

# ICOA936: WORLD HERITAGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONFLICT

## Subtheme 02: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Building Peace and Reconciliation

**Session 2:** Heritage as Victim

**Location:** Silver Oak Hall 1, India Habitat Centre

**Time:** December 13, 2017, 16:45 – 17:00

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**Abstract:** Conservation, preservation and restoration of cultural heritage are confronted with serious challenges due to conflict of interests among nations, between state and state actors, among regional entities within a single country and communities. The objective of the paper is to examine whether designation of World Heritage intensifies or mitigates conflicts and its role to build peace and reconciliation among different conflicting parties. In order to develop a framework the paper argues that conflict can be defined in terms of attitude of opposing parties towards cultural heritage, degree violence and destruction, and possibilities of reconciliation and resolution of conflicts and contradictions among various stakeholders. In a broader sense there are three conflict situations, firstly, when opponents try to deprive, control injure, destroy, or otherwise harm; second, when two or multiple parties try to maximize their interest and win over other(s) through competition; third, when stakeholders aim to convince or persuade each other of the rightness or correctness or attractiveness of one's views or claims through debate and come to consensus through cooperation. Within the framework of three kinds of situations the paper tries to understand complexities of cultural heritage especially the World Heritage. The paper also attempts to highlight tools from within the World Heritage Convention and its operational guidelines from the process of nomination to actual designation and explore different kind of conflict situations.

**Key words:** *world heritage, conflict, world heritage convention, peace and reconciliation*

## INTRODUCTION

Conservation, preservation and restoration of cultural heritage confront with serious challenges due to conflict of interests among nations, between state and non-state actors, among regional entities within a single country and communities. This conflict arising out of variegated interests lead to conflict situations surrounding world heritage. It is argued that these conflict situations are not only externally governed but also inherent within the process of world heritage nomination. On one hand the world heritage nomination mitigates conflict but on the other hand the world heritage status intensifies conflict. The paper is an attempt to look at the World Heritage within the larger political debate on conflict, culture, and peace and reconciliation.

In order to develop a framework the paper argues that conflict involving world heritage can be defined in terms of attitude of individual countries/regimes/regional entities/or groups towards cultural heritage of 'others', leverage of each country to influence UNESCO and other international heritage bodies, vying for international recognition of maximum number of heritage, resentments, degree of violence and destruction by dissenting parties, and possibilities of reconciliation and resolution of conflicts among various stakeholders. In an article on social conflict, Robin M. Williams, Jr. defined conflict in terms of interactions of two or more parties manifesting in the form of fight, game and debate.<sup>1</sup> The norm of interactions among states in the international arena is primarily debate that takes place through game. However, possible outburst of overt conflicts between states, states and non-state actors, and among various communities is quite natural in the contemporary political situation.

## WORLD HERITAGE & CONFLICT

The general impression is that listing of World Heritage helps to increase tolerance among countries towards other cultures and develop world peace. Since why, how and for whom the world heritage sites should be protected remain undecided in many countries, the possibilities of conflict regarding cultural heritage still loom large. There are enough examples of open dispute over world heritage across the world. The contention between Cambodia and Thailand on World Heritage Site of Preah Vihear Temple is based on the issue of sovereign rights over a heritage belonging to a same cultural tradition. Besides interstate disputes, the world heritage often turn into bone of contention among different religious or cultural groups and face threat of ultra-nationalist and terrorist onslaughts. Demolition of Buddhist Archaeological Remains in the Bamiyan Valley by the Taliban is the most striking example of cultural intolerance. According to one interpretation, the Islamic regime of Afghanistan decided to destroy the site in the face of growing international isolation.<sup>2</sup> The episode of destruction of a two millennium old heritage property makes it imperative to rethink cooperation among various states and communities for the preservation of heritage from the perspective of conflict and reconciliation. As many nations try to muster the art of game to maximize national interests in the international politics, there are always room for potential conflicts to get to the World Heritage list.

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, Robin M. Jr. 1970. 'Social Order and Social Conflict', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 114, No. 3, 18 June, 218-19.

