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Introduction: Finding the Grain of Heritage Politics

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This volume is a collection of papers from the second conference in a series of three. This series of three conferences was first envisioned to look into what we call “the cultural politics of heritage-making” in Asia. In positing the notion of “heritage-making”, we foreground “heritage” as a dynamic process, a product that is unfinished and always in the making, akin to Harvey’s (2001) assertion that the term is a verb, that is, something that is done. We further recognize that this process of heritage-making is embedded in contesting political interests that seek to present “heritage” as a finished product, a noun that becomes appropriated as a form of cultural capital, broadly speaking. Or to put it another way, “heritage” becomes the manifest material and symbolic anchor for culture, and one must have a “heritage” as one must have a nose and two ears (to borrow Gellner’s simile) if one is to be recognized and recognizable in the international, national and sub-national arenas. Thus, “heritage” implies the process of heritage-making, and this process, when we consider the politics of recognition that is at stake, is embedded in cultural politics of multiple scales (see Harvey 2014).

These multiple scales, ranging from the local to the national and international levels — which we do not assume are discrete arenas of social action — involve different players with different degrees of agency and interests. In a generic way these players include the state, local actors at the grass-roots level, and international organizations and experts. Again, we do not assume that these actors or the arenas that they operate in are discrete. Often we may find actors reprising roles across the different scales, which hints at the complex assemblages that produce what we call “heritage”. Without foregoing the multi-scalar complexities involved in the process of heritage-making, but with a view to foregrounding in turn the different sets of actors involved at different levels of the heritage-making chain, each of the conferences in the series focused on one set of players respectively. Thus, the first conference, held in Singapore in January 2014, focused on the role of the state. The second conference, held in Taipei in December 2014, on which this volume is based, focused on local players at the grass-roots level. The third and final conference in the series, held in May 2016 in Leiden, focussed on the international players involved in the heritage-making process.

It was no coincidence that Taiwan was chosen as the venue for the second conference. With the lifting of martial law in 1987, political space in Taiwan was liberalized, which in turn led to the proliferation of social movements and the valorization of the local within the Taiwanese body politic. The rise of the “era of localism” in the 1990s (see Chiang et al., this volume) saw local grass-roots actors articulate that which was historically and culturally distinct of their respective locales — in other words, they were involved in the process of heritage-making from the ground up. Of course, these actors were often acting with or against different levels of the state, or borrowing ideas from across national borders (such as from Japanese heritage activists), but what was distinctive was that the initiatives were often from local communities acting in their own interests. To avoid over-romanticizing the democratic extent of heritage activism in Taiwan, suffice it to say that, relatively speaking, Taiwan was an apt place for reflecting on and considering the role of local players in the making of heritage.

Who, indeed, are the local players that we seek to define and locate in this volume? The official theme for the second conference was “Citizens, Civil Society and the Cultural Politics of Heritage-Making in East and Southeast Asia”. This directed attention to citizens and civil society actors

as the local players that the conference was to focus on. However, the theme served as a guide rather than a dictum, and often contributors (to the conference and also this volume) bring to the fore actors that operate outside of the formal political arena.

This presses us to rethink the notions of citizenship and civil society, especially how they should be conceptualized in relation to the Asian heritage-making contexts examined in this volume. The Western conceptualization of citizenship and civil society takes the modern nation-state as the overriding frame of reference. Citizenship, in the narrow legal-constitutional sense, involves the assignment of membership by nation-states within a global system of nation-states. In other words, it acknowledges one's place in a world defined and delineated by nationalities, where one's identity is archived through documents such as birth certificates, identity cards and passports, the process of which is administered and adjudicated under the watchful eyes of the state. And even when we adopt a more expansive understanding of the citizen in the socio-political sense, the citizen's negotiation for meaning, interests and resources via the public sphere quite inevitably assumes the presence of the state (Brubaker 1992). Similarly, civil society, in challenging the ever-expanding capacity of the state in intervening in the everyday lives of individuals, following Tocquevillean formulation, is premised on an enduring though often adversarial engagement with the state (Tocqueville 2002). In short, the state stands as an imposing Other in conventional formulations of citizenship and civil society.

