respondents include a couple who run a souvenir cum tailor shop; a mother who ran a gallery and her daughter who managed a hotel outside the old quarter; two sisters who ran a guest house; one gentleman who ran an antique shop and also was a partner in a joint venture with a young artist in a gallery.

All except the two sisters had other houses outside the old quarter where their next of kin or relatives lived. All the old houses were well preserved. All had toilets, bathrooms and kitchens re-designed or newly renovated to match modern hygiene standards. All agreed that life improved greatly after tourists came to Hoian. All were the 5th or 6th generation of the family to stay in their houses; they reported that most of their ancestors were business owners in Hoian. The majority were descendants from

the Minh Huong, a community of Chinese origin who fled to Vietnam after the Ming dynasty collapsed.

All the locals interviewed reported that the houses in which they were residing belonged to their ancestors; 7 out of 8 people said that they were already taking measures to preserve their houses even before tourists came. The preservation work is done out of respect for the past and the ancestors. Only one local admitted that the preservation work he had done was more for economic reasons as well as respect for the ancestors. He was able to live comfortably from the income generated from the old house. He reported that he had just bought a house at the outskirts of the town and just finished renovating it, and he owned a car too. In the case of Vietnam, houses and cars must be paid for in full with cash as the financial sector is not developed and thus no bank loans were readily available except through very special private arrangements with the banks. The responses indicate that the Hoianese first preserved their houses out of respect for the ancestors, but subsequently also realized that authenticity can be profitable.

All of them were generally comfortable with the current situation in Hoian. Some mentioned that they did not like all the policies in the beginning but now they understood the rationale and purposes and thus agreed with the local government's policies. One of them particularly praised the efforts of the Chairman of the People's Committee of Hoian Town, stating that the Chairman had been very helpful to her in her effort to get government funding for the preservation and restoration work for her house. However, they also mentioned that it was not easy to obtain permission from the People's Committee to have their houses repaired and the procedures involved many levels of bureaucracy. Most of them applied for the fund, but some applicants

failed because they did not meet the requirements or because there were many more houses in worse condition than theirs.

One local reported that he had refused funding from the government because he was unsure if acceptance of such funding might force him to honour the government's regulations in future. However, only one out of eight people interviewed had refused these funds.

Another interviewee discussed the policies regarding repair and restoration of houses. For instance, he felt that some policies regarding changing the structure of old houses were too rigid and should be more flexible. He said there were some incidents where the authorities were following the rules too strictly and blindly. He quoted his experience when he applied for a repair permit to change the roof of the air well upstairs. The permit was not given because he did not follow the requirements set by the Centre of Monuments and Relics Management. The requirement was that if he wanted to repair the roof of that air well, he had to use tiles. But according to him, using tiles would be too dangerous because the wall was old and not strong enough to support the added weight. He however managed to fix up a tile look-alike made from zinc boards, which from afar looked like tiles but are lighter. He said the authorities should equip themselves with more knowledge on old houses and should not just implement regulations blindly and should also take account of specific conditions and be more flexible. Nonetheless, all of the interviewees stressed that they would still follow official guidelines for restoration and preservation work in order to maintain the originality and authenticity of the site if they were reasonable and correct.

Some, however, noted that the government has shown some degree of flexibility over the years. In the past, there were some concerns over the strict rules on domestic hygiene; the government did not allow toilets to be changed from the

squatting to the pedestal type when the first few policies were implemented. But now this policy has since been amended.

All local respondents were very hospitable when interviewed. I was welcomed back whenever I want to. A few families even asked me to move in with them in order to save on accommodation. This experience confirmed the observations of tourists that Hoianese treated all tourists equally and hospitably; not because they wanted to earn something from the tourists, but because of their culture.

Currently the Hoianese would like to have more tourists and were not very worried that over-crowding would spoil the site. This was because tourists coming to Hoian usually did not stay long – only around half a day to 2 days. And since Hoian was a cultural site, the tourists visiting the site were more or less cultured and educated and thus would be more careful and gentle with relics. Moreover, they pointed out that Hoian only received large numbers of tourists during the holiday seasons (July to September and November to January). The rest of the time was quiet. They also commented that tourists who were concerned with the preservation and restoration of the site would not damage the site but would help them to promote the site and increase awareness of it internationally.

When asked how they treated tourists, the local Hoianese said that they treated everyone as per normal, with no discrimination between tourists, friends or strangers. They found out that tourists liked the way they were treated, so they would not do otherwise. They also realized that authenticity worked best for them. The owner of the guest house told me that she would invite her guests to have meals with her if they happened to come back during meal time (without charge) or if they had fruits at home they would offer some to the guests. During ancestor veneration ceremony, she would bring the food to her neighbours to eat and share it with her guests as well. Another

Hoianese told me he often showed tourists around the town like a tour guide but without charge. Others who owned houses usually invited friends or even tourists to stay for a night if there were no rooms available. They did not consciously try to be hospitable. The hospitality stems more from Hoianese culture. Thus the traditional social behaviour of Hoian is another important asset of the site.

These data confirm the generalization that Hoianese culture retains a traditional ethic of reciprocity and generosity which is not preserved in most modern urban societies. However, one can ask whether such a value placed on hospitality can be sustained in the long run under the pressure of increased tourism. There must be and would be a limit to the capacity of the Hoianese like any other group to exhibit such generosity. The carrying capacity of Hoian should be made a focus of study now, so that this unique asset can be preserved.

Hoian's economy is now mainly run by women. Vietnamese women in general are very good at running small businesses, probably because Vietnamese women have inherited the 'Four Virtues' (or "Tu Duc" in Vietnamese) from the Confucian Teachings. The "Four Virtues": "housework, appearance, speech and conduct" have been adopted as guidelines for females in China and Vietnam. , Hoianese women quickly and successfully adapt these values to running businesses.

2. Locals who stayed outside the old quarter:

Eight out of 16 locals interviewed stayed outside the old quarter. All were Hoianese except for one couple; the husband was from a different province and the wife was from a small village outside Hoian. All of them had businesses that were related to the tourism industry. They ran guest houses and mini hotels, restaurant / traditional food stores, coffee shops, made bags, drove taxis, etc. Their reported

income, although lower than those residents in the old quarter, still can support a comfortable lifestyle. They also liked the idea of having more tourists and generally felt that tourists coming to Hoian were gentle and would not damage the place. They also realized that tourism was the driving factor for Hoian's economy and treated tourists the same way as those who lived in the old quarter. Even the couple mentioned above who were not from Hoian behaved similarly toward tourists. Based on their behaviour, it can be concluded that Hoian society is efficient in enculturating other Vietnamese with indigenous cultural attitudes.

Another couple interviewed included a taxi-driver and his wife who made beaded and sequin bags for sale. . The husband left Hoian for Hochiminh City before Hoian started to receive tourists. He returned here to work, marry, and settle down when tourism entered Hoian. When I told him I wanted to buy his wife's bags to support them, he politely told me to go to the shops because the shops carried more designs and varieties. This was quite surprising since if I were to buy bags from her, she could have earned the extra margin because of the difference between the retail price and the wholesale price, but they did not do so. He was also very polite when he spoke with me and addressed my father as "Bac" (Elder Uncle) and himself as "con" (son or child in Vietnamese). This shocked me initially, but later as we checked into a small guest-house, we discovered that all the staff from the receptionist to the bellboy and porter addressed us this way.

Although the educational level of people who lived in the outskirts and suburbs of Hoian was generally lower than those living in the old quarter (historically those who lived in the Old Quarter were from wealthier families and their ancestors were quite educated – judging from written materials still kept in the old houses such as the Chinese scriptures hanging on the walls – a very common sight in the old houses); the

cultural attitudes toward others was the same. This shows that cultural attitudes in Hoian are not related to the level of education one receives but are a result of upbringing. Probably this cultural orientation evolved because of the original nature of Hoian – a cosy trading town where customer service was of the utmost importance to attract repeat sales.

The government's policies regarding the people who lived outside Hoian Old Quarter were relatively normal and flexible as compared with those implemented within the Old Quarter, thus the suburban residents had fewer complaints. Regarding policies such as parking within the lines and prohibitions on cars inside the Old Quarter, they understood that these were for the benefit of tourists and also for their own benefit too, because they knew that more tourists coming to Hoian meant more money and more business for all. Most Hoianese actually praised the resettlement scheme of the local government: people who wanted to move out of the Old Quarter or Hoian Town to a newly established site for resettlement⁷⁸ would be able to buy land at subsidised rate with infrastructure provided by the government.

I queried 16 people regarding the full moon night and obtained similar answers. They loved the idea and appreciated the efforts the government made to create this event. Despite the initial doubts and disagreements, they realized that their business improved during the full moon night due to the increased number of tourists, both inside and outside the old quarter.

⁷⁸ The settlement was initiated in 2001. It is seated on the site which previously was a 51-acre-cemetery at the farther end of the Old Quarter. The local government had the cemetery exhumed and developed basic infrastructure for this area. Locals are encouraged to move to this new development – land price is subsidized and other favorable policies are applied here. During the first year of this campaign they managed to re-settle over 100 families to this new site. Each family was assigned 200 m² to settle which an attractive price of only \$6 million Vietnam dong. The prioritized groups who can enjoy the deal are 1. poor local Hoianese that do not have houses to stay and 2. multi-generation-families who are currently staying within the Old Quarter. This settlement has proven to be a success since the price now has rocketed to \$2 million Vietnam dong per square meter. Information obtained during the interview with the People's Committee's Chairman.

One of the respondents told me that because of the full moon nights, Hoianese began to appreciate Hoian's beauty by night, its tranquillity, glamour and the mythic quality of the place and culture. He suggested more varieties of activities be introduced during the full moon nights so people visiting Hoian would constantly find new and interesting things and would come back for more; otherwise the initial interest and anticipation would diminish if the same activities were repeated every month.

He also suggested that the government could engage both the locals and tourists to participate in or contribute to the aura of the full moon night by wearing traditional clothes and taking part in traditional games. More cultural festivals such as masquerades should also be developed by the government to attract not only foreign tourists but also domestic tourists. The government should publicize the full moon night more widely so more people could get to know more about it.

