Heritage Interpretation and the Portrayal of Gadara for Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Heritage interpretation is a powerful issue in destination promotion that could either bolster understanding the value of heritage and increase cultural exchange or lead to heritage manipulation to fit political and economic agendas. Using the heritage site of Gadara in northwest Jordan as a case study, the author engaged in a series of unstructured interviews and analyzed Jordanian antiquities law, government sites, and reviewed the websites of tourism companies to gather data on perception, presentation, stakeholdership, and challenges. This article not only examines the often-narrow portrayal of Gadara's heritage interpretation in the tourism industry as a Late Roman/Early Byzantine site, but also recommends the use of the Loom Approach to Heritage Studies as a holistic approach that fosters the inclusion of all types of heritage resources in congruence with the local context. This new approach will diversify the attractiveness of heritage assets to meet the needs of different visitors and enhance the quality of their experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is often focus on one aspect of heritage and can reduce the multiple aspects of an object, site, or person. Heritage can be placed within several categories such as nature, landscape, monuments, artifacts, activities, people, and sites (Jean et al., 2020; McAnany, 2020). Yet preserving heritage can be difficult as much heritage can be simultaneously placed in multiple categories or conversely may not fit into a single category. The site of Gadara, in Northern Jordan, is no exception to the problems of multiple heritages per one site. At Gadara, tourists can see the ancient ruins and views of the Sea of Galilee, the Golan Heights, the Yarmouk River, and the River Jordan. Gadara is most often presented as a late Roman or early Byzantine site, however, it also contains Ottoman heritage, religious heritage for Christian and Muslim visitors, and the most recent heritage of the villagers themselves who were moved to an alternate site in favor of preserving the other heritage structures.

This article will discuss several possibilities as to why there is potential local population exclusion in heritage interpretation. The local populace in Jordan is excluded from investing and benefitting economically from the tourism industry or excluded in the heritage interpretation and marketing processes. If the exclusion is based on investment or economic benefits at the heritage site, that may be due to the lack of money available. If the exclusion is based on heritage interpretation, then this could be due to the lack of integration or involvement allowed for locals in the site. Economics are not necessarily linked to heritage interpretation and promotion on the part of the locals. There is not just a Bedouin and Palestinian heritage, but there are several diverse heritages such as Jordanian tribes who are not Bedouin: Circassians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Syrians, Chechens, and others each have a story to tell. Although they could be described as competing narratives, they do not need to compete. They are simply different. Each narrative is authentic to, or at least part of the integrity of, its group of adherents, and each narrative can have a place in the Jordanian national makeup. There should not be a story that legitimizes one group over another. At the same time, population counts should not determine the validity or the importance of a story, especially over another story.

Peter Howard (2003) argued that where heritage is paramount, identity is controversial and divisive. To accept the heritage of one group may be to contest the heritage of another group. Howard draws from three theories by Gregory Ashworth (1999) which he stated were the core of understanding heritage studies. The first theory is Legitimation. Governments throughout history have reworked prior status symbols in order to lend credibility to their regimes. This concept of legitimacy is then blended with the second theory: cultural capital. Cultural capital is protected, desired, and owned by a few. The third theory is dominant culture: who controls the cultural capital and defines what is normal. Howard proposed that in order to determine what to present and how to present and protect it, the site management must first discover what the heritage itself is. Heritage is such a nebulous concept it needs to be determined through interpretation, and this interpretation presented.

In constructing a sense of place and history, people begin to define their sense of heritage. Yet sometimes it is not individuals or communities that construct their publicly perceived sense of place. When outsiders construct the sense of place, it can sometimes lead to Othering. Edward W. Said examined the early generation of scholars who were involved either intellectually or artistically with the Orient--the Orientalists--and described a phenomenon of Othering in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. This evolved into the romanticized ideas of the people, landscapes, and cultures which shared a space in the minds of Europeans and Americans with the simultaneous inferior state of the Orient to its own Western superiority (Said, 1978). Edward M. Bruner (2005), offered a variety of examples on how some cultures can be viewed as the exotic Other. Bruner points out that stakeholders (tourists, locals, tour guides, tourism agencies, etc) in the heritage narratives have different interest in the narrative production, sometimes leading to competing heritage narratives. For example, contested sites such as New Salem (USA), Masada (Israel), and Elmina Castle (Ghana) raise key narrative questions of who gets to tell which stories. In Ghana for example, the representation of slavery and the slave trade is full of contradictions. Although African Americans visit Elmina Castle to reconnect with their roots and experience their ancestors' sufferings on their journeys to the New World, Ghanaians visit the Castle

