

2008 ICOMOS ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING COMMUNIQUE

HANGZHOU JUNE 2008

Meeting in Hangzhou, China on 10 June 2008, the participants of the 2008 ICOMOS Asia Pacific conference discussed through case studies and philosophical debate the many issues, achievements and shared learning about cultural heritage practice in Asia and the Pacific. The delegates drew the following six messages from this exchange:

1. **Cultural landscapes are particularly vulnerable in this region.** The shift from living cultural environments to new uses such as urbanism, or abandonment as threats to agricultural resources are exacerbated by the changing aspirations of younger generations, and the impacts of climate change;
2. **The role of community engagement in cultural landscape management is fundamental** in ensuring the success of the practical, day to day conservation management of heritage monuments and sites;
3. **ICOMOS is an essential regional professional network for conservation in Asia Pacific.** We can all share and learn from experience within our region. Six specific opportunities to expand the influence and benefits of ICOMOS in Asia Pacific were proposed:
 - **Formation of a Central Asia sub-regional network** or program or structure within ICOMOS in order to support professional development in those countries and their shared working language of Russian;
 - **Promotion of the role of the ICOMOS International Conservation Centre in Xi'an** to build regional skills through training, professional development and sharing of expertise;
 - **Facilitating regional member involvement in International Scientific Committees,** especially now in the lead up to the Quebec General Assembly;
 - **Developing opportunities for regional sharing of comparative knowledge, especially in relation to cultural landscape management,** perhaps through a Hangzhou based research program;
 - **Developing ICOMOS emergency response capabilities** for the Asia Pacific region, for example through the **ICOMOS Volunteers project**;
 - **Developing an Asia Pacific Regional calendar of events,** meetings etc, using the efficiencies offered by the internet.
4. **Presenting and interpreting heritage places is an essential part of the conservation process,** to improve community understanding and visitor enjoyment, as well as respect for conservation needs;

5. **Learning from old buildings and town plans to inform the design and energy performance of new structures in a time of new imperatives for energy conservation is vital**, as the world develops its responses to climate change.
6. **Heritage conservation should be seen as a respected resource in economic development**. The integration of cultural heritage conservation, as a resource considered within economic development, is a management opportunity which needs to be integrated in all conservation programs.

The participants at the meeting offered their sympathy and warm support for the people of China and colleagues affected by the Wenchau earthquake of May 12 and noted:

1. The importance of ensuring ICOMOS China has input to the planning process now being undertaken;
2. That ICOMOS regional committees are ready to assist when China is ready to receive support and practical input to the earthquake response efforts; and
3. Support for entry on the World Heritage In Danger List of the Diaolou and villages of Kiang and Tibetan nationality, now on China's World Heritage Tentative List.

We look forward to meeting again in 2009.

Rapporteur: Sheridan Burke



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RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

Meeting in Hangzhou, participants from countries in the Asia Pacific region including Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, Japan, Australia, Thailand, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Malaysia, Macao, Philippines and Sri Lanka, and also from the UK, Bulgaria, Belgium and Cote D'Ivoire expressed their appreciation to ICOMOS China, the Administrative Committee of West Lake Scenic Area and the Hangzhou Municipal Bureau of Landscape & Cultural Relics for their expert organisation of this, the fifth ICOMOS Asia Pacific Regional meeting and associated warm hospitality. We thanked the Republic of Korea and China for organising the meetings to date, especially Hae Un Rii, Guo Zhan and Kristal Buckley for their stamina and perseverance in facilitating the regional meetings which have contributed to the strengthening visible presence of ICOMOS in the region. The incoming Chairman of ICOMOS China, Mr Tong Mingkang, has an important tradition to maintain.

The meeting heard presentations from fourteen speakers who raised common issues through case studies and statements of experiences which we found to hold much in common across the region.

MR. TONG MINGKANG, China, identified issues which he saw for the Asia Pacific Region on "the road ahead"

- global warming & the impacts of climate change
- disaster preparedness & response to emergencies impacting on world heritage places and humanity
- vulnerability of cultural landscapes to these forces

He reminded participants of the role of ICOMOS as a consultative forum for professional exchanges and co-operation – and the immense value of sharing professional experience amongst all.

Host Mr. WANG SHUIFA, Hangzhou welcomed delegates to this beautiful city of history and culture and we joined the many visitors before and after Marco Polo in seeing a city which can tell ancient stories and legends, through its paintings, operas and poems and also through its scenic beauty spots, gardens, and ecology as well as its many heritage conservation initiatives.

KRISTAL BUCKLEY, Australia reminded us that the Asia Pacific region is culturally, historically and geographically diverse, and that together, through the ICOMOS network, we can build and renew friendships and professional development opportunities. She noted that the ICOMOS International Conservation Centre (IICC) in Xi'an was a key capacity building centre for ICOMOS in the region.

