



CULTURAL TOURISM AS A SITE OF CONTESTATION AND CO-CREATION IN THE SHADOW OF BANDUNG CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of cultural tourism presents a critical dilemma for nations across Asia and Africa. Framed by the enduring legacy of the 1955 Bandung Conference, which championed South-South solidarity and cultural sovereignty, this paper interrogates the dualistic nature of cultural tourism as both a potential vehicle for nation-building and an instrument of neocolonialism. The paper employs a critical review of stakeholder analysis to establish the power dynamics inherent in the tourism ecosystem, identifying how economic benefits, cultural representation, and political agency are distributed among local communities, domestic and international tourists, governments, and multinational corporations. It argues that the Bandung Spirit's principles of mutual respect, sovereignty, and cooperative advancement provide an essential ethical framework for contemporary tourism development. The model prioritizes domestic tourism, intellectual property rights over cultural heritage, and equitable benefit-sharing as essential pillars for decolonizing tourism. It is concluded that cultural tourism, when consciously realigned with the Bandung ethos, can transcend its neocolonial pitfalls to become a genuine form of reciprocal cultural exchange and sustainable economic development, fostering a renewed spirit of solidarity in the modern era.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism, Nation Building, Bandung Spirit, Stakeholder Analysis, Decolonial.

1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is a tourism that is centered at how people manage their everyday life. It encompasses beliefs, values, norms and creation which express how the human person masters the environment to support living. The central pillar of cultural tourism is the emphasis of involving local communities to ensure their needs are met and interests protected. The African – Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia 1955 was one of such an act in which the African and Asian heads of states were making a turning point in the post-colonial world order. Filled with the cultural spirit of South – South cooperation the conference declared right for the formally colonized nations to self determination and mutual recognition. The motivation was to be included in the decisions which affected their continents by creating a one voice platform that would reclaim their authenticity. It is explicitly stated that cultural cooperation is a powerful tool for promoting international understand (Asia-Africa Conference, 1955). Africa and Asia were in the spirit of renewing their cultural ties in a new designed term of cooperation to further foster their initial development efforts.

Seven decades later, today cultural tourism in Arica and Asia has emerged as a primary source of contested and often commodified cooperation that has gone beyond the desires of the Bandung declaration. The Fourteenth Tata Oration (2024) reports culture being in a profound state of tension. The most debatable challenges include factors such as driver of economic growth, job creation, and fostering of intercultural understanding which are significantly lacking effective methods to assess and implement multi-level strategies that foster sustainable development in the regions. These compounding challenges expound Kessy (2022) require strong organizational capacity in order to manage the complexity of planning. Normally in a different cultural environment, there exist diverse goals which include the growing demand for transfer to digital and green economies. Traditional top-down planning approaches are often rejected by local communities, creating a need for more participatory methods to ensure sustainability and community adaptability.

Taylor (1991) identifies a major cultural shift in the West, noting that it expanded from elite circles to wider society after World War II. The author attributes the shift to the rise of a therapeutic ethos, in which culture moved away from moral and religious framings of guilt and sin toward a medicalized concern with health, well-being, and self-fulfillment. This ethos promoted the search for the 'true self,' emphasizing personal authenticity/identity and self-realization; a comparable spirit to the egalitarian ideals of the Bandung Conference. Just as the therapeutic turn in Western culture sought to democratize moral and spiritual reflection, the Bandung conference affirmed equality, mutual respect, and collective empowerment among newly independent nations, to allow individuals from all social backgrounds to engage in self-exploration. In both cases, the shift represents a move toward inclusivity and recognition of equal dignity, whether among nations or within the moral and psychological sphere of individuals.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Bandung Culture an Important Factor in National Building*

The Bandung principles focused solely on national building through the self-empowerment of newly independent countries. It emphasized empowering local communities as the only way these nations could maintain their independence and pursue genuine development paths. Cultural tourism supports the idea of involving local communities, recognizing them as true owners of the tourism experience. However, due to structural disparities in tourism development, local communities are often excluded from participation and therefore need to be empowered. According to Mbaiwa (2005), empowerment starts with creating policies that ensure benefits are shared fairly among all stakeholders. During Bandung, empowerment was recognized as a way to promote adaptive and ethical development models, especially for countries still striving for independence. This approach fosters a collective identity and promotes economic growth (Palmer, 1999) that support national development. In addition, heritage and strengthened national tales foster civic pride, boost the international image, and encourage cross-cultural dialogue, all vital in tourism (Nye, 2004). As a result, the overarching goals of the Bandung conference was to promote economic and cultural cooperation, protect human rights, advance self-determination, eliminate racial discrimination and give emphasis to peaceful coexistence. These efforts strengthen the social and economic impacts of tourism and contribute to sustainable national development (Asia-Africa Conference, 1955).

