

# Tourism and Monarchy in Southeast Asia



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Edited by

Ploysri Porananond and Victor T. King

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9949-6

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9949-9

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## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION: TOURISM AND MONARCHY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: FROM SYMBOLISM TO COMMODITIZATION

PLOYSRI PORANANOND AND VICTOR T. KING

### **Royalty and Tourism: a Neglected Field of Research**

It is well known that monarchies around the world play a significant role in tourism development and the tourist experience. Debates about the level of finance required to support primarily constitutional monarchies often refer to the positive tourist attraction provided by royal pageantry, palaces, temples and churches, architecture, museum collections, and historical legacies. The argument for the positive benefits which royalty brings in contributing to the increase in international visitor arrivals but also in enhancing the level of domestic visitor numbers to sites of royal recognition and national celebration are frequently marshalled on behalf of the British royal family as a very well-known global phenomenon. Where would London-based tourism be if it were not for Buckingham Palace, and the associated royal parks, historical buildings, collections and landscapes surrounding it, the annual calendar of royal celebrations, anniversaries and events, and special occasions like royal weddings and births, royal visits to the provinces, and official openings of buildings, sites, and events? The British national newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* ran articles in 2010 and 2011 (see, for example, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk), 28 July 2010; 20 June 2011; 9 July 2011) on themes such as “More than ever, the Royal Family is worth every penny” and that it “attracts £500 million from overseas tourism”.

Although not on the same scale, other royal families in Europe also have a considerable role to play in promoting tourism in their countries and overseas: among others, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Monaco, Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, and Spain. Royalty then is

business; it attracts tourists to royal sites and routes, and because members of royal families frequently travel and tour, and sites are given special significance if they have been given royal patronage or they are associated with the past presence of members of royalty, marked very often by special plaques and other markers of royal blessing, benefaction, and benevolence. It is not merely that tourists visit sites but that they buy royal souvenirs and other memorabilia as well.

However, up to now the literature on tourism and monarchy has been primarily devoted to the history and experiences of Western Europe, and particularly the United Kingdom. A landmark book in this respect is *Royal Tourism: Excursions around Monarchy* edited by Philip Long and Nicola Palmer (2008). The book is overwhelmingly devoted to British royalty (see, for example, Baxendale 2008; Butler 2008; Palmer 2008). But, in his editorial introduction, Long remarks that “there has been little work that has explored the broad and specific relationships between royalty and tourism in contemporary contexts. A direct, specific focus on the subject of ‘royal tourism’ has thus been overlooked in the tourism literature” (2008, 1–2). The same can be said with even more force for “royal tourism” in Southeast Asia, and other parts of Asia, as well as in the Middle East and Africa. Surprisingly little attention has been given to the relationship between monarchy and tourism development in Southeast Asia, still less on the historical dimension of monarchy and tourism there. This may be simply because, in several Southeast Asian countries, colonialism and then decolonization and the establishment of political independence have marginalized or removed traditional royalty and its symbolic and ritual functions at the centre of the nation-state. It is only more recently with the increasing importance of cultural, historical and heritage tourism that monarchy has begun to be resurrected as an important element in the service industry and in economic development plans.

The need to shift the focus from European to Asian royalty is important not only to begin to fill gaps in the literature on monarchy and tourism outside Europe but also to attempt to avoid the increasing criticism of tourism studies that its major perspectives, orientations and paradigms have been based on an overly Eurocentric preoccupation (see, for example, Cohen and Cohen 2012, 2014, 2015). In this connection “rethinking Asian tourism” with the objective of “Asianizing” it has become an especially crucial arena for recent research (Ploysri Porananond and King 2014). Three examples with regard to the comparison of the relationships between monarchy and tourism in Western



Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, and Southeast Asia might help illustrate some of the differences in their character and emphasis. First, in the Kingdom of Thailand, for example, monarchy has an important religious and sacred status, and in Negara Brunei Darussalam and the Federation of Malaysia the social and cultural distance between sultans and the wider population and the aura surrounding royalty, though decreasing, is still significant. In this regard there are certain areas of royal life on which newspapers, television and other media are not permitted to report. We should also note here that the King of Cambodia, as a resurrected constitutional monarch, occupies a somewhat ambiguous and tenuous position in a socialist state. However, this is not to say that members of the respective royal families in Southeast Asia do not interact on a public stage with their citizens or that the population is not interested in the personal dimension of their royalty. But the kinds of intrusive reporting, for example, of the personal lives of members of the British royal family and their constant pursuit by the paparazzi would not be allowed in Southeast Asia.

This public exposure in Europe but especially in the United Kingdom which, in raising royal profiles, feeds into tourism activities in certain respects also requires a formidable public relations, press office and publicity machine employed by the royal family for the purposes of both promotion and the provision of information and also the management of the media. Again the situation of Southeast Asian royalty in this respect is rather different. It is hard to imagine the emergence of the media-driven international celebrity status of the late Diana, Princess of Wales and the interest occasioned by the marriage, travels, activities and offspring of Prince William and his wife Catherine, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, occurring in royal circles in Southeast Asia.

Secondly, and related to this first point about royalty and the media, there is the issue of what has been termed the “domestication” of the British royal family and the fact that royalty in the United Kingdom is talked about and perceived in terms of “a family” (Palmer 2008). In some sense the nation is seen to own “the family”, which in familial terms represents and expresses the nation-state. Through the media and the controlled access that the royal family allows, a distanced intimacy is established. In Southeast Asia, though family and kinship are vitally important, the equally important dimension of respect and obeisance does not permit this kind of media-generated intimacy. Where royalty has an established position in government then respect and hierarchy do not allow access and the domestication of royalty in national terms.