But what if there are contexts in which the nation-state does not figure? Or where it figures fleetingly, sometimes in view and sometimes out of view, sometimes as a receding backdrop and at other times returning hauntingly? Given Asia's colonial and post-colonial trajectories, how do we account for heritage-making in pre-national, post-national, trans-national and, God forbid, a-national contexts? Finally, to return to the subject of this volume, how do local actors define and position themselves, and what sort of socio-political space do they construct and operate in, where the nation-state is not necessarily an overriding element in their frame of reference?

Perhaps we can begin to think of how to define and locate local players by recalling that the word "citizen" is a historical referent for "city inhabitants" rather than members of a nation-state. That is, citizens were, in the first instance, inhabitants, or people who occupied a local space, and as such acted within the locus of their habitat, producing the

complex constellation of social relations and experiences that constitute what Lefebvre (1991) calls “lived space” in the process. Heritage, then, is what local actors do when they relate to the past and discover meaning for the past in the present (see Smith, this volume) within the context of their “lived space”.

Now that we have begun to de-nationalize the process of heritage-making, it is important to address the question of how local actors relate to this process. The relationship, as Smith (this volume) argues, can be an instrumental one, where the past is appropriated for the present through a calculus where recognition is apportioned or withheld. In this respect we can consider the Taiwanese Chinese rendition of “heritage” as “*wenhua zichan*” (文化資產), literally “cultural assets”, where heritage can be construed as a form of asset, property or even capital in the Bourdieuan sense, and be put to work to generate more capital in various forms (Bourdieu 1986). To conceptualize heritage as a form of capital, then, is to locate social actors as subjects employing heritage as part of their economic strategy to improve their social positions.

On the other hand, the relationship between local actors and heritage-making can be a non-instrumental one. Perhaps one way to begin to reflect on such a relationship is to consider the more general Chinese rendition of “heritage” as “*wenhua yichan*” (文化遺產), that is, as “cultural legacy” or “inheritance”, something passed down to us by our forebears. The relationship between social actors and heritage construed in this sense takes on a more passive tone, where the emphasis is on that which is inherited, that was created by earlier generations and not by the heirs. Of course, heritage in this sense can still be appropriated to generate more wealth, but it can also be wealth that is simply enjoyed in and of itself. It is akin to air, breathed freely for one’s sustenance — that is, the process of heritage-making can be part of social actors’ everyday lives, a part of existence that need not necessarily be bound to interest.

The foregoing arguments, in positing that the process of heritage-making can take or not take the nation-state as an overriding point of reference, and can be defined or not defined by interests, are not presented in order to privilege any particular position. Instead, they are presented to sensitize the reader to heritage-making as practice, and as practice what it may mean to the social actors involved, so that our interpretation need not be unduly burdened by preconceived notions of what heritage entails. It is on this basis that we present the chapters in this volume,

ranging over different Asian national contexts without being confined to the national framework, ranging over different historical eras without privileging a particular historical point of departure, and ranging over different local actors without discounting their interest or disinterest in relation to the process of making heritage. In so doing, we hope to engage with a reading of heritage practice on the ground, and determine the fine grain of heritage politics.

Indeed, it is because heritage is intertwined with identity and power that heritage is political. As Laurajane Smith's chapter argues, heritage is both inclusive and exclusive — it defines both identity and difference, and the process is a contested one. In reviewing the debates around the concept of heritage, the chapter provides some conceptual handles for engaging with the cases discussed in this volume. In particular, it makes explicit the relationship between heritage, identity and power through the articulation of heritage as cultural performance. Through such performances that produce and accrue meaning and emotional investments, Smith demonstrates how actors engage in the politics of recognition, legitimizing social inclusion and exclusion through the idiom of heritage.