So far the number of domestic tourists visiting Hoian is still larger than international tourists⁷⁹. This indicates that Hoian should pay more attention to this big group of tourists, although figures show that international tourists spend more time and money in Hoian. Domestic tourists usually stop by Hoian for a day or less as this is one of the stopovers in their trans-Vietnam tour. They do not usually spend the night in Hoian. However, as Vietnam's domestic economy improves, Hoian's income from tourism may one day be contributed largely by the domestic tourists.

C. THE AUTHORITIES' OPINIONS:

I interviewed three local authorities in three different organizations: Mr. Nguyen Su, Chairman of Hoian's People's Committee, Mr. Vo Phung, Director of Centre for Culture and Sports, and Mr. Tran Anh, Director of Hoian Centre for

⁷⁹ Refer to table 1 and 2 in chapter 2.

Monuments Management and Preservation. I hope to obtain different perspectives on the restoration and development of Hoian. Each of them had their own views about tourism in Hoian, but all agreed on one point: the people who made the place different from other tourism destinations in Vietnam were more important than Hoian's physical assets.

1. Mr. Tran Anh

Director of Hoian Centre for Monuments Management and Preservation:

Mr. Anh had been with the Centre ever since its inception in 1985 when it was formerly called the Company of Monuments, Restorations and Tourism Services (Công ty Di Tích và Dịch Vụ Du Lịch Bảo Tàng). He recently completed his Master of Arts dissertation titled: "Historical, Cultural Values and Orientations of Preserving Wooden House Architectures in the Old Quarter of Hoian" at the University of Culture, Hanoi. My questions for him concerned the restoration and preservation of the Old Quarter.

I started the interview with a question regarding the annual restoration and preservation budget of the Centre. He told me that the budget came from a few sources, i.e. from the central government, from the Ministry of Culture, from the provincial level and from the town level. The Centre needed on the average about 10 billion Vietnam dong annually for all the restoration and preservation work in the Old Quarter. But the funding received from the various levels of authorities usually amounted to only around 4 billion Vietnam dong. As such, they would restore and preserve as much as the budget allowed, and if they had more money they would do more.

With insufficient budget, the funds were stretched to fulfil as many projects as possible, thus it took a longer time to complete one project. As a result, many other projects were put on hold. Therefore a number of old houses in the Old Quarter that needed repair and restoration were postponed.

The government policy at that time was to subsidise from 10% to 80% of the cost of restoration. This policy was well received by the locals since most of the houses in the old quarter were privately owned, and the cost of restoring an old wooden house was too high except for a few. A committee consisting of relevant authorities was set up to assess the applications for the subsidy. They met twice a year to consider applications for major repairs. The waiting period for approval was from 3 months to 6 months depending on the number of applications received.

There were some challenges implementing the policies and regulations in the beginning. Firstly, there were not enough funds. There were around 70 houses badly in need of restoration but work had to be delayed because of limited funds. Secondly, it was difficult to accustom the locals to the development work: its noise, activities, traffic and congestions required some getting used to. Thirdly and most difficult of all was to persuade and prove to the people that the policies would work for them. At that time not so many people agreed to preserve their houses. They wanted a more comfortable house that catered to the life style of the 20th or 21st century whereas the old houses were built and designed for use in the conditions of the 18th and 19th century. The wooden houses were just too old. For example, the toilet and the wooden parts of the houses were in danger of destruction by fungus and white ants. So in the beginning when they could not obtain permission to do the repairs they wanted, the locals would carry out the repair work during the night to avoid the authorities' attention. But since the policies were relaxed in 1997, installation of modern facilities

such as pedestal toilets, kitchen cabinets, refrigerators, and air-conditioners were allowed so long they were concealed properly in order to maintain the original structure of the houses.

All repair work carried out in the ancient houses needs to be approved by the local government. If only minor repair or touch-up work such as painting, re-roofing, or patching of walls is required then the owner needs to seek approval from the Centre and the Chamber of Town Management. Major repairs and restoration work will be subjected to approval from the Town People's Committee. This was troublesome to some locals in my interviews. They said that they needed to have approval from a few levels and the waiting time was usually too long. I checked with Mr. Anh and learned that approvals usually require 3 days to 30 days depending on the scale of repair needed. The experimental period for implementing this policy was in 1996. It was fully implemented in 1997 and by 1999 it was already fixed. The government would fund the restoration and preservation work, and would have experts sent to the old houses to help with technical problems and the choices of materials, and those who stayed in the old houses would not need to pay repair tax or construction tax.

A loan facility to extend funding to those who wish to urgently repair their houses thoroughly was under consideration at the time of interview. This was to provide some money for repair work while waiting for the approval of government funding. These loans can be either interest free or with very low interest. At the time of interview, it was not yet available, but was scheduled to be put on trial soon.

Underground cabling work for the town's electricity grid and television network was also in process at the time of interview. This is part of the restoration plan to return Hoi An to its original townscape without the clutter of antennas and hanging power cables. The underground cable system was put on trial late December 2002.

Underground cabling in the old quarter is challenging because of the floods that occurs almost annually. The old quarter is situated on low land and when the floods arrive, the houses would be partially submerged in water, jeopardising the safety of using underground electricity cables. Two streets were put on trial and the results were not satisfactory; the safety index was not very stable. It had been running for a few years and only in year 2001 did the safety index meet the requirements. But yet they still dare not uninstall the aboveground wirings for those 2 streets. At the time of research in year 2002, a third street (Nhị Trưng nổi dài) was being tested. But since that street was located on higher land than those within the old quarter, the safety index for the system was more stable.

The population of Hoian is 75,802. To ease the problem of population growth as well as to reduce pollution, a crematorium is under construction to encourage the locals to cremate their dead instead of traditional burial.

Two high speed ferries were bought to service two marine routes; one between Danang's port (Tiên Sa) and Hoian and the other between Hue to Hoian. A jetty for these two ferries is now under construction. With these two marine routes, travelling time from Danang and Hue to Hoian will be shortened. This may in turn encourage more tourists to visit Hoian too.

While trying to bring more tourists to Hoian, the local government also tried to spread them to the surrounding areas to avoid congestion. They were no longer giving permission to open hotels within the old quarter and were moving existing ones to the outskirts of Hoian to lessen the commercialization of the place. The government offers incentives such as lower tax rates for those businesses that move out of the old quarter.

I asked him for his views on the general state of tourism in Hoian. He commented that Hoian was never a good place for agricultural development because

there was no flat land and the weather was too dry. The fishing industry was primitive and conditions for further development were not conducive. Thus the only option for Hoian was to develop the tourism industry, trading and other service sectors. The government would focus on cultural tourism, ecotourism and arts tourism. Trading would be developed hand in hand with tourism to create more activities. This option is more naturally for Hoian to take since Hoian started as a trading port.

To reinforce the tourism industry, the government would try to revive old lost crafts such as carving and carpentry, horticulture, pottery and others, whereas the existing agricultural and fishing industries would still be kept but would not be developed on a larger scale.

Among the domestic tourist destinations currently, Hoian is one of the “must-see” destinations for the trans-Vietnam tours. Mr. Tran Anh said it was possible because Hoian lies within the triangle of Hoian – My Son – Hue. These are the three World Heritage Sites endorsed by UNESCO. Hoian is also within reach of the recently recognized World Natural Heritage Site: Phong Nha Cave. Furthermore, Hoian is readily accessible to tourists by all means of transport: by air (Danang International Airport and Phu Bai Airport in Hue, which would become another international airport soon), by sea: (Tien Sa sea port), and by land: (the National Highway One). He said in fact, Hoian has most of the facilities ready to receive international tours as part of the Trans-Asia tour, but more marketing is still required to project Hoian as an international tourist destination. So far Hoian is known to the international tourists through word-of-mouth marketing because of its good reputation among tourists.

I was concerned if Hoian would be damaged or destroyed at a faster pace should more tourists come to visit. Mr. Tran Anh said he was not worried about the danger of tourists damaging the site, but more worried about the site itself being

damaged or destroyed because of physical factors such as the age, humidity, insects and tree roots. On the contrary, he felt that more tourists coming to Hoian would in fact help Hoian to do more restoration work. The money generated from tourism services could be reinvested into restoration and conservation work.

Mr. Tran Anh is confident that Hoian will be able to strike the balance between development and sustainable tourism. The government and the locals are working harmoniously to develop Hoian's cultural activities and restoring old buildings. In Hoian, the motivation for developing the society was culture; therefore income from tourism would be reinvested in cultural activities.

As a restorer, he thought that the full moon nights were a good idea and it did help Hoian's domestic tourism. It might be crowded but only on the streets and not within the old houses so it would not affect the residents much. I asked whether the full moon nights could become too touristic and would lose the original idea of re-creating an ambience of a 19th century Hoian and become more like a cultural show which is artificial and touristic such as in Bali now. To him, the activities during those full moon nights were quite normal and close to what local people normally did during festive times, such as playing the traditional card games (*bài chòi*), reciting and creating poems, playing chess and others. Since the government did not sell tickets, it means that the full moon nights were organised not for profit and thus did not require any audiences. The activities and the nights were normal and with or without the tourists, the activities would just carry on as usual. So far this event happened only once a month and the responses were very positive.

They had also tried out different themes for different months. It is Children's Day on the 1st of June and the full moon night's theme for the month of June can be related to children. The 8th month of the lunar calendar is Mid-Autumn and the

children celebrate this festival with lanterns and traditional games while the adults enjoy the mid-autumn cakes that is only available during this time of the year.

However, special arrangements to showcase the full moon nights can be arranged for special guests and tourists whose arrival did not coincide with the actual full moon night. Two streets were allocated to host this ad-hoc event. Whenever this special arrangement had to be made, Mr. Tran Anh had to seek approval from the residents staying along these two streets because it involved getting them to participate for a few hours such as turning off white fluorescence lights and wearing traditional clothes and others.

In reply to my question regarding the adaptive reuse of old houses in ideal situations where income was not an issue, he said that Hoian originally was a port town where trading was the main activity of most people and was also the reason that people became rich. Therefore Hoian would not be Hoian if there was no business in town. Hoianese could not just live in the houses and do nothing even if they received income for doing this. Therefore, trading would always be one of Hoian's interests. Commodities could change but the ways of living i.e. doing business would still be part of Hoian.

