

The Loss of a Cultural Heritage and Tourism Resource: Singapore's Disappearing Burial Grounds

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the paper is the meanings, uses and prospects of old burial grounds which are discussed within the context of the South East Asian city state of Singapore. Burial sites are shown to be complex entities serving multiple purposes, including that of heritage resource and leisure and tourism amenity, but to be under threat from urbanisation in a rapidly modernising metropolis where land is scarce. Official agencies profess appreciation of heritage as a whole, especially in defining the identity of the nation and its people as well as in attracting tourists. However, development appears to take priority over conservation as evidenced by disappearing burial grounds in general and the fate of an historic Chinese cemetery in particular. Cemeteries emerge as repositories of memory and spaces for leisure as well as theatres where conflicts over land use are enacted and government power is asserted.

KEYWORDS: *Burial Grounds; Heritage Conservation, Singapore; Urban Development*

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the importance and future of burial grounds with specific reference to their roles as a cultural heritage and tourism resource in Singapore. An account is presented of conditions in the city state, considering the agencies and agendas at work, and particular attention is given to an historic Chinese cemetery scheduled to be cleared for a new road, housing and a light railway station. Official commitment to development, as a prerequisite for the economic growth on which the country's future is said to depend, is seen to pose a threat to old cemeteries. Nevertheless, there is awareness of the merits of heritage conservation expressed in a policy which is partly inspired by the imperatives of nation building and citizen wellbeing as well as the demands of the tourism industry. Popular engagement with heritage matters also appears to be increasing, putting pressure to respond on a long standing government confronting the possibility of political change. Circumstances in Singapore merit examination because it is a rapidly modernising and relatively young country where there is still some uncertainty about national identity. Its case serves to illuminate the inherent tensions between conservation and development evident within the context of burial grounds and the challenges of

securing an appropriate balance which encompasses the needs of residents and visitors. Findings are based on the analysis of material in the public domain gathered from a range of sources, supplemented by fieldwork observations.

MEANINGS AND USES OF BURIAL GROUNDS AND UNDERLYING AGENDAS

Research into the many different aspects of dying has been termed death studies (Maddrell and Sidaway, 2010) and one strand in the literature deals with the disposal and commemoration of the dead (CRG, 2011; Rugg, 1998). Places of internment are commonly described as a burial ground (Rugg, 2000) which is a phrase usually employed interchangeably with graveyard and cemetery, as it is hereafter, although some dictionaries define both the latter as appendages of churches. The topic has attracted the interest of geographers in particular and academics from other fields including anthropology, architecture, health, history, planning, psychology and sociology. Such a spectrum is indicative of the many roles filled by cemeteries which extend beyond a site of burial and remembrance to visitor attraction.

Burial grounds are sacred spaces with mystical elements which satisfy religious requirements and have a socio-cultural significance (Francaviglia, 1971). Helping to answer questions about the workings of society past and present, they constitute cultural landscapes (Francis, 2003) which store meanings and memories. Status and power are communicated by the size and elaborateness of tombs and cemeteries are microcosms of external physical and social environments (Lloyd Warner, 1959; Sloane, 1991). Their study thus affords insights into history, evolving conditions, contemporary society and prevailing belief systems (Francis et al, 2005). Kong (1999) writes of graveyards as deathspaces where divergent sets of values clash and, for Teather, (2001, p. 185), they represent an 'ongoing process of conflict and compromise involving the traditional and the modern, the personal and the political and the sacred and the secular'. Political actions and ideologies have implications for the physical fabric of burial grounds and traditional rituals surrounding death, planning and land use policies sometimes threatening historic sites (Bollig, 1997). Space is thereby politicised and contested and a theatre for the assertion of and opposition to state economic and political power (Tan and Yeoh, 2002; Yeoh and Tan, 1995). These dynamics have been observed in Mainland China, for example, with dominant agendas of modernist planning, the market economy and Communist Party doctrine shaping its landscapes of death (Teather, 2001). Wartime graves are a distinctive type of burial ground and attempts to recreate an English garden in British and Commonwealth war cemeteries overseas have been depicted as an exercise in the construction and articulation of nationhood (Morris, 1997). Meanings of cemeteries are thus multiple and mutable, as are attitudes towards them and their uses. Places associated with death can inspire fear (Tuan, 1979) and

