

Public Archaeology and the Physical Legacy of European Colonisation in South East Asia

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This paper investigates the potential for public archaeology to demonstrate the physical legacy of European colonisation in parts of South East Asia. The research was carried out for the degree of Master of Letters in public archaeology and cultural conservation at the University of Sydney.¹

Public archaeology is the area of cultural expression used in this paper to investigate the physical aspects of the colonial legacy in South East Asia. The colonial sites selected in this survey are in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Macau. Research concentrated on three main issues: how public archaeology can demonstrate the legacy of European colonialism; how public archaeology can demonstrate the attitude of present cultures to their colonial past; and the contribution from the public in the conservation of colonial sites in the region. The study comprises description of selected colonial sites with potential for archaeological investigation, the legacy left by different colonial powers, the legislative protection available for these sites, the level of public interest and support, and the problems which these sites encounter.

The study focuses mainly on large national architectural features, rather than vernacular remains, because published material is available on the large sites. While it would have been interesting to investigate a series of, say, lesser known Dutch trading sites in Indonesia, on which a large body of Dutch literature exists, these publications have limited use to those who do not read Dutch.

The term public archaeology, as used here, refers to translating the academic work of the professional archaeologist into material which the public can understand, learn from and enjoy. Good use of public archaeology is a useful and effective tool in interpreting culture heritage.

Cultural conservation in South East Asia started early this century with the Dutch efforts at Borobudur in 1907,² the ancient Buddhist site on Java. In 1966 the international community gave recognition to cultural rights in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, national governments have had neither the legal framework, the funds, technical expertise nor the political will to conserve colonial sites. Although some ex-colonial powers left good legislative systems for heritage management, establishing effective legislation is now an essential factor in all heritage management. All governments in the region must deal with problems of urban development, cultural tourism and a growing public interest in heritage conservation. While indigenous cultures often regard their ancient (and usually religious) sites from the pre-colonial period as historically and archaeologically more important, the pressures of cultural tourism are affecting these sites.

In comparison, the movement to protect the cultural heritage in Australia dates from only the 1940s. Although heritage legislation exists in most of the Australian states (Tasmania being the exception) it varies markedly in content and effectiveness. Notwithstanding a keen community involvement in heritage issues, many of the conservation problems in the Asian region described in this paper, unfortunately, are still occurring in Australia.

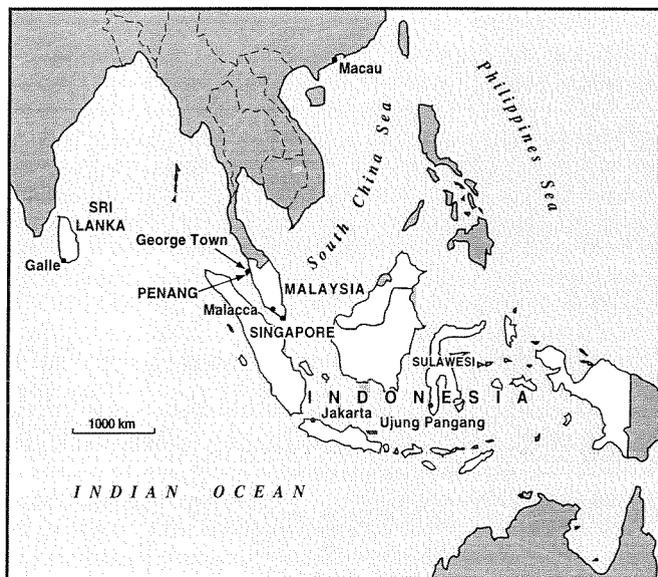


Fig. 1: Map showing principal sites mentioned in the text.

THE ASIA REGION

By the time the British settled Australia in 1788 other European nations had already been colonising the Asian region north-west of Australia for centuries. First came the Portuguese once they discovered the sea route via the Cape in 1498 to the East Indies. They quickly established trading ports on islands in the East Indies, on the coast of South India and Ceylon, and as far east as Macau, which they still hold today.

The Spanish followed. After Magellan made new discoveries by sailing across the Pacific from South America in 1521, the Spanish established permanent settlements in The Philippines in 1565. Over the next two hundred and fifty years Guam became a regular stop on the trade route between these islands and Mexico.

The Dutch were there too: in Java in 1596, then in a well organised way from 1602 with the Dutch East India Company, *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC). In 1619 they built Batavia as the VOC headquarters on the site of Jayakarta, which became Jakarta upon independence in 1950.³ The Dutch remained the dominant traders in the area from 1621, expelling and replacing the Portuguese at their ports, such as Malacca and in Ceylon. Dutch dominance deterred the English whose presence in Java was short, from 1602 to 1620.

The British concentrated their trading interests in India which they controlled through the British East India Company from 1773. As British power in the region grew, and with shifts in European politics during the late eighteenth century, Britain

replaced the Dutch at a number of sites in Asia. It moved into Ceylon in 1790, Malacca in 1807, and simultaneously was investigating new trading ports of its own. Two years before the first convict settlement in New South Wales, Francis Light formally established a port on Penang Island for the British East India Company.⁴

A year later, in 1787, the French came to Indo-China. In 1799 the VOC went bankrupt with the result that the Dutch Government took over control of the Dutch East Indies which it held until 1950. After the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, the Dutch were able to retain their interests in the Dutch East Indies. Raffles established a settlement in Singapore for the British in 1819.

For over four hundred years the trading interests of Europe shaped the character and development of places in the Asian region. The physical evidence for European presence and influence in the region is immense. Warehouses, forts, whole towns, government residences, public buildings, private dwellings, churches and cemeteries exist. Some have been long abandoned and survive only as archaeological ruins: Bantem in Java, and A Famosa Fort, Malacca. Others stand in the centre of large modern cities at risk from aggressive urban development: Old Batavia now Jakarta, and Macau. Development bypassed others leaving them unspoiled nineteenth-century sites: Galle, Sri Lanka; or at least development has been slow: Malacca, Malaysia. For some the threat of urban expansion and large-scale change is close at hand: George Town, Penang.

