

Heritage Narratives, a Bridge for Transformation, Connection and Communication

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Abstract

Bridge, a great invention in the human history to connect the gap from land to land, develops into a variety of symbolic images created by narratives in literature and art works. Through the analysis of the narratives of love stories taking place on three bridges, Broken Bridge, Long Bridge and Xiling Bridge, in the West Lake Landscape, this research will present how a typical image of bridge as a storyscape of romance has been created, circulated and reinterpreted in literature works. The storyscaping of these narratives are so successful that the audience grows strong interest in exploring the landscape around these bridges created by the stories, which have engaged more audience in the adaptation of these stories in the forms of operas, novels, films and songs. As a result, these three bridges, as the storyscapes of these narratives, have also obtained a national impact over time and space. Based on the case study of these stories, this paper intends to argue that heritage narratives have played an effective role in connecting tangible assets with intangible values, the past history with the present need. In addition, such intangible heritage values created by narratives have also contributed to the sustainable conservation of these bridges. Despite the several collapses of these bridges in the long history, they have been repetitively restored not merely because of their physical functions, but also due to their symbolic significance as the places for the pilgrimages of love. Finally, the paper discuss the strategy of the present heritage narratives of these bridges, aiming to realise a more effective cross-cultural communication which can bridge the cultural gaps and thus enhance the cultural and social impacts of the heritage sites among foreign tourists.