because it praises their history. Some blacks feel that even though they are not Ghanaians, the castle belongs to them. However, when diaspora blacks (even blacks of Ghanaians origin) return to Ghana, Ghanaians label them as "Whiteman" or foreigners. Issues of narrative authority are raised here because for many African Americans, the castle is a holy place not to be desecrated. They do not want the castle to be painted or made beautiful, but rather to maintain its stark and dismal appearance.

Nigel Worden (2001) also looks at heritage, competing heritages, and heritage site representation through the case study of Melaka in Malaysia. Melaka is presented as the origin of the modern Malaysian state, and Malay heritage is celebrated to the expense of other indigenous and immigrant heritages such as the Chinese or Portuguese. These examples of contested heritage and exclusion of competing or complimenting heritages is a complex problem in Heritage Studies: how does one present a site with multiple heritages, or a national story where not everyone agrees on the important narratives?

The richness of heritage sites can allow tourists to learn about local cultures through heritage interpretation. Even when falling into disrepair, heritage sites are important to the locals and local history (Vijaykumar, 2016). The aspects of a heritage site chosen for heritage interpretation have the potential to cause politicization of heritage and the site, leading to diminished commercial use of heritage sites and selection of only certain targeted tourist interests (Bui and Lee, 2015). For some visitors, heritage interpretation has the potential to emotionally link individuals to a heritage site. This emotional link can lead to word of mouth or web review promotion of sites by those tourists. The promotion of heritage sites in this manner can be an effective marketing tool. The local community also plays an important role in this promotion (Hart Robertson, 2015).

According to Al Mahadin (2007), some researchers believe that tourism in Jordan is rooted in politics, not economy, and interpreted to bolster the legitimacy of Hashemite rule and the creation of Jordanian state history. In the 1970s and 1980s, Jordanians saw a movement to folklorize what was Jordanian in the present as being continuous with the past as national identity, Bedouin, and tribal. Folklore museums promote Bedouin folklore as Jordanian with the Hashemites as guardians or protectors of this culture for tourist and local consumption. Museums gave Jordanianess to their objects transcending creation of state by referring to objects as Jordanian which were created prior to the state itself. Petra and certain other sites are seen in continuity with current regime—the king and royal family are parallel to Nabataeans. Islamic heritage with the exception of crusader and Umayyad castles has been largely ignored, especially Ottoman heritage including many public buildings and mosques. In the push for legitimacy, archaeology is used as a political tool. Ottomans ruled for over 400 years, and the 1916 Arab Revolt was couched as throwing off the oppressive Ottoman, non-Arab regime. Celebrating Ottoman heritage would cause legitimacy questions for the current state as preexisting and also legitimacy questions for the current rulers (Al Mahadin, 2007).

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this article is to examine how the competing heritages of Gadara are interpreted and portrayed in the tourism industry in Jordan, explain how the perception of the Gadara given by marketing affects the local residents, and in response to considering the issue of singular heritage presentation and the challenges of how to fully present a site with multiple heritages, show how the Loom Approach to Heritage Studies, a model of woven cloth on a loom to illustrate how both time, culture, and space can be fully integrated by those looking to present the heritage of a site from a fully inclusive and comprehensive point of view, is a more inclusive model and framework to the case study of the heritage site of Gadara.