Huang (2007, p. 207) describes public cemeteries in Taiwan as 'frightening and forbidding', avoided by residents except when tradition calls for visits to ancestral graves. Hong Kong's cemeteries and columbaria are 'dangerous and powerful places that link earth, heaven and the underworld' (Teather, 1998, p. 21). Elsewhere and in contrast, those in public hands may come to be seen as a park or leisure amenity. They afford amusement of miscellaneous sorts, existing as much for the living as the dead. Such an occurrence is not new and cemeteries were popular for recreation in Victorian Britain (Brookes et al, 1989) and nineteenth century America (Linden-Ward, 1988). Activities undertaken now are various and American researchers recorded over 22 categories in a Boston urban cemetery, amongst them Frisbee throwing and playing hide and seek (Jordan, 1982). Certain behaviour is, however, destructive and desecration of graves for whatever reasons retains the power to shock.

Burial grounds can additionally be a tourist attraction (Seaton, 2002) and are promoted as such by destination authorities (Scott 2009). They may have an artistic and aesthetic appeal in some instances (Worpole, 2003) and any attractiveness for the general audience is likely to be heightened if they house the remains of famous figures, demonstrated by Pere-Lachaise in Paris where numerous luminaries lie buried (Northstar Gallery, 1998). Individual tombs sometimes are a centre of religious pilgrimage for devotees or tourists as a whole while more secular pilgrims are drawn to the graves of Hollywood film stars (Rojek, 1993) and musicians (Alderman, 2002). War graves are visited by people with a personal connection and those with a more casual interest (Dunkley et al, 2011). Visitors may be motivated by a fascination with death and human suffering, a predisposition which has been labelled dark tourism (Stone and Sharpley, 2008), and some commentators have spoken of tombstone tourists (Stanton, 2003).

Tourism may be a positive force for proper maintenance and conservation and the prospects of older cemeteries are a theme in the literature. Neglect is recognised to be a problem (Meyer and Peters, 2001) while the better known may suffer from adverse impacts caused by large numbers of visitors. Taiwanese authorities are endeavouring to increase recreational usage of the island's public landscaped cemeteries (Huang, 2007), but a more pressing concern in parts of Asia is encroaching urban and industrial development apparent in metropolises such as Hong Kong (Teather, 1998) and those of South Korea (Teather and Rii, 2000). Cities across much of Asia have undergone transformation in recent decades, fuelled by economic advances and inward migration (Rimmer and Dick 2009), generating debate about the consequences (Goh and Yeoh 2003). A regular outcome is the sacrifice of built heritage (Winter 2009) and more natural spaces. Official plans to redevelop burial grounds may be thwarted, however, as revealed in the survival of Bukit China cemetery in Malacca, Malaysia, after strong protests from the minority Chinese population (Carter, 1993 and 1997). Singapore's burial grounds are also at

risk in ways which are outlined in a later section after discussion of the principal parts played by cemeteries in the city state.

SINGAPORE'S CEMETERIES AS HISTORIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL NARRATIVES

The island of Singapore lies at the southern tip of the Malayan Peninsula and its original inhabitants were primarily Malays, but there is little documentation about their burial sites (Tan, 2011). Formal burial grounds date from the nineteenth century (Harfield, 1988) after Singapore was claimed as a trading post for the British East India Company by Stamford Raffles in 1819. Workers flocked to the bustling port from around the world, especially the Chinese who soon outnumbered the indigenous Malays. It later acquired the status of a British colony, combined with Malacca and Penang in 1862 to form the Straits Settlements. British rule was interrupted by the Second World War and Japanese occupation, but then resumed in 1945 when moves towards autonomy in Singapore and neighbouring Malaysia, another colony, began. Singapore initially joined the Malaysia Federation, but was expelled in 1965 and became independent. There were doubts about the survival of the new republic, but it was to flourish under Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party (National Heritage Board, 1998) which has been in power since winning the 1959 election. The government is renowned for its pursuit of order and control (EIU, 2009), impinging on many aspects of life, which has been tolerated by citizens in a type of unspoken contract whereby they enjoy security and prosperity in return (Lee, 2002).

