Editorial

Memory, History and Narratives: Packaging 'Heritage' and Unpackaging 'Values'

Events, whether contemporary, historical or mythical, attributed to happen at certain points a geographical area tend to become integral to those places. People remember these events reference to specific places and experiences – memories, which then, take the form of stories about real and remembered things. They cannot be separated from the land even though the names of these places do not immediately reflect such stories. So much so that certain place names or shapes may trigger a collective memory that was significant for the community, groups or individuals. Through selective use of symbols, myth and historical events, an image of the community is reflected in the landscape. Memory is then a manner of articulating relationships between community and landscape, or between the landscape and individuals. The memory-scape in relation to landscape is that which is – constructed with people's mental images of the environment, with particular emphasis on places as 'remembered places'.

One of the most salient records left by early societies in the world area is the large quantity of cultural artifacts spread across a wide temporal and spatial span. Using mapping technologies one can explore questions of visibility, access, spatial distribution, and relationships with natural corridors and historic pastoralist routes. But this same mapping of the landscape is also a very political engagement - It is often that certain sites formally get tagged as 'Heritage Sites' over a myriad of equally significant cultural places. Thereby, I contend, resulting in an element of selection and elimination through a process of 'packaging' of history and historically significant places as being worthy of being tagged as heritage.

Heritage and conservation have become important themes in current discussions on place, cultural identity, and the preservation of the past. Archaeological sites have long been a part of heritage and its display, certainly before the use of the term 'heritage' and the formal study of tourism. However, current concerns with their escalating destruction can be attributed to the perception among the public and professionals alike that archaeological sites, like the natural environment, represent finite nonrenewable resources deteriorating at an increasing rate. This deterioration is because of a wide array of causes, ranging from neglect and poor management to increased visitation and vandalism, from inappropriate past treatments to deferred maintenance. No doubt the recent pressures of economic benefits from tourist activities in conjunction with increasing communication and mobility have caused accelerated damage to many sites unprepared for development and visitation.

Tourism, rapid-urbanisation, natural disasters, violent conflicts and resource-utilisation are among the many ever-present threats to archaeological sites. In the face of these challenges, values are the subject of much discussion in contemporary society. Indeed, with the world becoming a global village, the search for values and meaning has become a pressing concern. In the field of cultural heritage conservation, values are critical to deciding what to conserve — what material goods will represent us and our past to future generations — as well as to determining how to conserve. Even brief consideration of a typical conservation decision reveals many different, sometimes divergent values at play: think of the artistic and aesthetic values of an old building, as well as the historical values of its associations, plus the economic values tied up in its use, and so on. In short, values are an important, determining factor in the current practices and future prospects of the conservation field.

Heritage is a concept to which most people would assign a positive *value*. The preservation of material culture – objects of art and of daily use, architecture, landscape form – and intangible culture – performances of dance, music, theater, and ritual, as well as language and human memory, are generally regarded as a shared common good by which everyone benefits. Both personal and

community identities are formed through such tangible objects and intangible cultural performances, and a formation of a strong identity would seem to be a fundamentally good thing. But heritage is also intertwined with identity and territory, where individuals and communities are often in competition or outright conflict.

What to Remember, What to Forget

Cultural heritage requires memory. It is not enough for things and monuments to exist on a landscape: in order to be a cultural heritage, they must be remembered and claimed as inheritance/bequest, even if their original meaning is lost or poorly understood. In this sense cultural heritage is always, to some degree, intangible. For tangible and intangible cultural heritage to have meaning and potency, the heritage must be active, dynamic, used, and performed, rather than existing, inert, and static. Johnson observes that "landscapes, sites and monuments are always emergent and processual, whose meaning(s) and significance are continually being remade through various material and discursive practices" (2001: 75).

Moreover, cultural heritage may be positive and pleasant, or negative and painful, or it can be both, even for the same group of stakeholders. Such a complex range of potential behaviors suggests why cultural heritage is readily contested and even rejected. "Selecting particular pasts to conserve is necessarily a matter of continuous negotiations among all interested parties" (Mondale 1994: 15). The connection we see with human rights concerns that which may be commemorated and how the commemoration plays out in the present.