<sup>2</sup>Pattanaik, Smruti S. (2002). Religion and Politics in Afghanistan: The Role of Taliban Regime. In K. Warikoo, Ed., *Bamiyan – Challenge to World Heritage*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. New Delhi: Bhavana Books & Prints, 137-8.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS**

The paper tries to understand complexities of cultural heritage and possibilities of cooperation among the countries in South Asia in the context of World Heritage. As a geographical area, South Asia, comprising of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, is widely viewed as single cultural entity influenced in different degrees by three major religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The civilizational connections and historical linkages in South Asia with the advent of European imperialism became extremely complex and turned out to be politically contentious in the process of decolonization and emergence of independent nation-states. In order to develop better relations and meet challenges of external forces, the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was set up in 1985. In 1989 the SAARC nations included sports, arts and culture as important areas of cooperation and since then the countries in the region have deepened collaboration in the field of tangible and intangible heritage by introducing regular meetings of Ministers of Cultural Affairs, establishing a South Asian Cultural Centre, bringing the agenda for Culture, Protection, Conservation and Maintenance of the South Asian Cultural Heritage, and developing a cultural trail linking major Buddhist historical sites across the region. It was decided to take measures to preserve and reconstitute the South Asian cultural property and create a SAARC heritage list together with the operational guidelines of UNESCO. In this regard declaration of 2016 as the SAARC Year of Cultural Heritage is a remarkable achievement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to develop a typology and examine further scope of cooperation beyond overt conflicts in South Asia, the paper analyzes data related to the list of world heritage sites and the process of nomination. Data have been collected from two web sources – the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and World Heritage Site for World Heritage Travellers and arranged in tabular form in accordance to year of inscription into the World Heritage List, year of submission into the Tentative List and year of withdrawal from the Tentative List. Preliminary findings show that in certain years the countries of the region have been more active in preparing submissions for world heritage. On the basis of heritage related works in South Asia and on-going cooperation within the SAARC, the paper brings out typology of world heritage. This typology is intended to guide the SAARC to make concerted efforts for conservation, preservation and restoration of common heritage in the region and help to get the unrepresented countries in the World Heritage List.

## **FINDINGS & TYPOLOGY**

The UNESCO approves World Heritage designation and enforces its operational guidelines to signatory states. How enthusiastically an individual state participates in the global discourse of heritage depends solely on its awareness, motivation and diplomatic skill. One scholar discusses that countries like China and Morocco use the World Heritage nomination process to fulfil their nationalistic agenda. On the other hand there are countries like Bhutan and Maldives which do not have any World Heritage.<sup>3</sup> The limited or

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<sup>3</sup> Chapagain, Neel Kamal. (2013). Introduction: Contexts and concerns in Asian heritage management. In Kapila D. Silva and Neel Kamal Chapagain, Ed., *Asian Heritage Management – Contexts, concerns, and prospects*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. London and New York: Routledge, 10-11.

non-representation of heritage of some countries not only undermines UNESCO's purpose of identifying World Heritage but also allows some of the cultural and natural treasures to face greater danger of destruction. This can also be potential source of conflict in the future. Apparently there is no instance of manipulation for achieving nationalistic goal in the world body by the SAARC countries and the eight-nation regional grouping has already initiated dialogue on heritage related matters at the official level. The available data however reveal sources of contradictions and potential conflicts within the politics and society of these countries.

In terms of responding to global initiative of listing heritage properties across the world, Bhutan is fairly new. It is only in 2012 that the country submitted eight heritage properties – four cultural and four natural properties varying from monastery, fortresses, landscapes and national parks. Maldives is also without any World Heritage Site; however it began to prepare its inventory in late 1980s. While it submitted three sites in 1987 and withdrew all of them in 1996. Maldives became active again in preparing inventory in 2013 with the nomination of Coral Stone Mosques.

Nepal and Sri Lanka began with first inscriptions in 1979 and 1982 respectively. The two countries have not withdrawn any of the heritage properties and both have Hindu, Buddhist and Natural Sites that plays a pivotal role in the making of Buddhist circuit in South Asia.