3. THE RESEARCH AREA AND METHODOLOGY

For this research, I engaged in qualitative field work and gathered data from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected directly from personal interviews and observations of tour groups, as well as architectural and tangible heritage observation and analysis. To protect the identities of my interviewees, I identified them via broad terms such as locals, officials, tourists, and the like. Secondary data included outside studies and statistics, maps, policies, legal documentation, government strategies, websites, journals, newspapers and reports, and conferences on tourism's impacts on host communities. The author used both active and passive observation, being an active observer in several tour groups as well as passively observing tour groups, tourists, and tourist and local interactions. Active and passive interactions produced the same results. The study sample of individuals for this research were the residents of Gadara, those who worked with or were involved in Gadarene tourism such as site employees, booth owners/ gift shop owners, the Friends of Archaeology Association in Gadara, and the tourists at the site.

The bulk of the research was completed in two phases during the summer of 2012: phase one being documenting the site, oral interviews, participant observation, and ethnography and phase two consisting of work done in Irbid, Amman, and the district of Bani Knanah to research government plans and strategies, examine library and archival sources, and to utilize resources and speak to individuals at the Tourism Directorate, tourism police, the Jordan Tourism Board, the Department of Antiquities, travel agencies, tour companies, the Jordanian National Electric Power Company, Khaled Ibn Al-Walid municipality, Gadara municipality, local businesses, and the Jordanian Directorate of Water Resources used snowball sampling and sought out adult (over the age of 18 years old) individuals of different genders, ages, education levels, origins, and connectedness to the site. In total, I interviewed approximately 250 residents, tourism professionals, and antiquities employees and 150 tourists. A short, third phase was conducted in March 2019. The author conducted a series of informal interviews with tourism officials, local government workers, and site officials to check the continued accuracy of the 2012 fieldwork results. The author then revisited tourism websites and government sites in to update information.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The competing heritages of Gadara are portrayed and interpreted in various ways depending on the site, entity, or individuals engaging in the portrayal and interpretation. The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) and the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities promote Gadara in brochures and websites. Upon examining the publications and seeing how Gadara is being marketed and promoted, one would notice that these promotional materials: the JTB's Jordan History and Culture brochure, the Jordan Visitor's Guide brochure, and the JTB official website as of September 22, 2020, focus on ancient heritage as do the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities materials. Gadara is promoted as one of the ancient Decapolis cities with a beautiful situation on a hilltop overlooking the Jordan Valley on the Sea of Galilee filled with cultural and physical ties to ancient Greece and Rome. These institutions also promote Gadara as the place of Jesus's miracle of casting the demons from a possessed man into a local herd of pigs who then ran into the Sea of Galilee. The majority of the brochures images and entries on Gadara are on the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods of the city with a small side note states that Gadara was known in the Ottoman records as Mkes which meant a tax gathering outpost. These sites are described at length on the various brochures and although the Ottoman site is sometimes pictured, it is not described at all. They also recommend that tourists see the Roman city ruins, Gadara's Museum, and Al-Himmah's hot springs located six miles north of Gadara with its Roman bath complex. The brochures barely mention the Islamic heritage or the more recent past of the Ottoman village at the site, and the Visitor's Guide even recommends leaving the site to see other Roman sites rather than mention the more recent heritage. There is no mention of the contemporary tangible or intangible heritage of Gadara. The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities website only provides operational information about Gadara such as entrance fees, and the hours of operation and statistical information such as the numbers of tourist arrivals to Gadara and their nationalities (The Jordan Tourism Board, 2012a, 2012b; The Jordan Tourism Board, 2020; The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2020).

The promotion of Gadara by local and international tourism companies varies from Gadara's geographic location to Gadara as an ancient site and a religious or biblical destination. The way these companies present Gadara appears to only be a Roman and Byzantine civilization with little connection to other time periods or peoples. Although the Islamic and Ottoman heritage is strongly documented in Gadara, there was no mention of these more modern periods including the contemporary heritage of Gadarenes. The heritage site of Gadara is being presented again and again as a static and ancient destination with no dynamic heritage or people (Alobiedat, 2014; Jordan Private Tours, n.d.; Jordan Select Tours, n.d.; TripAdvisor, n.d. -a, n.d. -b; Viator, n.d.).