Singapore's history was once reflected more fully in older graveyards where the dead from former eras were laid to rest, including in the grounds of the Christian churches established by European settlers. Many cemeteries and the stories they held have been obliterated, but those remaining often have tales to tell. For example, the Japanese Cemetery founded in 1891 marks the Japanese presence in Singapore and has a section for Japanese *karayuki-san* which translates literally as Miss Gone Overseas. These were young women from poor families who were sold in Japan in the nineteenth century and brought to Singapore as prostitutes. During the Second World War, Japanese soldiers and civilians were interred at the site and memorials were erected by Japanese Prisoners of War at the end of hostilities (Blackburn and Lim, 2011). Cemeteries also convey the island's diversity of cultures and faiths such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam as well as the ancestor worship characteristic of the Chinese. Cemeteries for the Chinese were the most prominent historically, tending to be large in scale (Colony of Singapore, 1952), and clan associations were the principal providers.

One notable example which sheds light on episodes in Singapore's history and socio-cultural circumstances is Bukit Brown Chinese Cemetery which occupies 40 hectares of land in what is now a city suburb. Bukit is Malay for hill and Brown was

the surname of a shop owner and trader who arrived in Singapore in the 1840s and whose house was built nearby. The cemetery was officially opened in 1922 for the wider Chinese community, both rich and poor, and accounted for over 40% of formally registered Chinese burials within the municipality by 1929. It was to attain occasional notoriety as the scene of murders, robberies and gang fights (Kartini, 2009). Around 100,000 are interred in Bukit Brown from possibly as early as 1833 through to 1973 when it was closed for burials. Several of the dead were pioneers of Singapore whose deeds are commemorated in modern place and street names. About 80,000 tombstones survive and many are weather beaten and overgrown, yet the more elaborate still possess the ability to impress. They are adorned with auspicious stone images and sometimes decorative tiles. The largest plot belongs to a nineteenth century businessman and his wife and is guarded over by a two metre high statue of a Sikh, the Indians who were customarily watchmen in Singapore (McKenzie, 2011).

The cemetery informs about Chinese traditions and customs, notably those adhered to in the southern regions of Fujian and Guandong from where most of the early migrants to Singapore came (Singapore Heritage Society and National Heritage Board, 2011). Fengshui or geomancy was influential whereby the configuration of the landscape and relative positioning of wind and water elements determine human fate. Balance is essential if harmony is to be attained and this applies to the dead as well as the living, failure leading to bad fortune for the deceased in the afterlife and their offspring in the real world. Conventional graves are large and visible from a distance with an omega-shaped tombstone, allowing sufficient room for the performance of rituals. The soul resides in the grave and selecting an auspicious plot is thus crucial, hills being favoured due to the belief that life emanates from mountains (Koh, 2010).

SINGAPORE'S CEMETERIES AS SPACES FOR REMEMBERING, LEARNING AND LEISURE

Cemeteries in Singapore act as places for families and friends to remember the dead, although there may be no living next of kin to mourn at older graves. Customs depend upon the religion and its strictures, but veneration of ancestors is an important Chinese practice as previously mentioned. The resting places of the dead must be visited, tended and undisturbed (Watson, 1988) and Qing Ming is an occasion of significance for Singaporean Chinese. During the month that the festival falls, relatives make a pilgrimage to ancestral tombs and carry out a series of rites and rituals, repairing graves and making offerings. Contracting companies work to tidy up neglected graves and individuals may be hired by families to undertake the necessary cleaning, seen as a filial duty (McKenzie, 2011). While meeting the material and non-material needs of the dead and bereaved, Singapore's cemeteries

offer a window onto the past in a manner already suggested. The Singapore Heritage Society (Tan, 2011) contends that they educate about former societies and cultures and should be treated by locals as open air museums and parks. Bukit Brown is lauded as one such living museum and was chosen as a venue for walking tours organised jointly by the National Heritage Board (NHB) and Singapore Heritage Society as part of the former's 2011 outreach programme. The NHB has official responsibility for fostering 'nationhood, identity and creativity through heritage and cultural development' (National Heritage Board, 2008, p. 3). The cemetery is the location for tours conducted at night by a private business known as Asia Paranormal Investigators, a name reflective of participant interest in the supernatural as well as history and culture. It is also a tranquil and relatively natural environment in intensively urbanised and industrialised Singapore, comprising undulating terrain which is home to a mix of vegetation and bird and animal life. The Nature Society holds bird watching excursions there and it has been designated a Tree Conservation Area by the National Parks Board. Amongst other leisure pursuits undertaken by individuals in the grounds are walking and jogging.