The rest of the chapters in this volume shift the focus to more specific cases from East and Southeast Asia. They depict forms of civil society heritage-making agency, based on empirical and culturally sensitive field research, experienced "from the ground up", by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and historians, among others. They go beyond the generic, reflecting the diversity and malleability of heritage-making processes within different Asian social environments, and with them, the infinite creativity of their members. As a result, readers should expect to encounter the grain of heritage politics in all sorts of spaces and among different kinds of communities, from the symbolic centres of nations to peripheries, among the urban poor, rural communities, regional vernacular communities and the Chinese diaspora, and of course, in Taiwan, where the conference that inspired this volume was held.

The Nation

The nation is not exactly an unexpected place to encounter processes of heritage-making. Indeed, as argued at the beginning of this chapter, heritage has become a cultural prosthesis that nations cannot do without. Yet, when

we consider not the official narratives on heritage but how civil society groups and grass-roots actors apprehend and define “national heritage”, especially in terms of lived experiences, the nation becomes decentred and heritage narratives take unexpected twists.

With Yangon, the former capital of Myanmar, the question of heritage emerged when the military regime moved the capital to the newly constructed city of Naypyitaw in 2005–6, thus freeing numerous colonial-era buildings formerly occupied by the government. What to tear down and what to retain, and what to do with what is retained, became pressing questions for a city thriving with foreign firms and NGOs, all competing to get a foothold in the commercial capital of a country that had recently become more open to international influences and investments.

Jayde Lin Roberts documents these recent changes and in the process points to the sharp sociological and cultural divide that exists between the views on urban physical “aesthetic” heritage preservation held by a tiny fraction of the city’s civil society made up of foreign-educated Burmese and returned members of the diaspora and the concerns of the majority of the local population inhabiting the derelict city centre. The Yangon Heritage Trust, an internationally supported elite organization, seeks to preserve the British-era “modernist” architectural legacy of the former capital through its engagement with the state and also through a discourse of commodification to lure foreign investors. To Roberts, this seems at odds with the everyday anxieties of an impoverished urban population, and bears the risk of perpetuating a state of entrenched social inequality and alienation. Here, heritage politics involves not just the engagement between elite civil society actors and the state but also the disjuncture between the vision that the elite has for the city’s heritage-*scape* and the “lived space” as experienced by the common city inhabitants. What Burmese-ness entails, against the backdrop of Yangon’s increasing cosmopolitanism and corporate cityscape, is not a finished product narrated through an official script endorsed by the state, but remains a matter of symbolic struggle among these actors, often subtly embedded within the fine grain of everyday life.

Appreciation for “lived space” and the role of heritage in everyday life is articulated by Adrian Perkasa and Rita Padawangi through the notion of living heritage, explored in the context of Trowulan residents living with and off the ruins of the ancient Majapahit kingdom. Living heritage entails evolving sociocultural practices that continue to resonate meaningfully

with the lived reality of local actors. It allows for the appropriation of the built environment to continue to embody meaningful social relationships and practices, such as the transformation of Majapahit ruins into Muslim cemeteries. Juxtaposed against such sites that evolve organically with the symbolic and material needs of local inhabitants, state-sponsored heritage sites that draw on this “glorious” past in the narration of the nation, in privileging the material monument over the lived reality of residents in the environs, do not exude the same kind of social vibrancy. In fact, heritage projects driven by state or market interests tend to become detached from the lives of local actors. Here, the grain of heritage politics is found not in contesting representations but in the practice of everyday life. In this banal rhythm of everyday existence, the past and present are continuously remade to meld with interests that are negotiated from day to day. In the case of these residents who live, so to speak, at the symbolic centre of Indonesia’s pre-colonial past, the ruins left by their ancestors are meaningless unless they can build their own lives upon them, and in so doing make heritage on a daily basis.

The “Periphery”

Beyond the geographical and symbolic centres of nations, living heritage manifests itself wherever the past is intermeshed with the present in the performance of everyday life. Such performances can occur among “peripheral” communities, that is, communities that are usually considered to be beyond the political centre or national imaginary, such as rural and indigenous communities, or regional language groups and post-colonial entities.