Through the meeting presentations we "visited" sites in Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Cambodia and Thailand, Australia, the Philippines, Japan, the Republic of Korea and China. We have shared success stories and learned lessons from some failures as well, in a very open exchange and with a sense of co-operation which makes the possibilities for the future become evident.

PALI WIJERATNE, Sri Lanka in his cricketing metaphor of the "scoreboard" challenged us to answer:

- Are we ready to manage World Heritage sites?
- Can we cater to all the stakeholder aspirations?

To these two key questions, we saw some emerging answers in case studies which followed.

AUGUSTO VILLALON, The Philippines in relating his experiences with the Ifugao Rice Terraces told us how:

- consultation with the local people was essential
- understanding and successful interpretation were crucial
- micro-economic opportunities need to be discerned and pursued
- heritage can be an untapped resource for development
- many years of talking with the local people is a worthwhile investment
- understanding all components of the place and its setting was most important

VASU POSHYANANDANA, Thailand related the complexities of what may become a trans-border nomination of the Preah Vihear mountain temple and its setting, by Cambodia and Thailand.

NATALIA TUREKULOVA, Kazakhstan warned us of the dangers of uncontrolled archaeological excavation and unsubstantiated “reconstruction” currently occurring in some places in Central Asia where rapidly changing economic conditions prevail. She hoped for the creation of a sub-regional ICOMOS group to “open a window” for Central Asia to shared professional networks and skills development, perhaps through the IICC-X.

NUROV URTNASAN, Mongolia spoke of changing social and economic pressures upon the cultural landscapes of the World Heritage inscribed Orkhon Valley. In the context of a nomadic pastoral culture, climate change is causing expanding desertification, and increasing urbanisation, modern technology and living advances must be reconciled with traditional cultural values.

PETER PHILLIPS, Australia spoke of the impact of climate change on cultural heritage places. He challenged us to start thinking about measuring costs by energy consumption, not money. The ways in which heritage structures may exhibit sound energy and sustainability performance must be better understood, to rebut ill-informed and narrow views of energy management in the built environment.

A thread running through all the presented papers was the importance of communication in presenting heritage sites. PROFESSOR SANG HAE LEE, Republic of Korea related the development of detailed interpretive and directive signage for sites in Seoul, including the Changdeogung Palace, in a beautiful model solution to a ubiquitous and problematic challenge for all world heritage sites. A timely example, and one to note given that at the Quebec General Assembly, ICOMOS will vote to adopt an international charter for Presentation and Interpretation of Heritage Sites.

YASUYOSHI OKADA, Japan, examined the history of recent cultural landscape World Heritage nominations from Japan and the recent invitation by the Japanese Government agency Bunka Cho for nominations by the public of possible entries to the World Heritage Tentative List for Japan. Will this be the ultimate engagement of the public in the World Heritage process?

Mr. TONG MINGKANG, the newly elected President of ICOMOS China, reported on the extraordinary growth and expansion of ICOMOS China through focussed meetings and published documents on diverse subjects, including vernacular housing, industrial archaeology, and the modern inheritance of the 20th century. He listed various conferences and training sessions organised for conservation professionals. The new ICOMOS International Centre for Conservation in Xi'an held the first training course presented by a professional association in China. The remarkable range and number of initiatives, achieved with a growing and active membership are truly impressive and inspiring.

Mr. GUO ZHAN reported upon the human tragedy and damage to heritage caused by the Wenchau earthquake on the 12th of May. ICOMOS China is co-operating with and advising government on responses to the disaster. Colleagues in International ICOMOS stand ready to assist when and wherever possible, once China is ready to receive such support.

Ms CHEN TONG-BIN informed us about three of China's rich cultural landscapes, all on the tentative list for World Heritage inscription: Hangzhou's West Lake, the remarkable blockhouses of the Qiang Minority Culture, and the Hani Rice Terraces.

Ms FENG HAN noted the opportunities for collaboration with the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee of Cultural Landscapes (IFLA) and WHITR-A/P training programs (Tongji University, Shanghai) to contribute to discussions about authenticity and integrity, contexts and traditions in relation to cultural landscapes.

Six main conclusions that might be drawn from the discussions:

- 1. Cultural landscapes are particularly rich, dynamic and vulnerable in the Asia Pacific region**
- 2. The role of community engagement in cultural landscape management is fundamental**
- 3. ICOMOS is an essential regional professional network for conservation in Asia Pacific**
- 4. Presenting and interpreting heritage places is an essential part of the conservation process**
- 5. Learning from old buildings and town plans to inform the design and energy performance of new structures in a time of new imperatives in energy conservation is vital**
- 6. Heritage conservation should be seen as a respected resource in economic development**

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