Few overseas visitors make their way to Bukit Brown unlike some of Singapore's older burial sites. The Japanese Cemetery has become a memorial park and is a stop on sightseeing tours for Japanese tourists (Blackburn and Lim, 2011). Tombs of former sultans and their families are found in the Kampong Glam district (Widodo, 2011) which is closely associated with the Muslim Malay community and one of the ethnic enclaves featured regularly in tourist itineraries. One burial ground mentioned in the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) general guide is the Kranji War Memorial (ACMG, 2011) which contains the graves of 4,461 service personnel, mainly from the UK and Commonwealth countries, who died during the Second World War. The grounds are maintained by the UK Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and ceremonies on Armistice Day and ANZAC Day are attended by official representatives from relevant nations and veterans and private individuals whose relatives are buried at Kranji. Another curiosity is the headstones from one of the oldest Christian cemeteries, now defunct, which have been mounted on the walls of what is now Fort Canning Park where they constitute a social history of Singapore in the nineteenth century (Miksic, 2011).

SINGAPORE'S CEMETERIES AS PLACES OF CONTROL AND CONFLICT

Official worries about cemeteries in Singapore predate independence and colonial authorities struggled to cope with the proliferation of Chinese burial grounds. They eventually sought to reduce the number for professed reasons of health and hygiene and land use optimisation, but moves were also an outcome of the desire by government institutions to wrest control from ethnic and clan associations (Yeoh 1991 and 1999; Yeoh and Kong 2003; Yeoh and Tan 1995). The

new government too was anxious to assert its authority and adopted a strategy of centralised and comprehensive planning which was enacted through powers of compulsory acquisition. The 1965 Master Plan, founded upon detailed land use surveys, declared that cemetery ground would be deemed available for development (Singapore Planning Department, 1967). By the early 1970s, cemeteries near and around the heart of the city were being closed (Singapore Parliament, 1972) in a policy which was justified by references to the common good and nation-building efforts. The land was given over primarily to housing estates as well as shopping centres, transport infrastructure and other projects. Cremation had been advocated by the colonial administration, the first state crematorium opening in 1962, and continued to be encouraged as the best way of dealing with the intensifying shortage of burial space. The notion seemed to gain public acceptance (Yuen, 1999), although it is contrary to Chinese tradition and not an option for Muslims. The burial period for all graves was restricted to 15 years in 1998 and, after this time, graves are exhumed. Remains are cremated and stored in columbaria or re-buried in smaller plots (National Environment Agency, 2011) in a strictly regulated process (Tan and Yeoh, 2002).

As a consequence of repossession and re-use, there were 60 cemeteries in Singapore in 2011, compared to 209 registered burial grounds in 1953. Only one is open for new burials and is a 700 hectare collection of cemeteries devoted to the principal faiths, together with a columbarium. While this trend has been largely unchallenged in the past, the future of Bukit Brown has stimulated unprecedented debate. The cemetery was earmarked for housing and a Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) urban railway station in the strategic planning of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in the 1990s. The URA deals with land use, physical planning and development under the auspices of the Ministry of National Development and directed by the long term Concept Plan. The decision about Bukit Brown was reconfirmed in 2011 when it appeared that work might start soon, station plans having already been prepared. It was then announced that a four lane road would be built, starting in 2012 and crossing part of the cemetery, in order to relieve traffic congestion on existing roads. The Singapore Heritage and Nature Societies both expressed opposition because of the damaging repercussions for the natural environment and historical legacy. The impending threat galvanised public interest in the site, disclosed by correspondence in the letters page of the main newspaper, sometimes written by descendants of the buried, and online. Objectors typically complained about the URA 'inadvertently erasing an important component of the nation's identity' which was a 'powerful marker of Singapore's past' (The Straits Times, 2011a). Another spoke of the chance to 'breathe community life' into the site by adding facilities such as a museum to draw Singaporeans and visitors (The Sunday Times, 2011a). Government representatives expressed their sympathy with the opponents' position, but insisted that the national interest entailed