Hy Van Luong’s chapter moves beyond cities to focus on rural-based, community-initiated forms of heritage practices through a comparison of post-war, post-communist reconstitution of local religious festivals in the rural areas of North (Red River delta region) and South (Mekong River delta region) Vietnam. Village communities made use of new opportunities brought about by the *doi moi* government reforms of the late 1980s and the subsequent removal of strict atheist policies to organize themselves quite free from state intervention or from the new forms of commercialism engendered by the country’s integration into global capitalism, such as tourism. The chapter shows how these local heritage-making initiatives — including performances of public rituals at communal houses, village

and neighbourhood shrines or Buddhist pagodas — can differ in terms of the intensity of people's support. This, according to Luong, owes much to "the importance of regionally varying local dynamics", with communities in the north appearing sociologically better equipped than their southern counterparts to perform these modes of collective heritage-making, which the author attributes to a greater sense of communal identity and local social capital.

Cai Yunci's chapter examines another set of communities that is usually marginalized, or exoticized, in the official narratives of nations, namely, indigenous communities. Here, Cai interrogates the instrumentalization of heritage by comparing two indigenous cultural villages in West Malaysia that serve as outposts of heritage tourism. The Mah Meri Cultural Village was a state venture that sought to preserve and showcase Mah Meri cultural heritage. Through the commodification of handicrafts (originally embedded within the tribe's ritual economy) and cultural performances, these indigenous people were able to convert their heritage capital into a form of income to sustain them within the national market economy. However, in the process they had to contend with the state-endorsed cultural broker's infringement on their monopoly over the interpretation of their own customs as well as the profits of the cultural village. The Orang Seletar Cultural Centre, on the other hand, is an independent cultural village established through the efforts of local activists and funding from an international non-profit organization. The aim of the centre is to promote community-based eco-tourism as an alternative means of livelihood for villagers whose traditional habitat has been encroached upon by neoliberal developments. At the same time, through this spatial exhibition of their cultural heritage, the Orang Seletar lay claim to their indigenous identity and rights, and seek the state's recognition of their associated territorial heritage. In both cases the state could not be evaded, and the indigenous peoples' relationship with heritage was instrumental in nature. But in the latter case the pronounced autonomy from the state gave room for cultural change in tandem with evolving questions of livelihood and political recognition, approximating what could be articulated as living heritage.

Film-making, as an artistic medium for rendering heritage, allows "a community of artists, managers and technicians" to define new spaces of collective cultural imagination. In Katrina Ross A. Tan's chapter, a little-known yet thriving and consciously framed heritage-making process takes

place through alternative regional film-making and film festivals organized in the vernacular languages of numerous regions of the Philippines. These initiatives are not just reacting to the conventional dominance of commercial films in Tagalog from Manila or Hollywood films. They result from local efforts aimed at including hitherto peripheral communities and their regional languages in the nation's film-scape through the use of digital technology and the organization of regional cultural events and networks. The Filipino state, through its cultural institutions, is recognizing these non-commercial community-based initiatives as contributing to the country's national heritage. In turn this is also recognition that such cultural and linguistic diversity is constitutive of the country's national identity. This is a rare case where the state includes heritage-making processes emanating from the country's periphery in representations of the nation.

With Sheyla S. Zandonai's study, we are brought to the fringe of the Chinese nation where the inhabitants of Macau, a former Portuguese colony now returned to Chinese sovereignty, sought to appropriate their colonial heritage as part of their post-colonial identity. The chapter first documents the political economy of post-handover Macau and the overwhelming impact the casino industry has on the city and its built heritage, with its numerous UNESCO-nominated buildings and sites, and this against the unique political background of Macau's Special Administrative Region (SAR) status. Zandonai then focuses on a transformative incident where members of the local community, mainly of Chinese origin, sought to prevent a Portuguese-built lighthouse from being blocked by high-rise developments, even when local authorities and UNESCO showed no interest. After pointing to the post-colonial ambiguity of the action — Macau residents of Chinese origin defending a colonial-era relic — the author shows how the different political entities associated with Macau, such as the Macau SAR government, the Beijing central government and UNESO, had to accommodate such unprecedented civil society action coming from Macau's inhabitants.

