

Closing Remarks APCONF 4, Taiwan

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ROLE OF APCONF:

The Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage (APCONF) aims to address UCH in a broad sense: seeking information on context, research, management, and preservation, in Asia and the countries of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The conference series' broad net invariably captures a wide range of, frankly, some of the world's most interesting individuals involved with underwater cultural heritage, including scholars, government managers, museum specialists, curatorial staff, and representatives from NGOs, IGOs, the private sector and the maritime community.

CHALLENGE OF APCONF 2020:

As we are all too aware, the 4th APCONF event faced enormous challenges during preparation and implementation. The global pandemic has drastically changed how and what we should do, in order to protect ourselves and our communities, to the detriment of meetings, workshops and conferences. We are all learning to live in a new way, and long to recreate face-to-face human connection. Personally, I very much regret not being able to travel to Taiwan and attend APCONF in person, to see friends there again and enjoy the history and heritage (and wonderful food) of Taipei. I was fortunate to be part of the UCH training course there in 2017 and long to return.

Despite these unparalleled challenges, and the current inherent limitations, the conference series again reaffirms our Asia Pacific shared communication and experiences of UCH context, research, management, and preservation.

IMPORTANT UCH THEMES:

Of course, there is emphasis on the UCH resource itself (both to wrecks Nia Ridwan and authors, Matt Carter, and others...and to construction, Douglas Brooks, Somasiri Devendra, Eline vanden Berg and Martijn Manders). But there are also specific topical areas we should recognize:

Excellent presentations covered Resource management (Wisnu Arya Gemilang and authors, Natali Pearson, Dominic Bush, Meihua Shao, Elena Perez Alvaro, Chen Pin-wen and co-authors); analysis of the Cultural landscape (and seascape) (Anja Krieger, Tomo Ishimura); Cultural exchange (Selva Kumar, Dr Sharon Wai-yee, Sarah Ward); Maritime history associated with UCH (Maria Cruz Berocal and authors, Jose Casaban and authors); and Human connections to maritime heritage and to each other (Xu Lu, Cliff Periera, Yan Ying-ying, Paul Chow, Leon Derksen and Professor Iwabuchi)

These related themes demonstrate that underwater cultural heritage is a multifaceted field. Yet, there may be one particular aspect which will emerge as prominent. I have heard climate change called the 800-pound gorilla, or the elephant, in the room (if you've heard that expression). Climate impacts to UCH is not only the elephant in the room, it is the elephant in the room that is eating our lunch. The

impact of climate change is now, and will continue to be, a critical issue facing our field. I expect it will be an important consideration for APCONF 2024.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Finally, I'd like to thank our keynote speakers, Dr. Kenzo Hayashida for introducing us to the UCH of Japan and recognition of UCH priorities in Taiwan, and Professor Vincente Diaz, for inspiring us to see ourselves and our voyages on a broader scale.

And I would like to acknowledge and thank the APCONF volunteers, including the session organizers and program committee as a whole, for their work in preparing the 4th APCONF event.

Unfortunately, I have to say the work is not yet done, and (as before) publishing the proceedings and looking into online distribution as well.

In particular, I would like to thank my friends Dr. Bill Jeffery for his vision in guiding the conference, and Dr. Brian Fahy, who carried the burden of managing the abstract and paper submissions, and also undertook the complex task of assembling the conference program, in coordination with our host planners.

And of course, I must thank our host planners and institutions, in particular: the Bureau of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture, the Chinese UCH Association, the National Museum of Marine Science and Technology, and the National Taiwan Ocean University, for committing to support the full event, and then accommodating great changes in venue and scheduling, and persevering nonetheless to make our conference possible. On behalf of the program committee, you have our thanks.

APCONF NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:

We have a special APCONF award to announce, and there were a number of very fine candidates, colleagues, who have made important efforts in our shared mission to understand and preserve UCH in the Asia Pacific region. After deliberation by the Program Committee, I am pleased to inform you that the Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage award for "notable achievements and contributions in the field of maritime archaeology" goes to **Sheldon Clyde Jago-on**, who was the Curator of the Archaeology Division and a former Officer in Charge of the Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage division of the National Museum of the Philippines; and **Ricardo Favis**, who helped steer the Regional Capacity Building Programme on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO office Bangkok, where he served for two decades. This is particularly touching for us, a split award made posthumously to both (Ricardo in 2019; Sheldon passed away in 2021). They will be missed.

APCONF 2023:

A final note: regarding APCONF 2023, it is my pleasure to inform you that the program committee will begin planning the event with the South Korean National Research Institute of Maritime Cultural Heritage in November 2023. See you there!