

ASIAN PHILOSOPHY OF PROTECTED AREAS



1st ASIA PARKS CONGRESS
JAPAN 2013 | PARKS CONNECT
13th – 17th November 2013 in Sendai City, Japan

by:

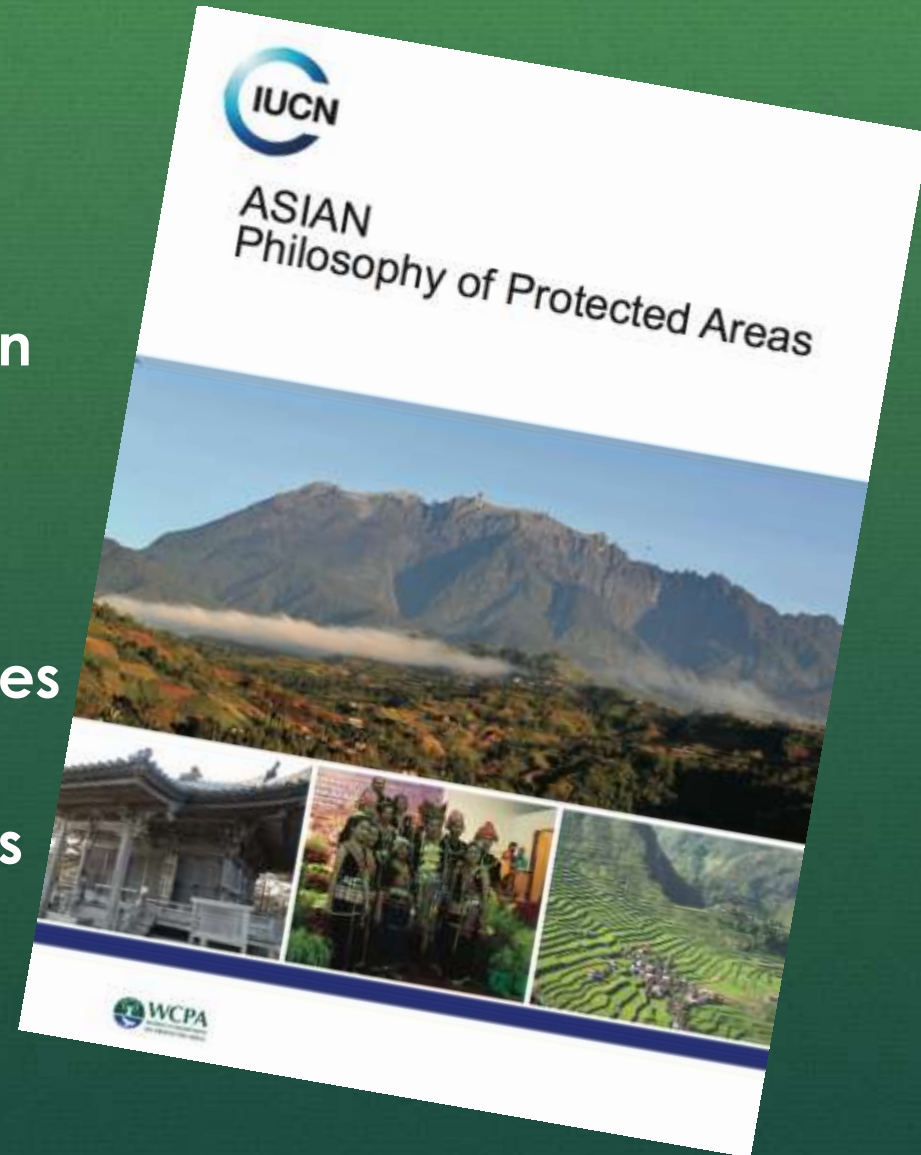
Amran Hamzah

Professor and Director
Centre for Innovative Planning and Development
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Co-Chair
Theme on Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA)
IUCN

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Background

- ◆ Research on the Asian Philosophy of Protected Areas mooted at Akita Workshop in 2009
- ◆ To complement the so-called Western philosophy and approach in managing formal Protected Areas
- ◆ Research funded by Ministry of the Environment, Japan and prepared for IUCN Biodiversity Conservation Programme, Asia
- ◆ Output appropriate for policy makers and other stakeholders in Asia to enhance the effectiveness of Protected Area management



Objectives

01

To carry out **a literature review of the traditional concepts of protected areas in Asia** especially the relationship between humans and the natural environment from the perspective of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Taoism, Shintoism and Animistic beliefs etc.

02

To **review existing laws, policies and the governance of PAs in Asia to identify common ground and best practice** in terms of the recognition of traditional and spiritual values, and to highlight how Asia's approaches differ from the colonial models inherited from the West.