The Bandung Conference communities and nations were unable to retain control over their cultural and natural heritage let alone to achieve the broader goal of sustaining economic independence. Instead, many postcolonial states remained embedded within global systems of inequality that limited their policy autonomy and reinforced structural dependency (Office of the Historian, 2017). As a result, local economies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have continued to be vulnerable to external shocks, perpetuating cycles of economic leakage and resource outflow particularly in Africa (Bianchi, 2009; Dieke, 2013). In Asian countries the decline of the Bandung spirit in the 1980s coincided with the rise of neoliberal reforms, structural adjustment programmes and the globalization of markets which were imposed by the multilateral agencies such as World Bank (WB) (Kessy, 2022). According to Kessy (2022) several Asian countries responded by launching export-oriented development strategies, prioritizing industrialization and integration into global value chains in contrast to African states.

African nations were constrained by debt burdens, limited industrial capacity, and externally imposed economic reforms, often relied on resource extraction and primary commodity exports, leaving little room for endogenous development (Mbaiwa, 2005). The inability to safeguard cultural and natural heritage further intensified dependency, as tourism, heritage industries, and natural resources were increasingly structured to meet the demands of international capital rather than local communities (Britton, 1982; Bianchi, 2002). This situation has not only deepened economic vulnerabilities but also reproduced forms of cultural dependency, where heritage sites and cultural expressions are commodified for global consumption rather than serving as anchors of collective identity and local development (Akama, 1999, Kessy, 2022). Consequently, the unfulfilled aspirations of Bandung continue to echo in contemporary debates on sustainable development, tourism, and heritage preservation in the Global South.

2.2. *The Neocolonial Analysis*

A robust critical scholarship frames international tourism as a continuation of colonial power structures. This critique draws from postcolonial and dependency theories, arguing that tourism often results in:

Economic Leakage and Dependency: A significant portion of tourism revenue is repatriated by foreign-owned airlines, hotel chains, and tour operators, creating a neoextractive economy that benefits external capital more than local communities (Britton, 1982; Bianchi, 2009, Kessy, 2023). This creates a form of economic dependency suggestive of colonial trade patterns.

Cultural Commodification: According to Urry and Larsen (2011) tourist gaze transforms living cultures into consumable products. Sacred rituals are truncated, spiritual symbols are mass-produced as souvenirs, and complex traditions are simplified into easily digestible performances, leading to staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973) and cultural alienation.

Spatial and Social Displacement: The development of tourism enclaves can lead to the redevelopment of historic areas, the restriction of local access to sacred sites, and the exacerbation of social inequalities (Mbaiwa, 2005).

2.3. *The Stakeholder Analysis Model*

The Stakeholder Analysis (SA) model is a strategic framework used to identify, categorize, and understand the interests, power, and influence of actors involved in a particular system or sector. In tourism research, stakeholders typically include government authorities, local communities, private investors, NGOs, cultural institutions, and tourists themselves. The model emphasizes assessing stakeholders' roles, relationships, influence, and potential conflicts, providing insight into how decisions and benefits are distributed within the sector.

In the context of this study, the SA model is particularly relevant for examining how tourism governance, heritage management, and cultural representation operate within postcolonial and neo-colonial structures. By mapping stakeholders according to their interest in tourism outcomes and capacity to influence them, the study identifies points of tension, cooperation, and opportunities for co-creation and empowerment. The SA model also facilitates a critical assessment of domestic versus international tourism priorities, linking them to the broader Bandung framework. It highlights which stakeholders support decolonizing initiatives and which reinforce dependency patterns, thereby offering a strategic basis for policy interventions aimed at promoting equity, local retention of tourism benefits, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

3. **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design to examine cultural tourism, postcolonial legacies, and the Bandung Conference framework. The approach emphasizes critical analysis of socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions of tourism, focusing on the dynamics of power, dependency, and cultural co-creation. Data were collected primarily through document analysis and a comprehensive literature review of scholarly works, case studies, and reports of domestic and international tourism, heritage management and community participation. The document analyzed included historical records, official conference proceedings and reports. All of those allowed for an in-depth understanding of patterns of economic leakage, stakeholder influence, and the contested nature of cultural tourism.