2. Mr. Vo Phung

Director of Hoian Centre for Culture and Sports:

Mr. Phung was the man behind the full moon night concept, and the success of this program had caused many more people to discover Hoian, especially domestic tourists. My questions for him mostly concerned this subject and the cultural aspect of Hoian.

He said the aim of full moon night was to revive the ambience of Hoian in the early 20th century. Therefore no transportation was allowed in the old quarter, no overhead cover (plastic covers or umbrellas), no white lights; no modern equipment (like television, computer, cassette player or motorbike) was displayed during 6pm to 9pm on full moon nights. Instead, warm lights and lanterns were lit, and traditional music was played by groups of amateur players on the pavements of the old streets. All these things made the old quarter glow and transformed it into a mystical place.

When it was first started, the authorities surveyed the locals and tourists through questionnaires and discovered an overwhelming support of 92%. Suggestions poured in from the locals as well as tourists. Some business owners within the old quarter suggested reducing tax during the full moon as it might affect their businesses. But once the full moon night was implemented, the business owners realized that their business were actually better during the full moon nights because there were more tourists coming to the town. So the full moon night was originally a cultural product but now it is sustained economically by tourism.

Mr. Phung was also the person who designed the activities for the full moon night: traditional music groups, traditional poem groups, local food fare, traditional games... He said the local government was very keen on building Hoian into a cultural town. In 1993 they started to send their local civil servants to other provinces, towns and cities in Vietnam to learn how to start building a “cultural family”, because the family was the core of a town, a society. “Cultural family” (*gia dinh van hoa*) was a policy from the central government to build a family in which all the members received adequate education, information, exercises, food, earn enough money and led a civilized and healthy lifestyle. The policy was first formulated by the central government around the 1990s, but not seriously implemented in many cities. Hoian

however began to implement this policy in 1998, perhaps partly because its values were in conformity with traditional Hoian culture. The Hoian authorities stressed that culture was the root of everything and preservation of traditional Hoian ways of life would be the only way to lead Hoian toward sustainable tourism – according to the Central Party line. Not only was Hoian a cultural site (in terms of physical structure); Hoianese themselves should be cultured and courteous so that tourists would have a good impression of the people and the place. In that way Hoianese would be able to retain the positive values of their traditional culture, and would attract more tourists – it was a win-win situation.

It was argued that the “cultural family” programme should be implemented because in a market-driven economy, the economy could override politics, culture and everything else, so that culture might be degraded by the pursuit of short-term profits. The “cultural family” in a time of economically driven society would help to define and refine the characteristics and personality of a person. He said Hoian has all the while been a cultural and nice place with friendly and peaceful people, so building a “cultural family” or “cultural town” was the only way to maintain characteristics that have existed in the past. If Hoianese were not like that, it would be almost impossible to reshape a society into what was called “cultural family”.

Hoian’s culture of respecting and preserving things that were passed on from their ancestors also stemmed from here. It was their nature to keep their ancestors’ heirlooms – this custom is particularly strong in Hoian compared with other places in Vietnam. It is not the practice but the intensity of the practice that makes the difference. Mr. Phung attributed this local peculiarity to the fact that Hoian was formed by trade and southward movement of people from other places. Initially they had nothing in common, but as time passed a unique identity was developed so the

Hoianese tend to treasure their characteristic marks of local identity. However, constant reminders from the authorities were needed in order to keep the place “clean” – i.e. the local government banned massage services, dancing activities, restricted rock music from being played loudly in public while promoting folklore, folksongs, traditional games and values instead.

3. Mr. Nguyen Su

Chairman of Hoian Town People’s Committee:

Mr. Nguyen Su was the catalyst who started the wave of conservation projects in Hoian. He was a finance analyst in Hue before returning to work in Hoian. In 1986, Mr. Su was the Communist Party Chief and later on became the Chairman of Hoian Town People’s Committee. He, too, fell in love with Hoian's old quarter, and being an unusually open-minded communist; he set about reviving the area. He was a poor farmer from a village near the old quarter, and even now his family is not wealthy. When I met him, he was still riding a very old scooter and his house was very bare and basic. His two sons who were studying at universities in Hochiminh City only had one old bicycle to share. However he was very passionate about the restoration and preservation of the town.

When he was first appointed to the position, he did not realize how valuable Hoian was. He thought of it as an old, ugly and dark town which was going to collapse anytime. He could not understand why conservation experts stressed Hoian as an international heritage site.

In his first month in power, he spent much of his time on the site talking to the local people, to the experts and to a few tourists. He walked up and down the old streets to observe the place. Gradually he began to appreciate the beauty of the place

and started to come up with guidelines and regulations to protect the fragility and beauty of Hoian.

As with all things, introducing new ideas and policies was difficult at the beginning, not everyone would understand and agree with Mr. Su's ideology of conservation. His strategy was to get the locals to agree with him first and then press ahead with what he thought had to be done. In order to do this, he had to find a win-win situation that benefits the town and those of the individuals. He had to convince the locals that it was for their own benefit to conserve and restore Hoian, and then in turn Hoian would attract more tourists and thus would bring them economic benefits.

In Mr. Su's perspective, although Hoian was physically old, the people were diversified and different. These cultural characteristics created the special lifestyle of Hoian. He stressed that Hoian could only prosper and thrive when tourism was based on culture. Without culture Hoian would not be able to succeed or even survive for long.

As the Chairman of the Local People's Committee, Mr. Su allowed no exceptions to the rules governing alterations made to the historical places in the old quarter. This included the height limits of the buildings and the types of wood and paint that could be used. He told me that, "At first, we would send teams around the old parts of the town and issue warnings and fines to the people we found not abiding by the rules and guidelines. Building materials imported into the city were checked. People were not allowed to alter their homes freely like they could before."⁸⁰

While understanding Mr. Su's intentions, some residents thought he was respecting the past a little too much. Being increasingly prosperous, the locals failed to see the charm of living in an 18th-century house in the 21st century. The old

⁸⁰ Tran, Anh. "Nhan dan pho Hoi voi di san van hoa cua tien nhan (Hoian people with the ancestors' cultural heritage)", Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Thanh Niên (Youth Publisher), 2001, p. 314

buildings were dark, the plumbing was primitive, and the traditional construction materials did not fare well in the tropical heat as well as the annual floods that afflicted central Vietnam. Ms. Huynh Thi Nhung, an artist who rented a house in the old quarter for use as a gallery, offered a common refrain: "I have been in this place for over a year and have done great business here," she said. "But I have not once set foot inside the toilet"⁸¹

Residents said the limitations on the colours they could use — relatively uninspiring shades of gold, cream and blue — were stifling. The locals wanted to know why they were not allowed to slightly brighten their lives. Once that limited palette was all that was available, but now much more attractive hues could be found in the stores.

The locals also complained that the original woods that Mr. Nguyen Su insisted them to use were expensive and hard to find. A gallery owner, Kim Phuong commented, "The government acts like our parents."⁸²

What was more, complying with the heritage regulations involves a laborious and time-consuming battle against bureaucracy. An application for permission to carry out household repair had to explain in details what the resident planned to do, how it would be done and who would carry out the work. After some time, during which the paperwork was shuffled from department to department, government inspectors finally came to assist them with the repair work. Mr. Su felt that all these complaints and grumbles were perfectly normal and expected because there was no policy that was not compulsory. The local people just needed sometime to get used to following the strict guidelines.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.315

⁸² Ibid.

The grumblers aside, the majority of the Hoianese had a strong feeling for tradition and understood the need to preserve the buildings in which they lived and worshipped. Not atypical was Mr. Truong Van Tri, who lived in a house built by his ancestor centuries ago. A highly educated man who speaks four languages, Mr. Truong Van Tri was descended from the family believed to have constructed the "Japanese Bridge", a 16th-century foot bridge that linked the Chinese and Japanese parts of the area. "We will keep our house as it is," he said, "When it collapses, we will figure out what to do. I am afraid if we were to rebuild it in a modern style, my ancestors would no longer feel comfortable in their home."⁸³

Mr. Su also cited the above as one of the reasons Hoianese kept their houses. Many Hoianese restored their houses purely out of respect for their ancestors and culture. Actually Hoianese were not poor, especially those staying along Nguyen Thai Hoc Street as most of them have businesses elsewhere. Thus the motive for preserving their houses was cultural and not for profit. Now that Hoian is preserved, it brings profits from tourism to the people, but this is an unanticipated benefit of the underlying cultural ethos. To prove the point that the preservation efforts were not profit motivated, Mr. Su cited another example. Before 1990, Hoian was not yet known as a tourism destination and the town was a weaving factory. Every household had at least three weaving machines. If economics had been the driving force behind the preservation work, many houses would have been torn down to make way for bulky machines. But Hoian was still very much left untouched after the weaving era passed.

Of course a small number of sites were unfortunately destroyed during that time. But compared with the percentage of people who had weaving machines in the town, it was not significant. A good demonstration of conservation was the Tran Clan

⁸³ Ibid.

Temple which was converted into a weaving factory. Tran Clan Temple had a lot of wooden columns and pillars which made it unsuitable for a weaving factory. However it stood the challenge and was left in a rather well-preserved state. Thus, Hoianese were able to retain their ancestors' assets and culture⁸⁴ by finding new economic applications to the sites. In the long run, if a site had no economic value, it might disappear because the older generation would be replaced by the younger generation who would be more practical. The younger generation might either destroy or disfigure it to make room for modern facilities inside the old houses.

Some house owners, who built or repaired their houses using the wrong materials and modern architecture before tourism set in at Hoian, were now rectifying the mistakes. They tore down the inappropriate segments and rebuilt them, following the original architecture and materials.

The locals also tried to revive traditional crafts such as lantern making, pottery making, authentic food making, tailoring and others. In Hoian, visitors were allowed to participate in handicraft production. Motorcycles and heavy vehicles were not allowed to go into the historical quarter⁸⁵. More regulations pertaining to the preservation and conservation of Hoian and the historical quarter had been implemented. More funds, raised by both local government and foreign organizations were pumped into conservation and preservation.