Afghanistan has an available inventory of a total no. of sites 7 out of which one site is in Former Tentative List, four sites are in Tentative List and two sites are in the list of World Heritage Sites. The country commenced its activities in the year 1983 with the nomination of Ai Khanum however soon the site was retracted. We find the activities of the county next only in 2002 with inscriptions of Minaret of Jam and 2003 with Bamiyan. Unfortunately, both the World Heritage sites are in endangered list.

Bangladesh has a total number of ten sites with two sites in the Former Tentative List, six sites in the Tentative List and two sites in the World Heritage List. The country commenced its activities in the year 1985 with the inscription of Historic Mosque City of Bagerhat and the Ruins of the Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur. The country was active again in 1993 with submission of two sites and their withdrawal in 1996. This was followed by the inscription of its first only natural site of the Sudarbans as World Heritage Site. Being the largest country among the SAARC India has highest no. of 85 sites with 17 sites in the Former Tentative List, 42 in the tentative list and 36 sites as World Heritage. With the submission of 22 entries in 2014, India became most active since the formation of new government in 2014. Pakistan on the other hand has a total of 36 sites with 6 in World Heritage List, 26 in the tentative list and 4 in the former tentative list. Some of the world's oldest archaeological remains like Mahenjodaro and Taxila are inscribed as World Heritage in Pakistan.

**Table 2**  
*Ascribed, Tentative and Withdrawn Sites of SAARC Countries*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Types of Sites</b>		
	<b>Ascribed</b>	<b>Tentative</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>
<i>Afghanistan</i>	<i>Islamic, Buddhist</i>	<i>Natural, Ancient living cities, Islamic garden</i>	<i>Greco-Bactrian archaeological remains</i>

<i>Bangladesh</i>	<i>Medieval Islamic city, Buddhist, Natural</i>	<i>Ancient archaeological site, Buddhist</i>	<i>Natural, Buddhist</i>
<i>Bhutan</i>		<i>Fortress, Buddhist, Natural</i>	
<i>India</i>	<i>Prehistoric Archaeological site, Hindu, Hindu and Jain, Islamic, Buddhist, Christian, Natural, Pre-modern scientific wonder of Hindu tradition, Colonial and Post-Independent India, Modern city</i>	<i>Archaeological sites, Sites along the ancient and medieval communication routes, Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, Sikh, Bahá'í, Colonial and Post-Independent Indian, Modern city, Art and Craft, Settlement, Old burial system, Nature</i>	<i>Archaeological site, Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, Jain, Natural,</i>
<i>Maldives</i>		<i>Islamic architecture on coral stone</i>	<i>Islamic</i>
<i>Nepal</i>	<i>Hindu and Buddhist, Buddhist, Natural</i>	<i>Hindu, Buddhist, Settlement an industrial heritage, Medieval settlement and city, Natural</i>	
<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>Archaeological site, Islamic</i>	<i>Archaeological site, Natural, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu</i>	<i>Buddhist, Natural</i>
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	<i>Natural, Ancient city, Buddhist, Hindu, Colonial</i>	<i>Buddhist</i>	

Source: World Heritage Site for World Heritage travellers, <http://www.worldheritagesite.org>; World Heritage Centre

It is evident from above analysis that religions play a vital role in South Asia and have potential to build peace among societies of the region as well as conflicts. With the emergence of radicalism within religious groups and nationalist sentiments there are possibilities of growing fissures within domestic as well as regional level in the SAARC region. While the general tendency related to world heritage in respective countries in the region still shows mutual tolerance to each others' religious and cultural values, however, in the name of establishing outstanding universal value it is also dividing the countries of the region and creating conflict situations. The general fissures of conflict in the region have been identified as under:

1. While the first decade of submission of the countries of the region identified sites with varied typologies across function and religion, the same went towards narrowing down the later year submissions for world heritage sites to match the ideology of the countries.