Intellectual Property Rights

Human rights and cultural heritage intersect in the area of property rights, defined both as real territory and as other forms of ownership such as memory, traditional knowledge, and even genetics. Nicholas and Hollowell (2004: 6) state that "descendent communities have legitimate concerns about the procurement,

dissemination and exploitation of 'traditional knowledge' as intellectual property. As commodification of cultural pasts and claims over uses of the past continue to expand, questions about sharing the benefits of research and concerns about unauthorized or commercial uses of knowledge, images, stories, and designs will persist and fuel debate, or even lawsuits." It is not far fetched for a group to claim its sacred knowledge – a part of its cultural heritage – as an inviolable intellectual property right and to contend that they have the right to protect themselves from prying, whether by governments, missionaries, or anthropologists.

Values and Valorization

Values and valuing processes are threaded through the various spheres of conservation and play an enormous role as we endeavor to integrate the field. Values give some things significance over others and thereby transform some objects and places into 'heritage'. The ultimate aim of conservation is not to conserve material for its own sake but, rather, to maintain (and shape) the values embodied by the heritage — with physical intervention or treatment being one of many means toward that end. To achieve that end, such that the heritage is meaningful to those whom it is intended to benefit (that is, future generations), it is necessary to examine why and how heritage is valued, and by whom.

Cultural significance is the term that the conservation community has used to encapsulate the multiple values ascribed to objects, buildings, or landscape. From the writings of Riegl to the policies of the Burra Charter, these values have been ordered in categories, such as aesthetic, religious, political, economic, and so on. Through the classification of values of different disciplines, fields of knowledge, or uses, the conservation community (defined broadly) attempts to grapple with the many emotions, meanings, and functions associated with the material goods in its care. This identification and ordering of values serve as a vehicle to inform decisions about how best to preserve these values in the physical conservation of the object or place. Though the typologies of different scholars and disciplines vary, they each represent a

reductionist approach to examining the very complex issue of cultural significance.

Valorizing as a Tool and Cultural Significance

Heritage is valued in a variety of ways, driven by different motivations (economic, political, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, and others), each of which has correspondingly, varied ideals, ethics, and epistemologies. These different ways of valuing in turn leads to different approaches of preserving heritage. For instance, conserving a historic house property according to historical-cultural values would lead one to maximize the capacity for the place to serve the educational function of telling the stories; the primary audiences in this case might be local schoolchildren and the local community, for whom association with this old place and its stories makes a significant contribution to their group identity.

By contrast, conserving the same site to maximize economic value might lead to a conservation approach that favours revenue generation and tourist traffic over educational and other cultural values. Thus, parts of the property might be developed for parking, gift shops, and other visitor-support functions, instead of interpreting and conserving historic landscape or archaeological elements of the site; the overall conservation strategy might be driven by creating a popular (marketable) experience, as opposed to creating one that focuses on educational use by a target audience of school children. Neither option can be viewed as a priori better or more appropriate than the other, as the appropriateness is dependent upon the values prioritized by the community, or 'stakeholders' involved (professional, public and government) and the context in which the effort is undertaken.

To conserve in a way that is relevant to our own society in our own moment, we must understand how values are negotiated and determine how the process of analyzing and constructing cultural significance can be enhanced. There is also a parallel obligation, beyond preserving what is relevant to our own time – that is, *preserving what we believe will be significant to future generations*. The prospect of stewarding for future generations the material markers

of the past, imbued with the cumulative stories and meanings of the past as well as of the present, is the essence of conservation. With wide acknowledgment that culture is a fluid, changeable, evolving set of processes and values and not a static set of things, the conservation of cultural heritage must embrace the inherent flux but not lose sight of this immutable cross-generational responsibility.

Making Sites: Interplay of Values and the 'Package'

Archaeological/Heritage sites are made, not found. They are constructed through time. Display as intervention is an interface that mediates and therefore transforms what is shown into heritage, and conservation's approaches and techniques have always been a part of that process. In the case of Sanchi, and its associated site under study presents a very good example of how this plays out in reality. Especially when we take into perspective how we chose to present our heritage to the world.

When one looks at the Main Stupa at the UNESCO World Heritage Sanchi, what we see is a grand monument, which almost looks freshly constructed. And all around the monument are landscaped gardens, for people to come and relax in. It, in no way looks like a place of veneration, where people would have come to pay their respects or to look for peace. Instead it looks like a place; one can go to, if one is looking for fun and a slice of history.