Thirdly, where royalty has been removed either through colonial decision or post-colonial nationalist ideology and action in Southeast Asia, the relationship between monarchy and tourism is reconstructed and historically engineered specifically to generate tourist dollars. Monarchy is no longer present and active in some Southeast Asian countries, but memories and legacies are presented in terms of what the nationalist political ideology and its interpretation of history require. Again this presents particular differences with the constitutional monarchies of Western Europe. Living representatives of the past in Europe are still available as resources for tourism development. On the other hand in Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar and Indonesia (though with certain exceptions in Java and Bali) monarchy is expressed in monumental remains, palaces, royal residences, mausoleums, mosques and temples as tangible vestiges of the past. In other words monarchy and tourism are much more decisively located in a re-interpreted and reconstructed past.

As we argue in this volume what the study of the relationship between monarchy and tourism also requires is a conceptual focus on what constitutes heritage; on royal sites as arenas of negotiation and contestation as well as foci of the varying interpretations and interests of different stakeholders; on what is displayed, promoted and made accessible to tourists and what is not and remains silent and unexpressed; on the ways in which royalty has defined, organized and presented space and made it available for touristic intercourse; and on the complex interplay between invented tradition, symbolic representation and commoditization.

## **Monarchy in Southeast Asia: a Cursory History**

The histories of monarchy in Southeast Asia are extremely well covered in several recent volumes, but the most useful for us are those by Osborne (2013) and Reid (2015). In the former French Indochinese states of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, the colonial regime worked through traditional monarchical institutions, but these were eliminated when socialist regimes gained power after the Second World War, and their imperial and royal histories were removed from the nationalist narrative. Nevertheless, monarchical legacies and memories have enjoyed something of a revival recently, and more definitively in Cambodia with the introduction of a constitutional monarchy in 1993, the renaming of the country as the Kingdom of Cambodia, the resurrection of King Norodom Sihanouk as

head of state and, after his abdication in October 2004, the succession of his eldest son, Norodom Sihamoni. But during the stormy years of anti-colonial politics, the Cold War and military struggle for full national independence from the 1940s to the 1970s, monarchy was seen as an anachronism of privilege in Marxist-Leninist and Maoist-inspired ideologies which emphasized social equality, the equality of opportunity and the elimination of what was considered to be an outdated “feudal” past. A further issue was the accusation from secular nationalist political leaders that traditional rulers (kings, sultans, rajahs and emperors) and their supporting institutions of nobility and aristocracy had conspired with external powers to subjugate and exploit their own people, operating feudal regimes which benefited an exploitative elite at the expense of the majority of the population.

In Myanmar on the other hand the British had already dismantled the power and administration of the Burmese king and the Konbaung dynasty in the late nineteenth century following the third Anglo-Burmese War of 1885. The colonial power established direct rule and put in place governing structures, which relocated and resituated Burma as a separately administered colony under the British Indian Raj. In this regard independent Burma’s past in the context of General Ne Win’s “Burmese road to socialism” from 1962 was not seen as something that should be celebrated other than for those elements which were selected to support a centralized and authoritarian ideology directed to the promotion of a nationalist-socialist-Buddhist agenda.

Among all the mainland Southeast Asian countries Thailand survived as an independent monarchy, and, during Rama IV’s and Rama V’s reign a nation-state was constructed, with European advice and guidance, which defined Thailand (or Siam as it was then known) in increasingly modern geopolitical terms; the Siamese/Thai “geo-body” was created (Thongchai Winichakul 1994). King Mongkut (Rama IV) and King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) wielded considerable political power which served to shape and legitimize the nation in royal and Central Siamese terms and which celebrated the Chakri Dynasty and its connections with the ancient kingdoms of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai. In Thailand therefore, kingship and its associated national symbols play a significant role to this day, even after the coup of 1932 which introduced a constitutional monarchy.

In the Philippines, particularly in the northern two-thirds of the country, there had been no major royal institutions on the scale of the Muslim sultanates in the Malay states, Java, and Brunei when direct Spanish rule was imposed increasingly from the sixteenth century;

moreover, the sultanates in the southern Philippines, including Sulu, were relatively minor players in Spanish colonial administration. The post-independence state of the Philippines then founded a secular republic along American lines without recognition of traditional institutions of leadership, and no significant monarchical legacy is identifiable.

Turning to the other island nation-states of Southeast Asia, the Indonesian revolution, with the partial exception of the success of the sultanate of Yogyakarta and the role played by the Sultan of Yogyakarta, and the more recent tourism-related successes of Balinese royalty, also instituted a republic. Singapore took the same republican path when it broke from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965 and separated itself from the Federation's institutions associated with the Muslim Malays and the sultanates. However, monarchy in its absolute form has survived and indeed flourished as a governing institution in Negara Brunei Darussalam since the granting of full independence by the British in 1984. Malaysia also maintained a constitutional monarchy. But more than this the politically moderate federal government of the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, himself of royal stock, maintained the symbolic and ceremonial roles of the sultans from the British period, particularly in presiding over Malay Muslim culture and ensuring its dominant role in the construction of the symbolism and imagery of the modern Malaysian nation-state. The Malaysian political elite also devised an ingenious five-year system of rotation between the nine Malay sultans (of Perak, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Johor, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan) to provide the constitutional monarch, the King of Malaysia, as the head of state.