The study also applies the SA model to systematically identify, categorize, and evaluate the interests, influence, and interrelationships of key actors in tourism development. The model highlights how asymmetries in power and resources affect decision-making, benefit distribution, and control over cultural and natural heritage. For example, foreign investors in high-end safari operations hold substantial influence, in shaping policy priorities and revenue flows, while local communities often remain marginalized. Using the SA model, the study identifies points of tension, potential collaboration, and avenues for co-creation and local empowerment, particularly in fostering domestic tourism and

sustainable heritage management. The study identifies recurring patterns of dependency, agency, and cultural negotiation.

Ethical review included the interpretation of documents and literature the way they were presented, to ensure accurate representation of sources and respect for the contexts discussed. By combining the qualitative analysis with the SA model, the study offers both a descriptive mapping of stakeholder dynamics and a critical framework for reorienting tourism towards decolonized and locally empowered practices.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. *The Bandung Spirit as an Ethical Compass*

The Principles of Bandung, particularly centered on respect for national sovereignty, equality, and mutual benefit, provide a vital lens for evaluating tourism development. The Bandung Spirit was fundamentally about agency, the right of nations and peoples to control their own destiny and engage with the world as equals, not as subordinates (Scott, 2015; Tan and Acharya, 2008) by fostering:

- a. Mutual Exchange: Tourism encounters should be structured as two-way exchanges of knowledge and respect, not one-directional extraction.
- b. Sovereignty over Resources: Host communities and nations should retain control over their cultural and natural heritage.
- c. Respect for Cultural Integrity: The presentation and practice of culture must be determined by the culture-bearers themselves, free from external market pressures that demand alteration or dilution.

A critical stakeholder analysis (Freeman, 2010; Reed et al., 2009) propose a framework to operationalize the Bandung principles beyond identification of the stakeholders themselves. The framework suggests analysis of power, interests, and legitimacy of each, questioning how benefits are shared among them. Table 1 shows how Bandung strategies align with tourism development dynamics.

Table 4.1. Stakeholder Analysis for Authentic Cultural Tourism and the contribution of the Bandung Principles

Stakeholder	Key Interests	Power/Influence	Bandung-Aligned Strategy
Local Communities	Cultural integrity, livelihood, land rights, spiritual sanctity	Often low; requires mobilization and legal support	Empower as primary decision-makers. Implement Community-Based Tourism (CBT) with equity ownership. Create direct revenue-sharing mechanisms
Domestic Tourists	Affordability, national connection, leisure	Significant collective economic power	Champion as core market. Develop patriotic marketing, educational tourism, and subsidized access to foster national identity
National Government	Economic growth, job creation, soft power, tax revenue.	High (regulation, policy, infrastructure).	Shift policy metrics from visitor numbers to well-being tourism indicators, local retention rates, and cultural impact assessments. Develop policies that incentivize local hiring and invest in infrastructure that benefits both tourists and citizens
International Tourists	Authentic experience, comfort, novelty, safety	High, economic vote	Educate on ethical consumption. Promote codes of conduct and responsible behavior through pre-arrival materials and guide training

Local Businesses	Profit, market access, sustainability	Low (capital, global reach, marketing)	Provide training, access to credit, and facilitate linkages with the formal tourism sector to reduce leakage.
Multinational Corporations (MNCs)/ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)	Profitability, shareholder return, market share, brand growth.	High (capital, global reach, marketing).	Regulate for equity. Think about local hiring, profit-sharing agreements (partnership), and environmental/cultural sustainability reports. Require joint ventures and fair wage policies

Source: Compiled from the reviewed literature, 2025.

4.2. *Pathways to a Decolonized Tourism Praxis*

Applying the Bandung framework to tourism highlights several actionable pathways for decolonizing the sector.

4.2.1. Reengineering Domestic Tourism

A strong domestic tourism sector is a key protection against the economic and cultural vulnerabilities associated with neocolonial dependency. It ensures that cultural assets primarily serve national identity building and are less vulnerable to the whims of international markets. Countries like India and Indonesia have successfully leveraged domestic tourism to create a more resilient industry (Prentice, 2019). Nevertheless, Kessy (2018) note that international tourism brings the developing countries the hard currency which contribute a lot in terms of the GDP, investments and in fixing the balance of trade.