The site of Sanchi, ever since its discovery almost 200 years ago, has attracted considerable scholarly interest. The site was first noticed in 1818 by General Taylor of the Bengal Cavalry (Burgess 1902) and was re-visited the following year by Captain Edward Fell. In subsequent years, the site was subjected to various bouts of haphazard digging, constituting little more than treasure hunting. The most ambitious project carried out in 1822 resulted in considerable damage to the site (Marshall 1940, 1947), so much so that by the time J.D. Cunningham visited the site in 1847, many of the sites were almost in ruins (Cunningham 1847).

The first serious excavations were initiated in 1851 by Alexander Cunningham and F.C. Maisey formed the primary focus of

Cunningham's Bhilsa Topes. Restoration work began in 1881 (Cole 1884), continuing in later years under John Marshall (1940), whose excavations between 1912 and 1919 represent the most comprehensive and authoritative work till date. In recent years, especially in the years 2006-07, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) undertook major conservation projects at Sanchi – which involved landscaping and general maintenance of the site – to give it a more aesthetic look.

But archaeological/heritage sites are also places. If we are to identify and understand the nature and implications of certain physical relationships with locales established through past human thought and experience, we must do it through the study of place. Places are contexts for human experience, constructed in movement, memory, encounter, and association. While the act of remembering is acutely human, the associations specific places have at any given time will change. Nevertheless, technical intervention — that is, what is removed, what is added, what is modified — is the concrete expression of a critical judgment thus formed in the course of this process.

The Road Ahead

This editorial hopes to posit a new definition of conservation that is attuned to contemporary social processes – one that entails participation – not just of professionals but also of the lay public. The conservation process is best seen more inclusively, encompassing the creation of heritage, interpretation and education, and not just about any efforts/claims of groups/institutions to be (sole) custodians of heritage through the control and regulatory mechanism of access to them.

And with this background in mind that we at *Atna*, the Journal of Tourism Studies, in association with the History department at the CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, envisaged this issue. In this issue, one of the prominent ideas is to negotiate and understand the multiplicity of methodologies that are required for the understanding of the notions of 'identity' and 'memory' as a layered, and often a contested set of representations, in the

narratives of historical studies – pertaining to Heritage and Conservation.

The issue was conceptualized as a series of articles with an in-depth series of case studies, with the aim of bringing together three distinct areas of analytical questions that are implied by its title's key terms – 'history', 'memory' and 'identity' – and how they lead to the creation of historical narratives which ultimately guide the heritage and conservation-based policies of any Government or the lay people who consume the cultural heritage of their community. Questions like – what are main approaches to social and cultural memory? What, and whose history is being remembered and narrated? And in this quagmire, how should identity be understood? – would be the prime focus of the issue.

I warmly welcome everyone to go through a series of primary research-based articles on a broad range, in both geographic and chronological terms, including local, regional, national and/or global foci from ancient times through to contemporary periods. These papers are intellectually challenging and covering examples across different parts of the world – including discourses on communities, uniqueness and exceptionality, myths of origin and of cultural exclusivity, in the making of Heritage narratives.

Kumar's paper delves deep into the narratives of national history and even pantheons of national heroes. It studies the creation of memory and identity, which leads to formulation, preservation or conservation of monuments, and heritage associated with them. He critically examines the Harappan civilisation- within the boundaries of the era when the erstwhile newly created nation-states, Pakistan and India were drawn. He critically engages with the era of academic politics in which both the Pakistani and Indian scholars, along with British ones and politicians claimed a five thousand years old antiquity for their nation-state based on the Harappan civilisation.

The work done by Singh et al is a very reflective discussion on social and cultural factors that help shape our identities by analyzing first-hand perceptions and creating their own personal identity charts, through oral narratives, folk traditions - within the

larger domain of Madhubani paintings. The paper provides an intense scrutiny of the idea of how they can often become a reflection of the culture and the repository of a society's collective memory. His paper investigates and analyses the art tradition of Madhubani paintings, examining the challenges caused by commercialization and thereby evaluating the scope of cultural tourism in the region.

Again, Mohanty et al, looks at the idea of the influence of socio-cultural factors in the construction of an intangible heritage from the perspective of Films and Film tourism - especially focusing on how it has been increasingly recognized as a key instrument in destination development and co-creation of tourist experiences. Within this context, they have done an extensive analysis of Nrityagram, a village formed by the international community of Indian classical dancers. Their work highlights that if promoted as a film tourism destination, Nrityagram can contribute in the promotion and conservation of Indian cultural dance, a form of intangible heritage.