03

To **recommend strategies and measures to further improve the effectiveness of the management of PAs** in Asia through better partnerships in governance, expanding 'buy-in' from local communities and the incorporation of traditional values and approaches to strengthen the relationship between conservation and human development.

Evolution of Protected Areas

1872

Designating Yellowstone National Park as protected area (national park)

US National Park Service was created in 1916 *"to conserve the scenery and natural historic objects and wildlife therein and provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generation"*

1968

Africa Convention on Nature and Natural Resources

- Conservation area
- Strict nature reserve
- National park
- Special reserve

1982

3rd. World Congress on National Parks, Bali, Indonesia

Other than the standard topics, the following were included in the agenda

- The role of protected areas in sustainable development
- Protected areas and traditional societies
- Conservation of wild genetic resources
- Development assistance and protected areas



1962

1st. World Conference on National Parks, Seattle, USA

- Park interpretation services
- Scientific research-based management
- Protected areas definition and standards
- Exclusion of damaging development
- Inclusion of support for protected areas in aid programs
- Marine protected areas
- Species protection by protected areas

1972

2nd. World Conference on National Parks, Yellowstone and Grand Teton, USA

- Conservation of representative ecosystem
- Conservation of tropical forests
- Conservation of North and sub-Polar ecosystems
- Marine national parks and reserves
- Establishment of Antarctica as World Park under UN administration
- International parks
- Regional systems of national parks and other protected areas
- Conservation of world heritage
- Wetlands conservation
- Etc.

1992

4th. World Congress on National Parks, Caracas, Venezuela

New emerging themes

- Global change and protected areas
- Global efforts to conserve biodiversity
- People and protected areas
- Financial support for protected areas
- Protected areas and the sustainable use of natural resources
- Partnership for protection areas
- Ecological restoration

2003

5th. World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa

Seven vertical themes

- Linkages in the landscapes/seascapes
- Building support for protected areas
- New ways of working together – Governance of protected areas
- Developing the capacity to manage – Capacity building
- Maintain protected areas for now and future – Management effectiveness
- Building a secure financial future – Finance and resources
- Building comprehensive protected area systems – Gaps in the system