Tourism companies and other tourism outlets would have the ability to increase tourist interest and variety at the heritage site through cross promotion of tangible and intangible heritage. For example, by creating a heritage interpretation-based itinerary for tourists visiting Donnafugata Castle in Italy, researchers were able to consolidate local architectural tourism draws with traditional rural buildings of the region with enogastromic (food and wine tourism) attractions, lodging, and directions within a simple guide. Text panels and a self-guided tour allowed the larger and more diversified interest groups who visited the

castle to experience other heritage of the region increasing tourism receipts for the area (Leanza et al., 2016).

There are several different arguments as to why ancient heritage is promoted in Jordan. The conventional approach of marginalizing the local people and their intangible heritage is irrelevant and inaccurate in Jordan. Intangible heritage, according to them, is the memories and stories which are passed down about archaeological sites, giving those sites meaning to the locals and making them a part of cultural heritage. The anthropological approach to cultural heritage looks at the memories, stories, and sense of place as opposed to the conventional approach approved of and used in the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) conventions which are based on scientific evaluation of value. The conventional approach advocates a top-down interpretation of heritage by the government presented to locals, and the anthropological approach used more frequently in Western interpretation as of late advocates the validity and importance of local cultural heritage in site interpretation (Abu-Khafajah and Rababeh, 2012).

The conventional approach to heritage interpretation marginalizes local populations, contexts, cultures, and knowledge. The Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DAJ) has focused on monumental classical archaeological sites since its creation under the British Mandate in 1924. Where classical archaeological sites are seen as paramount, local communities are seen as potential threats to the conservation and preservation of these sites and are moved, such as what happened at Petra or Gadara in Jordan, in order to protect the sites and to allow for more excavations and archaeological work to be done (Abu-Khafajah and Rababeh, 2012).

The top-down approach also marginalizes the local communities through the exclusion of local scholars from the interpretation of the sites on the national and international levels. Following this post-colonial mind set, the local scholars or communities would be a threat to the preservation of these sites, and thus they are cordoned off through fencing and restrictions from locals. There is no consideration given to any contemporary heritage connections to the site or those locals would have any interest in these sites (Abu-Khafajah and Rababeh, 2012). However, heritage is developing and not static. In Gadara, for example, locals not only used the stones for construction, but also used concrete and plaster to integrate with the borrowed stone. Many locals most likely used the stones from the site due to the lack of available building materials and the expense of new materials (interviews with Gadarenes on July 18, 2012). As a result, the idea of using the stones from the ruins of the site of Gadara to build new houses is not necessarily intentionally destructive, but rather a reuse and redevelopment in the tangible heritage of the site. If the residents of Gadara were less marginalized and not excluded from heritage interpretation, locals also would have a greater stake in promoting the heritage site and increase the positive experiences of visitors.

It is true that contemporary Jordanian heritage from all groups is not well-represented in the public sphere. For example, at Gadara, there is no contemporary heritage of the locals present within the museum collection or at the site except for some pictures of Gadarenes with short description at the Visitor's Center, which remained closed except for when requested to be opened. If the Center then remains closed, contemporary heritage is

effectively not being promoted as it is unlikely tourists would realize they could request a closed building to be opened, and the building is not labeled on site with signs (Interviews with local residents at Gadara on July 18, 2012 and March 12-14, 2019; Observation of the Visitor's Center at Gadara on July 28, 2012 and March 6, 2019).

With the economic downturn of the late 1980s through the early 1990s, the Jordanian regime was in trouble and turned to the 1994 Peace Treaty which it marketed as an economic boon as a way to shore up regime legitimacy. However, there were no government supports for the new industry, and after the initial boom from 1994-1996, the Jordanian tourism industry fell apart and returned to its prior state. The private sector rushed to invest in the new industry 1994-1996. Local populaces were mostly excluded from the tourism industry in their areas. Heritage sites were marketed by the government as five star locations rather than cultural spots. Tourism was thus another way to shore up the regime post September 11, 2001, as Jordan's monarchy sought to promote Jordan as not overtly Arab or Muslim. Instead, Jordan becomes a country associated with a king and queen. The Jordan First campaign promoted Jordan as a peaceful country amongst scary neighbors with a sizable Christian population: religion becomes personal and not national. Jordan is portrayed as a Hashemite valued country and not as an Islamic or Arab country. Jordan is seen as Westernized and peaceful (Al Mahadin, 2007).

