

PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE A STUDY OF THE SILVERSMITH IN INLAY LAKE, MYANMAR*

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Abstract

Culture plays multiple roles in the development of tourism and is a key tourism resource. Living culture within the local community can be defined as cultural heritage which combines the two concepts of historical ancient monuments and living heritage; arts and crafts. Knowledge and skills community recognizes as part of their cultural heritage may act as a tourist attraction to the place (UNESCO, 2006). Tourists engage with the cultural heritage as a part of their experiences, explore the traditional craftsmanship as it was performed in the distant past. This paper provides the first comprehensive study on the traditional silversmith handcraft in Inlay Lake from the cultural point of view. The study area is the *Heya-Ywama* village, which is the main silversmith site in the Inlay Lake, Myanmar. The study describes the intangible cultural practices from the tangible silverwares and explores the authenticity and commodification of cultural heritage. The results show that the *Innثار* people perceive the traditional silversmith as a part of their cultural heritage and it is an authentic heritage craft handed over to new generations, however, lack of literature on traditional methods, intellectual concerns and outside investments are presented as finding results.

Key words: Culture, Living Culture, Cultural Heritage, Authenticity, Commodification, Heritage Craft, Traditional Silversmith, Handcraft

Introduction

The Inlay Lake is Myanmar's top flagship tourism destination that attracts thousands of visitors annually and has received at least 250,000 domestic and international visitor arrivals during 2013-2014. As Myanmar's combined cultural and natural tourism area, the Inlay Lake provides significant income for local, regional and national economies.¹ Tourism

¹ Destination Management Plan for the Inlay Lake Region 2014-2019, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar.

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