Formal Protected Areas



COLONIAL MODEL OF PAs
Inherited by most Asian countries



Implications

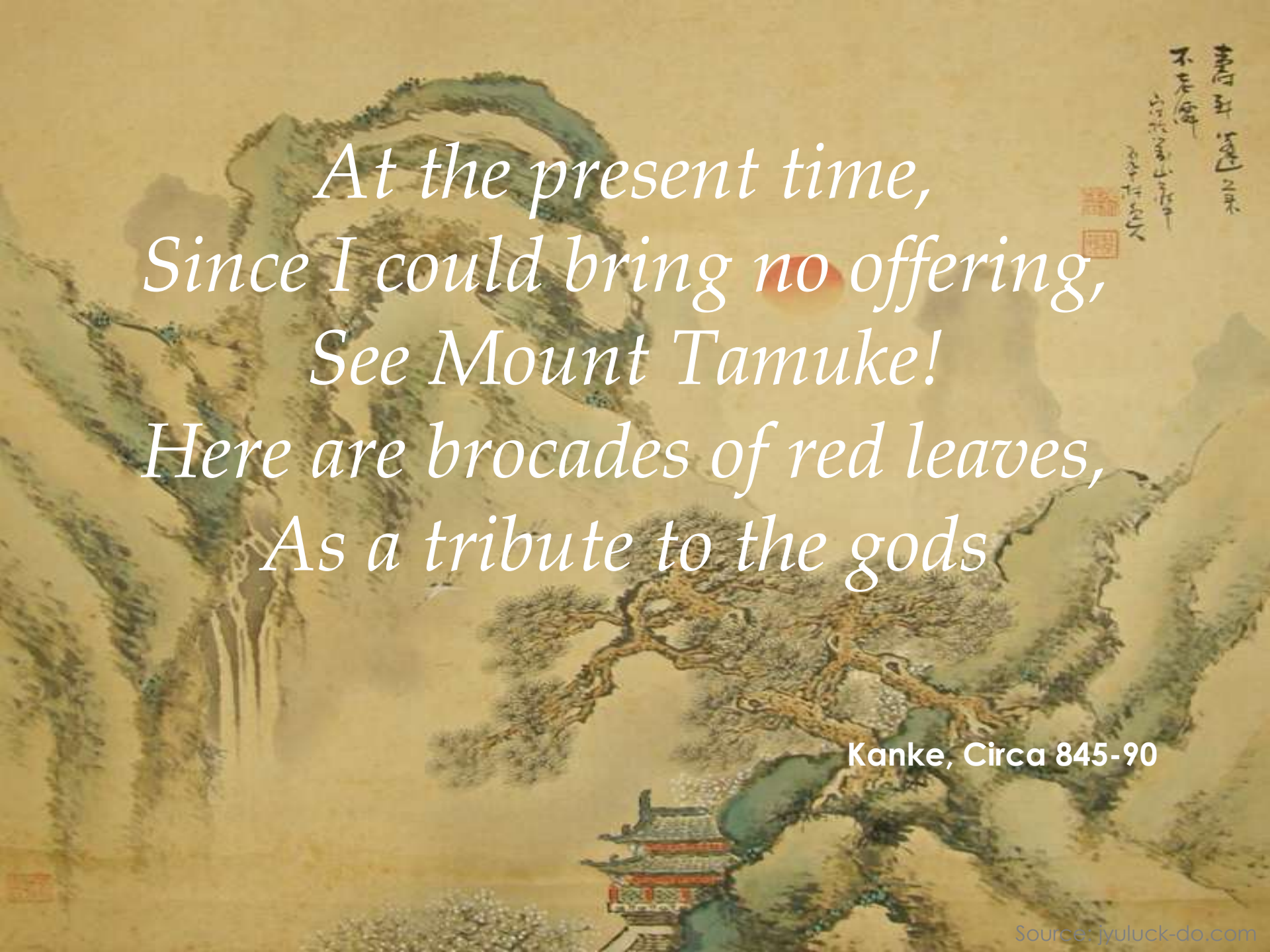
- Encroachment
- Non-compliance

'Traditional' Protected Areas in Asia

**Harmony
between
Nature
& Humans**

- ◆ e.g. sacred natural sites
- ◆ based on taboos, beliefs and prohibitions





*At the present time,
Since I could bring **no** offering,
See Mount Tamuke!
Here are brocades of red leaves,
As a tribute to the gods*

Kanke, Circa 845-90

“The Chinese and Japanese... always believe there may be an earthquake or some other disaster around the corner, so they feel the need to put something by. I admire the optimism in American society: their belief that... everything can be broken up, analysed and redefined”.

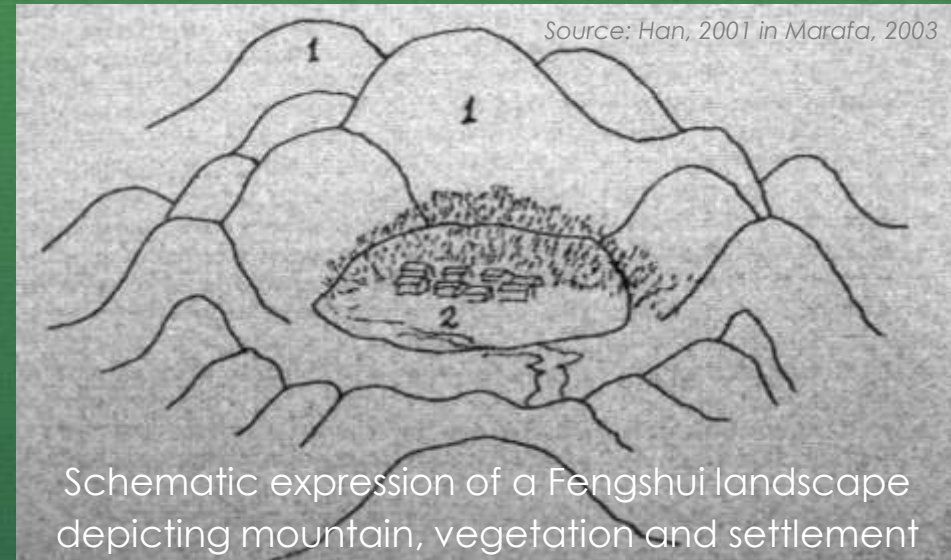
Lee Kuan Yew
One Man's View of the World
2013

01 China

Confucius / Daoism – gave birth to physical manifestations in the form of **Shansui (mountain and water) landscape** – quintessential representation of the traditional Chinese philosophy, **oneness with nature**

As an essential element of the Daoist philosophy, sacred (**fengshui**) forests in China are still regarded with respect

More than 6000 fengshui forests in China



Source: Han, 2001 in Marafa, 2003



Fengshui forest in New Territories Hong Kong

02 India

Estimated over 100,000 sacred groves in India – believed to house a god(s) and name after deities

The foci of religion and cultural life, attract millions of pilgrimage and the abodes and surrounding forests are traditionally protected.



