

Bridging Nature-Culture Dualisms in the Asian Conservation Circle: A Perspective from Cultural Landscape

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The prevailing view of people in opposition to nature was reinforced in the 20th century by the science of ecology. Until the late 1980s there was some tension between cultural and natural heritage conservation. It is during the 1990s that criticism on such a culture-nature binary, emerged. There was also an expanding interest in and understanding of cultural landscapes in the conservation circle. Since 1992 those landscapes that the interaction between people and their environment is considered to have outstanding universal value are World Heritage Cultural Landscapes. However, even if the term cultural landscape is now widely circulated internationally, its use in Asia still presents problems. There is a need to look closely at regional values and their inextricable connection to the continuing process of landscape creation in Asia. I will review “the rise of cultural landscape” as a means of bridging the nature-culture dualism, and propose new challenges lying ahead in the conservation circle. I will also draw an example from my research experience in an area called Wando Archipelago in Korea. Then, I will propose the issues to be

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considered in recognizing and protecting the values of cultural landscapes within the Asian context.

According to my study, increasing interest internationally in cultural landscapes and the existence in Asia of a rich heritage of cultural landscape should be the touchstones for specific regional action to recognize and celebrate its cultural landscapes. There is a need to bridge the gap that exist between the international framework with its universal cultural landscape values and the establishment of a set of regional values firmly embedded in Southeast and East Asian cultural processes. With a regional basis in place, it will then be logical to look at applying World Heritage cultural landscape categories to future World Heritage nominations. Both cultural geographers and physical geographers can cooperate with each other in such a work to lead the study of cultural landscape in Asia.

In order to reach this end, we may face new challenges lying ahead and these issues have to be considered in the Asian context:

- creating new research networks between Asian geographers to fully explore the links between the different heritage categories and protection systems;
- sharing information about protected area systems and cultural landscapes, in particular, on achievements, success stories and model cases;
- exploring best protecting practice sites as key places for sustainable local and regional development

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