Under the stewardship of Mr. Su, the lives of local residents improved from the growth of tourism business. Museums started to grow. The Showa Women's

⁸⁴ Vietnam has practised ancestral worship for many centuries. According to Confucius, ancestors were sacred and were to be respected (hence the youngsters are to respect the elders) and were the roots of the households. Most of the Hoianese were originally from China (the Ming migrants) therefore their beliefs are even stronger than among the indigenous Vietnamese. The fear of losing their roots or dishonouring the families' ancestors was disastrous and considered a misfortune for the household. It was so strong that even when Catholicism came to Vietnam, the missionaries had to compromise with this practice – ie, Catholics in Vietnam are allowed to have ancestral altars at home but no bows were allowed. Till today ancestral worship is still very common and can be found in most Vietnamese households.

⁸⁵ Graig, Thomas. "A Vietnamese Port Finds New Vitality - Thanks to a Conservation-Minded Bureaucrat." *Asia Week*, Dec 07, 2002

University invested in the Museum of Trading Pottery and Porcelain. Toyota Foundation sponsored the Museum of Sa Huynh Culture⁸⁶. In 1995, the People's Committee sent a report to the provincial government and the central government to apply for UNESCO recognition. In order to achieve this, the local government had to come up with more policies and regulations pertaining to reservation and restoration of the site. As a result, not only were there regulations restricting the architecture in the old quarter, several other unpopular policies and regulations related to littering, parking, street stores and even the conduct of the locals had to be implemented. These policies were badly received by the locals. The locals protested and hated the Chairman so much because they felt they were deprived of their freedom.

But Mr. Su kept his position on the ways of doing things; imposing fines and charges to those who committed the offences. To conduct business within the site, the locals had to seek for permission for the type of service and trading they wanted to do. The chairman did not tolerate services such as massages, restaurants with sexy waitresses. He made it a point that Hoian should be seen as a cultural town, therefore these kinds of services should not exist.

The locals continued protesting against these regulations for over a year, but gradually they started to appreciate them and once they became accustomed to the new practices, they realised these were the right ways to maintain their heritage. As a result, the locals came to practise these measures automatically and no more fines were issued. Within four years of implementing those policies to protect and promote tourism to the nation and to the world, Hoian was endorsed as a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site in 1999.

⁸⁶ Tran, Anh, p.316

The followings are the highlights of the Chairman's contribution:

Full Moon Nights:

The Chairman of the People's Committee took another step toward making Hoian a major tourist destination by bringing back the past to the present: the full moon night. On the 15th day of each lunar month, residents on Tran Phu, Nguyen Thai Hoc, Le Loi and Bach Dang streets switched off their lights and hung cloth and paper lanterns on their porches and windows. Television sets, radios, streetlights and neon lights were turned off. To preserve their town's ancient character, Hoian residents decided to revive the practice of using colour lanterns. Starting in the fall of 1998, one night each month is declared a "lantern festival". The 15th day of the lunar month is also a Buddhist day of worship. Residents place offerings of food and incense on their ancestral altars and visit one of Hoian's many pagodas. The scent of incense and the sounds of people singing add to the town's enchanted atmosphere. On these evenings, visitors will be able to get a rare glimpse into another era. In the ensuing quiet the streets of Hoian are at their most romantic, the darkness broken only by jewel toned lanterns in all manner of shapes and sizes. It is all the more picturesque since motor vehicles are banned from entering Hoian's Old Quarter. Traditional food and desserts appear again, more delicious than those of the famine time, attracting curious tourists.

Prohibition of Sex Tourism:

The locals' participation in the preservation and restoration of Hoian was significant. They valued tourists' opinions and tried to make the tourism environment as 'clean' as possible to attract more tourists through 'word of mouth'. Mr. Su

strongly believed that when Hoian was developed as a cultural tourism destination, all activities should be cultural and without bad implications, thus no massage parlours, no sexy hostesses, and no prostitution in Hoian. He argued that if tourists came because of these things, surely Hoian could not compete with Hanoi, Hochiminh City or even Danang. These meant that Hoian would specifically aim to market itself to cultural tourists who would make their decision to visit based on the uniqueness of Hoian culture. So far, Hoian has been free from massage service for four years but tourists still come and the room occupancy rate is the highest in the whole country. The state-owned Hoian Hotel which initially had 10 rooms reserved for massage services had to abandon that practice and release the rooms for tourists. Even the famous foreign investment Victoria Resort did not provide any massage services. This reinforced the Chairman's conclusion, "If you want to invest here, you need to follow the rules and conditions. You should enrich and emphasize Hoian's culture, not dilute or corrupt it with foreign and modern ideas".

Although Mr. Su was from a poor family and he was still not rich, he was not swayed by protests. To him, everything is simple and straightforward, even when it comes to state problems and business problems. He was frank and would not bend in front of any external forces. The most important thing for him was to do something to lessen people's suffering and make their lives more comfortable.

Tourists' safety:

Local tourist managers were government servants specially appointed to watch out for possible dangers for tourists. The litany of hassles for tourists - having to buy goods and services of low quality or at high prices due to the collusion of dealers and intermediaries; being harassed by hucksters, shoe-polishing boys and cyclo drivers;

sidewalks or roads being utilized for business; and regulations on the use of sound, lighting and business hours being ignored - were all things these officials wish to change.

The municipal authorities had organized an urban conduct monitoring team specializing in overseeing social order and the tourist environment in the ancient town, and inspecting cyclo drivers and business intermediaries. Members of this team were always present in the streets and at sightseeing venues to deal with visitors' complaints. "We have also dealt with disputes between visitors and hotels and service establishments submitted to the municipal chairman for settlement. We have even shut down a hotel for a month for treating visitors unfairly," said a local tourism manager⁸⁷.

Homestay programmes:

Hoian was the first city in Vietnam to permit local residents to start up home-stay businesses to ease the burden on the small number of hotels in town. Of course, only good families with beautiful houses are allowed to receive foreign guests. Foreign visitors love to stay in 100-year-old wooden houses, listening to the sounds of wooden sabots in a quiet street or the cries of vendors on a tranquil night. For those who come from industrialized countries and are accustomed to crowded streets and air-conditioned rooms, a night's stay in an ancient wooden house in Hoian is an unforgettable memory.

Currently, the houses inside the old quarter providing homestay services receive more guests than those outside the old quarter. Tourists liked to walk along the old streets and did their shopping in the old quarter. But in the near future, the tourist flow will be more evenly distributed. Furthermore, many of the shops outside the old

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.317

quarter were also run by those who stayed inside. The locals were investing on properties outside because they could predict the tendency of the government to move more business to the outskirts of Hoian.

Town's planning and real estate market in Hoian:

Mr. Su was concerned about the planning of the town. He wanted to have things that would be left untouched for tourists to see and view, but he also wanted to have things that were nice and modern and comfortable for tourists as well. Therefore, most of the better hotels would be located outside of the old quarter because there was not enough space to build such hotels inside the old quarter, and the existence of such hotels would damage the overall look of the site. Furthermore, these kinds of projects needed serious investments that those old houses' owners might not be able to afford. The local government gave out three years of tax free incentives to encourage business owners to move from the old quarter to do business outside.

Most people thought that Hoian's tourism revolves around the old quarter and Mr. Su felt that it was right of them to think so too. He said it started from the old quarter but it was not the only thing to see in Hoian. The town was in the process of town planning. This was very important for the development of Hoian. The old quarter alone would not be enough for tourism; therefore the local government was developing the craftsmanship villages, the beach and other cultural services to attract more tourists to stay longer and to come back to Hoian in the future.

There are other attractions in Hoian such as the 7 km long of pristine beach front which is just 5 km away from the old quarter, the Cham Island, the craft villages, the Laguna system (canals, rivers and sea) and the typical Vietnamese countryside that could keep tourists entertained for a longer period. But the most interesting thing that

Hoian possesses is its people. Unlike Hue, which is more like a museum and lifeless, Hoian on the contrary is perceived as alive and full of energy.

On the topic of local and foreign investments in Hoian, Mr. Su said that the policy was to give the locals priority over foreign investors. This is to encourage the locals to engage in business ventures which would eventually benefit them. But if the project was too big for local investors, the authority would then invite external investors.

Projects to be carried out in Hoian must be beneficial to the local community. This policy attracted a lot of pressure from other centres of power (foreign investors or powerful figures in the central government), but so far Mr. Su stood firm. He insisted that the foreign investors must follow the rules and regulations set out by Hoian. If the investor is not agreeable with the terms, then there will be no investment and it is fine for Hoian. He stressed so long as he was still in power, no other forces could make him accept the investors if they could not meet the requirements. And he is confident that even if he longer is in power, his replacement will continue to do what that is best for Hoian.

The prices of land and houses in Hoian were among the highest in the country together with that of Hanoi and Hochiminh City. He said at that time prices were under control, but the peak of the crisis was in early 2002 when the price went up really high. The authority came up with a few rules to regulate the property market. Since most of the old houses in Hoian were privately owned, the decision to sell the properties was absolutely in the hands of the owners. Still, they had to follow these rules: 1. the house has to be sold as whole. It cannot be divided and sold part by part. 2. The new owner could not change the structure of the house. All repair work had to follow the rules issued by the planning office.

Mr. Su said that more old houses were traded during 1997 or earlier because at that time people did not realize the profit which could be made from the old houses. But now, there is rarely an old house for sale because the locals knew the house could help them bring in money. Most of the old houses were bought by Hoianese themselves, so it was very difficult to find an old house available for an outsider to buy nowadays.

Invasion of foreign cultures:

Tourists and Vietnamese visiting Hoian will bring with them foreign cultures and thinking. Hoianese would be in contact with these people and so would be subject to external cultural influence. There were certainly good and bad points about this, but most probably it would affect the new generation. Mr. Su felt that this is something inevitable. What he could do was to try to reduce as much as possible the chances of the younger generation becoming over-exposed to pop culture and to have a very comprehensive programme for promotion of national culture to create awareness for the new generation.

Mr. Su predicted 6 or 7 years ago that Vietnamese outside Hoian will come and may bring along their influences. He urged Hoianese to be united. He wanted clans and family to foster closer ties. With stronger multi-layered bonds, Hoianese would be able to resist external influences and retain their characteristics.