03 Japan



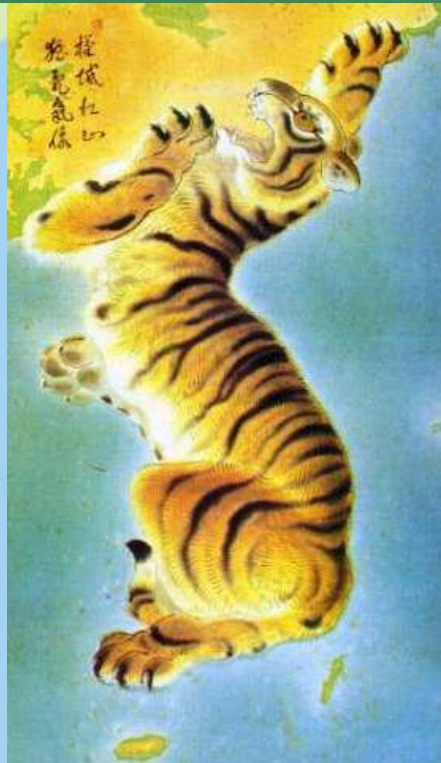
Omiwa Jinja



Fushimi Inari

Most Japanese Buddhists practise their religion with a blend of *Shintoism*. *Shinto* shrines or temples are places of worship and the dwellings of the *kami* or the Shinto gods. *Chinju no mori* (small forests surrounding Shinto shrines) gave birth to harmonious relationship between humans and nature

04 South Korea



The Baekdu-daegan: A continuous range of interconnected mountains.



Native pine grown to shield villages from extreme weather.



Drawing depicting the Baekdu-daegan Mountain-system as the spine of a crouching tiger, the emblematic national animal of Korea. Along the Baekdu-daegan trail can be found hundreds of sacred sites of Korea's many faiths and beliefs. And 6 types of village forests with different functions

05 Other Parts of Asia



**Manggarai,
Island of Flores
Indonesia**

Animism/Catholicism
(highly syncretic)



**Coron,
Palawan
Philippines**

Animism/Christianity



**Wat Khao Cong Phran,
Ratchaburi
Thailand**

Buddhism/Animism/Hinduism

COMMONALITIES ALL OVER ASIA

- ◆ Sacred natural sites created out of reverence and respect for physical elements such as mountains, forests, rivers, ponds etc. that contain spirits
- ◆ Something bad would happen if these abodes and surrounding forests are removed or encroached upon
- ◆ Perhaps harmony between humans and nature out of necessity due to the relatively fragile ecosystems in Asia?
- ◆ A person in Asia is 4 times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than someone living in Africa, and 25 times more than someone in Europe and North America (message WG)

The Contribution of Sacred Sites to Biodiversity Conservation

Jainta Hills, Northeast India

1 Sacred Grove
3 Sacred Groves
82 tree species
Above average vascular plant diversity



INDIA

Western Ghats

allow limited extraction of non-specific timber products,
collection of Surangi flowers are permitted for livelihood with seasonal lease
used by ethnic **villagers for the extraction of *madi* or the juice of the palm (*Caryota urens*)**
open degraded areas are used to **cultivate agricultural crops**

Kodagu, Karnataka

25 Sacred Groves = **90** km²

richer species of trees, birds & macrofungi in a smaller area

722 species of angiosperms in a 1.4km²

Meghalaya

79 Sacred Groves

133 plant species

96 are endemic to the state

7.7% of all endemic species in the state

better than larger national park that houses 960 species

The Contribution of Sacred Sites to Biodiversity Conservation (cont.)



CHINA



Yunan

HIGH levels of species diversity

Yi people - house more species and endemic species than the surrounding nature reserves or forests

sources of **water** and **medicinal orchids**



INDONESIA



Oelolok, West Timor

10 Sacred Groves

189 plant species compared to only 46 species found outside the area



THAILAND



Doi Tone Cave

Estimated **100,000** bats

local villagers are **allowed to harvest 'guano'** to be sold as fertilizers - benefited the local community economically

Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Asia

Satoyama/Satoumi Biodiversity Conservation Systems



JAPAN

- Model of sustainable resource management and biodiversity conservation approach based on traditional methods of agriculture
- Satoyama being increasingly applied in Asia

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (cont.)

Tagal System of Resource Management

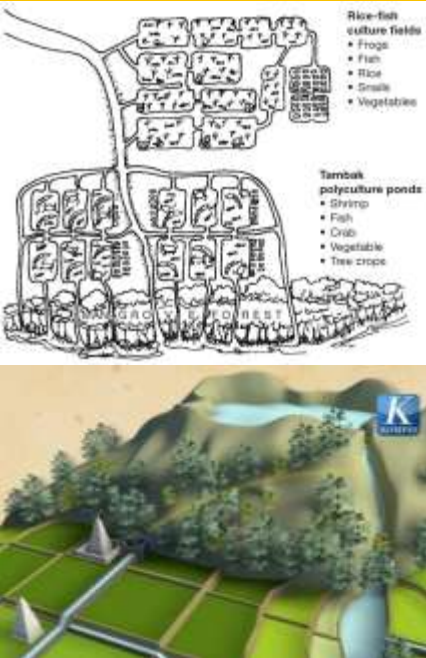


MALAYSIA

Prohibits fishing activities throughout the year, to allow the supply of fish to breed and replenish, allowing future generations to enjoy the rich bounty of the rivers. Once or twice a year *tagal* is lifted allowing community a whole day of fishing

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (cont.)