Therefore the survival of monarchy and its associated symbolism and historical legacy in Southeast Asia has been diverse and disparate, and, in the nature of a colonized region, some traditional institutions have survived because they served the political and administrative expedience and requirements of the colonial power, while others disappeared because they were quite simply dispensable in that they were perceived by the colonial powers at the time to present unacceptable problems for efficient and effective foreign-imposed governance and administration. Since political independence in the post-war period the fortunes of monarchy have also varied between different countries in the region; but in all cases the form and content of monarchy have been transformed and reconstituted.

## **The Transformation of Monarchy and Tourism Development**

Yet what seems to be happening in the region, with the recognition of the economic importance of tourism and its incorporation into national economic and regional development strategies, and, more especially, the increasingly important role of cultural and heritage tourism within government plans, is that monarchy has become part of the national agenda. For those countries which have retained monarchy in a constitutional form (in Thailand and Malaysia), or reintroduced it (in Cambodia), or accepted it in a reconstructed traditional form (in Brunei), or retained it or reshaped it (appropriate to the current political ideology and pragmatic economic policy) as a cultural and historical legacy which can be used for economic developmental purposes (in Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia and Singapore), then it is a resource which can be translated from its symbolic role (though Brunei is an exception here in the continuing exercise of monarchical power) to one which can be used for the generation of tourism revenue. So we move from institutions which held power (and left a historical legacy, however much it was denied and marginalized at specific periods for political purposes) to those which serve the objectives of a globalized tourism industry, some of whose consumers are interested in culture, heritage and history and wish to visit and gaze on royal sites and activities. Nevertheless, this is not to say that the symbolism, imagery and historical legacy of monarchy are no longer important; they are, but so are the revenue-generating capacities of royalty.

### **Negara Brunei Darussalam**

This volume addresses a neglected theme in tourism research on Southeast Asia. It comprises chapters on established and constitutional monarchy. We start with the only surviving monarchy in Southeast Asia directly responsible for governance. Victor King reflects on the importance of monarchy in relation to the major tourist sites of Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Negara Brunei Darussalam. The national ideology of Brunei gives expression to the overriding importance and the all-encompassing character of Malay Islamic Monarchy (*Melayu Islam Beraja*). Therefore it is hardly surprising that the focus of touristic activity in Brunei incorporates tourists into those symbols of monarchy which demonstrate

the power, authority, and legitimacy of the sultanate; the main tourist circuits also emphasize the position of the Brunei Malays as the dominant population of the country, physically and demographically located prominently in Bandar Seri Begawan and the famous “Water Village” (Kampong Ayer). The chapter demonstrates that most of the prominent sites in the capital have royal connections and reflect the economic position, importance, and historical legacy of the Brunei sultanate from the sixteenth century; these are invariably the sites visited by tourists, both domestic and international, especially the Royal Regalia Museum, the major royal-related mosques, the royal mausoleums, and the collections in the Brunei Museum, the Malay Technology Museum, and the Maritime Museum, which demonstrate the central role of the monarchy and the Muslim Malays in Brunei.

## **The Federation of Malaysia**

Nor Hafizah Selamat and Hasanuddin Osman demonstrate a somewhat similar situation in Malaysia, although the power and influence of the monarchy there have been considerably diminished in constitutional terms when compared with Negara Brunei Darussalam. The attraction of royal heritage in Malaysia and the development of heritage tourism emerged decisively following the establishment of the concept and popularization in touristic terms of the “Royal City” (*Bandar diraja*) in several Malaysian states, including the Royal Johor Bahru City, established by Sultan Abu Bakar in 1866 and later moved to Muar town in 2012, the Royal City of Alor Setar in Kedah, and Kuala Kangsar in Ipoh state which was declared as the Royal City of Perak by Sultan Idris Shah I in 1887. The royal cities are where the official palaces of the rulers are situated, and usually royal mosques, galleries, mausoleums, and museums, although in some states the royal city is different from the administrative capital. By using the case study of the Royal City of Kuala Kangsar, Nor Hafizah and Hasanuddin explore the process by which the royal products of the Perak Sultanate have been presented and interpreted in the royal museum and the kinds of images that have been selected and constructed. In particular the chapter examines tourist experiences and their reflections on their “excursions” in the Royal Gallery of Sultan Azlan Shah in Kuala Kangsar. The findings show that a delicate process of selection was involved in portraying and displaying royal artefacts, memorabilia and ritual paraphernalia that symbolize appropriately and with the fullest effect the identity of the

Malay sultanate of Perak. Local Malaysian visitors express a “sense of pride” in having close encounters with objects associated with royalty and reading about the life, experiences and achievements of the late Sultan Azlan Shah, who also served at one time as King of Malaysia. Their visits are described frequently as “memorable”. The study also has a practical dimension and suggests that the tourist experience could be enhanced further through the employment of trained tour guides on site with appropriate knowledge and interpretive skills.

## **Kingdom of Thailand**

Other than Brunei, only Thailand demonstrates a long lineage of royalty which continues to play a vital part in the life of the country, and in the developing heritage tourism industry. Not only are sites in Bangkok promoted as major tourist venues for both domestic and international tourists, in particular the Grand Palace constructed by Rama I (Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke), the founder of the present Chakri Dynasty, from 1782, but also sites outside the capital including the former royal capitals of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai, and in the north, in and around Chiang Mai and the bordering hill regions.