Currently all the schools in Hoian, from primary to high school level, conduct a weekly extracurricular activity that educates the students about Hoian and its culture. This campaign has been on for a while and was especially emphasised in 2001 because of the rise in crimes committed by juveniles in the country as a whole. However, the crime rate in Hoian was still very low. Mr. Su was able to name a few problematic kids

in town but most of them had mellowed and become much better persons after receiving a lot of training and guidance from the school and the government. A number of shops in Hoian were also owned by young entrepreneurs. They knew what attracted tourists so they also knew what to preserve in order to keep tourists coming back to Hoian. Generally Hoian's youngsters were well-behaved.

Congestion and resettlement:

The problems of congestion will inevitably appear once Hoian prospers with tourism growth. To ease congestion in the old quarters, the authority encouraged people to move by selling them land at the outskirts at subsidised price. This policy was met with overwhelming response. The previous year witnessed the resettlement of more than one hundred families to the new location.

A 51 acre cemetery was exhumed and developed with infrastructure to receive new residents. Each family was given 200m² of land for settlement. There are two groups of people eligible for the resettlement. The first group are the poor people without a house, and the second group are families with four to five generations living in under the same roof. The second group of people were offered to purchase the land at highly subsidised rate of six million Vietnam dong per 200m². Now the price of the same piece of land has inflated to two million Vietnam dong per 1m². The authority was also planning for more space at the outskirts of the town for future resettlements.

Terrorism:

After the September-Eleven attack that brought down the World Trade Centre in New York and the Bali Bombings in Indonesia, the tourism landscape will never be

the same. Although Hoian was a small tranquil ancient town, it could not exist in total isolation from the threat of terrorism.

Mr. Su was aware of the eminent threat of terrorism and treats it with utmost importance. The authority had plans to handle such situations. However he refused to reveal any concrete measures that are in place to prevent any terrorist attacks.

One advantage Hoian had was its close-knit community. Should any unusual thing happen, the authority would be promptly alerted and the situation should be brought under control within matter of hours.



Picture 21: Mr. Nguyen Su, Chairman of Hoian's People's Committee and author.

The above interviews have shown that the local culture and the appropriate policies of the governmental authorities are perceived by three different groups (officials, Hoianese both inside and outside the old quarters, and tourists) to be the main factors responsible for the apparent ability of Hoian to become a sustainable heritage tourism site.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The in-depth interviews with tourists, the locals, and the people on the management board of Hoian in Chapter 3 provides important data for deciding which factors have made the largest contribution to the success of Hoian. This chapter attempts to summarise the information collected from the interviews with locals, tourists, and the management board to further strengthen this hypothesis. Next, I would like to see if Hoian could be used as a case study to draw lessons which can be useful in the management of other historical sites. This summary can also be used to extrapolate the possible future of Hoian so that steps can be taken now to prevent any future problems. I also hope to suggest some possible improvements to make the development of Hoian more sustainable and consonant with authenticity in future.

A. SUMMARY OF DATA:

The success of Hoian cannot be accorded to just a single factor of either the authentic Hoianese people or the will of the authority to conserve Hoian. Rather, its success is the result of these two factors coming into play; each reinforces and compliments the another, lifting Hoian onto the stage of international recognition of being a heritage site endorsed by UNESCO. Just one of these two factors alone would not be sufficient, but together they have resulted in an outcome which compares favourably with the condition of other heritage sites both in Vietnam and in neighbouring countries.

1. The Hoian People:

The Hoianese know that tourists return for subsequent visits because they enjoy the authenticity of the locals' warmth, hospitality, indiscriminating behaviour towards

tourists and the friendly environment. But as anthropological fieldwork suggests, the true reason why this particular cultural asset has not become degraded is not due to any particular policy, but to the fact that this behaviour is rooted in local culture rather than from conscious efforts to be nice just to attract the tourist dollar.

1.1. The Hoian Culture and Tradition:

Data from the interviews indicates that Hoian's uniquely authentic hospitality is deeply-rooted in culture and tradition. Data from interviews with Hoianese and tourists shows that the local people are perceived both by outsiders and themselves as friendly, hospitable and non-discriminating. One can hypothesize that this characteristic is mainly due to their ancestry, their upbringing and their social environment where the elders still take an effort to educate the younger generation in the ways of the old. As such, ancestral values are instilled in the younger generation.

Both foreigners and locals perceive the Hoianese as having a very deep respect for the past. The typical family structure in Hoian, based on short-term fieldwork observation, is the extended family model where three or more generations live under the same roof. Because of this, the family traditions are easily transferred to the young. The rituals and traditions are still practised and the younger generation can observe and understand the relevance of the traditions and assimilate these practices as part of their lives. This differs from a child who learns the ways of tradition from school and merely treats the lessons as a path to his or her examinations.

1.2. The Younger Generation

Interviews with the Hoianese and with the Hoian authorities indicated that there were special plans to groom the younger generations in Hoian to continue their cultural

traditions. The younger generation in Hoian already possess good knowledge of their history and tradition that have been uniquely passed down to them in ways which are perceived to be unlike other parts of Vietnam. Hoian culture is heavily influenced by Confucian ethics and the younger generation has been taught to uphold these values. These values of conservation of the past, respect for the elders and social consciousness are cultivated as part of Hoianese socialization process.

To strengthen the understanding of history, culture, and their significance, the local authorities have made extra-curricular classes compulsory for the young. The current success of tradition being passed on from generation to generation despite the existing threat of globalisation is mainly due to the reinforcement of tradition and hospitality by the local authorities and the extended family structure. It is not taken for granted that culture and tradition will be automatically passed on without interference. Thus active management of this cultural resource is being undertaken, apparently in an effective manner.

On top of theory lessons in classes, practical experiences in school reinforce the understanding of Hoian culture. Some of the youths have chances to own shops and to find some activities to pack their lives with more purposes. With their hands getting dirty, they start to appreciate their unique Hoian culture and understand how being traditional and hospitable helps them grow financially. Cases of juvenile delinquency are rare in Hoian compared to other cities of comparable size in Vietnam due to the strong social support system.

1.3. The Hoian Social Support Group

Although it is difficult to quantify, qualitative anthropological research suggests that both foreigners and locals perceive the people of Hoian to be civic

minded. They pay attention to their surrounding and report elements which are undesirable to the local authorities. They note any differences or threats to the neighbourhood and made Hoian such a safe place to be. Neighbours are treated as part of the family in terms of reciprocity.

Hoian is a small town so that interpersonal relations can usually be conducted on the basis of mutual acquaintance. Marriages among clans result in stronger ties. Another reason why traditions are so strong in Hoian and not affected by external influences is because of the presence of social support groups. These social groups and inter-clan relations help to ensure that the tradition, religion, social conduct, ancestral rituals and culture have been strictly followed.

One of the highlights of the events calendar of Hoian is the “Full Moon” concept. The locals are happy with the influx of locals from other parts of Vietnam and foreigners. As a result of the full moon event, the locals also learn to appreciate Hoian’s beauty by night and that reinforces their desire to preserve the traditional Hoian ways. During the full moon event, the locals indulge in traditional games and activities that were prevalent in the past. This ensures the survival of the games and they are no longer threatened with disappearance.

1.4 The Old Houses:

The people in Hoian are taught to treasure the things of the past. Hoianese report in interviews that the main reason why they make great efforts to preserve their houses and not to sell them to property speculators was because the houses and everything in it were gifts from their ancestors and they treasure such gifts. The house is not seen as property but rather regarded as a symbol of family history and selling the house would be an insult and disappointment to the ancestors. The house also forms a

link between the past and the present. It connects the people living in it to their ancestors and it would be passed down to their successors in the future.

The primary reason given in interviews for the public support for preservation is thus respect for ancestors. As a result of this preservation, more tourists are streaming in to see Hoian, and the locals are now experiencing the commercial benefit of the conservation. This has become an added incentive to preserve the houses, their living environment and the common areas. There is little fear that the immediate generation will succumb to commercialisation as the reason for the success of Hoian as a tourist spot is the fact that Hoian is still relatively “unmarred” and that there have not been signs of pop-culture around the corner. Data from qualitative interviews show that the Hoianese understand that once they lose the authentic feel of Hoian, tourists will stop coming and they will cut their lifeline. The main attraction of Hoian according to interviews with tourists is that tourists want to understand the daily activities of an authentic traditional Asian society. As long as Hoian preserves its unique culture, tourists will return for subsequent visits to find out more about the locals and their culture. Due to this, the locals realise that their efforts of preserving old things has two forms of benefit: psycho-social stability of individuals, families, and neighbourhoods, and financial. This will be reinforcement to them that preserving the buildings and practicing their customs and traditions are truly beneficial for them.

The adaptive re-use of Hoian’s historic buildings so far has been quite appropriate. The shophouses are converted into tailor shops, souvenir shops, lantern shops, art galleries, restaurants, museums and so on. These commercial activities required minimal changes to the structures of these houses. At the beginning of tourism in Hoian ten years ago, merchandise was displayed outside the houses which covered up the buildings. Neon lights were also used. All these ignorant merchandising

skills destroyed the traditional beauty of Hoian and the authorities had to come up with the rules and regulations to guide and educate the locals. Guidelines such as only wooden signboards with golden words attracted grumbles and protests from the locals initially. But gradually they also realised the change suited the site better and the tourists loved it too. This means that the historical site had to be restored and preserved in its original look as much as possible. In this case, official guidance was an important subsidiary influence which augmented tradition.

However we should not use tourists' expectation as a gauge because we might run the risks of turning the place into a touristic site with no local identity in the long run. Preservation is not just directed to the physical aspect of the historical site. The soul and the activities of the site are equally, if not more important, as experience in places such as Singapore has shown. The historical site, although set in its own time, is not static but dynamic and should also be given margins to grow at its own pace. We can see the examples from Bali, Indonesia, and Chinatown, Singapore when the places became too touristic – the cultures and atmospheres were totally altered to meet what some decision-makers believed were tourists' expectations (although apparently no anthropological studies were done to examine this hypothesis).⁸⁸

The distribution of shops in Hoian Old Quarter is relatively dense but still under control⁸⁹. Some tourists said the shops were similar to one another, but if one walked in and took a closer look one would find something different from other shops. This means the shops in Hoian are pretty diverse: there is a shop named “Same same but different”!!! Still, it is never too soon for the local government to control the

⁸⁸ Askew, M. and Logan, William S. Cultural Identity and Urban Changes in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays. Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1994, p. 167 – 186, p.227 – 248.