For a better understanding about the reason(s) for the focus on promoting the ancient heritage of Jordan, this article will explore the Jordanian Antiquities Law and the selection criteria of UNESCO. The Jordanian Antiquities Law was amended in 1934, 1953, 1976, 1988, and 2004, but during all these periods until now, the definition and scope of antiquities has remained nearly the same with very few changes in the definitions (Darabseh, 2010; The Department of Antiquities of Jordan, n.d.). Current Jordanian Antiquities Law No. 12 for the year 1976 and Jordanian Antiquities Law No. 21 of the year 1988 including 2002, 2004, and 2008 amendments defined antiquities as:

> Article 7: Antiquities
> A. "Any movable or immovable object or artifacts that were made, written, inscribed, built, discovered, or modified by a human being prior to the year 1750 AD including caves, sculpture, coins, pottery, manuscripts, or other types of manmade products showing the beginning and development of science, arts, handicrafts, religions, traditions of earlier civilizations, or any part added to these products after that date."
> B. "Any movable or immovable object or artifact presents in clause A of this definition which dates to 1750 AD and which the Minister of Antiquities requests to be considered an antiquity by a decision published in the official newspapers."
> C. "Human, animal, and plant remains which date back prior 600 AD."
>
> Article 8: Archaeological Site
> A. "Any area in the Jordan that was regarded as a historic site under former laws."
> D. "Any other area that the Minister of Antiquities decides contains any relics or is related to important historical events by decision that will be published in the official newspapers" (Alobiedat, 2014, p. 219).

The main change in the Antiquities Law since 1923 is the cutoff date of consideration for antiquities status was 1700 AD until the 2002 amendment when the year was changed to 1750 AD. Other than this change, the changes made were in peripheral areas such as the Minister of Antiquities. Based on the Antiquities Law, heritage that would fall under the definition of antiquities would be ancient heritage in Jordan. This also noticeably excludes such sites as the Ottoman Village at Gadara, which although dating back to the nineteenth century and part of the contemporary heritage of Gadarenes, is not protected under the law. Because the law does not accurately reflect the interest in or importance of more recent heritage post 1750 AD, the Minister should consult with a diversified consultation committee outside the Department of Antiquities such as Archaeologists, Anthropologists, Architects, Civil Engineers, and Historians when determining what constitutes both antiquities and protection. This composite committee may prevent the narrow focus on ancient heritage which may be the perspective of Archaeologists and Anthropologists, or the equally acute concentration on the more modern heritage which may be the scope of Architects and Civil Engineers. There could also be a second designated protected class created such as "heritage" or "contemporary heritage" which constitutes the post-1750 AD time period.

Another reason the laws may not have changed and are still focusing on ancient heritage is the adoption of UNESCO criteria for inclusion of a heritage site (UNESCO, n.d.). Using Gadara as an example, the Ottoman Village does not represent anything particularly unique as far as lifeways or traditions, and Ottoman villages existed across much of Ottoman territory. What is unique, if Jordan was asked to apply the UNESCO criteria for nomination and selection of a heritage site, is the ancient heritage at the site with the Roman theater, the Byzantine church, and the shop lined streets in conjunction with the geographical location. This article proposes the UNESCO and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities should take into account the modern populations, cultures, and traditions when declaring a heritage site in order to compliment the reason for nomination and to create a fuller narrative of place and importance. Another reason could relate to the idea that tourists seek out something different from their home culture: perhaps some tourists are seeking out something different from their time and place in the ancient heritage of Jordan as opposed to the more contemporary culture (MacCannell, 1976). Perhaps this is what the Department of Antiquities and tourism companies anticipate tourists and international organizations are interested in, and chooses to privilege ancient heritage over contemporary as a result.