Prasit Leepreecha investigates the historical development of tourism in highland ethnic communities in northern Thailand, focusing on the roles of the Thai state monarchy’s initiative. It is argued that the monarchy has played important roles in launching projects in contemporary popular tourism in highland communities. In addition, the visits and initiatives of His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) have become increasingly commoditized for tourism purposes. The historical development of the monarchy’s engagement with the highlands and the subsequent expansion of tourism in highland communities began from the time of Chao Dararassamee, the consort of King Rama V, when she returned to Chiang Mai in 1914, and she then took trips to visit poppy fields in highland villages and constructed a house of recreation on the Doi Suthep mountain top. From 1961 onwards, since the construction of the Phuphing Palace, which is a popular tourist destination, His Majesty the King and family members have made visits to highland villages near the palace and elsewhere in the northern regions. In addition to Rama IX’s sponsorship of the Royal Project with the objective of introducing cash crops to replace opium cultivation among highland ethnic farmers in 1969, he has donated funds and launched a store for local villagers to sell handicrafts.

Importantly, after promoting agricultural products for a few decades, the Royal Project promoted the tourism business in specific Royal Project sites in the early 2000s, with the slogan of “Following His Majesty's Footprints”. Tourism has become increasingly popular in these Royal Project sites. And without royal involvement the expansion of cultural and ethnic tourism into the northern uplands might well not have taken off as rapidly as it did.

The second chapter on Thailand, again focusing on the northern regions, is by Ploysri Porananond. She presents a fascinating case of the interrelationships between monarchy, the symbolism of the elephant and tourism development in Chiang Mai. It provides an appropriate example of the ways in which tourism sites are symbolized, branded, and acquire a marketable and commoditized identity. In the case of the city and province of Chiang Mai, their identification with the symbol of the elephant (which was also used subsequently in the logo of the premier higher education institution in the city, Chiang Mai University), were the result of the royal visit of King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) and his consort to the city in 1926. Prior to the visit elephants had been brought into the region as carriers of long-distance trade goods and as work-animals in the logging industry. But to provide a grand reception for the royal visitors a large number of elephants were assembled to form the royal parade from the railway station through the streets of Chiang Mai in honour of the King and Queen. From this point on the association of Bangkok royalty with the elephant became increasingly deployed as a clear and distinct symbolic means to define and identify Chiang Mai in its relationship to the Thai nation-state.

Visitors to Chiang Mai (which from this time onwards became an increasingly important tourist destination, especially with the rail link between Bangkok and the city) also began to seek out souvenirs as gifts for friends and family and as mementoes of their stay. An obvious representation of Chiang Mai was the elephant, and enterprises began to be established for the carving in wood of elephant figures. In the more recent period of tourism development the elephant, and its construction as the symbol of Chiang Mai and as the major element in tourism branding and destination identification, continues to be used in the souvenir and handicraft industry, but has also now been incorporated into tourist recreational sites. Elephant camps are now an important part of the tourism experience in the Chiang Mai region where visitors are treated to elephant shows and can feed, bathe and ride on elephants. With regard to changes in the political economy of Chiang Mai elephants have not only



been used in branding, symbolic consumption and in the symbolization of place, instigated through the royal visit of 1926, but have been transformed from work-animals in trade and logging to performers, entertainers and spectacles in the tourist service industry.

## **Socialist Republic of Vietnam**

The historical legacy of Vietnamese monarchy focused on by Bui Thi Tam was denied and then resurrected for purely economic reasons. As the old imperial capital of the Nguyen dynasty (1802–1945), Hue is well known for its complex of cultural and historical monuments (citadels, palaces, tombs and mausoleums, landscapes, and temples) and was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 1993. In 2003 Hue’s royal credentials were further strengthened with the inscription of Royal Court Music by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. For the past two decades tourism in Hue has increased dramatically and is at the centre of the strategic thrust in the city’s socio-economic development. Attention has also to be directed to the conservation and enhancement of Hue’s heritage value, in part enabled by tourism development and an increase in financial resources. The chapter discusses the conservation and management efforts involved in the Hue monuments complex in relation to tourism, and the strengths and weaknesses in the development of cultural heritage tourism there with regard to product development and quality management. Recommendations are made for a more sustainable approach to cultural heritage tourism in the imperial city.

In a connected chapter Nguyễn Phạm Hưng proposes that Vietnam’s tourism in the feudal period was closely related to popular “tourism activities” combined with the official business of the royal court. Under the policy of *trọng nông ức thương* (agriculture promoted but trade not encouraged), and the closed-door policy (*bế quan tỏa cảng*) of the imperial court, as well as the common social views popular among ordinary people, tourism was not seen as an economic activity. Rather it was regarded as an elite cultural activity. Expressions of early tourism in Vietnam in the “feudal period” mainly comprised visits or journeys for the pleasure of emperors, nobles, mandarins, scholars, clergy, and merchants to historical monuments, and other places of cultural interest and magnificent landscapes; the official tours of emperors and their subordinates, nobles, and local officials within the territory; the

“diplomatic tours” of Vietnam’s “ambassadors” to its diplomatic counterpart countries, mainly China, and later France and some Southeast Asian countries; and conversely the importance of forms of tourist activities by foreign missionaries and traders in Vietnam.

In summary, Vietnam’s tourism in the “feudal period” was closely related to popular “tourism activities” combined with the official business of the royal court. Nevertheless, without these formal tours and travels, many precious cultural heritage sites would not have been preserved, recognized and defined, and many famous scenic spots would not have been discovered and celebrated as they are today. Thus tourism during the imperial period has endowed Vietnam with tourist attractions and resources which are used and deployed by the Vietnamese state today for economic development purposes.