development. A URA spokesperson said that 'we have to take a balanced long-term approach in land-use planning and be very selective in what we conserve because of our land scarcity. As our population grows, we have to meet increasing land needs for various uses'. Bukit Brown, together with Bidadari, was 'needed for housing purposes' and excluded from conservation plans (The Straits Times, 2011b). Bidadari opened in 1904 and was once Singapore's third largest cemetery (Cornelius-Takahama, 2004; Williams, 2011). It was closed for burials by 1973 and cleared for high-density housing in 2001 without any systematic documentation of graves (Goh, 2002). As a memorial to those who had been buried there, about 20 Christian and Muslim tombstones and the original gates were moved to a park which was a feature of the newly developed site (Koh, Auger and Yap, 2006). Objectors bemoaned the likelihood that Bukit Brown was to suffer the same fate as Bidadari and criticisms of plans persisted. The relevant government minister admitted that 'we could have done better, a bit more of these conversations and briefings when we announced some of these things, maybe get more stakeholders, and earlier' (The Sunday Times, 2011b). After some months, the authorities did agree to fund a project to record details of the tombs affected by road construction which numbered an estimated 5,000 to 10,000. Less than a year was allowed for completion of the task, however, with doubts about whether this would be possible despite support from volunteers intending to employ assorted and sometimes high technology methods (The Straits Times, 2011c).

SECURING A PLACE FOR CONSERVED HERITAGE IN SINGAPORE

The story of Singapore's cemeteries to date indicates that modernisation and development are at the forefront of government thinking. Burial grounds are seen to occupy valuable land which could be put to more productive use and are therefore not prominent in physical planning and official visions of the future. At the same time, there is an appreciation of the significance of heritage and the need for some conservation linked to issues of identity, quality of life and tourism. As well as pursuing objectives related to growth, the URA is also concerned with making Singapore a 'home to cherish by safeguarding places of identity and heritage' (URA, 2008a). There were 94 sites, comprising over 7,000 buildings, designated for conservation by the URA and 61 National Monuments chosen by the Public Monuments Board in 2011 (Henderson, 2011; URA, 2011). Delineation of parkland is also part of the URA's remit and it produced the first island-wide Leisure Plan in 2008 designed to expand recreational possibilities and green spaces for a population with rising expectations (URA, 2008b). Parks and greenery are hailed as contributing to a 'health, happy and enviable Singapore' (National Parks Board, 2011) and images of a clean and green Garden City are central to formal and public conceptions of Singapore (URA, 2010; Yuen, 1996).

A stated official aim is to promote active lifestyles and 'participation and ownership of heritage', contributing to a 'greater sense of belonging' which will 'draw us closer to our families, to our respective communities and more importantly, to our country' (Government of Singapore, 2011). The aforementioned NHB claims that heritage and culture are a 'source of strength and ballast in times of uncertainty and change ... a stabilising keel connecting all Singaporeans with their hearts and souls' (National Heritage Board, 2008, p. 5). Heritage in diverse forms is thus a nation building tool, helping to bind together the disparate populace (URA, 1991) composed of Chinese (75%), Malays (14%), Indians (9%) and an Others category which includes Eurasians (Singapore Statistics 2009). There is a belief that instilling officially approved constructions of nationhood and national identity will incite pride in and loyalty to the country (Yuen, 2005) and, by implication, to the government as the architect of the modern nation and its accomplishments. Cultivation of such sentiments is deemed essential because of Singapore's short history and racial mix which have prompted official fears about fragmentation and loss of control.

As well as being a tool in the pursuit of socio-cultural and political strategies, heritage is agreed to have the capacity to earn income through the adaptive reuse of conserved buildings (Teh, 2006) and as a tourism product. Concerns about the damaging consequences for tourist appeal of the disappearance of built heritage underlay various initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s (Smith, 1999) and the STB is active in conservation projects. Authorities have, however, been censured for excessive intervention which compromises authenticity (Henderson, 2000). Traditional cultural heritage attractions are also taking second place in destination promotion to attractions such as shopping malls, high profile sporting events, evening entertainments and integrated resorts with casinos. The last proved controversial, overturning a long standing ban on casinos, but helped international arrivals reach a record 13.2 million in 2011 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2012). Despite investment in new amenities, heritage is still recognised as having the power to attract visitors and assist in differentiation and positioning in a market characterised by intense competition amongst destinations worldwide.