Traditional Subak System

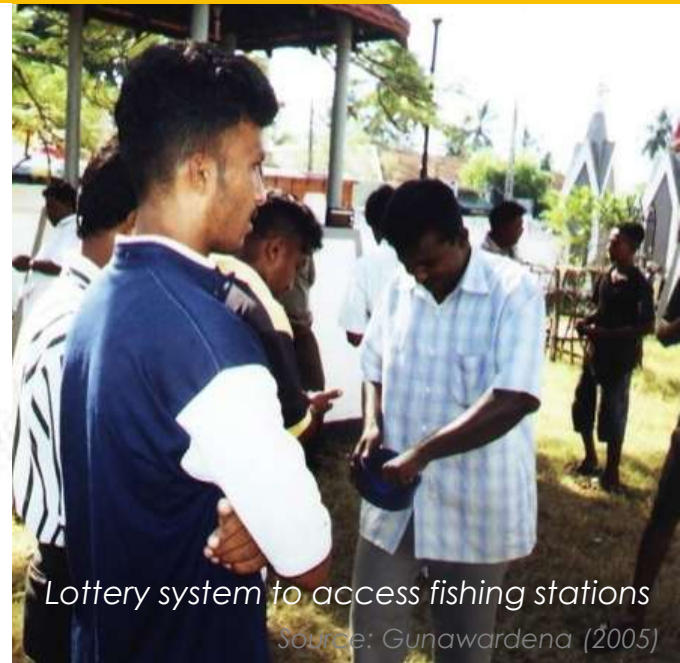
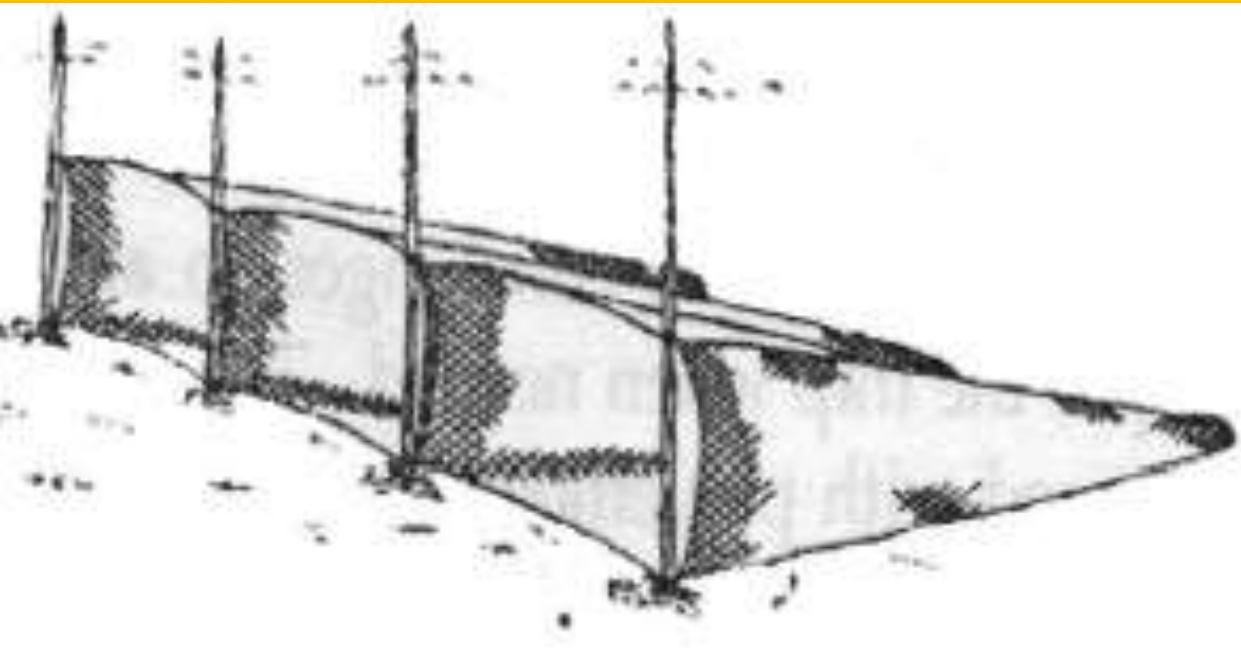


INDONESIA

Part of a water temple system integrated with the *tambak* system for the combined production of rice, fish and downstream products

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (cont.)