⁸⁹ Tran, Anh, p.68.

distribution of shops here and spread them out to the outskirts of Hoian rather than having them all cluttered in the Old Quarter.

There are suggestions to convert those historical buildings into museums. One of the tourists I interviewed suggested moving the people out of the Quarter at night and only allowing them to come back in the daytime for their daily activities. However another possible tactic would be to preserve the town itself as a live-museum where all the activities already go on without having to re-create them. If the locals are to move out of the Quarter, the nights in Hoian would be so quiet that the overall feel of the place would be affected. The Quarter would become the office or working environment instead of the living environment of Hoianese. There is disagreement between various people interviewed; but from the standpoint of sustainability, keeping Hoian as it is now is much more likely to continue to be interesting and authentic than a mock-up version of half-alive-half-dead Hoian.

1.5 Others:

In the past when the port was bustling, foreigners came and traded with the local Hoian people and thus the people of Hoian were exposed to many different cultures. The social interaction caused the locals to subconsciously adapt all these different cultures and developed a unique culture of their own. Thus, Hoian culture became very different from that in other parts of Vietnam. One of the reasons why the value system survived despite strong influence from commercialization was because Hoian had become quieter after the decline of the port in the early 19th century. Hoian was therefore less exposed to western influences as compared to the rest of Vietnam. Hoian was also relatively unaffected by the two civil wars.

The mentality of the people in Hoian played a major role in the preservation of authenticity. As far as commercialisation and globalisation are concerned, the Hoianese are not trading in their traditional way of life or habits and customs to become another modernised city. They have realised that their traditions are a way for them to make a livelihood for themselves and that in order to sustain the prosperity of Hoian; they must keep these ways of the old. They also realise that without the kindness and realness, tourists would not come back. They are aware that their niche is the realness of the Hoianese and thus their traditions and the ambience of the place and the people is the success of Hoian.

2. The Management Board:

The interviews have shown that the local authorities are concerned about the preservation of the historical sites and traditional values. They realise that while tourists love the old feel of Hoian, Hoian has to find ways to make sure that tourism brings in investors and money to sustain the population and economy of Hoian so that there will be sufficient funds to preserve and conserve the natural and traditional surroundings which the tourists come to see. Why these particular authorities have decided to take a longer-term perspective whereas those in other areas normally succumb to pressures for short-term profit is an interesting question which could not be resolved in the time available for research.

2.1. Physical Conservation:

House owners have to obtain approvals from the authorities and adhere to strict regulations on conservation work. This is to ensure that the old houses do not change

too drastically. Modern amenities are carefully concealed so that they do not affect the traditional setting of the house. Strict rules on hygiene are also to be observed.

Although the authorities seem to be imposing many restrictions on the house owners, the authorities are also trying to help the house owners by funding up to 90% of the restoration cost, depending on the financial situation of the house owners. Many of the house owners in Hoian are not rich and the funding helps these house owners to lessen the financial burden to restore or preserve their homes.

2.2. Cultural Conservation:

The authorities have made efforts in both the physical and cultural environment to ensure that tourist gets to see Hoian in its traditional settings and feel its traditional ambience. After all, many cities in Asia have tried conserving their heritage sites but failed to retain its atmosphere. The buildings are merely shells of the past. Visitors are unable to feel the ambience of the place as the traditional activities and people have been replaced by a new set of modern activities and new group of people respectively (such as China Town, Singapore). The authorities in Hoian want to make sure that visitors are able to experience the warmth of the people, see the traditional craftsmen at work and enjoy its traditional settings. Conserving the buildings is easy, however, retaining the ambience of the place is difficult and that involves socializing the people of Hoian to practice the ways their ancestors did in order to maintain the ambience of Hoian's old quarter.

The sense of tradition and preservation of houses must be passed on to the next generation to ensure that the success of Hoian will continue for generations to come. The local authorities also try to reinforce the traditional upbringing by setting up a cultural family for the residents of Hoian. The cultural family defines characters and

personalities. It also promotes unity among the Hoianese and strengthens family bonds. This strategy is seen as a defence against globalization and the market economy; to prevent Hoian from turning into one of the many faceless societies in Southeast Asia, overtaken by modernization.

2.3 Town Planning:

The population has been incentivised with tax relief, modern infrastructures and subsidised land to relocate to the outskirts of Hoian to reduce congestion in the old quarter. It is also to prevent problems of slums, air and noise pollution. By allocating other areas of Hoian for residential and commercial purposes, the local authorities ensure that the sanctuary of the Old Quarter is kept. The local authorities attempt to prevent too many signs of modernization in the old quarter. Heavy vehicles and motorcycles are forbidden in the zone. The locals living in the Old Quarter may find it troublesome to get around but they understand the need for such measures. Underground cabling works are done to hide the electricity and television cables to free the hideous hanging cables in the Old Quarter. Homestays are greatly encouraged and hotel chains are forbidden in the Old Quarter. This arrangement ensures that the tourism dollar benefits the locals and raises the local's standard of living. It also provides the tourists what they are looking for: a rustic environment and opportunity to interact with the locals and experience their way of life. The "No Hotels" rule also prevents the physical environment from being disrupted by big hotels. The better hotels however, are not totally banned from Hoian. Instead, they are built outside the zone and along the beach. However, the hotel chains had many stringent rules and guidelines to follow before they receive approval to erect their hotels in Hoian.

2.4 Security:

The local authorities are very mindful of the threat of terrorism although it may seem remote that terrorists will strike Hoian. However, the authorities are not taking the current level of security for granted and efforts are made to ensure the safety of Hoian.

2.5 Will of the Authority:

The commitment of the local authorities is a rare commodity in these days as governments and authorities tend to focus on short term economic benefits of commercial tourism. Despite early protests, Mr. Su did not waver from his beliefs that Hoian would benefit if it retains its traditional identity. By enabling the locals to join his vision for the future of Hoian, the Chairman has helped ensured that the mentality of Hoianese will not be easily swayed from the seductions of elements which may erode the traditional way of life in Hoian. Strict laws and regulations were imposed on the conservation policies, financial aid were made available to the locals for house conservation, the youth were provided with means to connect to their past and to appreciate their heritage; all these laid the foundation in which his legacy will be continued even after Mr. Su steps down. Thus one might wonder whether in this case a particular random factor in the personality of this individual rather than some larger-scale socio-cultural phenomenon was one reason for Hoian's unusual success.

It is important to note that the success of Hoian cannot be attributed to a single factor of either the Hoian people or the Hoian management board. Neither factor alone was sufficient; these two factors are not independent of each other but both were necessary for the situation in Hoian to achieve the unusual position it occupies in the tourism landscape. On one hand, if the people wished to be more modernised and be

immersed in the western culture, they could move out of Hoian or find ways to sell their houses for profits and there would be little or nothing the local authorities could do about it. If the locals could not be bothered with the preservation of their houses, they would simply let it rot and collapse even if funds are available for conservation work. If the locals were not committed to keeping the authenticity of the place, there would be little the authorities could do with their campaigns. On the other hand, if the management board were short-sighted and focused on short-term economic benefits, they could sell off the land to property speculators despite the protests of the locals and bring in the big international hotel chains and destroy the natural environment to build more infrastructures to aid modernization. If they are not concerned with preserving Hoian's tradition and buildings, the region could easily be redeveloped into another other typical city which is polluted, chaotic, uniform and impersonal. As such, Hoian's success is a fortunate and beautiful display of a perfect symbiotic or synergistic relationship between the local people and governmental authority.

B. HOIAN AS A CASE STUDY FOR OTHER HISTORIC SITES IN VIETNAM:

The success of Hoian in the tourism industry is widely known across Vietnam. So far Hoian is the only place that has been able to preserve its tangible and intangible assets and at the same time, be sustained economically by tourism. Qualitative research suggests that this success is the result of specific local qualities of both the local people and the management.

Vietnam has a number of other natural, historical and cultural places that are also very attractive. Unfortunately they were and are being ruined by the short-sightedness of visions. It is my hope that the success of Hoian can be a case study to

these destinations and give Vietnam's tourism another chance to develop into a world class tourist destination without committing the mistakes other places had made.

Conditions were conducive for Hoian's success. Firstly, the Hoianese are traditional and have deep respect for their ancestry and culture. Secondly, the authority must be far-sighted to understand that the benefits derived from sustainable tourism far outweigh the short-term profits from tourism that is unplanned and damaging to the heritage sites. Thirdly, a department dedicated solely to the preservation of Hoian was formed. It worked out a strategy for its conservation plans and its public education programmes. The department understood the ideology of sustainable tourism and channelled the tourism dollar back into the conservation and restoration work.

Last but not least, the ideology of sustainable tourism must be communicated to the people. As such, the people would understand and be able to work hand-in-hand with the authorities in preserving their heritage and culture. The people would also understand that authenticity, which includes the architecture, the culture, and even the behaviour and attitude of the people, is the key to attract tourists.

Currently, Hue and Halong Bay are the other two UNESCO endorsed sites in Vietnam that draw an increasing number of tourists every year. However, there are damages in these two places that could have been avoided if sustainable tourism had been introduced and practiced earlier.

For example, Halong Bay is now home to a number of inappropriately-designed hotels mushrooming all over the shores and invading the islets as well. A road was also constructed to link the inland and the Tuan Chau Island which is the nearest island to shore. These unplanned developments destroyed the natural landscape and are major mistakes for Ha Long Bay.

In Hue, one of the most romantic aspects of the old citadel is the rivers and 40 over lakes. They have served as important water traffic and drainage systems as well as ecological landscaping. But due to overpopulation and poor management, the lakes have now become 'kang-kong' growing plantations and dirty ponds. Some have even been filled in to become residential lands. Traditional garden houses are unique to Hue. But now the houses are sold to anyone who is willing to pay a good price. The wooden houses (unique Hue-style house) are disassembled into pieces, packed up and sold to the rich from Hanoi and Hochiminh city. All these activities would have been avoided if the local government and the local people had a stronger sense of belonging and a deeper respect towards their culture and their heritage. They could have preserved and restored it so that tourists could come and visit these places and in turn could generate more money for a much longer run.

