



Shaping Asia

The Best we Share Nation, Culture and World-Making in the UNESCO World Heritage Arena

Prof. Dr. Christoph Brumann

Max Planck Institute for Social
Anthropology, Halle

Thursday, 2 Dec. 2021

10:15–11:45 (CET)

Zoom event

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972 is one of the most widely ratified international treaties, and the World Heritage title given to cultural and natural sites of "outstanding universal value" has grown into a major mark of distinction and global brand. In the 2010s, it has become significantly easier to get on the World Heritage List, and conservation demands for the sites so honoured have also grown softer. The lecture introduces a new book on the reasons for this transformation, based on ethnographic fieldwork at Committee sessions, interviews and documentary study conducted over a decade. Structural nation-centeredness of the World Heritage Committee; vulnerable procedures for evaluation, monitoring and decision-making; and loose and inconsistently applied heritage conceptions have all played their part. The strongest factor for bringing about the new mode of operations, however, were lingering North-South imbalances and the frustrations they caused. Yet precisely because the wishes of influential countries from the Global South are now more readily fulfilled, imbalances remain, in similar ways as in other international bodies. All this is undergirded by basic consensus on a central premise – even with more than one thousand entries, the World Heritage List is incomplete and must continue to grow.

Prof. Dr. Christoph Brumann is Head of Research Group at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, and Honorary Professor of Anthropology at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. In addition to *The Best We Share* (2021), he is the author of *Tradition, Democracy and the Townscape of Kyoto: Claiming a Right to the Past* (2012) and the co-editor of *Monks, Money, and Morality: The Balancing Act of Contemporary Buddhism* (2021), *World Heritage on the Ground: Ethnographic Perspectives* (2016), *Urban Spaces in Japan: Cultural and Social Perspectives* (2012) and *Making Japanese Heritage* (2010). He has also published on the anthropological concept of culture, Japanese practices of gift-giving, and utopian communes. He is a member of the Academia Europaea.

Zoom registration Link:

https://uni-bielefeld.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYpd-mtrTkoHdI7pblr7lyycz3OIJLITQ_t