Table 1 lists a number of Asian sites showing formative events in their colonial history.

GALLE, SRI LANKA

Galle is a fortified town in south-west Sri Lanka with cultural features of three colonial powers: Portuguese, Dutch and British. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish trading ports in Ceylon. In 1505 they came to Galle, and by 1543 had a small trading colony with a Franciscan chapel. The site was fortified in 1588. The Portuguese fortifications comprised a wall and three bastions on the landside, and the seaward side had a palisade. The Dutch added greatly to its fortifications when they captured the fort in 1640. Galle was an important centre for Dutch East India trade until the British arrived in 1796. At the formal transfer, the Dutch Governor handed the keys of the garrison to Lachlan Macquarie representing the British Government.

The fort comprises forty hectares, with complete ramparts, some 640 houses, plus 287 institutional and religious buildings, open space and an underground sewerage and drainage system introduced by the Dutch. Today it is a well preserved, living settlement which has enjoyed continuous occupation. Regarded as the best preserved fort in south and south-west Asia, it received World Heritage listing in 1988. This listing also acknowledges Galle as an outstanding architectural and archaeological site in Asia from the colonial period.⁵

The principal evidence of Portuguese occupation is in the three bastions on the north side and the site of the palisade by the harbour. Otherwise it was the Dutch who enlarged the fortifications to fourteen bastions, laid out the town on a grid pattern and generally constructed much of what is visible today. They built an intricate sewerage system, flushing it with sea water which was raised by a windmill located on one of the bastions (Fig. 2). Entrance to the fort in Dutch times was by way of a gate through the VOC warehouse at the harbour (Figs. 3-5). During the British period a new gate was cut through the north wall, the moat was filled in, and new buildings constructed. The lighthouse standing on the Utrecht bastion was built by the British in c.1880, and the clock tower erected in 1883 near the northern rampart commemorated Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.⁶

Legislation

Sri Lanka inherited reasonably complete heritage management legislation on independence. Both archaeological and colonial monuments and sites are protected by the *Antiquities Ordinance*, 1940, revised in 1956 and containing elements of Roman-Dutch and British law.⁷ Under this ordinance every site on Crown Land is the property of the government's Department of Archaeology. The law also provides a mechanism for bringing sites on privately owned land within the Department's ownership and protection. No archaeological excavations are done without a permit from and supervision by the Department of Archaeology.⁸

Galle has been under the protection of the Department of Archaeology since 1940 when the old State Council passed a private member's bill to give it this protection.

Archaeological Work

With a colonial history which began around 1505 and ended with Sri Lankan independence in 1948, the Galle Fort is rich ground for archaeological investigations. So far, the only archaeological work undertaken has been around the earliest (northern) ramparts. Excavation, documentation and conservation of this section of the rampart walls and related structures began in 1987 as part of the long-term plan for conservation of the fort.

Many Dutch forts exist in Sri Lanka and throughout the former Dutch East Indies, and are of interest to scholars of military structures.⁹ It appears that the main archaeological interest in Galle arises from its features as a fort. The Department of Archaeology has done no significant investigations of Galle's urban landscape, domestic architecture and use of space, its Portuguese, Dutch and British material cultural and influence on the indigenous culture, its place in the larger Sri Lanka historical and social context, or its relationship with the wider geographical colonial context. These are issues for a long-term archaeological programme, and probably go well beyond the present resources of archaeology in Sri Lanka.

A new maritime museum was established in part of the VOC warehouse by the harbour in 1990, but it appears that no archaeology accompanied the conversion and architectural conservation work.¹⁰ A preliminary survey of the underground sewerage system in 1987 established that it could be put back into operation with routine cleaning of the drains and re-erection of a working windmill to raise the water level for flushing through the system.

The Problems

A short-term programme drawn up in 1986 identified an enormous amount of work to be done in Galle.¹¹ As well as conservation and restoration work to colonial structures, the programme listed removal of encroachments in the fort particularly those connected with municipal works, and up-grading the general municipal services essential for modern living. During a visit in August 1993, I found that a number of items on the 1986 list had been achieved, but not all. Unfortunately, available information is inadequate to facilitate a broader analysis of the site, as few publications about the conservation of Galle exist.

The Public

The Department of Archaeology has led the conservation programme in Galle. There is no community-led movement to conserve the site and no equivalent of the National Trust or Friends of Galle, as one would expect to find in western societies. However, discussions with Professor C. Temminck Groll and Pauline Hengeveld, members of ICOMOS The Netherlands, indicated that Dutch interest in the cultural conservation of former Dutch sites in Asia is strong and active. This is more obvious in Indonesia than in Sri Lanka, but it can

TABLE 1: EUROPEAN COLONISERS IN ASIA

Country	Date	Colonisers	How they came	How they left
SI NGAPORE	1819	British	settlement	With Malaysia 1963 Independence 1965
MALAY PENINSULA				
Penang	1786	British	trade	Independent Malaysia 1963
Malacca	1511	Portuguese	settlement	Driven out by Dutch 1641
	1641	Dutch	settlement	Replaced by British 1807
	1807	British	settlement	Independent Malaysia 1963
CEYLON	1540s	Portuguese	fortification	Driven out by Dutch 1658
	1658	Dutch	settlement	Replaced by British 1790
	1790	British	settlement	Independent Ceylon 1948
EAST INDIES	1498	Portuguese	exploration	Driven out by Dutch 1600s
Java	1596	Dutch	trade	Dutch East India Co (VOC)
	1602		settlement	Replaced by Dutch Govt 1799
	1795-1816			Disruption by French and English
Jayakarta	1610		settlement	Dutch East India Co (VOC)
	1799		Dutch Govt	Independent Indonesia 1950
INDIA				
Goa	1497	Portuguese	settlement	Driven out by Dutch
Cochin	1509	Portuguese	settlement	Driven out by Dutch
	1663	Dutch	settlement	Driven out by British
All parts	1773	British East India Co		Replaced by British Government
	1858	British Government		Independence 1947
MACAU	c1520	Portuguese	settlement	Continuous

be found in the work of The Netherlands Alumni Association of Lanka (NAAL).