Kattudel (Stake-net) Fishery System



*Lottery system to access fishing stations
Source: Gunawardena (2005)*



SRI LANKA

This traditional fishery system has been given protection under the Sri Lanka Fisheries Ordinance, which limits membership, and hence maintains the limited-access nature of the system

CASE STUDY OF KINABALU PARK

- ◆ To avoid romanticism
- ◆ Case study revealed tensions as 'sanctuary' concept of PA is being transformed into participatory and inclusive approach
- ◆ Recognition of community forestry and empowerment of indigenous community
- ◆ Community Day introduced by Sabah Parks in 2010 was a masterstroke
- ◆ It reconnected the local communities with their spiritual abode of Mount Kinabalu



Main Findings

- 1 Asia has a long tradition of **respect, harmony and synergy between humans and nature**.
- 2 Asia's traditional values and long tradition of ecological adaptation by humans to their diverse environments, as opposed to Man's dominion over nature, **supports contemporary approaches in protected area management** such as Resilience Planning and Adaptive Management.
- 3 The **'wilderness' or 'island' approach** to protected area management **is alien to Asia's holistic approach** based on harmony between humans and nature.

Ifugao rice terraces in the Philippines



Main Findings (cont.)

- 4 Asia's **indigenous and traditional knowledge** have made significant contribution to modern conservation principles and practice in terms of the **stewardship of biodiversity and development ethics**.
- 5 Asia's traditional ecological knowledge have the **potential of enriching existing approaches and complementing** the principles of protected area management in the region.
- 6 'Traditional' protected areas in Asia such as **sacred natural places have an essential role in biodiversity conservation** and should be given **equal protection as formal protected areas**



- Hiraizumi WHS - Japan valuable artefacts saved from Tsunami
- Located on high ground



(Beside)

Bobolian (shaman),
Lunsin Koroh, age 85,
conducting the
monolob ritual,
seeking safe journey
for those
participating in the
pilgrimage.

Photo by: Helen Brunt

(Below)

Local community
slaughtering white
chicken as sacrifice
during 2nd. Kakakapan
id Gayo Ngaran

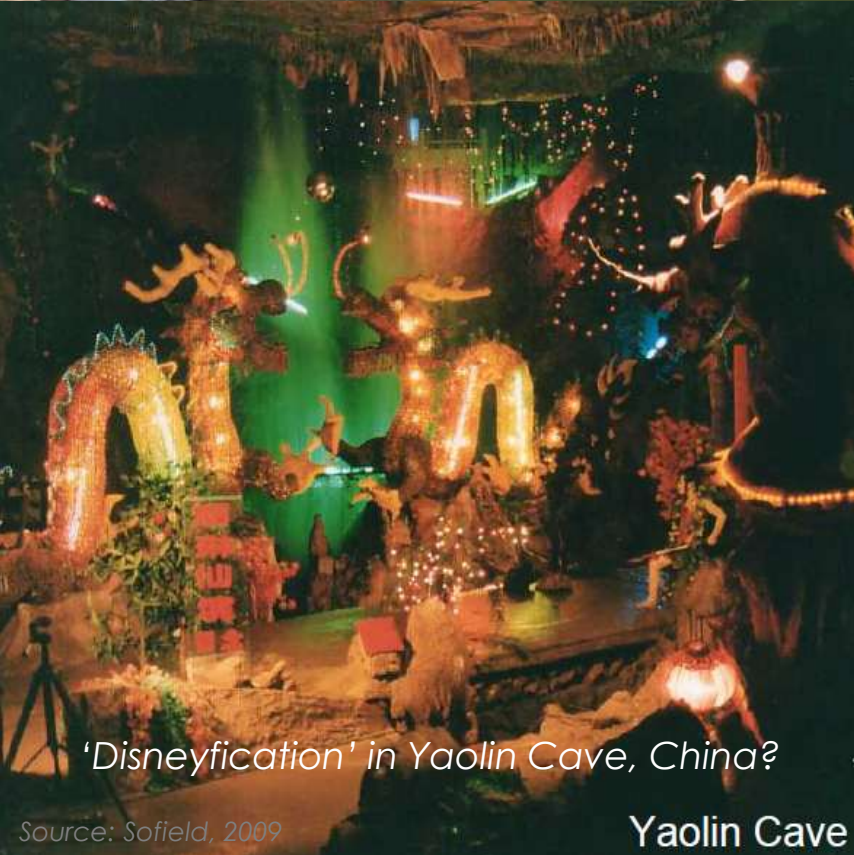
Photo by: Amran Hamzah



Challenges

- 1 Rapid urbanisation, depopulation of rural areas and the decreasing emotional **attachment to traditional beliefs and taboos** which are perceived as being backward.
- 2 The power of the **internet and social media in creating a 'homogenous' global community** will little appreciation of traditional values and traditions.
- 3 **Contemporary interpretation** by various mainstream religions in Asia gradually **erasing the role of traditional beliefs and taboos** as part of Asia's ancient wisdom in human-environment relationships