Although this article agrees that heritage sites are not necessarily marketed optimally in Jordan, it is unfair that the government is often blamed for this continued problem. Instead, tourism companies and academia also bear the burden of marketing heritage sites either less as different cultural locations or more as experiencing a luxury component to travel. Clearly there are aspects of tourism marketing in campaigns that are contrary to Jordan's majority Islamic values – values such as not drinking alcohol -- or Arab values like dressing conservatively. However, this is not necessary due to the regime attempting greater legitimacy or to downplay the Arab and Islamic realities of the country, but rather as a marketing tool to help potential visitors feel more comfortable with the idea of going to a country that differs significantly from their home country culturally and religiously. This is also practical travel information to let visitors know what to wear and what not to wear as well as what is and is not legally permitted or socially accepted (within boundaries) in the

country. For example, as of October 2, 2020, the Jordan Tourism Board official website recommendations that tourists should not consume alcohol outside hotel bars, eat, drink, or smoke in public spaces during the holy month of Ramadan, which is specifically enforcing Islamic and local values in public spaces for both Muslims and non-Muslims (The Jordan Tourism Board, 2020).

Heritage, as discussed above, is promoted for national legitimacy or is simply a continuation of the top-down, conventional approach to heritage interpretation based on aesthetic value. Some scholars claim that the ultimate authority and responsibility for heritage interpretation lies with the Hashemites and their regime, whereas others say the authority and responsibility lies with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DAJ) that is continuing the British Mandate policies. Whether the Hashemite rulers or the DAJ has the ultimate authority, the case study of Gadara shows that they are open to alternate suggestions provided the funding is present to carry out new plans. For example, the Jordanian government's decision to demolish the Ottoman village in Gadara was reversed when local and international archaeologists, anthropologists, and architects asked to preserve the remaining structures that were not interfering with excavations and the German Foreign Ministry provided the $30,000 to restore the structures (Brand, 2000).

The official interpretation and the portrayal of Gadara in the tourism industry represent an obstacle to the contemporary realities of the town and its population. Reading about the presentations of Gadara as a heritage tourism destination, modernity might not be expected by those who plan to visit the site. It can thus be argued that Gadarenes were disenfranchised in the commodification and marketing of their local tourism and heritage resources. As a result, some visitors, for example, may find modern architecture, cars, and modern clothing styles un-Gadarene. The real Gadara according to these presentations is not simply remaining a static place, but it also does not have living people.

Gadara is not just a sum of ancient stones, concrete, buildings, or streets. It is a personal place where locals could meet friends, relatives and visitors: where local culture is evolving and portrayed for others to see and to react. Promoting Gadara as a static, uninhabited, and ancient town is denying the existence of local residents. Not acknowledging the existence of Gadarenes caused negative attitudes toward the heritage tourism industry in the town and led to tension between the residents and officials. The residents perceived their exclusion as being seen as a threat to tourists and heritage (Interviews with the officials of the Friends of Archaeology and Heritage Association at Gadara, May 30-31, 2012; Conversation with local residents and booth owners at Gadara, Jordan, on March 12-14, 2019). Greater integration of locals in the heritage interpretation ease this tension, give Gadarenes stakeholdership in their local heritage, increase their sense of connectedness to the site once again, and bolstering their sense of identity.

Gadara was conquered, populated and colonized several times during the course of its history. It is a strategically favorable location with its Mediterranean climate, abundant resources for agriculture, and its early urban development that attracted people from all over the world. Although it is difficult to distinguish between Gadara's contemporary culture and the other areas of Jordan, this article will shed light on some contemporary customs of the village. At the very heart of Gadara's society is family. The family members

provide strong emotional ties and feel loyalty to one another. Gadarenes like any other society celebrate social, religious, and national occasions such as marriages, graduations, birthdays, Jordanian Independence Day, Islamic holidays, or even sporting events (Interviews with local residents at Gadara, May 20-21, 2012 and March 12-14, 2019; Interviews with the officials of the Friends of Archaeology and Heritage Association at Gadara, May 30-31, 2012).