2. The general trend of withdrawal of sites from the Tentative List points to the conflict in the mere process of World Heritage Nomination where the sites in the former tentative list reflect intolerance towards other countries of the region.
3. Besides the above conflict situations between countries of the region there are intergroup and intra-group conflicts within these countries. In recent years some fundamentalist groups are becoming intolerant towards particular heritage sites belonging to other religion. This can also influence in selection or withdrawal of world heritage at the official level in these countries.

## **CONCLUSION & WAY FORWARD**

To enhance mutual understanding among these countries, further probe needs to be made towards identification of elements that triggers conflict and rethinking the areas of cooperation; especially focus should be made to serial sites for cultural world heritage and trans-border sites for natural world heritage within the region. For example, the Royal Manas National Park which is in the tentative list of Bhutan should be designated as a World Heritage site since Manas National Park in the Indian side is already a World Heritage site. Taxila and Nalanda should be made into serial sites of India and Pakistan and also extended to similar site in Bangladesh. The expanse of Khangchendzonga National Park in Nepal is completely ignored whereas the portion within India is given the status of world heritage.

The SAARC nations while upholding the outstanding universal value of world heritage, the regional value of heritage within the SAARC region need to be considered. It should put together its resources for developing Islamic and Hindu circuits along with Buddhist in the region. Lastly, the countries of the region should forge greater cooperation to help nominate world heritage from Bhutan and Maldives.

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# ICOA936: LE PATRIMOINE MONDIAL VU SOUS L'ANGLE DES CONFLITS

## Sous-thème 02: Le rôle du patrimoine culturel dans la construction de la paix et de la réconciliation

**Session 2:** Patrimoine en tant que victime

**Lieu:** Silver Oak Hall 1, India Habitat Centre

**Date et heure:** 13 Décembre, 2017, 16:45 – 17:00

**Auteur:** Jana Chaudhuri

*Jana Chaudhuri occupe actuellement le poste de directrice adjointe de l'architecture à la Fondation du patrimoine urbain de Delhi. Elle est architecte avec un post-diplôme en conservation et gestion du patrimoine. Jana Chaudhuri a reçu le Fulbright Fellowship 2010-2011 pour poursuivre des recherches professionnelles en préservation historique aux États-Unis. Ses intérêts de recherche concernent le patrimoine mondial, les conflits et la démocratie.*

**Résumé:** La conservation, la préservation et la restauration du patrimoine culturel sont confrontées à de sérieux défis dus aux conflits d'intérêts entre les nations, entre les états et les acteurs étatiques, entre les entités régionales au sein d'un même pays et les communautés. L'objectif de ce document est de voir si l'inscription au Patrimoine mondial intensifie ou au contraire atténue les conflits ainsi que son rôle dans la construction de la paix et de la réconciliation entre les différentes parties en conflit.

Afin de développer un cadre, le document affirme que les conflits peuvent être définis en fonction de l'attitude des parties adverses envers le patrimoine culturel, la violence et la destruction, et des possibilités de réconciliation et de résolution des conflits et des contradictions entre les différentes parties prenantes. Plus largement, il y a trois situations de conflit : d'abord lorsque les adversaires essaient de se priver, de contrôler, de blesser, de détruire ou de nuire; deuxièmement, lorsque deux ou plusieurs parties essaient de maximiser leur intérêt et de gagner sur d'autres par la concurrence; troisièmement, lorsque les parties prenantes cherchent à se convaincre ou à se persuader mutuellement de la justesse ou de l'exactitude ou de l'attrait de leurs points de vue ou de leurs revendications par le biais d'un débat et parviennent à un consensus par la coopération. Pour ces trois types de situations, le document tente de comprendre les complexités liées au patrimoine culturel, en particulier au Patrimoine mondial. Le document tente également de d'analyser les outils de la convention du Patrimoine mondial et de ses directives opérationnelles, depuis le processus de nomination jusqu'à la désignation effective, et d'explorer différents types de situations de conflit.

**Mots-clés:** patrimoine mondial, conflit, convention du patrimoine mondial, paix et réconciliation