## **Lao People’s Democratic Republic**

Supachai Singyabuth’s chapter on the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Luang Prabang gives expression to the importance of this royal city as a fast developing tourism hub in the country which is especially known for its architecture, historical sites, rituals, festivals, and Buddhism, all of which are related to its royal past. These expressions of monarchy as well as the integration into these local symbolic representations of French colonial architecture are the main tourism resources which have been used to construct and represent Luang Prabang’s touristic identity.

Supachai considers aspects of the politics of identity and social memory of the people of Luang Prabang by discussing the most prominent ritual, the *Hae Hau-Hang Muang* walk which takes place every year during the New Year celebrations; it is also a focus of tourist interest. The chapter argues that the ritual of the walk provides a public domain within which the tensions and relations between the Lao state and its citizens, between ethnic minority and national majority groups, between old and new regimes, and commercialization and tradition, as well as between genders are expressed, negotiated, and contested. Supachai proposes in particular that the politics of declassification and reclassification of the royal past and its Buddhist context reflects the role of the *wor* (the litter to carry the abbot of the royal Buddhist monasteries), the monks and the Nang Sangkhan (beautiful girls relating to the Hindu legend of Kabinlaphom, who are carried on animals in the parade and walk). From the early 1990s, the government began to open its doors wide to foreign

investment and tourism development. In this context the Lao government then turned to the past and presented itself as a defender of national and cultural historical traditions. Luang Prabang's past was resurrected, reorganized, reconstructed, re-interpreted and promoted, even though the past had a close connection with royalty. But the royal past was then reproduced in the form of cultural objects, these objects being used as representative of an authentic royal past, though they excluded the meaning and story relating to that past.

Supachai argues further that in the creation of a "royal town in memory only", the government has promoted Luang Prabang using imagery derived from its rich royal and Buddhist history. At the same time, many residents of Luang Prabang town have inserted themselves into this constructed historical, royal, religious, heritage and touristic space. The ritual of walking from "the head to the tail of the town" reveals how tradition and the past are always invented and re-invented for the purpose of the present.

## **Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

Simon Duncan then demonstrates how the concept of royalty has been resurrected in Myanmar for tourism purposes. Mandalay Palace is promoted by the Myanmar Ministry of Tourism and Hotels as a key tourist site. The palace and other heritage sites in the former royal city are also featured prominently in various tourism promotions of the country. However, the palace is a reconstruction undertaken quite recently by the military government and based on designs, drawings, templates, and photographs of the nineteenth-century original which was destroyed during the Japanese War. In spite of the destruction of the palace important artefacts escaped damage and are now displayed in the National Museum in Yangon (Rangoon), covering the history of Myanmar (Burma) from ancient times until the present, with the notable omission of the British colonial period.

Duncan demonstrates that the artefacts of King Thibaw and his wife dominate the museum; the highlight is the huge elaborately decorated throne of the king which gives expression to the great skills of Burmese craftsmanship. Nevertheless, although around 20 per cent of the floor space of the museum is dedicated to King Thibaw and his wife, the visitor is not informed of the fate of King Thibaw who died as a prisoner in Ratnagiri, India and that the grave of Queen Supayalat is located within

easy walking distance of the museum; it lies between the graves of the former UN Secretary-General U Thant and Khin Kyi, the wife of Aung San and mother of Aung San Suu Kyi. These two famous figures were considered as undesirables during the Ne Win military dictatorship from 1962. The tomb of the last Mughal Emperor from India is also to be found nearby. It has been the subject of official visits by the former Indian Prime Minister among other dignitaries. Myanmar President Thein Sein also made a reciprocal visit to the grave of King Thibaw in India in 2011. All of these sites would undoubtedly be of historical and cultural interest to some tourists, but they are not included in the state's presentation of Burmese history. The issues of interaction between the state, heritage, history and tourism and the state's construction and interpretation of history are examined in this chapter.

## **Republic of Indonesia**

Moving to Indonesia, in Janianton Damanik's and Destha Raharjana's chapter on Java we find that the Javanese elites had better (though not absolute) access to tourism activities as compared to ordinary people. As in the nineteenth-century Thai case, the frequency of travel was motivated primarily by the need to secure and legitimize political power. Members of the elite often travelled to reinforce their control over a region and its population, demonstrating the social status of the nobility, which included the use of vehicles and bodyguards. The second motive was the need for recreation. The elites who worked for the monarchy were granted the right to take leave; men mostly opted for hunting or visiting tourist resorts designated for the royal families. The third motive was the need for mental-spiritual rejuvenation; to visit sacred places including monasteries, for meditation and to build supranatural communication with the hermits. Elite tourism activities grew alongside the introduction of Western culture into royal circles. The chapter demonstrates that social and economic infrastructures such as hospitals, roads, railways, hotels, and schools were built for the Dutch colonial officials using European standards, but this led indirectly to the European lifestyle serving as the model for the recreational and travel lifestyles of the native elites.

The chapter attempts to help fill a gap in our knowledge of earlier travel in Java, specifically with reference to Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo); it compares well with Nguyễn Phạm Hưng's chapter on the early

travels of the emperor and the Vietnamese elite by exploring some of the available accounts of travelling or tours conducted by a small number of members of the local elite, in the Javanese case during the period from 1900 to 1940.