NAAL is a private organisation founded in 1970 at the initiation of The Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Co-operation (NUFFIC). Among other things, it promotes or participates in cultural development projects in collaboration with Dutch universities, institutions, non-governmental organisations and friendship associations in Sri Lanka and The Netherlands. One of NAAL's current projects is the twinning of Galle with the Dutch town of Velsen from where the original windmill came for operating the sewerage system in Galle. NAAL is also involved in the restoration of the sewerage system.

NAAL is located in the Dutch Period Museum in Pettah, the old market area of Colombo. This museum is a fine example of an architectural conservation project of a colonial structure. Originally built as a Dutch governor's house in the eighteenth century, the building had many uses (including that of a post office) which led to its neglect. However, the restoration included no archaeological investigation of the site.

PENANG AND GEORGE TOWN

George Town on Penang Island is the oldest British settlement in Malaysia. It was virtually uninhabited when Captain Francis Light formally established a small settlement for the British East India Company here in 1786 in an attempt to attract trade away from the Dutch. Britain's trading policy turned it quickly into a thriving port. From 1826 Penang, Malacca and Singapore formed the Straits Settlements administered from Calcutta. They became a British Crown Colony in 1867.

George Town abounds in sites with potential for demonstrating through public archaeology the colonial legacy in Penang.¹² Penang has by far the best collection of Anglo-Indian buildings in Malaysia and Singapore. They date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and include *Government House (1804) which stands on the waterfront in the grounds of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, and Suffolk House, the home of Francis and his son William Light. Mariophile is an Anglo-Indian bungalow in the grounds of the*

Catholic seminary. It is believed to date from before 1805, and is in an almost original state of preservation. St George's Cathedral (1817) is the oldest Anglican church in south-east Asia. The first English language school in Asia opened in 1816 in the buildings which are now the museum. No archaeological investigations have been carried out in relation to any of these colonial buildings and sites.

Francis Light constructed the foundations of George Town at Fort Cornwallis in 1793. Originally in wood, the fort was rebuilt in stone in 1808-10 using convict labour. It bears architectural features in common with Fort Phillip built on Sydney's Observatory Hill in about 1804.¹³ The whole site would once have been fertile ground for archaeology. Now only a gunpowder magazine and a chapel built for Christian worship survive from the original structures. The moat has been filled in, and a carpark stands outside the southern wall. Unfortunately, the interior ground has been greatly disturbed with the erection of an amphitheatre for cultural events, and the installation of harbour navigational equipment. Further investigation is necessary to determine the degree of disturbance to areas with no new structures.

The Old Protestant Cemetery, on the other hand, is a colonial site where an active conservation and interpretation programme is at work.

Legislation

The Malaysian *Antiquities Act, 1976*, and the *Town and Country Planning Act* are the two pieces of legislation which affect colonial sites in Malaysia. However, on Penang Island only eight sites have been gazetted under the *Antiquities Act*. These are predictably the main public and religious buildings, and the Clock Tower in George Town.

A Conservation of Architectural Heritage Enactment is now being planned in conjunction with the repeal of the *Rent Control Act, 1966*. This reform is important to Penang in particular which has the largest number of rent-controlled premises, especially in George Town. Abolition of the *1966 Act* could leave the way clear for large-scale urban redevelopment as seen in Singapore. While the proposed legislation is aimed



Fig. 2: Galle Fort, Sri Lanka. View of the sea wall looking south to the Triton Bastion, where the windmill once stood.



Fig. 3: Galle Fort, Sri Lanka. Detail of the VOC coat-of-arms above an entrance through the old warehouse.



Fig. 4: Galle Fort, Sri Lanka. British coat-of-arms above the other side of the entrance shown in Figure 3.



Fig. 5: Galle Fort, Sri Lanka. The VOC warehouse.

at all architectural heritage, it also will provide some protection for the archaeological resource.

The United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) initiated work on legislation to protect Malaysia's built heritage. In 1991 it commissioned British lawyers, Richard Castle and Malcolm Grant from Cambridge University, to advise on a national conservation legislation. UNCRD has initiated a similar programme for Jogjakarta in Indonesia.¹⁴

Penang Heritage Trust

As recently as 1984 the first clear signs of public interest in conservation appeared in Malaysia. In that year the Heritage Trust of Malaysia, known as the *Badan Warisan Malaysia*, was established. In 1986 a chapter was formed in Malacca, and in 1987 another in Penang. In six years the Penang Heritage Trust, *Persatuan Warisan Pulau Pinang*, has demonstrated an enormous enthusiasm and ability to get things done in George Town. It is a voluntary organisation with about 100 members, and a very effective secretary, Khoo Su Nin. She has been responsible for raising community awareness for not only the rich Chinese heritage but also the European colonial contribution to Penang. The Trust is an active participant in the Asia and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation, formed in Penang in 1991 to facilitate exchange among various heritage organisations throughout the Asia and West Pacific region, and to promote active co-operation towards common objectives.¹⁵

The Penang Heritage Trust has two projects which are good examples of publicly driven heritage conservation in George Town: the restoration and conservation of the old Protestant Cemetery and Suffolk House.