Heritage sites hold different values to locals versus international visitors who favor different narratives for heritage interpretation (Ballantynea et al., 2014). Gadara is no exception. For a wide range of Arab visitors, especially Palestinians, the geographic location of Gadara means to them more than Gadara as a heritage site, representing a nostalgic spot for Palestinian refugees. Several Palestinian family members visit Gadara to be as close as possible to their origin. They bring their children to teach them about their heritage and history with the land and for the adults to remember their childhoods (Interviews with Palestinian visitors at Gadara, May 25, 2012 and March 18-21, 2019). With the increasing number of Syrian refugees in Jordan, and the close proximity of the Syrian border to Gadara, Gadara may become a similarly nostalgic site for displaced Syrians.

Religious and Biblical value is another purpose for tourist visits to Gadara. According to the Bible, Gadara is the place where Jesus cast out demons from a man into a herd of pigs. Some international non-Arab tourists knew about Gadara from the Bible, which encouraged them to visit Gadara to seek spiritual knowledge (Interviews with tourists at Gadara, May 24-29, 2012 and March 18-21, 2019). The new discovery of Jesus's Cave will probably increase the number of visitors interested in the religion rituals and narratives.

Gadara, for other groups of tourists, is a place where they could seek cultural knowledge. It attracts a wide range of tourists such as those who are interested history, or the figures associated with this history such as leaders, writers, artists, philosophers and poets. These travelers were there to visit the historic buildings and to learn about the people in the past and present (Interviews with tourists at Gadara, May 24-29, 2012 and March 18-21, 2019).

Tourists also visit Gadara for fun, adventure, and relaxation. The town represents an outdoor recreational place especially for Gadarenes and other domestic visitors to escape from daily tensions, routines, work, stress, and to refresh their bodies and minds (Interviews with local residents at Gadara, May 20-21, 2012 and March 12-14, 2019; Interviews with the officials of the Friends of Archaeology and Heritage Association at Gadara, May 30-31, 2012; Interviews with booth owners at Gadara, May 22-23, 2012 and March 12-14, 2019). Gadara, for other Jordanian communities, is an outlet for intangible heritage promotion and marketing. Heritage events held in Gadara consists of other communities' intangible heritage and performers displaying their heritage to an audience of Gadarenes and a few people from outside Gadara. As a result, local Gadarenes feel removed or excluded from the site, as other heritages are pushed forward in promotion (Participant observation of the Heritage Event in Gadara, July 28, 2012; Interviews with performers at Gadara, July 28, 2012).

The official interpretation of Gadara's heritage and the portrayal of Gadara by the local and international tourism companies are fairly uniform as a late Roman/Early Byzantine site