Diaspora

Diasporas, by dint of their transnational trajectories, often exist and subsist in the spaces between nations. While their heritages are unlikely to take centre stage within national narratives, they do usually form part of the multicultural fabric of countries in today's globalized world. The Chinese

diaspora, in particular, can be found in almost any part of the world, and their heritage, in different shades and hues, do augment the cultural landscape of places they had trod. More importantly, through the notion of diasporic heritage, what comes to the fore is that, beyond business ties and networks, diasporas facilitate the translation of cultural heritage across borders, and therefore demonstrate the cultural dimension of what scholars have articulated as Chinese transnationalism (Ong and Nonini 1997).

Li Yi's chapter on the heritage-making efforts of the Chinese community in post-war Myanmar reflects the vicissitudes of articulating and preserving heritage in diaspora. Central to this tale is the Chinese community's relationship to their "homeland" and language, negotiated through a classical Chinese poetry society and a Chinese library, both established in Yangon. Where the poetry society catered to the fancies of the Chinese-educated elite and intelligentsia, the library took on the role of promoting Chinese literacy on a more general level among the Yangon Chinese. Through language, the cultural umbilical cord was maintained with the Chinese homeland, which, on the one hand, was imagined as an ancestral land steeped in timeless tradition and an immemorial past, and on the other hand, related to through a state that claimed legitimate representation of the Chinese nation. This dualism in identification among the Chinese diaspora then bespoke a complex transnationalism emerging in the interstices between polities that, post-independence or post-civil war, were still in the process of becoming nation-states. Aside from this the chapter also foregrounds how social actors, in particular members of the poetry society, relished the reciting and writing of Chinese poetry as Chinese gentry of the past would do, and in the process found a way of connecting with Chinese high culture. Their engagement in the art of heritage-making through poetry was a part of their everyday life inasmuch as it was part of their leisure.

Also dealing with the dynamics of heritage in diaspora is Zhang Beiyu's chapter on the perception of Chinese street opera in Singapore in the 1970s and 1980s. Under the rubric of a modernizing state, opera was first seen as a folk cultural practice in need of being disciplined and regulated, and then as a "dying art" in need of being resuscitated as heritage. Nostalgic representations of street opera mourns the loss, not only of this performance art-form, but also of the mode of everyday living associated with opera, in particular the sociality common to the familial experiences and neighbourly street life of that era. Besides the role of street opera in the

life of the Singaporean nation, the chapter also dwells on Teochew opera as a family heritage from the perspective of practitioners. For these social actors, Teochew opera was considered a form of de-territorialized culture that involved the flow of ideas and people across geographical boundaries, spanning China, Hong Kong, Malaya and Siam. Although the performance of opera as peripatetic practice eventually became unviable through the reification and reinforcement of nation-state boundaries, the chapter was able to recover a historical perspective that recalls a pre-national context where what opera practitioners inherited from their predecessors was very much part of their everyday work and practice.

Taiwan

In this volume there are four chapters dealing with Taiwan's experiences. The first introduces, reconstructs and provides an overview of Taiwan's heritage policy formation and transformation, demonstrating how policy change has been both the consequence of civil society action and the cause of further citizens' engagement in heritage movements. This is followed by three case studies of a colonial heritage site, a military veterans' village, and a tobacco settlement. The three case studies vividly illustrate the diverse heritage-scape that has emerged in Taiwan since political liberalization in the late 1980s and 1990s, leading to extensive "Taiwanization" of the polity, growing indigenous consciousness, and the valorization of collective memories of Taiwan's past.

The chapter by Min-Chin Chiang, Li-Ling Huang, Shu-Mei Huang and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao traces the historical evolution of Taiwan's cultural heritage policies from the early China-centred authoritarian period to the current Taiwan-centred democratization era. This evolution is marked by shifts from the distorted cultural policies of the 1950s–70s to the authorized official heritage-making in the early 1980s, to heritage-making in tandem with new identity-formation in the late 1980s, to community development and the proliferation of local museums in the 1990s, and finally to the revised heritage policies since 2000. The revised heritage policies with the onset of the twenty-first century are characterized by the following features: replacement of Chinese cultural dominance with a multicultural paradigm; decentralization of bureaucratic mechanisms for heritage designation and registration; protection of potential heritage sites; offering of incentives to private heritage site owners to preserve the

sites; and enhancement of access to and use of public heritage sites. The authors attribute such significant changes to increasing democratization, the emergence of a Taiwan-centred identity, and the corresponding awakening of civil society.

