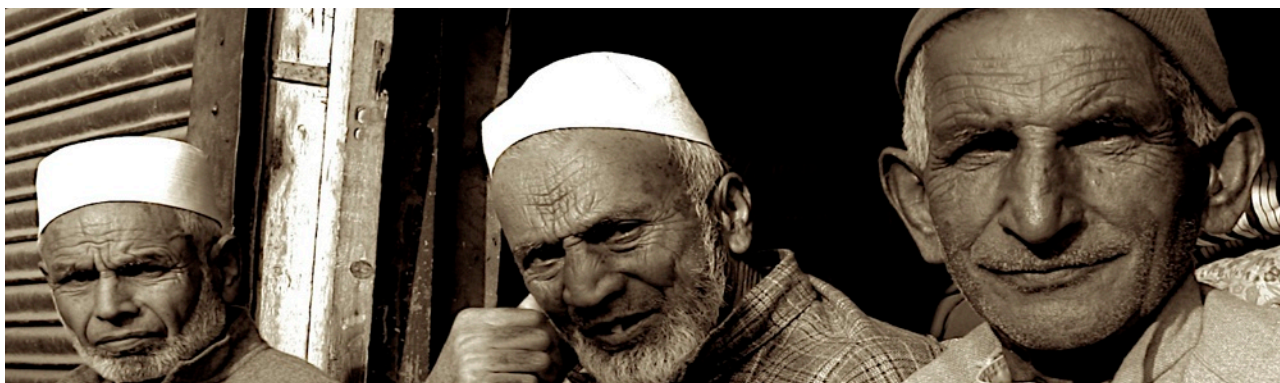


HERITAGE IN ASIA

CONVERGING FORCES AND CONFLICTING VALUES



08-10th January 2009

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

Rapid economic and social change across Asia today means the region's heritage is at once under threat and undergoing a revival as never before. Expanding infrastructures, increasing incomes, liberalizing economies and the lowering of borders, both physical and political, are all converging as powerful forces transforming Asia's social, cultural and physical landscapes. But as the region's societies look forward, there are competing forces that ensure they re-visit the past and the inherited. In recent years the idea of 'heritage' – both natural and cultural – has come to the fore across Asia, driven by a language of identity, tradition, revival, and sustainability. For some, heritage has become an effective means for protecting those landscapes, rituals, artifacts or traditional values endangered by rapid socio-economic change. For others, it has emerged as a valuable resource for achieving wider goals such as poverty alleviation, nation building or the cultural profiling of citizens. And yet for others, heritage protection is an obstacle inhibiting progress, national unification, or the shedding of unwanted memories.

In a region of immensely uneven change - such that the pre-/industrial and post-industrial all co-exist to create simultaneous presents - major analytical challenges arise from the need to preserve, safeguard and restore in contexts where aspirations for modernization and development are powerful and legitimate forces. To date however, much of the analysis of heritage in Asia has relied upon inherited or borrowed conceptions, and assumptions about what should be valued and privileged. The legacies of colonialism, state-centric agendas, social inequality, and the uneasy management of pluralist populations all conspire to stifle open and innovative discussion. There is little doubt that over the coming decade the contestations surrounding heritage in Asia will continue to intensify, whereby converging forces and conflicting values are the norm.

Hosted in Singapore, *Heritage in Asia: Converging Forces and Conflicting Values* examines heritage in relation to the broader social, environmental and economic changes occurring across Asia today. Moving beyond sector specific analyses, we define heritage in holistic terms and include the natural and cultural, the tangible and intangible. We strongly welcome contributions which consider the validity of current heritage theory for understanding contemporary Asia, and where appropriate, offer new conceptual and analytical directions. We also encourage submissions from researchers who offer insights into the connections between heritage and social development, urban studies, post-conflict reconstruction, migration/diaspora, trans-national capitalism, human rights, or popular culture. The conference provides the interdisciplinary platform necessary for making sense of the broader contexts and forces surrounding heritage in Asia today; and, in so doing, offers an innovative look at the rapid and complex socio-cultural changes now occurring across the region.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Prof. William Logan, Director of Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia-Pacific, Deakin University

Dr Nobuko Inaba, Professor of World Heritage Studies Program, University of Tsukuba