with very little attention paid to the additional heritages of the Ottoman structures, the religious aspect of Jesus's Cave, the Biblical narratives of Gadara, or even acknowledging the modern villagers who were displaced from the site in 1970s. To promote Gadara and other competing heritage sites in a more inclusive and holistic manner, this article recommends the use of the "Loom Approach" to Heritage Studies. The Loom Approach (see Figure 1) considers heritage interpretation as a type of woven cloth on a loom, which creates a far more inclusive portrayal of the mixed heritages of a site and eliminates narrative competition. The warp is the tangible and intangible heritage, the weft is the time periods, the loom consists of policies, finances, strategies, and other legal and administrative structures, and the weaver is the scholar who is helping to assemble the picture, or cloth, of the heritage of an area (Alobiedat, 2014, 2016). In the case of Gadara, the weft periods are the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Ottoman, and Contemporary periods, the tangible heritage is the architecture, inscriptions, structures, landscape, objects, and artifacts, and the intangible heritage is the culture, religious associations, and memories. In the end, although the researchers would have helped to assemble the heritage textile, they would not be an integral part of the fiber, and it would be the tangible and intangible heritage that is connected through time in space, rather than everything being connected to an outside actor. The Loom Approach not only works for the whole heritage of a people or area, but it also works for a singular aspect such as a single tradition or heritage artifact.
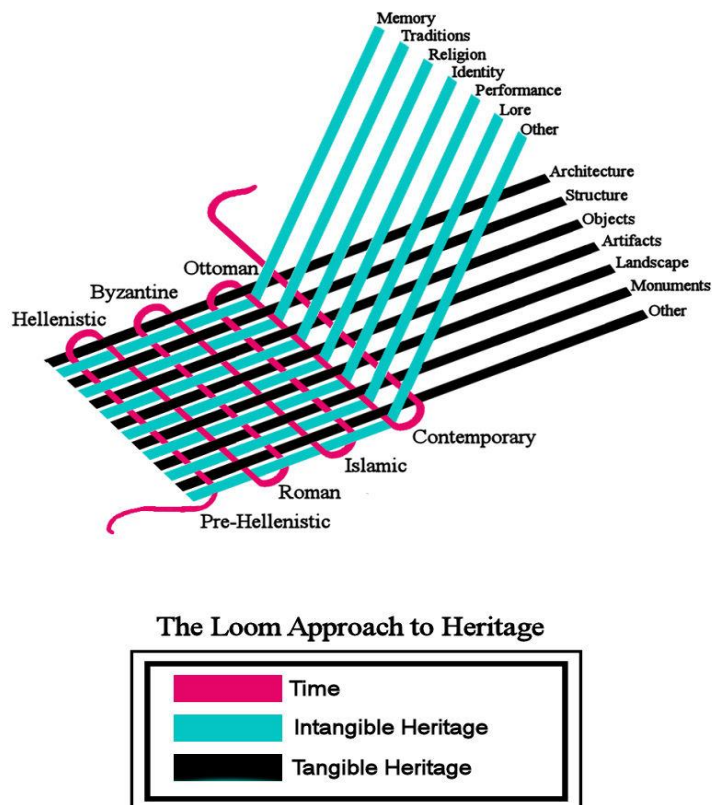

Figure 1: The Loom Approach to Heritage Studies was applied to the information received in order to attempt to arrive at a more inclusive interpretation of the data (Alobiedat, 2014, 2016).

The Loom Approach will adapt and reconcile the Jordanian Department of Antiquities Law, the selection criteria of UNESCO, the conventional approach to heritage (with the exception of the exclusion of locals and scholars), and the anthropological approach adding up the tangible heritage. It will take into consideration the ancient and contemporary heritage as well as the environment and the ecosystem of Gadara. For example, in addition to the focuses on the ancient tangible heritage of Gadara, the ancient intangible heritage of the city with reconstructions of the chariot races in the hippodrome, theater productions of plays and poems written by Gadarene playwrights and poets, or reenactments of shops on the streets will be presented in the Loom Approach to bringing the ancient city to life. This will not only give a different experience to tourists at the site, but using the shops, for example, will be beneficial to the environment by reusing existing structures and mitigating the need for new construction. Although hiring performers is costly, this article suggests collaboration with other heritage sites which currently give performances or use performers. The Loom Approach will also involve the most recent contemporary heritage including the Ottoman and modern Gadarene architecture, cultures, family and social life and its relation to these structures, and the economic and social status markers present in the tangible heritage to give visitors a better idea of local customs and traditions. It will use Gadara as an educational spot and for cultural exchange. To do so, local residents must be involved with every step of the production process, no longer to be excluded from promotion or interpretation.

5. CONCLUSION

Gadara's representation revealed that heritage is commoditized and reconstructed or constructed for visitors' consumption. As a result, new meanings of place and identity develop that often clash with the meanings ascribed by the local community, a conflict in which those who have more political power (officials) and economic power (tourism companies and investors) usually have the most influential decisions. This was evident through the promotion of certain images such as the ancient tangible heritage by the government and tourism companies. These images linked with the notions of heritage as static, rather than of multiple voices and diverse discourses. The author looked for a new way to interpret heritage in a manner that did not focus on one or two stories at a time for a site which would have so many stories. Instead, developing The Loom Approach to Heritage Studies, the author sought a way to include all stories as simply relative to time and space – an ever-evolving narrative which would allow for the inclusion of the ancient and modern heritages, and inclusion and input of the local communities. In this way, both those from the past, present, and future would have a chance to have their voices heard in the story of Gadara.

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