

LIVING IN THE SHADOWS OF THE GREAT WALL

—PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AT WORLD HERITAGE SITES

By Dr. Mingming Su

依长城而居

——世界遗产地旅游发展与遗产保护

苏明明 / 著



中国出版集团



世界图书出版公司

本研究的进行和成果出版得到了加拿大人文社科基金(Professor Geoffrey Wall),教育部留学归国人员科研启动基金(世界遗产地旅游发展中社区参与模式与有效性研究,项目号:2012010128)和国家自然科学基金项目(我国遗产旅游社区参与综合评估模型研究,项目号:41201147)的资助。

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中国出版集团
世界图书出版公司
广州·上海·西安·北京

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

依长城而居:世界遗产地旅游发展与遗产保护/苏明明著. — 广州:世界图书出版广东有限公司, 2013.3
ISBN 978-7-5100-5881-3

I. ①依… II. ①苏… III. ①长城—文化遗产—旅游业发展—研究 ②长城—文化遗产—保护—研究
IV. ①F592 ②K928.77

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2013)第 050449 号

依长城而居——世界遗产地旅游发展与遗产保护

策划编辑 孔令钢

责任编辑 黄琼

出版发行 世界图书出版广东有限公司

地 址 广州市新港西路大江冲 25 号

<http://www.gdst.com.cn>

印 刷 虎彩印艺股份有限公司

规 格 787mm × 1092mm 1/16

印 张 17

字 数 300 千

版 次 2013 年 3 月第 1 版 2014 年 1 月第 2 次印刷

ISBN 978-7-5100-5881-3/F · 0089

定 价 49.80 元

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PREFACE

Tourism is a major economic sector globally and one that has shown remarkable resilience in the face of economic and political vicissitudes, and the occurrence of extreme events of many kinds, both natural and human-made, recovering rapidly from short-term dislocations. Since the onset of the “Open door” policy and, particularly since the late 1980s once infrastructure was put in place, tourism to China has expanded rapidly and the country is now one of the most-visited international tourism destinations. In addition, a massive domestic tourism industry has been developed. These trends have had and continue to have far-reaching economic, environmental and social implications for many places in the country.

Tourists are attracted to special and often fragile places. Tourism is, at the same time, both widely dispersed and highly concentrated. While there are few places in the world that receive no visitors, most tourists are concentrated in a small number of highly attractive places. The result is both opportunities and huge management challenges for these destinations.

UNESCO, through designation of World Heritage sites, has sought to protect special places of “universal value” in the interests of all humankind. However, according places this status draws attention to them and, in many cases, it increases pressures on them by attracting more tourists to them. Thus, there is often tension between the worthy goals of protection of iconic sites and their use for development through tourism. At the same time, the number of stakeholders with interests in such sites increases with international involvement, making them even



more difficult to manage because different stakeholders have different relationships, responsibilities, preferences and expectations for the site.

Local people, whose families may have lived in and around such sites for generations, have a special relationship to such sites and have much at stake when local heritage resources receive international acclaim and tourism development occurs. However, often their interests are ignored or forgotten when more powerful people make important decisions that will affect their future. Thus, it is important to ask and explore what happens to local residents when local natural and cultural resources become World Heritage sites. Are they aware of the plans for such sites? Are they consulted in the nomination and tourism development processes? Do they benefit from what transpires? More broadly, tourism is not usually developed as an end in itself but is usually a means of achieving other, more fundamental, goals and objectives, commonly including local development, however that may be defined. It follows that tourism planning should be as much about meeting the needs of local residents as attracting tourists from afar.

Such questions as those raised above have attracted my attention for many years and have been explored in collaboration with my graduate students in a variety of sites, particularly in Indonesia and China. This book is an outcome of such collaboration. Some of this research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada who approved a research grant entitled “Global-local Relationships in Chinese Heritage Sites”. Part of the costs of undertaking the research on which this book is based was covered by this grant, leading to the successful completion of a PhD thesis by Dr. Su at the University of Waterloo, Canada.

