

Interfaculty Heritage Studies Research Group Seminar
'Heritage and Human Rights: Changing Perspectives'
7 July 2011

Library Presentation Room, Ground Floor of Library, Milton Keynes campus
10.00 – 15.30

Coffee/ tea will be available at the start, and at lunchtime. Participants are asked to bring their own lunches, please.

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| 10.00 – 10.10 | Introductions and welcome |
| 10.10 – 10.35 | Rodney Harrison 'World heritage, universal values and the politics of representation: an alternative view' |
| 10.35 – 11.00 | Louise Cooke 'Emerging debates: Human rights and earthen architectural heritage' |
| 11.00 – 11.25 | Lotte Hughes 'The implications of Kenya's new constitution for cultural heritage-related claims, and increased tensions between human and cultural rights' |
| 11.25 – 11.50 | Graham Harvey 'Respecting indigenous animate object-persons' |
| 11.50 – 12.15 | Monica Grady (or Diane Johnson) 'Meteorites in Cultural Heritage' |
| 12.15 – 12.30 | Questions |
| 12.30 – 13.15 | Lunch (please bring your own) |
| 13.15 – 15.30 | Discussion, led by Paul Tremlett, and further questions |

Abstracts received:

Louise Cooke

This paper explores the 'development' dilemma posed by contemporary heritage theory, identifying a number of emerging themes in relation to the study and conservation of earth structures and human rights. Building materials have and evoke different values, earthen building materials being associated with a number of positive and negative values. I argue that through the critical re-examination of the values of earth building materials we can address certain 'anti-development' accusations, demonstrating that such materials are fit for purpose, modern and more suited to the changing climates that will be encountered in the 21st Century. This approach recognizes human rights to develop, adapt and change.

Monica Grady/Diane Johnson

Meteorites are valuable records of solar system history – made of iron or stone, they formed from material that was part of a cloud of gas and dust which collapsed to produce the sun, the planets and their satellites, asteroids and comets. The events recorded in meteorites stretch back some 4567 million years. The largest meteorite to have been preserved as a single object is the Hoba iron meteorite (an estimated 80 tonnes); it remains where it fell, near Grootfontein in Namibia, and is preserved as a national

monument. Iron meteorites are the biggest and heaviest examples of extraterrestrial material that fall to earth, and have a long history of conversion into artefacts, either ceremonial objects or tools. Some of the earliest records of the preservation of worked iron meteorites come from the description of artefacts found in ancient Chinese and Egyptian graves. In many cases, the metal was hammered to produce blades for axes, daggers and swords, presumably to assist progression into the afterlife. Jewellery from iron meteorites has also been preserved as beads, strung onto necklaces. The reason for the use of meteoritic iron in Egypt and China has been debated: some of the artefacts date from before metal products were worked from terrestrial iron ore deposits, leading to the inference that iron meteorites were used because they were a handy source of iron. By contrast, some ancient manuscripts ascribe heavenly powers to meteorites (or thunderbolts); it was believed that items made from the metal would also have these powers. One well-documented use of iron meteorites as a primary source of metal for tools is the working of the Cape York iron meteorite into knife blades by the Inuit of Greenland.

Rodney Harrison

Most commentators within the field of heritage studies have been critical of the idea that universal rights and interests in relation to heritage should supersede local ones. In this paper I argue that it is the very fact that the World Heritage Convention expressed itself as representing a 'universal' set of values which has meant it has had to take seriously the indigenous and minority critique of the list as unrepresentative. This critique has had an enormous influence on the way in which heritage is understood and managed in the early twenty-first century, not the least in terms of the broadening of heritage to include intangible values.

Graham Harvey

Within the permeable boundaries indicated by the "new animism" (scholarly engagement with relational ontologies and epistemologies), this presentation concerns the display and presentation of animate object-persons (e.g. deity statues and ancestor-houses) of Polynesian origin. Contrasts between displays in at least three museum and heritage centre venues (the British Museum; Te Puia, Rotorua; and the Bishop Museum, Honolulu) and indigenous involvement with such displays will form the basis of these preliminary thoughts.

Lotte Hughes

Kenya's new constitution, passed in a public referendum in August 2010, enshrines for the first time a wide variety of rights relating to culture, heritage, indigenous and minority issues. While positive in some respects, since cultural heritage can be a tool for achieving social cohesion and development, there are fears (first expressed during the constitutional review process) that Kenyan citizens could claim rights on the basis of 'traditional culture' that clash with the human rights of certain vulnerable groups, such as women and children. This paper, based on a proposal for future research, examines some of the key areas of concern.