

Architectural Conservation in Asia: National Experiences and Practices



William Chapman*, John Stubbs and Robert G Thomson

School of Architecture, University of Hawaii at Manoa, New York, USA

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*Corresponding author: William Chapman, Professor and Interim Dean, School of Architecture, University of Hawaii at Manoa, New York, USA, Email: wchapman@hawaii.edu

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Opinion

John Stubbs and Robert G. Thompson have done an excellent job summarizing the current state of architectural conservation practice in Asia. Spanning the whole of the Asian landmass and covering twenty-three countries, *Architectural Conservation in Asia* addresses both past and present practice; the principal issues and concerns; and the current governmental apparatus throughout the region. The authors also include shorter essays, many commissioned by leading figures in the field of conservation, to provide insights on specific details of contemporary practice. These include essays on operative charters and guidelines, new initiatives in disaster management, the rising interest in "intangible culture," and existing opportunities for education and training. The volume also takes on many cutting edge problems, including the preservation of Soviet-era housing in Vietnam and Cambodia, treatments of colonial heritage, the conservation of properties damaged through war and conflict, and the widely differing ideas of what needs to be conserved and what constitutes heritage.

Both Stubbs and Thompson are well equipped to handle this ambitious project. Stubbs was for many years the Vice President and Project Director for the World Monuments Fund.

He is currently the Christovich Senior Professor of Architectural Preservation Practice and Director of the Master of Preservation Studies program at Tulane University. Thompson, following an internship at the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), is currently the Acting Federal Preservation Officer for the Presidio in San Francisco. Both have extensive experience in Asia and are familiar with many of the principal figures in heritage management and conservation in the region.

Although there is considerable emphasis on buildings and landscapes, the volume should also be of great interest to archaeologists and anthropologists, both for its treatment of numerous monumental archaeological sites and also for its discussions of culture and practice; Angkor and Ayutthaya in Cambodia and Thailand, respectively, receive extensive treatment by the authors, as does Myanmar's Pagan. The book is extensively illustrated and well supplied with maps providing even uninformed readers with a strong understanding of the range of sites and conservation practices throughout Asia. The third volume in Stubbs's comprehensive story of conservation practice throughout the world, this last offering is essential reading for anyone interested in heritage and conservation and especially those involved in practice in Asia.



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