A book on monarchy and tourism in Southeast Asia would obviously have to make space for a chapter on Bali, Indonesia's longest established and highest profile tourism resort. Graeme MacRae's and I Nyoman Darma Putra's historical analysis demonstrates the importance of traditional Balinese monarchy in its relationship to tourism development. However, they also note that "Indonesia has the most monarchies of all, with its national organization, *Forum Silaturahmi Keraton Indonesia*. The 4th Silaturahmi Nasional Raja dan Sultan Nusantara, held in Bali in 2015, was attended by 250 kings and sultans from the archipelago and overseas". Nevertheless, with regard to Bali, MacRae and Darma Putra focus on the island's major centre of cultural tourism, the royal court town of Ubud. The chapter demonstrates the ways in which Balinese royalty there used its global social network to promote the tourism industry and encourage the community to use the benefits of tourism to maintain local arts and crafts. The Ubud Palace has been most influential in promoting Balinese religion, as well as its arts and tourism which goes as far back as the 1930s and was then continued through the early period of independence up until the present day. After his success in sending dance troupes to the Colonial Exposition in Paris in 1931, at home the king of Ubud, Tjokorda Agung Sukawati worked closely with foreign artists residing there, including the German painter Walter Spies and the Dutch painter Rudolf Bonnet, to establish the artist club Pita Maha with the goal of promoting the arts. The royal family graciously opened its doors to tourism in order to stimulate economic growth during the early years of independence. Paying guests were invited into the palace and the royal family continued to invest in tourist accommodation.

After Tjokorda Agung's death in 1978 his two sons, Tjokorda Putra and Tjokorda Oka carried on the work of cultural tourism development in Ubud using their considerable landholdings and their position of prestige and influence. Today royal family members own and operate luxury hotels in Ubud, such as Royal Pita Maha, and the Ubud Palace remains an important centre of religion and arts, and continues to attract tourists. However, members of the Ubud royal family have diversified their interests into other areas of the economy, moving into niche cultural tourism and into politics and real-estate development. The fascinating issue here is how members of the royal family maintain their ties to

tradition and religion while promoting tourism and development. As MacRae and Darma Putra also argue, the categories of “monarchy” and “tourism” are complex and do not permit the demonstration of straightforward one-to-one dyadic relationships. Both categories require deconstruction and a historical examination of the changing, dynamic and complex relationships embedded in what we term “royal tourism”. This is a theme which requires further and much more detailed investigation in our future publications.

## **Republic of Singapore**

Finally, we turn to what might seem a surprising case study in relation to monarchy: the Republic of Singapore. We are reminded by Kailasam Thirumaran that Singapore too has royal heritage, though not to the extent of her neighbours like Malaysia. The narrative of Singapore’s royal heritage has been subsumed and incorporated into its national history, but this downplaying of Singapore’s important royal narratives acts to deny, or at least simplify their complex historical realities. This chapter provides an understanding of the last Sultan of Singapore’s palace (Istana Kampong Glam) which today is a national Malay Heritage Centre. In the course of analysing the relationship between Singapore’s ancient and modern royal history and the tourism industry, this chapter examines the interrelationships between Singapore’s history, political economy and its tourism landscape, and argues for a culturally “neutral” and much more nuanced presentation of Singapore’s sultans in the pre-and-post-independence eras. The study employs a combination of observation, interviews, and content analysis of relevant physical sites, literature, and online media to unravel the positionality of Singapore’s royal heritage in the context of contemporary tourism. The chapter also provides a practical dimension in conceptualizing a royal tour itinerary for the benefit of policy makers and tourism industry practitioners, keeping in mind that Singapore above all other Southeast Asian nations Singapore has been most adept in packaging, commoditizing and museumizing its historical legacies.

## **Concluding Remarks**

So in summary, in this volume we cover the obvious relations between active monarchy and tourism as well as the not-so-obvious reconstructed nature of the tangible expressions of monarchy designed primarily to appeal to a tourist cultural heritage industry. We also address some of the complexities of the relationships between these two broad categories of “monarchy” and “tourism”. It is clear from the various chapters that national governments in ASEAN are increasingly addressing the issue of monarchy and its relationships with historical legacy, heritage and tourism development. In our view this official interest will certainly continue to increase as the interest in cultural and heritage tourism expands in Southeast Asia. One of the driving forces in this is the UNESCO inscription of World Heritage Sites in the region which serve as major attractions for cultural and heritage tourists, as well as visitors who simply wish to be associated through their photographs on Facebook and other social media with globally significant sites.

This volume also addresses the complex interplay between the invention of tradition, symbolism, politics, heritage, and touristic commoditization and consumption. Moreover it has examined the contending interpretations of particular sites and the rather more practical concerns of the improvement of the tourist experience in royal tourist sites and how they can be better conserved, presented, promoted, and enjoyed, and hopefully be part of a more informed, educative tourist experience.

This is only a start in our research. As a result of the pressure of commitments of several potential contributors to this volume we were not able to cover all the royal sites for which we had originally planned. Further research on the Malay sultanates and royal cities in Peninsular Malaysia needs to be undertaken and comparative studies of these cities; the sultanates of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, the Balinese princedoms, and especially Ubud in Bali, and other royal cultural legacies of Indonesia require much more attention; the historical legacy of Angkor in Cambodia and the boom in cultural tourism there also demand more extended research; and the royal capitals of Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Bangkok in Thailand merit much more detailed attention from the perspective of the relations between monarchy and tourism. Nevertheless, in recent research on the more general subject of heritage and tourism in Southeast Asia some of the royal sites have been examined from other perspectives (see, for example, the chapters on Angkor, Ayutthaya, Borobudur, Luang Prabang, Melaka and Prambanan, in King 2016).