4.2.2. Instituting Community Led Governance

According to Tosun (2006) self-actualization requires transferring power from external corporations to local communities. Models like Nepal’s community-managed trekking routes and Bhutan’s High-Value, Low-Volume tourism policy demonstrate how placing control and benefits directly in local hands aligns with Bandung’s principles of self-determination (Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010; Dorji, 2001).

4.2.3. Protecting Intellectual and Cultural Property

Neocolonialism operates through the appropriation and commodification of culture. Bandung aligned policies must include legal frameworks that protect traditional knowledge, rituals, and art forms from exploitation, ensuring communities benefit from and approve of their commercial use (Meskell, 2018).

4.2.4. Fostering South-South Solidarity

The original spirit of Bandungla was one of South-South cooperation. Tourism flows and knowledge exchange between nations of Asia and Africa can create alternative circuits of travel that are less embedded in historical colonial power dynamics, fostering a more equitable global tourism landscape (Bianchi, 2009).

4.3. *Toward a New Bandung Era: Decolonizing Tourism*

Traditionally, tourism in Africa and Asia has been shaped by colonial perspectives. In Tanzania, it is often easy to find tourism sidelining the experiences and contributions of local populations (Kessy, 2023, 2022). It is debated if cultural tourism can significantly contribute to the country’s economic independence. The question is not whether cultural tourism is inherently good or evil, but how it is structured, governed, practiced and the dignity and mutual respect relation it creates. This forms a basis of dignity and mutual respect as to why the Bandung Conference Communique of 1955 is urgently needed in the global tourism today.

According to Britton (1982), Mbaiwa (2005), Bianchi (2009), and Dieke (2013), in regions where tourism constitutes a major economic activity, evidence demonstrates that the industry is highly concentrated in the hands of a few dominant companies, leading to substantial revenue leakages from host countries. The predominance of foreign ownership in high-end safari lodges and tour operations for instance, has systematically constrained the economic gains available to local populations. Consequently, communities residing in proximity to flagship attractions frequently remain

economically marginalized, despite the significant wealth generated by these sites while much of the decisions have remain top down oriented. As a result, the critical stakeholder analysis informed by the Bandung spirit, policymakers, communities, and industry leaders can dismantle neocolonial perspective of managing cultural and heritage resources. The goal is to transition from a model of extraction to one of regeneration especially by regenerating local economies, cultural pride, and reciprocal relationships between hosts and guests. The model would require a conscious effort to redistribute power, recenter local voices, and measure success not merely in GDP growth but in community well-being and cultural vitality. In doing so, cultural tourism can finally shed its neocolonial disguise and fulfill its potential as a genuine tool for nation building and a vibrant, equitable form of cross-cultural cooperation in the 21st century.

5. Conclusion

To ensure cultural tourism serves as a nation-builder, policies must be consciously designed to mitigate neocolonial risks. The Bandung Conference (1955) symbolized a bold assertion of postcolonial sovereignty and the potential for collective cultural and economic self-determination. While it sparked visions of independence and intra-Southern solidarity, the structural realities of global capitalism and persistent inequalities limited its transformative impact. In tourism, these limitations are stark: control over cultural and natural heritage continues to be concentrated in the hands of foreign investors, and economic benefits are unevenly distributed, leaving local communities marginalized despite the wealth generated by the sector.

Nevertheless, cultural tourism also reveals spaces of resistance and creativity. Communities are not passive; they negotiate, reinterpret, and co-create cultural narratives, asserting agency on how heritage is represented and consumed. The successes of Bandung lie less in its immediate outcomes and more in its enduring conceptual legacy, which challenges conventional development paradigms and encourages reflection on sovereignty, equity, and cultural integrity. Its failures underscore the enduring tension between global market pressures and local empowerment. Decolonizing tourism, therefore, demands sustained critical engagement, deliberate policy reform, and a commitment to reorienting cultural assets toward local well-being rather than merely generating immediate profit.

In conclusion, the future of cultural tourism in Asia and Africa need not be a choice between economic marginalization and cultural degradation. Rather by drawing on the powerful, anti-colonial ethos of the Bandung Conference and employing the practical tool of stakeholder analysis, a third way is possible. This path champions a form of tourism that is equitable and sustainable to transform the tourist encounter into a genuine, respectful dialogue between cultures, ensuring the rich civilizations of Asia and Africa are shared with the world on their own terms.

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