

Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia. Patrick Daly and Tim Winter (eds). Abingdon: Routledge, 2012. ISBN: 9780415600453

The heritage sector has been witness to significant growth in recent decades, with profound implications for physical heritage resources, their surrounding landscapes and source communities. In turn, a wide range of literature has been disseminated on the subject, not least of which is the publication, in 2009, of Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman's *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*, arguably the first text to address heritage as an academic discipline. It is within this field of heritage publication growth, that Patrick Daly and Tim Winter's specific and detailed consideration of the heritage sector in Asia, comes as a very welcome addition. While certainly not a geographical area to have been overlooked in heritage debates, Daly and Winter's comprehensive text, supported by a significant range of challenging case studies, stands out as leading and authoritative on the subject of Asian heritage.

The volume is divided into four themes, addressing conservation, politics and governance, identity, before concluding on the impacts of modernity and globalism. Comprising twenty three chapters, this is a comprehensive endeavour. Notable as well, this volume brings together an internationally diverse cohort of scholars, with eastern and western academics roughly equally represented. This provides a balance of perspective, and a variety of insights which only serves to enhance the credibility of the text.

Winter and Daly open this edited volume with an engaging overview of the split personalities which dominate the Asian heritage sector. The influence of tourism operators in the vast region, and their influence over local heritage conservation strategies, is important, as commercialism becomes increasingly embedded in national heritage programmes. At the same time, identity driven narratives dominate interpretive strategies. In locations such as Tibet, the identity narrative serves a very particular political agenda, and is questionable as an objective representation of contemporary Tibetan culture. There can be little doubt about the recognised importance of heritage in Asia in economic terms, but the true value of the resource could perhaps be better understood in terms of political control and ideology.

This theme would have been a more engaging and controversial area for the edited volume to continue with, but instead conservation issues become the feature for the following five chapters. A consideration of the practical difficulties of conservation throughout Asia is though, of value, providing a context for the interpretive issues to be engaged with later. Timothy Barnard's study on the legacy of Dutch conservationists (perhaps better described, on occasion, as 'hunters') on the Komodo island, and those land masses surrounding, is particularly fascinating when considering the prevalence of natural world heritage sites in the region today.

World heritage, perhaps unsurprisingly, goes on to become a dominant and recurring theme in the considerations of authors. William Logan provides a useful chapter outlining the dubious political nature of the implementation of the World Heritage convention in Asia. Citing the frequently overtly nationalistic nature of site listing, Long draws on examples such

as Vietnam's push for site listing, in relation to the nation's 1,000th anniversary celebrations, and the PDR Korea's use of listing in relation to the development of historical claims over the entire geographical peninsula. While Long's wider critiques of the World Heritage List are familiar and echoes many other publications, he establishes a strong context for the wider discussions to follow.

Colin Long revisits Vietnam, but also addresses attitudes to World Heritage in China and Laos. Here, Long identifies an alarming emphasis on commercialisation of heritage sites which, certainly in a Chinese context, appears to outstrip any conservation based concerns. While profitability is a motivating factor, in all examples, World Heritage status has provided nations with the opportunity to reshape perceptions regarding national historical narratives. In Vietnam, the ruling Communist Party is seen to be a particular beneficiary of the process. Here, sanitisation of the past allows for the mitigation of less comfortable and time specific episodes in the story of the nation. Awkward chapters are weaved into a longer narrative, and their impact is subsequently diminished.

Robyn Bushell and Russell Staiff continue with this approach, tackling the frequent dichotomies presented in World Heritage relationships. Citing modernity and social mobility, the impacts of World Heritage status on local communities in Laos are considered. Here however, UNESCO display concerns on increased visitor numbers, while locals, dependent on heritage tourism, are strongly advocating transport development to enhance access to the Luang Parbang World Heritage Site. Describing World Heritage as a 'double-edged sword', Bushell and Staiff further explore the conflicts created by a desire for, and impacts created by, tourism derived audiences. Ken Taylor picks up this narrative in relation to George Town, Penang, where World Heritage status is found to be in conflict with contemporary demands for modern living standards. Heavily sought after, World Heritage status in Asia is repeatedly shown to be a potential vehicle for political confrontations.

One of the other more significant contributions to feature throughout this volume is the consideration placed on the role of intangible cultural heritage. Generally, ideas related to intangible cultural heritage have been considered in subject specific texts, with limited discussion of the discipline in more general heritage themed publications. However, the *Handbook of Heritage in Asia* treats intangible heritage in the mainstream. This is an important recognition of the prominence of intangible forms of heritage throughout Asia. Georgina Lloyd's chapter addresses the difficulties faced in legislating for the protection of intangible heritage forms. An important observation here acknowledges that traditional values and informal local legislative systems will play a prominent role in protecting intangible forms, yet broad brush state legislation may well conflict with, and contradict, these more established protective systems.

This theme is further supported by Patrick Daly's closing chapter, considering the importance of martial arts as intangible heritage in China and Malaysia, confidently arguing that it is 'impossible to discuss cultural heritage in Asia without considering intangible cultural heritage'. Daly's fieldwork reveals a troubling picture in which practicing masters of traditional Chinese martial arts find their craft increasingly marginalised, as societal values

and pressures change. One potentially contentious point raised by Daly addresses the need to change the nature of transmission of cultural tradition, a process which would ultimately require a corruption of the tradition itself. However, Daly contends that without such fundamental changes, the entire cultural tradition might ultimately be lost. Such are the challenges of safeguarding intangible heritage.

These themes are, however, only a fraction of those covered in this ambitious volume. The breadth of heritage management and interpretation issues addressed here, makes the *Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia* a text with much wider applications that go far beyond the study of Asian heritage. This text will certainly serve as an essential introduction to some very culturally specific heritage themes. For instance, Denis Byrne's discussion of popular religion across the entire Asian continent, and its importance in the priorities of heritage practitioners, delivers a key overview of religious themes that are specifically relevant to this region. The text in general provides debate and discussion which easily transfers to other global regions.

While students of Asian heritage will be obvious beneficiaries of this text, those involved with heritage studies anywhere in higher education would do well to consider this publication. The theory and practice considered here are highly applicable in a western heritage context as much as they are in an eastern one. Indeed, practitioners and students may well benefit from an eastern perspective on otherwise familiar heritage management issues. This will also serve well as a supplementary text for anyone with an interest in Asian history and contemporary popular culture. This volume addresses themes which will have a broader resonance with cultural studies in Asian nations, and be valuable in wider social studies programmes.

The *Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia* is therefore a robust and deep text. This is a subject leading publication, which makes a substantial contribution to an otherwise relatively thin field of study. For considerations of Asian heritage, approaches to management and interpretation, with specific analysis of the role of World and intangible forms of heritage in the region, this collected volume is unrivalled, and essential for students of the discipline.

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