Clearly this whole subject within tourism studies requires a further volume on an increasingly significant but neglected area of research in order to embrace equally important sites which we have been unable to include in this first stage of our inquiries. In contextualizing the current invented and constructed “modern” role, position and understanding of monarchy in the region in relation to an equally re-interpreted, reconstructed and reconstituted representation of Southeast Asia’s “traditional” royal legacies, we think we have opened up a promising future field of research in tourism studies. What we have also done, we hope, is to demonstrate how space and time are demarcated, given significance and interpreted and displayed in the context of the tourism experience.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to the Research Administration Center (RAC), Chiang Mai University, especially Associate Professor Dr Komkrit Leksakul, the Director, and Mr Thammanoon Nuamanong, the RAC manager, for the financial support it has provided in enabling scholarly connections to be made with the contributors to this volume, for the funding of major international conferences on tourism research at the university, and for providing Victor King with funds to visit Chiang Mai to undertake collaborative research with Associate Professor Dr Ploysri Porananond. Last but not least we wish to express our deep gratitude to Pui-Piyawadee Sompawong and Christopher Pipe for skilfully reformatting the manuscript of this volume in preparation for its publication. Finally, we give our heartfelt thanks to Dr A. V. M. Horton for his excellent work in compiling an index for this volume and for his contribution to copy-editing.

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## CHAPTER TWO

# BRUNEI DARUSSALAM: “A KINGDOM OF UNEXPECTED TREASURES”

VICTOR T. KING

### **Introduction**

The monarchy embodies and expresses the nation-state of Negara Brunei Darussalam and to a significant degree provides major sites and resources for tourists to gaze upon particularly in the capital of Bandar Seri Begawan. The national ideology of Brunei confirms the overriding importance and the all-encompassing character of Malay Islamic Monarchy (*Melayu Islam Beraja*). Therefore it is not altogether surprising that the focus of tourist activity in Brunei is designed to incorporate tourists into those symbols of monarchy which demonstrate the power, glory, history, and legitimacy of the sultanate; the main tourist circuits also give emphasis to the Brunei Malays as the focal population of the country, who are physically and demographically dominant in Bandar Seri Begawan and the famous “Water Village” (Kampong Ayer). This chapter places tourism in Brunei within the context of its history, and the physical and symbolic expressions of that history. It does so by examining the major tourist sites in the country and their connections with monarchy, and it explores some of the paradoxes in Brunei with regard to its character as a tourist destination.

### **Tourism in Brunei**

Given the overwhelming importance of the oil and gas industry, the fact that Brunei is a territorially and demographically small nation-state in comparison with its much larger neighbours, and that, though it has an international airport, it is not a major regional airport hub like Singapore,

Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and Hong Kong, then its tourism industry has always been relatively modest in size in its contribution to Brunei’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC] 2014, 2015). Moreover, in comparison with its neighbours within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), particularly Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore, its tourism sector as measured by visitor arrival numbers during the past decade is very small indeed (2015, 7–10). A further set of factors also has to be taken into account. Brunei, as a staunchly devout Muslim country with a very clear Muslim Malay identity, has not been attracted to the development of international mass tourism and especially beach tourism, again unlike such regional neighbours as Malaysia and Thailand, and, in the case of Indonesia, Bali. The “sun, sea, and sand” dimension of tourism has never been important in Brunei, and the only major accommodation for tourists on the coast and near beaches is the truly impressive Empire Hotel and Country Club at Jerudong, which, it must be emphasized, in its origins, luxury, opulence, and decor also resonates with Brunei royalty and the seal that the royal family have placed upon the hotel. Furthermore, with the restriction on drinking alcohol in public places, including within hotels and restaurants, and the lack of night-life and the more overt forms of popular recreational entertainment like live music and dancing which are sought by many international tourists from the West, Australia, and East Asia then the attraction of Brunei in these respects is limited.

Nevertheless, paradoxically Brunei does have some impressive stretches of tropical beach and dramatic coastal scenery. In addition, in spite of its national identity expressed primarily in Muslim Malay terms it is an extraordinarily cosmopolitan country with a very large expatriate labour force spanning a range of activities from manual work through to highly skilled and professional employment. And, even though it has strict regulations covering the consumption of alcohol, it still permits a generous duty-free import allowance for non-Muslim visitors and residents for personal and private consumption.

It also needs to be emphasized that, although the tourism sector in Brunei is relatively small it is by no means insignificant, and as the Brunei government continues to seek ways of diversifying the economy with the expectation in the medium to long term that oil and gas revenues will decrease as reserves diminish and the costs of exploitation increase, and with the price of crude oil currently at eleven-year lows, tourism has the potential to play an expanding role in Brunei’s development plans. In this regard calculations of the economic benefits of tourism in Brunei have

been undertaken by the WTTC based in London which issues annual reports on a country basis. For the purposes of calculating the benefits and making forward projections the Council takes into account both domestic and international tourism and business and leisure travel. These benefits are generated through hotels, guest houses, travel agents and tour guide companies, airlines and other transport services, restaurants, leisure activities servicing tourists (museums, parks, leisure and recreational centres), and government spending and other capital investment in tourist-related facilities. For example, in 2014 the direct contribution of tourism and travel revenue to the country's GDP was estimated at B\$ 317 million (1.5% of GDP), but taking into account indirect benefits its total contribution was B\$1.402.5 million (6.8% of GDP) (WTTC 2015, 1) (in November 2015 the exchange rate with pound sterling was B\$ 2.19 to £1). The total contribution projected for 2025 is B\$ 2.117.5 million (7.5% of GDP) (ibid.). Of course this does not take fully into account the vagaries of oil and gas revenue and its contribution to GDP and that percentage contributions may change over the period to 2025.