Positive opinions about conserved heritage might lead to an assumption that old cemeteries will be respected and saved for posterity. Selected examples such as Bukit Brown seem to be possible candidates for the award of conservation or even National Monument status and are well suited for the accolade of heritage sites under the latest government schemes to acknowledge places of importance to the community (National Library Board, 2010; The Straits Times, 2011d). However, formal arguments about clearing burial grounds to allow progress for the common good appear to be prevailing over notions of them as a cultural heritage resource imbued with private and social symbolism and leisure space. Unlike other forms of heritage deemed worthy of conservation, old cemeteries yield fewer economic or

political returns and make relatively heavy demands on land, often in prime locations. Development is privileged over continuity and tradition while death is reduced to a problem requiring the practical solution of cremation, irrespective of customs.

Looking ahead, there is a possibility of change due to a new political climate in Singapore after the most recent election in 2011 when the incumbent regime's vote fell to around 60%. The historic low was explained in part by economic grievances amongst middle and lower income earners, worried about the escalating cost of living and influx of foreign workers, calling into question the aforementioned social contract. A more assertive and better organised opposition and online debate using social media was another factor, emboldening government critics and the electorate at large. The PAP which is now led by Lee Kuan Yew's son still holds a Parliamentary majority, but statements in the aftermath of what he called a 'watershed' election suggest a new willingness to listen and respond to the electorate (Reuters, 2011); hence perhaps the ministerial statement about Bukit Brown. Singapore may be at something of a crossroad politically and an administration of greater responsiveness coupled with a more confident civil society could result in some policy modifications. Decisions might no longer be driven primarily by economics and politics, but give greater regard to socio-cultural and environmental considerations so that remaining cultural and natural heritage resources are better protected.

CONCLUSION

Singapore's geography, history, political system, economy and society endow it with distinctiveness. Together, these factors have produced a particular heritage and experience of nationhood and determined how these are understood and made use of by government. They have also created a unique leisure environment and tourist destination which is one of the leading centres in the region. Claims about an appreciation of the contribution of both cultural and natural heritage to society and the tourism industry and a commitment to protection do not necessarily translate into action. Pragmatism tends to prevail in decisions about land use with the ultimate objective being the maintenance of the economic growth presented as critical to survival. However, arguments in favour of saving remnants of the past are increasingly being heard and applied to burial grounds as demonstrated by the case of Bukit Brown. Cemeteries can illuminate history which, in turn, is intrinsic to the identity of the country and its inhabitants as a whole, providing continuity and connectivity. As such, they afford leisure and learning opportunities for residents and enhance the experience and understanding of visitors. Heritage can indeed be a tool in nation building, a leisure setting and a visitor attraction, but sufficient physical evidence needs to be retained and political and commercial interference

minimised if it is to exercise these functions effectively. The challenge for authorities is that of attaining an equitable balance between the imperatives of development, heritage conservation and leisure and tourism in which sites such as burial grounds are allocated a proper place.

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Definition of Cultural Tourism: The journey of people to specific destinations that offer cultural attractions, including historic sites and artistic and cultural events and shows, with the aim of acquiring new knowledge and experiences that meet the intellectual needs and individual growth of the traveler.Â Type of tourism that relies on cultural resources (i.e. heritage) of a region and provides opportunities to learn more about the regionâ€™s way of life. Learn more in: Entertainment and Food Tourism in the Backdrop of Late Modernity and a Reflection on Turkey. 6. Is the movement of people to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. Tourism is a circumstance of worldwide significance. A prestige human characteristic is a curiosity to see various places, peoples and customs, which the.Â It includes irreplaceable historic, cultural and natural resourcesâ€ as stated by N THP (Young, September 27, 2002). 1 page, 239 words.Â Cultural and heritage tourism is the old asset of the â€œnewâ€ tourism phenomena. Since the days of the Romans, human have been traveling for visiting historical attractions, cultural landmarks, participating special events and festivals; however, they were never realized as being a discrete group of travelers before.Â Moreover, the large sections of the community become dependent on tourism at the expense of other industries, leading to loss of self-reliance and traditional-style activities. Cultural heritage tourism is an important link that should be part of all ecotourism products and tour packages. People travel to see how other people live, to experience their neighbor-hoods, and to understand the natural environments that define their existence.Â Cooperation between WTO and UNESCO was established under terms of a previous accord signed in 1979. During the past decade, the two organizations have collaborated closely on a project to link cultural tourism and ecotourism, developing tourism packages along the famous Silk Road, the ancient caravan route linking Eu-rope and Asia which was traveled by Marco Polo. They are also working to develop a heritage tourism package which will educate visitors about historic sites associated with the African slave trade.