Yoshihisa Amae's chapter brings into the spotlight the Wushantou Reservoir, built during the Japanese colonial era by Japanese civil engineer Hatta Yoichi. The site is one of Taiwan's most important historical constructions and is designated as one of eighteen potential World Heritage sites in Taiwan. Although such a site is emblematic of Taiwan's colonial past, this past and its memories are not shrouded in shame or construed as a taint on Taiwan's national imaginary that need to be erased or altered. Instead, it is articulated not only as local heritage but as national and international heritage through a "circuit of culture" that involves a process of cultural production and consumption, facilitated by collaboration between the government and the public. This appropriation of the colonial past as part of Taiwan's heritage bespeaks a different kind of decolonization — not a disentanglement from the Japanese colonial past but a relinquishing of the script of pan-Chinese nationalistic history that reads the Japanese era as an encroachment on Chinese sovereignty. This discursive move, using heritage as a vehicle, projects a distinct Taiwanese identity.

Li Danzhou's chapter unveils yet another perspective on Taiwan's past through the study of the naval veterans' village in Zuoying, Kaohsiung. Such villages housed Kuomintang soldiers and their families who had retreated from mainland China between 1945 and 1953, and served as a humiliating reminder of the defeat of the nationalist army by the Communists. As a result, these villages were often hidden or exclusive, and set apart from mainstream Taiwanese society, even as their inhabitants were beneficiaries of preferential treatment from the nationalist government. Interestingly, with the liberalization and democratization of Taiwan, these villages and their history became incorporated as part of Taiwan's collective memory. This was in no small part due to the efforts of academics, intellectuals and citizen groups to "culturalize" these veterans' villages in the 1990s. Such valorization of "village culture", though contested, ascribed a sense of "place" to the villages. Consequently, even as inhabitants of the villages were relocated, some of the veterans' villages were preserved as heritage sites, serving as indelible parts of Taiwan's cultural landscape and collective memory.

The chapter by Han-Hsiu Chen and Gareth Hoskins explores Taiwan's tobacco agricultural landscape as heritage sites amidst shifting public

attitudes towards tobacco smoking. The case in question is Fonglin, a former tobacco cultivation village esteemed in Taiwan since the Japanese colonial era. Chen and Hoskins considers the conflicting ideas surrounding the tobacco industry and its cultivation landscape and buildings and how this was reconciled by distilling the history of the local agricultural economy and associated collective memories from the now disreputable image of tobacco smoking. On the ground, this was negotiated by local residents, which led to an exhibition on tobacco cultivation in the Hakka Cultural Museum and the preservation of many tobacco buildings, including one that exhibited the Tudor style. At the same time, as Fonglin is not as famous as the Meinong tobacco settlement in southern Taiwan, the township also highlights its Japanese colonial legacy to attract Japanese tourists. Here, the local community had to claim authority over the identification and interpretation of what is “local heritage”, and in so doing re-contextualize their relationship with tobacco and the colonial past.

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The Taiwanese cases suggest that heritage may not always be drawn from official scripts that narrate the “glorious past”. With the democratization of society and the ascendancy of localism, what becomes more salient is the intimate past, which may be mundane or a cause for embarrassment, but an indelible part of a community’s collective memory nonetheless. It is not surprising then to find that when grass-roots actors are involved in the cultivation and representation of their *own heritage*, it can be laced with what Herzfeld (2005) calls cultural intimacy. Likewise, the other cases selected for this volume, in highlighting the experience of grass-roots actors, puts the spotlight on their struggles over what heritage means at an everyday level, including the tensions and conflicts, the banal and the exceptional. The intimate, close-up view presented through this volume will, we hope, bring into focus the fine grain of heritage politics.

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