In employment terms in 2014 the total number of jobs generated directly and indirectly by the tourism industry was calculated at 15,500 (7.6% of those employed) which is projected to reach 20,000 jobs in 2025 (7.7% of those employed). The revenue from "visitor exports" (that is, spending within the country by international visitors on business and leisure trips, excluding expenditure on education) amounted to B\$ 518.6 million and by 2025 is projected to total B\$ 736.5 million (ibid.).

Visitor arrivals statistics are also a very important indicator of tourism activities and are used widely in evaluating trends in the tourism industry. However, they need to be treated with some caution. Just over a decade ago in 2004 arrivals in Brunei totalled 119,000 (Indexmundi). With some ups and downs they had reached 225,000 by 2013, which represented a decrease from 2011 when total visitor numbers stood at around 242,000 (World Bank). In 2012, they had decreased to 209,000, when total international visitor arrivals in the ASEAN countries stood at 89 million; but numbers began to pick up again from 2013. It is estimated that there will be around 263,000 visitors to Brunei in 2015, projected to increase to 435,000 visitors by 2025 (WTTC 2015, 5). Out of the 184 countries surveyed by the World Travel and Tourism Council in 2014 Brunei was ranked 110 in terms of its long-term growth prospects to 2024 (WTTC 2014, 1) and the following year it had moved up to 94 in growth prospects to 2025 (WTTC 2015, 1). This raft of statistics suggests that the tourism sector in Brunei does have significant potential and if more efforts were

directed to the promotion of the tourist assets of the country, these projections could be enhanced considerably. However, whatever the forward projections the tourism sector in Brunei will continue to be dwarfed by the oil and natural gas sector.

### **The Tourism Assets of Brunei**

There is evidence that the Brunei government has increasingly taken the potential of the tourist industry more seriously with the very recent creation by His Majesty the Sultan’s government of a Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism. Prior to this the government had already established a Brunei Tourism Board (BTB) with its associated Tourism Development Department (TDD) within the then Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources. The Board also administers the Travel Agents Act, amended in 2012, and the Travel Agents Regulation, 2012. One of the Board’s major recent projects has been the production of a *Brunei Tourism Master Plan 2012–16* completed in 2011 (Oxford Business Group 2013; Brunei Tourism Board 2011). The plans set out a clear strategy to promote “niche” tourism rather than mass tourism. Therefore, in principle, the projected growth is intended to be measured, incremental, and controlled. The focus will be on the “ecotourism and family holiday market” and in terms of attractions will concentrate on natural attractions and “a rich vein of Islamic history”. The strategy is “high-end and low-volume tourism”, to ensure “a minimum impact on the Sultanate’s environment and local culture” (ibid., 160). There has also been discussion in Brunei of the potential for the development of Islamic tourism in order to attract more visitors from the Middle East. But this seems to be an unlikely way forward, given the intense competition from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and now increasingly Thailand, and the attractions there of designer shopping, luxury accommodation, leisure activities, beach resorts, restaurants, including those serving Middle Eastern food, and a developed tourism infrastructure, including transport.

Therefore nature and Islamic cultural heritage comprise the twin elements in official tourism promotion. Moreover, and given the change in strategy and the restructuring of Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) (the national airline carrier) and its routes, there will be an increasing focus on the ASEAN market and on bringing short-stay Chinese visitors to Brunei (with regular flights from Hong Kong and Shanghai) (ibid.). The 2013

Report points to the main markets for visitor arrivals in 2011 as Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Australia, and the United Kingdom (ibid.). What is interesting however is that the master plan is much more ambitious than the projections of the World Travel and Tourism Council which estimates visitor arrivals as reaching 435,000 in 2025; the Plan projects 400,000 visitors by 2016, which on the basis of figures for 2015 seems unlikely to be attained (ibid., 161). Of course, these were projections made during the formulation of the plan in 2011, but comparing the WTTC figures with the BTB projections then the Board's plans suggest that the tourism industry is anticipated to grow faster than it has.

In line with the Board's emphasis on nature and culture the two catch lines in advertising Brunei's tourism assets are "The Green Heart of Borneo" and "A Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures". The Brunei Tourism website positions the country's niche tourism in five main categories: Art, Islamic [sic] and Culture; Leisure (including sports, shopping and places to stay); Heritage; Natural (diving, bird watching, parks, beaches, and centres); and Medical (three hospitals are listed: Jerudong Park Medical Centre, National Cancer Centre, and the Gleneagles JPMC) (Brunei Tourism Board 2015. <http://www.bruneitourism.travel>). Clearly, aside from ecotourism, the combination of culture, historical and heritage tourism plays the major role, and because much of this latter tourism is concentrated in and around the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, it is preoccupied with monarchy. Tourism in the capital includes the major royal sites, as well as displaying the history of the sultans and the sultanate, and the life and culture of the Brunei Malays. The Malays are the dominant population in terms of status, privilege, power, and influence, and were historically and are still today associated most closely and directly with monarchy, in that the administration, servicing, and support of the Malay Islamic Monarchy were provided primarily by them and it was from this ethnic group that the top echelons of royalty, nobility, and aristocracy were drawn (see, for example Brown, 1970; King, 1994).

### **Four Sites of Orientation**

Predictably the major sites of culture and heritage interest promoted through the Brunei Tourism website are the two royal mosques located in the capital, the Royal Regalia Museum and the famous Kampong Ayer, the "Water Village" which has become something of a global emblem or icon of the cultural identity of Brunei. Taken together these four sites