Old Protestant Cemetery

St George's Cemetery is the first Christian cemetery on Penang and continued in use until the 1880s. It contains the burial of Francis Light who died in 1794, and those of former Governors, military personnel, seamen, missionaries, Chinese Christians and some unidentifiable graves with foreign inscriptions (possibly of Middle Eastern origin). An 1864 plan of the cemetery exists showing that graves also lie under what are now large trees.

Malaysian independence in 1963 saw the separation of church and state functions. Therefore, the cemetery remained on state land but the Penang Island Municipal Council showed no interest in looking after the site. The cemetery fell into disrepair. The Council used part of the grounds for a plant nursery, growing trees for municipal landscaping projects.

With funds from SOCFIN, a French plantation company, and the Municipal Council, the Trust has begun restoration of the cemetery: repairing the perimeter wall, giving it a new coat of limewash, removing unwanted trees from the nursery area, leaving some to make an aisle, and laying a gravel walkway through the graves. The graves themselves are built of brick covered in lime plaster, and some have granite headstones. The Trust has a problem in reconstructing the graves on account of the Chinese belief in *feng-shui* (geomancy), the belief that disturbing graves will adversely affect the fortunes of the deceased's descendants. The Trust has already recorded all the graves and their inscription, and plans to set up a display board identifying the graves and providing a brief history of the cemetery. In addition, it has access to the work done by a British student which traced many of the lives of those buried in the cemetery. Some of this information may be incorporated in the interpretation of the site. This is a most useful project which contributes to conservation of the colonial legacy without needing large funding or highly technical expertise.

Suffolk House

The Penang Heritage Trust's second conservation project of the British colonial period is of grander proportions. It is the

restoration of Suffolk House, a detached two-storey Anglo-Indian Garden House once the home of Francis and William Light. It was built between 1790 and 1794 on the banks of the Air Itam River, in what was then the interior of Penang, where Francis Light had a pepper plantation. The house later served as Government House in the 1810s and 1820s.¹⁶

The Garden House developed in India with influence from Persia, and was the type of dwelling built by the rich merchants. Suffolk House in Penang is regarded as the best extant example of Anglo-Indian architecture dating from the beginning of the British East India Company's formal expansion into South East Asia.¹⁷

Although Suffolk House now stands in a dilapidated condition (Fig. 6), it retains its original architectural features and finishes, and even some of its former grandeur. Historical research so far has not produced evidence to help determine the size and layout of Light's estate, nor to identify the location of out-buildings on his pepper plantation. However, as the immediate curtilage of the house appears to have been little disturbed the scope for historical archaeological investigations around the house would seem good.

The restoration and conservation of Suffolk House is an enormous project needing technical expertise and financial support from outside Malaysia. Nevertheless, members of the Asia and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation regard Suffolk House as having outstanding historical significance for the region. The Penang Heritage Trust is promoting the project as a showpiece for the Commonwealth Games which Malaysia will host in 1998.

Penang is a sister city of Adelaide founded by William Light, Francis' son, in 1836. At a meeting in Adelaide in 1993 of the Asia and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation a group called Friends of Suffolk House was established to focus regional attention on this project. Already the Penang Heritage Trust has received support from the South Australian Government. In 1993 the South Australian Department of Housing and Construction (SACON) commenced preparation of a conservation plan and dilapidation survey for Suffolk House.

MALACCA

A Malay kingdom in the fifteenth century, Malacca was settled and occupied by the Portuguese (1511), Dutch (1641) and British (1807).¹⁸ For three hundred years it was an important centre for sea commerce east of India, and consequently its European colonial heritage is rich.

Malacca's colonial ruins include a military fort and a Christian church and burial grounds. There are also government administrative and private buildings still in use.¹⁹ St Paul's Church was built by the Portuguese in 1571, and used from 1753 as a Dutch burial ground. For a time it was the burial place of Francis Xavier; it has been in ruins for 150 years. The former Dutch town hall, the Studthuys, built between 1641 and 1660 is the oldest Dutch building in Asia.²⁰ Its salmon-pink bricks (now painted red) brought from Zeeland used to be a most obvious mark of Dutch architectural influence. A Famosa was a Portuguese fort dating from the sixteenth century. Today only the Santiago gate to the fort remains, still bearing the VOC coat-of-arms as evidence of Malacca's mixed colonial past.

Legislation

The Malaysian *Antiquities Act*, 1976, and *Town and Country Planning Act* operate in Malacca as in Penang. In addition, the Malacca Municipal Council has enacted a by-law to protect old buildings in accordance with the local government's efforts to promote tourism. The repeal of the *Rent Control Act* will have an impact on Malacca, but to a lesser degree than on historic structures in Penang.

