

Architectural Conservation in Asia: National Experiences and Practice 1st Edition

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Architectural Conservation in Asia provides a comprehensive overview of architectural conservation practice throughout the Asian region and is a valuable reference for teachers, architectural conservation practitioners, site managers and students of architecture, planning, archaeology and heritage studies worldwide. The volume's 598 pages provide an engaging and detailed overview of how built heritage conservation has evolved across the region. It is particularly relevant in illustrating how "Asian" approaches to conservation differ from the more fabric centred "Western" approach.

'*Architectural Conservation in Asia*' is the latest in a series of volumes authored or co-authored by Stubbs over more than a decade. The first of these, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation* was published by John Wiley and Sons in 2009. It presents a comprehensive survey of the practice, theory, and structure of architectural heritage conservation throughout the world. This was followed in 2011 by *Architectural Conservation in Europe and the Americas; National Experiences and Practice* co-authored by Emily G. Makas, also published by John Wiley and Sons Inc. In these volumes Stubbs and Makas ably demonstrate the value of large scale, detailed global and regional surveys in arguing for the indispensable role of architectural conservation in modern life.

This new book, *Architectural Conservation in Asia* (co-authored with Robert G. Thomson, and with the input of regional experts) provides a country-by-country analysis which draws out local insights, experiences, best practice and solutions for effective cultural heritage management that informs study and practice both in Asia and beyond. The lengthy introduction discusses the roles of many international institutions, national and non-government organisations involved in heritage conservation in Asia, noting in particular the importance of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in promoting conservation in the region and the relevance of initiatives such as the Historic Urban Landscapes approach for Asia's many historic cities. The book is organised into five geographic regions, each having their own helpful introductions and conclusions. Part 1 includes the countries of East Asia; Part 2 looks at Southeast Asia Mainland Countries; Part 3, the Southeast Asia Island Countries; Part 4, the South Asian nations and Part 5, Central Asia. Although many architectural forms and issues in conservation are transnational, the country focus in this ambitious volume provides a comparative and systematic framework for looking at local histories and national approaches to conservation.

Of particular interest are the short essays by regional experts, scattered throughout the volume as sidebars in the text. These lighten and deepen the text by providing personal, anecdotal and informative 'case studies' of places and issues. The volume is well illustrated with photos although these are black and white.

For those of us who work in the region, the documentation of countries like Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam provide excellent summaries of historical development and practice in these more well known regions. But the coverage of Central Asia, including Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and other countries, highlight the challenges of environmental, geopolitical and material conservation. The large scale ancient mud brick structures, which comprise the landmarks of "one of the worlds great regional civilizations remains daunting, and without simple solutions".

While recognising that it is not possible to cover everything in a single volume, we would have liked the section on Hong Kong to include discussion of the very positive "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" where—unlike Australia—the government does not sell off its assets, but provides the opportunity for non profit making organisations to submit applications for adaptive reuse of the many remaining colonial buildings still in government ownership. Substantial grants, covering most of the cost of adaptive reuse costs, are provided to successful recipients, and many places are being creatively repurposed for arts based and other community activities. Australia could well take note of this model.

The book provides a final two page discussion of the way forward—and highlights that all countries in the region are engaged in cultural heritage protection for a variety of reasons, including pride, protection of cultural identity, respect for the past, and opportunities for economic development in the way of jobs, local business interests, and competition with similar places. "Since cultural tourism is such a large and growing market in the region, the stakes have increased over time and are expected to continue to do so".

John H. Stubbs and Robert G. Thomson are to be congratulated at the rigour and detail shown in this volume. The extensive bibliography demonstrates the depth of research that underpins the text. Whilst this is an excellent reference for academics, Stubbs brings to the work his extensive practical experience. From 1990 until 2011, he served as Vice President for Field Projects at the World Monuments Fund in New York where he directed scores of the organization's projects across the world including many in the Asian region.

Architectural Conservation in Asia is the third in the series where Stubbs ambitiously attempts to document architectural conservation practice in different parts of the world—these are described on the project's website at www.conservebuiltworld.com.

For Stubbs, there are still three more parts of the world to write about: West Asia & North Africa; Sub Saharan Africa; and Australia, Oceania & the Polar Regions. It would be a significant contribution if he was able to undertake a similar coverage for Australia, and we in the conservation arena should offer him every support in this endeavour which is understood to be under consideration.