Dr Johannes Widodo, Professor of Architecture, National University of Singapore

Abstract Deadline: 1st September 2008

Proposed Themes:

Heritage in Cosmopolitan Urban Spaces

Across Asia cities continue to expand at unprecedented rates. Migrating populations, urban development and real estate speculation are placing severe pressure on fragile heritage resources. Simultaneously though, as cities compete for attention in today's 'new economies' they increasingly draw on heritage resources to brand themselves as sites of cultural or historical interest. What strategies successfully protect historic sites from the real estate developer? What role should the residues of colonialism play in new urban blueprints? How can the social pluralism of today's urban landscapes be reflected and equitably represented in the built environment? Potential themes include:

- Heritage and Performing The Global City
- Industrial, 20th Century And Independence Heritage
- Rural, Urban Transitions: Landscapes of the Vernacular and Everyday Heritage

Heritage, Reconstruction and Reconciliation

In recent years devastating disasters - whether it be from earthquakes, cyclones and tsunamis, or from the manmade violence of civil wars and conflict - have led to the destruction of irreplaceable architectural and archaeological sites across Asia. But should reconstruction and revival merely be about the heritage resources themselves, or can heritage play a wider role in the re-constitution of traumatized communities and the reconstruction of livelihoods? Does the language of 'commemoration', so favored by the international community, merely result in the retention of localized hostilities or can memorials be used as a tool for reconciliation? Potential themes include:

- Heritage And Post-Conflict/Post Disaster Livelihoods
- Trauma, Memory And Forgetting
- Post-Disaster Governance: Capacity Building, Geopolitics And Cultural Diplomacy

Economies of Heritage

Heritage is now widely employed as a 'resource' for socio-economic development. The use of cultural and natural heritage by governments, non-governmental agencies and institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank within a framework of development has yet to receive the critical attention it deserves. Is heritage merely being exploited

as an economic resource by wealthy elites or can it contribute to programs of 'sustainable development' that foster more equitable economic growth? Can poverty reduction help curb the illicit trafficking of cultural antiquities? In what circumstances do initiatives to promote intangible heritage create gender specific economies? Potential themes include:

- Heritage, Tourism And Development
- Theorizing the 'Values' of Heritage
- Sustainability, Community, Participation: Concepts or Buzzwords?

Heritage and Diversity

In recent years cultural heritage has emerged as an effective tool for promoting a benign language of difference within and across communities. But how successfully do current heritage policies reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious diversities of Asia? Do UNESCO conventions on 'intangible heritage' promote pluralism or are they enabling states to further their agendas of culturally profiling their citizens? How will the consumption of the Other or the exotic by a fast growing Asian tourism market influence the socio-cultural topography of the region? Potential themes include:

- Ethnicity, Culture And Plurality
- Heritage, Human Rights, And Indigeneity
- Empowering The 'Bearers Of Culture'

Heritage and Modernity

Modernity across Asia has destabilized previously accepted assumptions about 'authenticity' and the aesthetics of nature and culture. Do heritage frameworks conceived within the cultural traditions of 'Western' modernity remain valid for Asia today? In a region undergoing rapid industrialization, is industrial heritage a relevant category of social commemoration? Does a concern for preserving cultural heritage inhibit the shedding of the 'post-colonial'? How should natural landscapes best be protected from 'modern' intrusions? What rights should communities living inside historic landscapes have towards development and 'modernization'? Does new media present fresh opportunities for interpreting the past? Potential themes include:

- The Modern/Postmodern: Towards Asian Centric Theories of Heritage
- Simultaneous Presents & Multiple Temporalities Of Place
- Media, Popular Culture And Heritage

Submission Details

250-word abstracts and a 5-line biography should be submitted by 1st September 2008. Successful applicants will be advised by 15th September and will be required to send in a completed paper by 15th December 2008. Some funding will be available for those in the Asian Region, post-graduate students, and others unable to fund themselves. Selected papers will be put forward for publication in a refereed edited volume.

Submit enquiries/Abstracts to **Dr Patrick Daly** (aripd@nus.edu.sg) or **Dr Tim Winter** (tim.winter@usyd.edu.au).

Further Details and Submission Form Available at:

www.ari.nus.edu.sg/events_categorydetails.asp?categoryid=6&eventid=814