In selecting an iconic site, the Great Wall of China, as a focus of study and exploring what has happened to local people living adjacent to the site, Dr. Su makes an important contribution to understanding the tensions between preservation and development that are endemic but not restricted to World Heritage sites. Indeed, the issues that she explores are common to much tourism development. Although many of the important questions may remain essentially similar, the answers vary substantially with circumstances: the attributes of the site, its attraction to tourists, the preservation and development strategies that are put in place, and the procedures and priorities of the multiple jurisdictions that have interests in and management responsibilities for the site. In presenting the findings

of her research for two places adjacent to the Great Wall in the northern periphery of Beijing, Dr. Su gives a voice to local people whose perspectives are often muted or ignored in the rush to protect and develop many of the world's special places.

Dr. Geoffrey Wall
Professor of Geography and Environmental Management
University of Waterloo, Canada

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to many people who have offered their support, encouragement and assistance throughout my whole PhD journey and the writing of the book.

First of all, I would like to express my deep-hearted gratitude to Professor Geoffrey Wall at University of Waterloo. Geoff generously offered me his insightful advice and suggestions from his rich experience and knowledge, which guided me through the research process. His passion to his career and his quick response anytime I am seeking help also encouraged me to move forward.

My heart – felt appreciation goes to my advisory committee: Professor Clare Mitchell, Professor Robert Shipley, and Professor Stephen Smith for their patience, encouragement, and insightful and inspiring inputs. Without their contributions, this research would not be possible.

Moreover, I would like to express my special thanks to Ms. Hu Fang for her assistance in making connections with Badaling Special Zone Office. My sincere gratitude goes to Professor Wu Bihu of Peking University for providing valuable inputs on Chinese heritage research. In addition, special thanks to Mr. James Spear and Ms. Julie Upton – Wang of the Schoolhouse at Mutianyu for their assistance in putting me in contact with Mutianyu village major and the director of Mutianyu Great Wall tourist area and their interest and support in my research. My sincere thanks go to all interviewees at Badaling Special Zone Office and Mutianyu Great Wall tourist area and Mutianyu Village for taking time to answer my questions and providing valuable information and documents to support my research. Moreover, I would like to thank all questionnaire participants at Badaling and Mutianyu for their consideration and patience. Without all of your support



and assistance, this research could not be successful.

Finally, my deep gratitude goes to my parents, my husband and my little daughter for their love, understanding, support and encouragement. Thank all my friends and colleagues at Waterloo and Beijing, your company, encouragements and supports also give me strength to work ahead.

Su Mingming
School of Environment and Natural Resources
Renmin University of China
Beijing, China
March 2013

ABSTRACT

Heritage preservation and tourism development are inevitably intertwined at heritage sites. The relationships between tourism use and the preservation of heritage resources are characterized by both symbioses and tension. Achieving a balance between tourism and preservation is particularly complicated at World Heritage Sites with the involvement of international, national and local stakeholders with different interests and priorities. It is important to understand how international initiatives interact with local priorities at World Heritage Sites and how the international designation impacts heritage preservation, tourism development and community well – being at the local level. There is also an increasing concern to address this issue in a developing country context, such as China.

This research addresses the global – local relationship in tourism and preservation at World Heritage Sites in China through comparative case studies of Badaling and Mutianyu Great Wall World Heritage Sites in Beijing. Relationships between World Heritage and tourism, stakeholder collaboration and local participation were explored to achieve the research goal of enhancing understanding of global – local relationships affecting use and preservation at World Heritage Sites. Questionnaire surveys, key informant interviews, and field observation were conducted from September to December 2008 through field studies at Badaling and Mutianyu Great Wall sites, complemented by the collection of secondary data, primarily site plans and tourism statistics.

The inevitability of tourism at heritage sites, especially World Heritage



Sites, is demonstrated. Costs and benefits accruing to different stakeholders, especially those in adjacent communities, are studied in the context of the hierarchical and multi – departmental management structure in China. No direct control from an international organization, such as the United Nations through the World Heritage Convention, was identified at either site. The effectiveness of local participation and the distribution of benefits are evaluated using a two – dimensional framework. The inevitable involvement of multiple stakeholders with diverse and sometimes contradictory interests is demonstrated and the desirability of involving them in World Heritage planning and management are confirmed. In particular, this study reveals the ability and potential of tourism to be used to address both global priorities in heritage preservation and local interests in improving community well – being at World Heritage Sites. This research contributes to practice and to conceptual and empirical understanding of World Heritage planning and management and, hopefully, will inspire more research on World Heritage preservation and tourism development, particularly in developing countries like China.