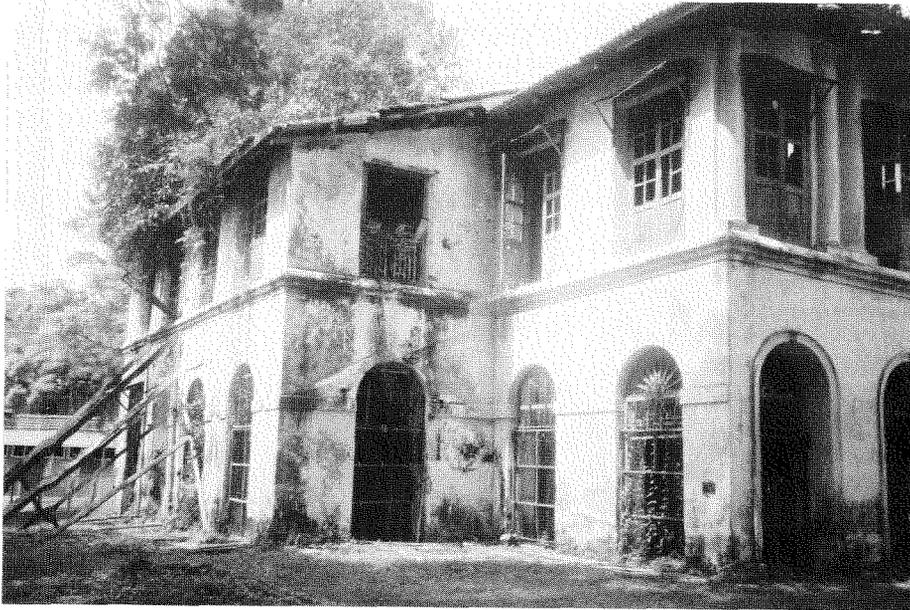


Fig. 6: Penang, Malaysia. Suffolk House, former home of Francis Light.

The Problems

To promote cultural tourism the Malacca Government has been promoting a Portuguese enclave which, in fact, dates from only the 1930s and includes Eurasians of other European origin; even its parish church conducts Sunday services in English. In addition, the Federal Malaysian Government has provided funds for a replica of the boat of Captain Albuquerque who captured Malacca for the Portuguese. Malacca is trying to recreate a Portuguese past which the city believes will appeal to tourists.²¹

SINGAPORE

Singapore's oldest landmark is Fort Canning, a hill which used to rise above the central business district of the city. Today, modern high-rise buildings dwarf it. It was the royal domain of ancient Singapura around the fourteenth century, and known as Forbidden Hill (Bukit Larangan) when Stamford Raffles rediscovered its ruins in 1819. Raffles used the site for the government quarters, and renamed it Government Hill. In 1895 it became an extensive fortification which was used well into this century. There is the old Christian cemetery (with Armenian graves) on Fort Canning, and supposedly the tomb of the last ruler of ancient Singapura.

The National University of Singapore has been carrying out archaeological investigations on the site since 1990, and is in the process of interpreting the site for the public. The interpretation will treat the pre-colonial, Raffles period and the World War II period. The latter phase is gaining particular attention as 1994 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese occupation of Singapore. The National Parks Department is financing and managing the project, but has not yet published information about it.²²

Legislation

Of all the legislation to safeguard cultural heritage in the region Singapore's *Preservation of Monuments Act 1970* provides the weakest protection against development. Because the national state is young, and settlement itself is relatively recent, there is little interest in archaeological excavation.²³ However, the Urban Redevelopment Authority has now identified five conservation districts: Chinatown, Kampong Glam, Little India, the Singapore River, and the civic and cultural district around Fort Canning. This selection takes account of the Chinese, Malay and Indian ethnic groups in the community, as well as the historic and cultural elements of general appeal. It also recognises the interests of cultural tourism.

The Public

While Fort Canning is the major site of the nation's pre-modern period, public interest in Singapore's heritage has been aroused more by a social history project in Tanjong Pagar, west of the river. Tanjong Pagar was originally a village where British residents established nutmeg plantations in 1822. It developed into a busy dockside area where Chinese immigrants worked and lived, and from 1965 was the political constituency of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The Tanjong Pagar project provided the first opportunity to conduct an urban archaeological excavation in Singapore. With volunteers from Friends of the National Museum, John Miksic excavated four sites along a street called Duxton Hill. To local Singaporeans this work demonstrated the application of archaeological research in the relatively recent colonial context. The sites also have provided important data for comparative studies of British colonial sites.²⁴ The whole project was financed and undertaken by the local people to record their district's humble origins. The results have been published in a fine collection of essays, which demonstrate the willingness of the community to fund such projects.²⁵

INDONESIA

The Dutch legacy in Asia represents such a significant portion of history that any discussion of the archaeological potential of colonial sites in the region must include colonial sites in Indonesia. However, it is the Dutch who are leading and supporting conservation work on sites in their former colony.²⁶ Some of their recent work in Indonesia is discussed briefly.

The period of Dutch occupation of the East Indies lasted for almost three hundred and fifty years, interrupted only briefly by the Napoleonic Wars. The Dutch established Batavia in 1619 as the centre of their large trading activity. It became the flourishing capital of the Dutch East Indies, and the largest Dutch town ever built. The colonial legacy from this period is found throughout the Indonesian archipelago most obviously in warehouses, forts, public buildings and private houses.²⁷ In particular, the city centres of Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya have features of typical Dutch 17th and 18th century architecture and town planning, while Bandung is a fine example of an early 20th century town.²⁸ In comparison, the ruins of the old sea port at Banten represent the very early Dutch presence in Java with Fort Speelwijk dating from 1682.

Legislation

In theory, legislation exists to protect all buildings over 50 years old. However, the Indonesian law is based on a 1931

Ordinance on Monuments. The Cultural Heritage Legislation was passed in 1992 to replace the Dutch ordinance, but the new law has many of the shortcomings of its colonial forebear. Complementing the legislation is the Archaeological Institute of Indonesia, which grew from the Dutch Archaeological Service established in 1913.²⁹

Old Batavia, Java

With Indonesian independence in 1950 Batavia was renamed Jakarta in recognition of the site which pre-dated the Dutch settlement.³⁰ The original Dutch centre had a fort (kota) and moat, and is known today as Kota, a coastal section of the densely populated modern city.³¹ Kota contains a cobbled square with many Dutch-inspired buildings, including the former town hall (1710), now a museum. The city council restored the town hall in 1973-1976 as a UNESCO project with technical advice from The Netherlands.³² There are Dutch-built warehouses still in use, but deteriorating from continuing damage inflicted by lorries.³³

Ujung Pandang, Sulawesi

Ujung Pandang was long known as Makassar on the island of Celebes.³⁴ It was one of the great entrepôts of south-east Asia by 1620 with a fortress dating from 1545. The Dutch took over the city in 1667, renamed it Fort Rotterdam and set about rebuilding the fort in stone. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they constructed fine buildings for the Governor, VOC officials and soldiers, and a chapel inside the fort.