In Bhadra and Nagarjuna's work, we come face to face with another aspect of the conundrum that we face in the field of conservation and preservation of cultural heritage. They examine repertoires of referential imagery and understandings of boundaries of preservation and conservation of certain kinds of heritage - in this case, the context of Underwater Cultural Heritage, since it holds the importance of past culture and tradition of humans. Their study delved into the aspect of tourists' awareness and the importance of preserving underwater cultural heritage, using the case studies of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu - and makes a very poignant point about the importance of remembering and preserving the same.

Suklabaidya and Aggarwal's work critically analyses the existing visitor management plan at the United Nations World Heritage Site (UNWHS) - Taj Mahal, the second most visited UNWHS in the world with more than 8 million visitors every year, and to suggest numerous proactive and reactive measures to bring about an effective Visitor Management Strategy for the site. They use with

ease both descriptive and exploratory methodologies to review, assess and suggest measures to enhance the experience for the tourists, with an effective marketing plan of strict conservation and preservation practices to be implemented in collaboration with locals, stakeholders and the government agencies.

And finally, in Malekandathil's work, another extremely important aspect of the erstwhile Empire and post-coloniality, (post)socialism and (neo)liberalism as equally distinct forms of historical memory organization is discussed. Their own repertoires of referential imagery and understanding of boundaries of preservation and conservation of certain kinds of heritage come to the forefront. He uses maritime histories and the case studies of Port towns to delve into the labyrinthine questions of identity formations and heritage based narratives; What factors shape our identities? What dilemmas arise when others view us differently than we view ourselves? How do our identities influence our choices?, especially in the evolution of port towns as a conduit of both tangible and intangible heritage.

I hope this will be an enriching experience, for anyone who wishes to engage in a discussion on topics of Historical narrativization of our shared cultural heritage, especially with the engagement of interesting and unique case studies within these studies.

References

Berdahl, Daphne. (2005). Expressions of Experience and Experiences of Expression: Museum Re-presentations of GDR History. *Anthropology and Humanism*, 30 (2), 156–170.

Bianchi, Raoul, and Priscilla Boniface. (2002). Editorial: The Politics of World Heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 8 (2), 79–80.

Cunningham, A. (1854). *The Bhilsa Topes; or, Buddhist Monuments of Central India: comprising A Brief Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Buddhism; with an account of the Opening and Examination of the Various Groups of Topes around Bhilsa*. London/Bombay: Smith, Elder and Co./Smith, Taylor and Co.

Cunningham, J.D. (1847). Notes on the Antiquities within the Bhopal Agency. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 16 (2), 739-63.

Flood, Finbarr Barry. (2002). Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum. *The Art Bulletin*, 84 (4), 641–659.

Johnson, Mark. (2001). Renovating Hue (Vietnam): Authenticating Destruction, Reconstructing Authenticity. In Robert Layton, Peter G. Stone, and Julian Thomas (Eds.), *Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property I (*pp. 75–92), London: Routledge.

Lal, B. B. (2001). A Note on the Excavations at Ayodhya with Reference to the Mandir-Masjid Issue. In Robert Layton, Peter G. Stone, and Julian Thomas (Eds.), *Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property* (pp. 117–126), London: Routledge.

Light, Duncan. (2000). An Unwanted Past: Contemporary Tourism and the Heritage of Communism in Romania. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 6 (2), 145–160.

Mondale, Clarence. (1994). Conserving a Problematic Past. In Mary Hufford (Ed.) *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage* (pp. 15–23). University of Illinois Press: Urbana.

Nicholas, George, and Julie Hollowell. (2004, April 6). Intellectual Property Issues in Archaeology. *Anthropology News*, 8.

Rao, Nandini, and C. Rammanohar Reddy, 'Ayodhya, the Print Media and Communalism'. In Robert Layton, Peter G. Stone, and Julian Thomas (Eds.), *Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property I (*pp. 139–155), London: Routledge.

Shaw, J. (2007). *Buddhist Landscapes in Central India: Sanchi Hill and archaeologies of Religious and Social Change, c. Third Century BC to Fifth Century AD.* London: Routledge.

Silverman, Helaineand D. Fairchild Ruggles (Eds.). (2007). *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*. New York: Springer.

Willis M., with contributions from J. Cribb and J. Shaw. (2000). *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India.* London: British Museum Press.

Prerana Srimaal
Issue Editor