New pontoon jetties provided at Royal Belum State Park, Malaysia to boost visitation



'Disneyfication' in Yaolin Cave, China?

Yaolin Cave

Challenges (cont.)

- 4 **Sacred natural** areas created by beliefs and taboos **are not legally protected**, and are susceptible to encroachment and modern developments.
- 5 The **influx of domestic tourists to national parks** in Asia and the adverse impact of their inappropriate behaviour.
- 6 **Inadequacy of local governance structure and capacity** to be integrated effectively with the mainstream institutional framework to form an effective co-management model.

Convergence Between Formal and Traditional Protected Areas

FORMAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Began with colonial model
- People excluded
- For conservation and enjoyment

Inclusion of local / indigenous people as stakeholders

- Empowerment of local / indigenous community through;
- Co-management
 - ICCAS
 - From stakeholders to rights holders
 - 'Rediscovery' of spiritual values
 - Adaptive Management

TRADITIONAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Taboos, beliefs, myths and prohibitions

Co-existence / harmony between human and nature

- Sacred places and spiritual sites
- Traditional resource management models e.g. Satoyama and Tagal System

Convergence

Alternative approaches complementing Western model

Recommendations

- ◆ Asia too diverse and plural to have a Pan Asian philosophy but there are commonalities
- ◆ Asian countries can learn from each other and celebrate alternative philosophies and approaches in resource management
- ◆ e.g. Nepal and has success stories in community forestry
- ◆ So that the region could make a more holistic contribution as part of the 'Asian Century'



01

To recognise the contribution of Asia's traditional ecological knowledge in complementing mainstream approaches in biodiversity conservation towards achieving the Aichi Targets



- There are 438 protected areas in Malaysia
- Encompassed both land and sea area with a total size of 4,084,675.3 ha
- Covering 10.6% terrestrial and 1.1% marine of Malaysia

Source: Master List of Protected Areas in Malaysia, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE) & WWF



Source: KOPEL

02 To **adopt a more participatory approach** by having an institutional and governance framework with clear channels of communication that include local and indigenous people in the decision making process

03 To enhance the capacity of the **local and indigenous communities** to be effective **joint custodians of protected areas**