The fort ceased to perform its military function in 1937 when the site was handed over to the Fort Rotterdam Foundation for cultural uses, and was listed as an historic monument on the register of the Archaeological Service.³⁵ It is now called Benteng Ujung Pandang. Today the former storehouses contain a history and ethnography museum, and the National Archaeological Service offices are located in the fort. Restoration began in 1970. There have been archaeological excavations, particularly around the chapel, which has been restored with assistance from The Netherlands.

MACAU

Macau is the oldest European settlement in Asia, founded on the western bank of the Pearl River shortly after the Portuguese reached China in 1513. Since 1557 the territory has been under continuous Portuguese administration. The face of Macau is that of an Asian city, bent on large-scale urban development. However, its long colonial connection with Europe has left a legacy of buildings and sites with much archaeological potential. Among other things, it has Iberian churches, an old Protestant Cemetery, a fort, several fine houses, a museum which was formerly the Macau headquarters of the British East India Company, and the Baroque ruins of Sao Paulo church.

Legislation

The lease which the Portuguese hold from China over Macau will terminate in 1999. In anticipation of this date, the Portuguese administration is actively conserving some important colonial sites through its *Instituto Cultural de Macau*. There is almost no local interest in the colonial heritage, the impetus for conservation coming from the Portuguese themselves. Macau has recent legislation for cultural protection of 1984 (known as D.L. 85/84/M).

Archaeological Work

The Portuguese completed the church of Sao Paulo by about 1610 when it was regarded as the greatest Christian monument in the East. Fire destroyed the church in 1835 leaving only the Baroque facade, the mosaic floor and impressive stone steps leading to it. The church's position on top of one of Macau's hills has made it the city's landmark. No doubt with cultural

tourism in mind, in 1990 the *Instituto Cultural de Macau* conducted archaeological work around the ruins of Sao Paulo to ascertain the church's outline for public interpretation and presentation. Conservation work began in 1993, and the Institute was to publish the report on the excavation and conservation in 1994.³⁶

ISSUES IN THE ASIA REGION

Heritage conservation and historic site preservation, in the western sense, are new concepts for nations in Asia. For most of these countries independence from their former colonial powers only came after World War II. Since then they have had to face the problems connected with their own evolving form of nationhood in a period of history characterised by rapid development. Attitudes to the conservation and preservation of sites with colonial heritage have been shaped by this development in the post-colonial period. Often the issues affecting public archaeology at colonial sites reflect the same economic and social issues affecting conservation of all cultural heritage in the new nation states.

The colonial sites discussed above share common problems for heritage conservation, but they also illustrate a range of issues as diverse as the cultures found in the region today. In this section I examine both the shared problems and the special issues.

Urban Development

One of the biggest problems has been (and continues to be) widespread urban renewal and large-scale development in the region. Interconnected with this is the problem of inefficient and inadequate legal protection for historic sites. In Singapore, for example, economic development, urbanisation, modern public housing and infrastructure have been the all-consuming priorities since independence in 1965. The government regarded conservation as an impediment to economic and social progress (an attitude still faced by western conservation movements). Because Singapore had no indigenous settlement before Stamford Raffles established it as a free port in 1819, it has been essentially a British colonial creation. The cultural pluralism which quickly set in became incompatible with economic growth after 1965; to the post-colonial government, it represented at best backwardness and sentimentalism, at worst a link with communism.³⁷

Only in 1983 when Singapore recorded a 3.5 per cent drop in tourism was its economic policy questioned.³⁸ By 1989 the Government enacted legislation to incorporate heritage protection in urban planning. However, there is no provision for rescue archaeology to accompany development, and in the cases of restoration of standing structures, conservation in Singapore is not conducted along the lines advocated by the ICOMOS Venice Charter.

In Malaysia heritage sites in urban areas have been protected indirectly by the *Rent Control Act* 1966, but it is the repeal of this national legislation during the 1990s which is prompting public concern for cultural heritage. Once rent control goes, old areas are ripe for modern development, especially in Penang. In this context the Penang Heritage Trust is playing an active part in the drafting of local conservation legislation for the state of Kedah. Those concerned about heritage in Penang do not want to see Singapore-style development on their island.

Under Malaysia's current five-year economic plan (1991-1995) some thirty sites have been identified to be preserved and developed for cultural tourism. The Museums Department which is responsible for cultural heritage management in Malaysia stresses that archaeological excavation should form part of the conservation programme for all historic sites.³⁹

The same problems connected with urban development exist in Indonesia, and threaten the original centres of former Dutch towns such as Jakarta and Bandung.

Sites with Competing Cultural Values

In other countries in the region the conservation of colonial sites must compete with archaeological relics belonging to a much older, pre-colonial, rich indigenous culture. A good example of this situation is found in Sri Lanka. Archaeology at the colonial fort of Galle is overshadowed by the massive excavations at the country's ancient sites of Anuradhapura and Sigirya, and the medieval site of Polonnaruwa, as well as interest in sites of Dambulla and Kandy. Collectively these sites form the UNESCO-Cultural Triangle Project. Galle must compete with them not only for funds but for professional attention and national interest. In fact since 1980 the UNESCO-Cultural Triangle Project has concentrated funds for excavation and conservation of sites in the Cultural Triangle, which are all World Heritage sites. As at 1991 total funding of this project from its inception has been \$A31.25 million from Sri Lanka (the majority from tourism), and \$A37.5 million from the international community (the majority from UNESCO member states).⁴⁰ Unfortunately, no comparative figures were readily available on the cost of the conservation programme at Galle. However, the expenditure clearly has been nothing like that for the Cultural Triangle sites.