C. POSSIBLE FUTURE OUTCOMES OF HOIAN:

The economy of Hoian depends largely on tourism. As the tourism market for Hoian develops, the economy of Hoian will also improve. The locals will benefit from the tourist dollar and the standard of living will improve.

Everyone in Hoian will benefit from the growth of tourism. More employment opportunities will be created and the people will be able to afford better education. Although the class structure in Hoian will not be completely eliminated, the gap will be narrowed and social stratification will be less obvious, thus promoting a greater sense of cohesion amongst the people of Hoian.

The success of tourism in Hoian will in many ways ensure the preservation and continuity of the Hoian culture. After all, it is the culture that links the past to the present, and eventually to the future. The increase in tourism is a form of recognition

of the Hoian culture and will instil in the locals a sense of pride to be part of it. This will further help to preserve the Hoian culture and heritage. The locals will take greater steps to ensure that the culture does not disappear from the pages of history. Traditional crafts will receive a new lease of life as these crafts are souvenirs for the tourists to bring home and promote the Hoian culture. A market for these traditional crafts will ensure its continuity as the people will make the effort to learn the way to make these crafts so they have another stream of revenue.

As Hoian becomes more successful, the locals in Hoian will have a greater sense of belonging. The locals will have a stronger feeling for their community and they will be more close-knitted and these bonds and kinship will be very difficult to break. The social structure will ensure the future generations to be aptly taught and a line of continuity for the traditions to be guaranteed. This is also a way to resist the onslaught of globalisation and materialism as the latter is not a value of Confucianism. As the Family is one of the important integral parts in the Confucian school of thought, these ideals will be passed on to generations to come and will ensure the long term survival of Hoian's unique culture.

The locals will also enjoy a great sense of pride for their own heritage when tourists from all over the world come to Hoian to learn more about its culture and heritage. Thus, knowledge on the Hoian culture and history will make the locals feel that they are highly valued by foreigners. With higher educational level and civil mindedness of the locals, Hoian will be a friendlier, safer, and more hospitable society.

In the future, as Hoian prospers from tourism, the extended family structure will be even stronger than it was before as it is a social institution where the past is linked with the present. The extended family structure will remain as an important part of Hoian culture. It will serve as a driving force to influence the behaviour of its people

and uphold the moral standards of the society. Thus, there will be lesser need for government intervention to educate the thinking and mentality of the people. As a consequence, the people of Hoian will enjoy a greater sense of freedom and individuality, where no or minimum government interventions are imposed on their social freedom.

However, all is not a bed of roses for Hoian. Hoian does not exist in a vacuum. It was actually a porous trading society where people from different countries met to trade. But since trading had lost its significance, the Hoian society still remains porous with the new influx of tourists' arrivals. This means that Hoian is constantly exposed to external influences. The tourists bring along with them a set of thinking and expectations. The interaction between the locals and the tourists will spark off some degrees of cultural exchange. Since culture is constantly changing and evolving, Hoian's unique heritage is also expected to evolve with time. This degree of change will be further accelerated with greater success in the tourism industry of Hoian. All that is left for defence is the wisdom and the will of its people and the authorities to strike a delicate balance between progress and preservation.

With restrictive new developments in Hoian, especially in the old quarter where no new modern developments are allowed, Hoian may face the problems of under-capacity to handle the increasing number of tourist arrivals. One of the problems is garbage handling and waste disposal. Hoian lacks the modern facilities to handle the garbage left behind by the tourists and there is also no proper sewage system for wastes disposal. All these might threaten the natural environment of Hoian with land and water pollution.

The increased number of tourist visits will also put a strain on the existing infrastructure of Hoian. To ensure Hoian is accessible and not congested, new

infrastructures are required to meet the needs of the visitors. However, the infrastructural developments may destroy the original landscape of Hoian which the authorities have been trying so hard to preserve.

When Hoian becomes successful, people from the nearby provinces will migrate to Hoian to look for work. These people are usually poor and are unable to find work in their own provinces. Without proper management, this rural migration could lead to social problems and unsightly slums in Hoian. If the authorities do not have plans of proper housing for these migrants, the migrants will have to sleep on the streets or have makeshift houses. These slums are not equipped with proper sanitation and may cause health problems and environmental pollution. Slums are potential fire hazards and threatens the existing old houses in the old quarter should there be a fire. Slums are also unsightly structures that reverse the painful preservation efforts by the Hoianese and the authorities. This rural migration may also lead to social problems such as prostitution and crimes as they do not share the same moral values as the Hoianese. The influx of rural migrants is also an external influence Hoian has to deal with. These foreign cultures may also corrode and weaken the traditional Confucian values of the Hoian people.

Another potential problem Hoian may face is the constant lure from the ambitious and greedy investors. Currently, there are mechanisms to prevent investors from acquiring properties for speculation in Hoian. But once the defence is down, property prices will shoot up which will lead to inflation and eventually will hurt the local economy. More importantly, if the houses in Hoian are not owned and run traditionally by Hoianese, Hoian uniqueness will slowly be eroded and becomes inauthentic. Hoian will lose its charm and become another soulless tourist destination.

As Hoian gets more popular as an international tourist destination, it may be faced with the threat of mass tourism. Hoian town may get overcrowded with tourists who are not interested in the Hoian culture and tradition but more interested in looking for cheap food and entertainment. The locals may be tempted to meet the demands of these tourists by supplying mass produced souvenirs or even introducing night-clubs which will undo all previous well-intentioned conservation efforts. Traditional handicrafts may give way to modern mass production techniques and the immoral entertainment industry may set its foothold onto a town which was once so pure and untouched by commercialisation.

D. SOLUTIONS TO POSSIBLE PROBLEMS:

The future success of Hoian depends very much on how Hoian handles the following challenges: 1) Authenticity of the Hoian Culture 2) Continuation of the Hoian Culture 3) Succession of the Hoian Management. Hoianese have to be constantly conscious of their sense of belonging, their background, their history and traditions so that no amount of external influences can change them.

1. Authenticity of Hoian Culture:

Hoian being a porous society is under constant exposure to other external influences from the migrants, tourists and even mass media such as television programmes. Hoian is attractive because of its unique and ancient culture. The culture is Hoian's intangible asset and its success depends on its ability to remain authentic. Once Hoian loses its authenticity, it loses its charm too.

The authenticity of Hoian, as defined in Chapter 1, can be defined as “aspects of a simpler, more unsophisticated native existence”⁹⁰. To remain authentic is the challenge all Hoian has to deal with. To remain authentic, Hoianese have to first make sure that the close knitted relationships among the extended family, relatives and neighbours are maintained. This form of close knitted relationships is rarely seen nowadays because of population growth and the progress of society. This community spirit and relationship not only attract tourists, but more importantly, ensure the perpetuation of the Hoian culture. After all, the extended family is one of the main institutions which impose the moral standards and links the future generation to the past.

Secondly, Hoianese have to ensure that their language, which includes the dialects and accent, as well as the tradition, is maintained. Hoianese has managed to retain its unique accent and dialects for centuries probably because of the elderly who stayed behind prior to tourism entering Hoian. The accent and dialects are unique and add to the authenticity of the Hoian culture. If the ancient accent is lost with the introduction of modern slang, the culture will inevitably be altered.

Thirdly, Hoian has to preserve the original architecture of the old houses. Without this landscape, Hoian will not have its charm.

The local government has put in tremendous efforts safeguarding Hoian culture from external influences. Policies are in place forbidding playing of loud music in public, concealing of modern amenities as well as the famous no vehicle zone in the old quarter. The authorities also introduced the “cultural family concept” to ensure the Hoian culture is kept intact and perpetuated within the family.

⁹⁰ Cohen, p. 92.

2. Continuation of the Hoian Culture:

The continuation of the Hoian culture depends very much on the succession plan. The children of Hoian will be the next owner of the heritage site. They will be the ones who decide if they are to protect or destroy it.

Hoian has one of the most conducive environments for the transfer of cultural knowledge to the younger generation because of the extended family structure and the close knitted community. On top of the social construct, the authorities have also put in place a comprehensive education plan to instil Hoian culture to the next generation. Nevertheless, with the advancement of technology, external influences cannot be completely filtered out. There are avenues such as the internet, the television as well as the radio, where the younger generation can obtain a whole wealth of information. They are accustomed to international brands such as Coca Cola and watching American Blockbusters. Thus the strategy is not to cut off all external influences, but to educate the young on their origin, their identity, culture and heritage, so that they can grow with the change without losing their identity.

3. Succession of the Management Board:

Hoian is fortunate to have the current management that has the foresight and perseverance as well as the devotion to lift Hoian up from a "City of the retirees" to a world class tourist destination. Not only did the management board succeed in having Hoian recognized as a World Heritage Site endorsed by UNESCO, which brought great financial advantage; they have also raised the standard of living for the locals. What the management board has achieved thus far is very commendable. Faced with many challenges such as from insufficient funds to resistance from the locals, the management stood their ground, bite the bullet and faced the challenges bravely. A

management board of such quality is hard to come by not only in Vietnam but also in other parts of the world.

The succession of the management is also critical to the continual success of Hoian. The younger administrative officials need to have the same attitude and passion towards their heritage. They need to understand that the success of Hoian is in its authenticity and not any borrowed ideas from other countries or sites. They also need to understand the concept of sustainable tourism and its long term benefits.

An education or training programme is suggested to train the younger administrative officials to ready them for the job. The programme should expose the officials to other tourist sites within and outside of Vietnam to exchange information on new implementations or mistakes to avoid that can help the tourism industry. The programme is also good for the senior officials to keep themselves current with the latest developments in tourism conservation work world wide.

Most importantly the officials themselves must have the passion towards their heritage if they are to take on the job. They need to have the desire to make Hoian the best place not only for tourists but also for their local people. It is the pride and love of the Hoianese has towards their culture and historical sites that translate into actions of preservation.

E. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN HOIAN:

Sustainable tourism is defined by the World Trade Organisation as “tourism which meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future”⁹¹.

⁹¹ Nuryanti, Wiendu ed. Tourism and Heritage Management. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1997, p. 62.