Forest Restoration Activity

Community Based Tourism



Source: KOPEL

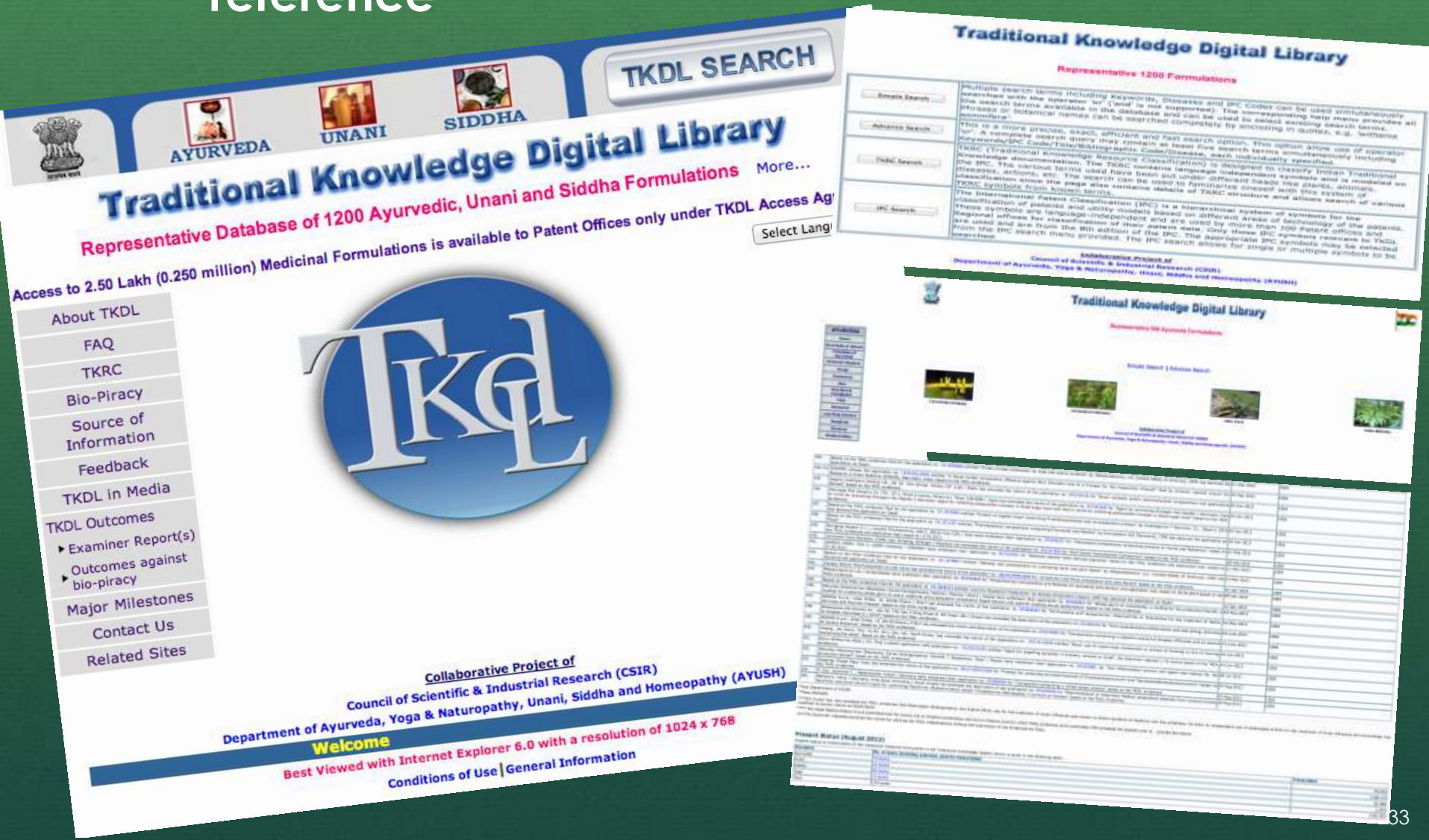
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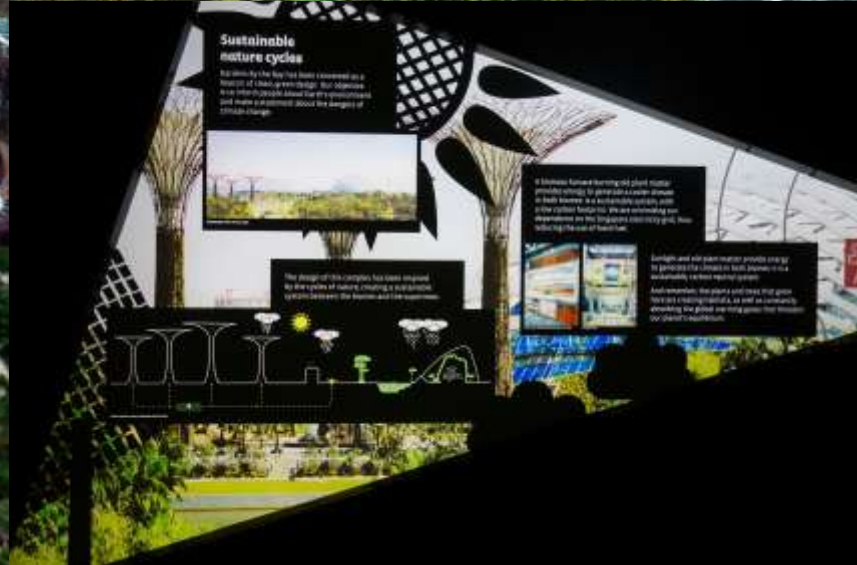
To educate the youths in Asia to be aware, appreciate and rediscover the region's ancient wisdom and traditional ecological knowledge as having the potential of complementing Western approaches in tackling contemporary environmental issues such as global warming, climate change and natural disasters etc.



05

To **intensify and integrate research** related to the wealth of **traditional ecological knowledge** in Asia to be stored in an **online repository** for common reference





06 To harness traditional ecological knowledge with **the use of technology** by leveraging on Asia's growing technological prowess

07 To reinvigorate interest in Asia's traditional ecological knowledge as part of the 'new paradigm' in resource management and biodiversity conservation



Source: WWF Malaysia

Conclusion

- ◆ The **Asian Philosophy of Protected Areas** is **exploratory in nature** and not an exhaustive/comprehensive study of the different development philosophies in Asia
- ◆ To **encourage interest and stimulate discourse** among participants of the inaugural Asian Parks Congress
- ◆ Also to **convince policy makers to revisit Asia's ancient wisdom and traditional ecological knowledge**

Thank you...