In Sri Lanka, where the ancient culture is also the source of the predominant religious culture of Buddhism, the problems for a colonial site are greater. Dambulla, a Buddhist monastery in the Cultural Triangle, is famous for its rock temples and paintings. It is one of the most important centres of Buddhist pilgrimage in Sri Lanka, a fact which has no doubt contributed much to its level of conservation. Indeed, its local importance can be measured by the number of stalls outside the monastery precinct catering to local needs, as opposed to those targeting the international tourist. In comparison, rows of stalls selling tourist knick-knacks are conspicuously absent in Galle, also a World Heritage site.

Colonial sites in Indonesia also suffer from being overshadowed by a great range of ancient sites with rich cultural heritage. Prehistoric sites on Java which are over forty thousand years old are associated with the earliest appearance of *Homo sapiens*. The largest Buddhist site in the world is Borobodur, dating from the ninth century. There are sites and whole living villages which have absorbed Hindu-Buddhist influences. The Islamic culture appeared in the eleventh century, and stayed, producing a local form of Islam, a wealth of sites and the basis of the country's modern national identity.

With its rich past it is not surprising that the sites from Indonesia's ancient cultures rank high above those from the Dutch period. Over three thousand historical and archaeological monuments and sites are recorded throughout the archipelago. Yet all these share common conservation problems arising from the very number of sites spread across a large equatorial chain of islands, and all demanding preservation expertise particular to the tropics. Recently support from the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam has been helping with heritage preservation in different sectors of old Jakarta.⁴¹

Similarly in Malaysia, colonial sites compete for attention, personnel and funding with the large Bujang Valley archaeological sites from the sixth- to thirteenth-century Hindu-Buddhist civilisation.

Other Archaeology

While historical archaeology is linked with the culture of the colonial period, it will be overshadowed by the activities of traditional archaeology. For in Asia the archaeology associated with ancient monumental sites with their long and rich histories can make important contributions to national identity. One view on the political function of archaeology is that colonial archaeology denigrates non-Western societies to the status of static yet living museums from which the nature of the past might be inferred.⁴²

During the restoration of the Dutch Period Museum in Colombo's old Pettah district no archaeological investigation of the well in the court yard accompanied conservation work. The well was seen as providing only old pieces of household china from the relatively recent past.⁴³ Such instances raise interesting questions about the reconstruction or use of the past. For the past is in the possession of those in power.⁴⁴

In addition, historical archaeology has its place in the investigation of pre-colonial historical sites which are more relevant to local communities than colonial sites are. One example in Indonesia is a study which reconstructs the evolution of Makassar states through analysis of thirteenth- to seventeenth-century archaeological sites in South Sulawesi.⁴⁵

In Singapore, historical archaeology has recently contributed to a social history project in the city's Tanjong Pagar district. There it showed, at least to some, that not all archaeological work is in the ancient past.

The Public

Publicly driven movements generally do not form part of the Asian way of life as they do in Western societies with traditions of functioning democracy, and in the spirit of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Heritage societies have been rare, with initiatives for conservation coming usually from government or the international community. For example, the Borobodur restoration was a UNESCO project begun in 1969. However, in Bandung, a city in West Java, the Bandung Society for Heritage Conservation is the first example of a community-based conservation initiative in Indonesia. It was formed in 1987 against a background of rapid urban change to protect, among other things, Bandung's colonial heritage of some fifteen hundred Dutch-designed Art Deco buildings. These buildings were constructed between 1917 and 1940 in accordance with a strict master plan which incorporates spacious gardens, parks and avenues giving the city its remarkable coherence.⁴⁶

The experiences of the Bandung Society demonstrate that it does not operate as a pressure group within the Western meaning of the term. Rather, the local social and political culture demand that it acts in a co-operative and supportive role. In a country where public participation in the planning process is virtually unheard of, the Society must balance the merits of a particular stand on a conservation issue against its future relationship with government. It does not yet hold a position of strength similar to, say, the National Trusts in Australia.

Malaysia has a small heritage conservation movement. *Badan Warisan Malaysia* (Heritage of Malaysia Trust) was formed in 1984, followed the next year by a support group called *Sahabat Warisan Malaysia* (Friends of the Heritage of Malaysia). The Malacca Chapter appeared in 1986, and the Penang Heritage Trust in 1987. Singapore's Heritage Society was formed in 1986. In these countries some people still regard heritage preservation as the interest of the affluent younger generation, whose elders have little sentimental attachment to places reminding them of their humble beginnings.⁴⁷

Conservation Training and Education

In many parts of Asia the education of the general public and skilled professionals is greatly needed for all heritage conservation. *Badan Warisan Malaysia* has been the most active in remedying this situation, and has made education and training a priority. It conducts seminars on a small scale, and has compiled a list of skilled workers in the country. However, craftspersons are scarce. In Penang, the guide who took me around the Protestant cemetery spoke of the difficulty in obtaining local labour to work on the cemetery's restoration. Facilities for conservation and preservation in Malaysia also are inadequate to meet current demand. In response to this problem the Penang Heritage Trust is establishing a Heritage Training Centre in George Town. This will be a training centre

for traditional building crafts and a research and documentation unit available for the whole ASEAN region.

In Malacca the local government is applying expertise from the Netherlands to the conservation of the former Stadthuys, the Dutch town hall. The Dutch are also involved in conservation projects in the old Dutch quarter of Jakarta and Ujung Pandang.