In order to understand “sustainability” in Hoian’s context, anthropological approach was used throughout this thesis to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings the interviewees carried in their conversations.⁹² Therefore a lot of questions were asked to find out what the people were thinking. The data which were compiled support the conclusion that it was the people of Hoian that made the difference in keeping Hoian in the list of “tourists’ most favourite destinations in Vietnam”.

The Vietnamese authorities have to adopt a more scientific approach in tourism planning and not leave things to act out their natural course. By having a comprehensive plan, the authorities will be more prepared with whatever problems which may arise when Hoian is open to more tourists. The local authorities must determine the optimal carrying capacity of all resources and heritage sites. This is important for the case of Hoian as the influx of tourists may overwhelm and destroy the natural environment or bring harmful elements which threaten to erode or undermine the traditional values and culture of the Hoianese. The local authorities must be mindful of the negative impacts of tourism, otherwise it may be too late to be caught unprepared.

There are three goals to sustainable tourism for Hoian. The first goal is to meet the needs of the present tourists. The money from tourism will be channelled back as funds for conservation work and maintenance purposes. The funds can be invested into infrastructure work to improve standards of hygiene, build better roads and preserve old houses. It can also be used for marketing purposes to attract more tourists.

The second goal is to meet the needs of the host region which is Hoian. Tourism should improve the economy and to provide Hoianese employment or a means to make a living. It should also provide funding for educational programmes for

⁹² Denzin, N.K., *Interpretive Ethnography*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, p.45.

the continuation of the Hoian culture. The educational programmes are not just targeted at the locals but also to tourists to educate them on the importance of cultural heritage conservation so that the legacy of preservation will continue.

The third goal is to meet the needs of the natural environment and enhance future opportunities. The environmental goals for sustainable tourism set up by the Hoian authorities are focused on a responsible and prudent use of the natural resources. They resist the temptation to build more roads leading to Hoian so that the natural vegetation would not be sacrificed. With more roads, the landscape and the charm of Hoian would also be threatened. Moreover, the increase in visitors to Hoian if such highways were built may be too much for the Hoian environment to endure. Thus by limiting the accessibility of Hoian, the authorities are indirectly controlling the tourist population visiting Hoian. The authorities are constantly aware of the problems of waste management. Thus the funds from tourism can also be employed for better technology to manage waste and protect the environment. With the natural environment protected, future opportunities will be enhanced.

The success of Hoian has been phenomenal and should be used as an example for other places to learn from. With pure determination and passion for their own heritage and culture, the people of Hoian together with the leadership of Mr. Su and his team, transform Hoian from a quiet town to a world renowned heritage site. All is not over for Hoian. There are constantly challenges to be overcome. At the time of writing, Hoian has just experienced a flood which totally devastated 4 houses and left 200 houses in serious condition. The local authorities are still waiting for funds from the central government to help restore the houses. The people are not able to handle the repair works themselves, since repairing an ancient house costs much more than building a new one. This is just one of the many challenges Hoian has to face. The

process of maintenance of a site is a never-ending series of challenges; only with more qualitative anthropological research will it be possible to isolate the factors which have created in Hoian one of the most successful examples of heritage tourism in Southeast Asia.

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APPENDIX 1

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS FOR TOURISTS:

- How do you know about Hoian?
- What do you like about Hoian?
- Why do you like that particular thing in Hoian?
- Where else in Vietnam have you been to? How do you compare Hoian and these places?
- What do you think makes Hoian special / unique in your view?
- What do you like to do in Hoian?
- What do you think about the Full-moon nights?
- Would you consider returning to Vietnam just to visit Hoian again?
- Are you satisfied with your experiences in Hoian? Please state the reasons why.
- Do you have any suggestions for Hoian?
- How do you find the people in Hoian? What do you like / dislike about them?
- Are you happy to pay for the visiting ticket to gain entry to those sites in Hoian? Are the tours and the introduction / explanations satisfying? If not, any suggestions?
- How do you find the museums in Hoian?
- Have you read much about Hoian before coming to Vietnam?
- Do you take any tours to the neighbouring sites near Hoian? Do you like the tours? Any suggestions?
- Comparing among the 3 heritage sites in the Central of Vietnam, which is your favourite? Why?
- Would you want to spend the night in the old shop houses or prefer to stay in better facilities outside Hoian?
- What is your itinerary when you are in Hoian?
- How do you like the food in Hoian? Souvenirs?
- Are you satisfied with the time frame you have in Hoian or would you like to extend / shorten your stay here? Please specify why.
- What do you think of the management in Hoian? Any suggestions?

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS FOR THE LOCALS:

- Why do you preserve your houses in the first place?
- Is it your own initiative?
- What made you do that?
- Are you happy with the current situation of Hoian?
- Are you happy with the current policies concerning the preservation and restorations of old houses, assembly halls, family chapels, etc..?
- If yes, why? If not, what do you felt restrictive about: what makes you unhappy?
- Do you think the policies applied within the Old Quarter will benefit the tourists and in turn will ultimately benefit you and your business? Please specify.
- What do you want to add / alter the laws and regulations going on within the Old Quarter now? Why?
- Do you think these policies are fair and helpful?
- What do you think about the traditional activities during the Full-moon night every month? Do you personally take part in those activities?
- Do you enjoy having tourists coming to Hoian?
- What do you think when tourists come to your house and ask you to show them around the house, do you usually accommodate their requests?
- Are you worried that too many tourists will spoil the site?
- Is there any financial assistance from the government regarding the restoration and conservation work? Do you think the aid is enough? What is your suggestion?
- What can be done to make the co-operation between the local government and local people a successful one?
- What do you prefer to make the houses into? Shops? Galleries? Restaurants? Hotels? Museums? Or keep to its origin?
- Do you really understand that authenticity will sustain the profits?

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

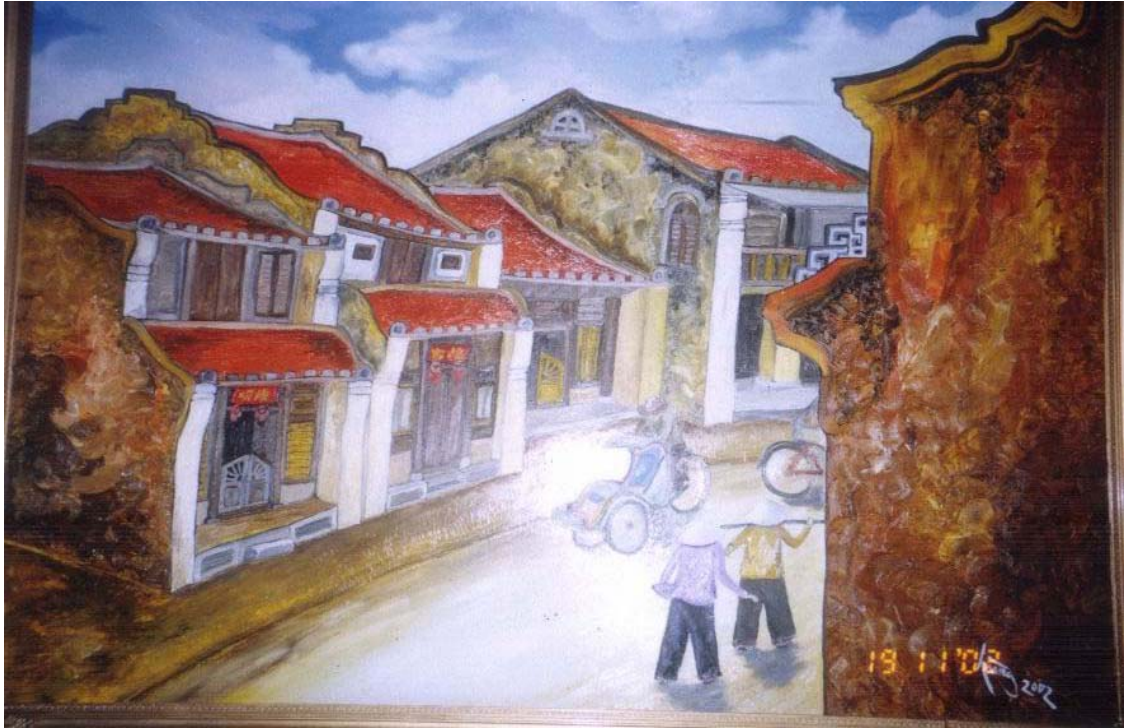
- How does the local government implement preservation and restoration into Hoian? Are there any resistances? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- What are the rules and regulations on the Old Quarter?
- The idea of having traditional activities every full moon night – whose is it? Why such idea?
- How was the idea introduced to the local people?
- Is it because of meeting the needs of the tourists' interest that the full moon night was introduced?
- Would it be too touristic if everything is altered according to tourists' expectation / interest?
- Will tourists' expectation bring good to the site or not?
- What does the government think of the locals' opinion of the night? Will it cause inconvenience to them / their business?
- Will Hoian have more nights like this in the future? Will locals want to have more of full-moon nights or traditional nights?
- What can be done to make the co-operation between the local government and the locals a successful one?
- So far, did the local not accept any policies? Why so?
- How to stop the site from being ruined by the increasing amount of tourists visiting Hoian?
- How do you understand sustainable tourism when it is relatively a newly used term, even to other countries?
- Will it be sustainable in the future or not?
- Hoian will be sustainable if...?
- Other sites nearing to Hoian such as Tra Kieu, My Son, Cham Island – can they help diminish the pressure of too many tourists swamping Hoian? Does the government have any plan to integrate these sites into Hoian's neighbouring attractions?
- After preservation / restorations, how does the government use the historical sites? Turning them into tourists' attraction like shops, galleries, restaurants and hotels or keeping them as museums or retaining its origin use?
- To what extend should Hoian come to depend on tourism? Are there any alternative existing?
- How does Hoian cope with "hot issues" such as terrorism? What are other threats Hoian faces? What are the solutions?

APPENDIX 2

PICTURES OF HOIAN



The Map of Vietnam



A Painting of the Old Quarter - very popular in the galleries of Hoian.



Street peddler in Hoian.



The Old Quarter during flood season (1999)



Quarter (1999) Travel by boat in the streets of the Old



Japanese tomb in Hoian



Another Japanese tomb in Hoian suburb.



Hoi An Market by the river.



Bach Dang Street - overlooking Thu Bon River



Teochew Assemly Hall



Hokkien Assemly Hall