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C Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 An overview

Heritage is a contested phenomenon, with its multiple uses and scales that are commonly associated with dissonant perspectives (Graham et al. , 2000). Tourism inevitably occurs at most heritage sites and the relationships between tourism use and the preservation of heritage resources are characterized by symbioses and tensions (Nuryanti, 1999; Tunbridge, 2007). Heritage can supply genuine attractions for tourism but excessive tourism may threaten heritage preservation. The potential of tourism activities to generate income and public support for heritage preservation is also recognized (Aas et al. , 2005; Peters, 1999).

World Heritage status represents the outcome of international initiatives to promote the identification, preservation and better management of heritage that is deemed to be valuable to all people. Possible impacts induced by World Heritage status have been identified, especially from tourism perspectives (Bandarin, 2004; Li et al. , 2008; Shackley, 1998). Tensions between heritage preservation and tourism are especially pronounced at World Heritage Sites, particularly in developing nations (Black & Wall, 2001; Li et al, 2000). With the involvement of international, national and local stakeholders, tourism and preservation at World Heritage Sites is particularly complicated and it is not easy to



achieve a balance among different interests and priorities. Local communities living in and around the sites, either by choice or, more commonly, by default, are involved in various ways (Scheyvens, 2003) and receive economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts (Singh et al., 1999; Nuryanti 1999). Therefore, it is important to understand how international initiatives interact with local priorities at World Heritage Sites and how the international recognition affects the preservation and tourism development of heritage resources and the local well-being.

China has been known for its rich cultural and natural heritage resources. Since joining the World Heritage Convention on 12 December 1985, China has 43 sites designated as World Heritage Sites, with a mixture of geographical and cultural diversity. The challenge in the preservation and management of these World Heritage Sites has attracted increasing attention from the Chinese government and scholars.

Drawing upon both western and Chinese literature, the status of research on tourism at World Heritage Sites in China is reviewed. With rich heritage resources and a large population base for tourism development, the importance of research on World Heritage is recognized (Fang, 2004; Wu et al., 2002). Considerable research has been undertaken to identify and analyze major issues in World Heritage tourism in China, such as the management structure, financial resources, tourism impacts, and community development. Although a substantial body of research exists, few addresses the global-local relationships in tourism development and heritage preservation. In particular, there is a need to undertake more detailed empirical research at a greater variety of sites, which are guided by clear concepts and appropriate theoretical frameworks, to enhance World Heritage management in China (Zhang and Bao, 2004). In addition, dialogue between heritage researchers within and outside of China should be enhanced (Zhang and Bao, 2004).

This study will bridge this knowledge gap by addressing issues of the global-local nexus in tourism and preservation at World Heritage Sites in China through comparative case studies of two Great Wall sites in Beijing. Findings will contribute to an enhanced understanding of the interdependency between heritage preservation and tourism development, global-local relationships, and the costs and benefits accruing to different stakeholders, especially the local community. Problems in the planning and management of World Heritage Sites will be identified

and suggestions will be made to address these deficiencies, particularly in the Chinese context.

1.2 Research Goals and Research Questions

Achieving a balance between heritage preservation and tourism at World Heritage Sites is a critical issue, especially in developing nations. Tensions between global priorities and local considerations are more pronounced in managing heritage with recognized universal values. Thus, measures should be sought to safeguard heritage preservation through proper tourism development and the balancing of local interests and global standards, particularly at World Heritage Sites. This is certainly an area that deserves more academic attention.

The research goal is to further the understanding of the global-local relationships in tourism and preservation of World Heritage Sites. Relationships between World Heritage and tourism, stakeholder collaboration, and local participation are identified as the three research objectives. Specific questions relating to each research objective are proposed and explored through field studies at two Great Wall sites (Badaling and Mutianyu) in Beijing, China:

1. World Heritage and tourism relationships: The extent to which tourism is considered in the designation, planning, plan implementation and management of the chosen sites will be examined. What are the impacts of the World Heritage designation on tourism development at the sites? How does tourism development impact heritage preservation?

2. Stakeholder collaboration: Who are the major stakeholders in heritage planning and management? What is the management structure of the heritage site? How are these stakeholders positioned in the management structure? What are their roles?

3. Local participation: How is the local community considered and involved in the World Heritage designation and the following development? What are the costs and benefits to the local community?