However, not all advice from ex-colonial governments has been good. In 1984 the Malacca Government asked the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to study and propose measures to preserve and revitalise the ruins of St Paul's Church and the Porta de Santiago. The result was a proposal by a Portuguese architect ignorant of current conservation philosophy and practice widely acknowledged in the ICOMOS Venice Charter.⁴⁸ Without having prepared a statement of significance for the site, the architect recommended building a modern conference centre within the St Paul's ruins. Wisely, the Malaccan Government did not proceed with the proposal.

Cultural Tourism

The Bandung Society for Heritage Conservation draws support from the local hotel industry, providing a necessary link with cultural tourism. For it is the link with the tourist industry which is proving to be a very important factor for conservation, particularly of colonial sites, in South East Asia. Cultural tourism is also the sector in which governments cannot afford to ignore the heritage conservation specialists. However, programmes to develop cultural tourism, as in Malacca, have not necessarily been in the best interests of heritage conservation. In a country where tourism contributes a large amount to national revenue, Malacca lags behind in conserving, restoring and interpreting its heritage.⁴⁹

In 1989 the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), with support of the Malacca State Government and Malacca State Development Corporation, assessed the tourism potential and future development for Malacca, in view of the city's rich cultural heritage. The PATA report made no reference to archaeology, and it seems all parties involved in the study regarded Malacca's colonial heritage essentially as one based on its monuments, architecture and town planning.⁵⁰

The PATA report gives many examples of inappropriate heritage interpretation, for example, the sound-and-light show from the ruins of St Paul's Church around the colonial monuments.⁵¹ Installation of lights and electrical cabling have damaged the fabric of the old church and the Porta de Santiago, as well as destroying the landscape. There was no guiding ICOMOS Venice Charter here. In addition, the text used in the sound and light performance is extremely nationalistic, with little relevance to the historic environment of the town. Malacca has a long way to go before it can rank with historic towns such as Olinda in Brazil, Caceres in Spain or Evora in Portugal (all World Heritage sites).

In Macau the problem is different. Here the Portuguese administration recognised in the early 1980s that economic development was threatening its colonial heritage. Here the majority Chinese community regards with indifference the value of the colonial heritage, and its destruction merely the price of progress in an Asian city. Again it was a PATA task force which did an assessment of the interaction between tourism and conservation. The report recommended continuing the traditions of Macau as an historic international resource and a quality tourist destination. Cultural tourism has been a major element in the fight against local developers and in the concern for quality urban planning. As well as introducing heritage protection legislation and tax incentives for owners of buildings, the Portuguese have found new uses for important colonial buildings, and introduced an educational campaign on preservation issues directed at school children.⁵²

CONCLUSION

Attitudes of countries in the region to their colonial past vary according to their particular experience. They are influenced most obviously by such factors as when and how the colonisers came, the coloniser's degree of dominance and exploitation, and the conditions under which they left. However, the future of colonial sites in the region is dependent on good management, funding and legislation. These elements will only appear when public interest in the heritage exists and makes itself known. Action is needed before sites are lost under the competing pressures in those countries.

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NOTES

1. Proust 1993.
2. Netherlands Department for Conservation 1993:20.
3. Tarling 1992(1):359-360.
4. Tarling 1992(1):603.
5. IUCN and ICOMOS 1992:321.
6. de Vos, 1987:24.
7. O'Keefe and Prott 1984:52.
8. Lalchandra 1993:51.
9. e.g., The Foundation for the Cultural History of the Netherlands Overseas (CNO) founded in 1961.
10. At least, I know of no published accounts.
11. de Vos 1987:27.
12. Khoo Su Nin 1993 deals with the Penang sites alphabetically by street name.
13. Pers. comm. Ian Stapleton, conservation architect, Sydney.
14. Pers. comm. Khoo Su Nin, Penang Heritage Trust.
15. Asia and West Pacific Network 1992.
16. Khoo Su Nin 1993:40-41.
17. Campbell 1993.
18. Tarling 1992(1):362.
19. Tarling 1992(1):363.
20. Netherlands Department for Conservation 1993:25.
21. Pers. comm. Dr Aedeon Cremin, University of Sydney; Cremin forthcoming.
22. Pers. comm. Dr John Miksic, archaeologist, National University of Singapore.
23. O'Keefe and Prott 1984:55.
24. Miksic 1989.
25. Tanjong Pagar 1989.
26. Pers. comm. Pauline Hengeveld, ICOMOS The Netherlands.

27. Tarling 1992(1):363.
28. Gill 1993:71.
29. World Monuments Fund and US/ICOMOS 1993:17.
30. Cribb 1992:49.
31. Gill 1993:72.
32. Netherlands Department for Conservation 1993:18.
33. Pers. comm. Peter van Dun, conservation architect, ICOMOS The Netherlands.
34. Reid 1988:27-32.
35. Volkman and Caldwell 1990:68-71.
36. Pers. comm. Luis de Gouveia Duraó, conservation architect, Instituto Cultural de Macau.
37. Tay Kheng Soon 1990.
38. Burton 1993:36.
39. Pers. comm. Dr Adi Haji Taha, Director of Antiquity, Museums Department, Kuala Lumpur.
40. UNESCO 1993:189-90.
41. World Monuments Fund and US/ICOMOS 1993:19.
42. Trigger, quoted in Shanks and Tilley 1987:187.
43. Pers. comm. Gamini Wijesuriya, archaeologist, Department of Archaeology, Sri Lanka.
44. See McBryde 1985:1-6.
45. Bulbeck 1992.
46. Wiltcher and Affandy 1993:186.
47. Burton 1993.
48. de Lima 1988.
49. In 1990 revenue from tourism was \$US1.8 billion, World Monuments Fund and US/ICOMOS 1993:23.
50. Pacific Asia Travel Association 1989.
51. Pacific Asia Travel Association 1989:53-58.
52. Rangel 1983:25.

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