

Network Event and Book Launch on: Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation

Side event and workshop at the IUCN World Parks Congress

Event number 018; Saturday, November 15; 17:30 – 19:00; Horden Room

Organizers: The Sacred Natural Sites Initiative (www.sacrednaturalsites.org) with the Biodiversity Network Japan and the World Commission on protected Areas – Japan.

Facilitators: Bas Verschuuren basverschuuren@gmail.com and Naoya Furuta naoya.furuta@iucn.org

Purpose: Introducing the Asian Sacred Natural Sites Network and Book launch with presentations and discussions on a way forward.

Format: The session will have an introduction to the growing network on Asian Sacred Natural Sites and continue with a soft launch of the publication: "Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation" that will be followed by presentations from chapter authors and close with a discussion hosted by a panel made up of the presenters.



Local Buddhist lamas today are leading ancient ceremonies together with protected area managers. Photo: Robert Wild.

Description: We will soft launch the publication entitled: "Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation" to published with Routledge. The publication centers around the following Guiding Questions:

1. To what extent do sacred natural sites form the backbone of protected areas in Asia, e.g. their cultural, spiritual and philosophical underpinnings?
2. What is the modern relevance of sacred natural sites to protected areas and the wider land and seascape and how can this be better recognised and their traditional guardians be engaged?
3. How can we support and improve management effectiveness, governance and equity of sacred natural sites within and outside protected areas in Asia?

Preliminary presentations:

Presentation 1 – Mr. Naoya Furuta *World Commission on Protected Areas Japan* and **Mr. Bas Verschuuren**, *Sacred Natural Sites Initiative*

Formation of the Asian Sacred Natural Sites Network and the soft launch of the publication: “Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation”.



Mt Fuji located on Honshu Island is a symbol of local and national identity. The highest mountain of Japan features in poetry and paintings and is visited by millions of people every year and climbed by hundreds of thousands. At fuji one can see how early Shinto beliefs fused with different strands of Buddhism and how this affected the various practices of worship conservation on and around the mountain. (Photo: Bas Verschuuren).

Presentation 2 – Mr. Amran Hamza, University of Technology, Malaysia & Vice Chair to IUCN TILCEPA – *Asian Philosophy of protected Areas*

We present sacred natural sites in Asia as part of an ancient and universal philosophy including cultural practice with fundamental significance to protected areas. We build on the study of Asian Philosophies for protected Areas presented at the first Asian Parks Congress.

Preseantation 3 – Lily Zeng –Yale University

Holy Hills, sacred forests protected by indigenous Dai people, have garnered great interest for their conservation potential in Xishuangbanna. These rain forests are disappearing at alarming rates due to the proliferation of rubber plantations, leading to significant losses of habitat for many species. Our goal is to create sustainable partnerships between local communities and conservation organizations.

Presentation 4 –Mr. Rajan Kotru, *International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICOMOD) - Kailash Sacred Landscape*

The Kailash Sacred Landscape (KSL) covers an area between India, Nepal and China and embodies the sacred values and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism,



Jainism, Bon and Sikhism. Here sacred sites serve as mediating points between multiple stakeholders to dialogue about nature conservation.

Presentation 5 – Ms. Liza Zogib, Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi and others.

We provide an insight into the Sacred Natural Sites of Bhutan, places of retreat and worship, where pilgrims and spiritual practitioners perpetuate their energy. These revered sites have been protected from external forces that might disturb their sanctity, creating important buffers and corridors for biodiversity.

Presentation 6 – Ms. Manisha Seth Gudman, IUCN CSVPA. Saving the scared sites of Tanza Valey in India.

The Tansa river basin, is a major source of drinking water for the city of Mumbai. Multiple layers of religious and spiritual beliefs have ascribed sacred status to trees, wildlife and different elements of the natural landscape. The spiritual value invested in the region can become the driving force for protecting the valley and conserving its natural potential.