

# Network Event and Book Launch on: Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation

Side event and workshop at the IUCN World Parks Congress

Event number 018; Saturday, November 15; 17:30 – 19:00; Horden Room

**Organizers:** The Sacred Natural Sites Initiative ([www.sacrednaturalsites.org](http://www.sacrednaturalsites.org)) with the Biodiversity Network Japan and the World Commission on protected Areas – Japan.

**Facilitators:** Bas Verschuuren [basverschuuren@gmail.com](mailto:basverschuuren@gmail.com) and Naoya Furuta [naoya.furuta@iucn.org](mailto:naoya.furuta@iucn.org)

**Purpose:** Introduce the Asian Sacred Natural Sites Network and Book launch with presentations and discussions on a way forward.

**Format:** The session will have an introduction to the growing network on Asian Sacred Natural Sites and continue with a soft launch of the publication: "Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation" that will be followed by presentations from chapter authors and close with a discussion hosted by a panel made up of the presenters.



Mongolia's Bogd Khan protected Area is associated with the life of Ghengis Khan and has been a national protected area since 1778. It has long been a sacred natural site in use by local Bon shaman. Local Buddhist lamas today are leading ancient ceremonies together with protected area managers. Photo: Robert Wild.

**Description:** The publication is titled: "Asian Sacred Natural Sites:

Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation" and will be a joint publication between the Sacred natural Sites Initiative and IUCN. The publication centers around the following Guiding Questions:

1. To what extent do sacred natural sites form the backbone of protected areas in Asia, e.g. their cultural, spiritual and philosophical underpinnings?
2. What is the modern relevance of sacred natural sites to protected areas and how can this be better recognised and their traditional guardians be engaged?
3. How can we improve management effectiveness, governance and equity of sacred natural sites within and outside protected areas in Asia?

## Preliminary presentations:

Presentation 1 – *Mr. Naoya Furuta World Commission on Protected Areas Japan and Mr. Bas Verschuuren, Sacred Natural Sites Initiative*

Formation of the Asian Sacred Natural Sites Network and the soft launch of the publication: “Asian Sacred Natural Sites: Philosophy and Practice in Protected Areas and Conservation”.



Mt Fuji located on Honshu Island is a symbol of local and national identity. The highest mountain of Japan features in poetry and paintings and is visited by millions of people every year and climbed by hundreds of thousands. At Fuji one can see how early Shinto beliefs fused with different strands of Buddhism and how this affected the various practices of worship conservation on and around the mountain. (Photo: Bas Verschuuren).

**Presentation 2** – *Mr. Nawraj Pradhan, Mr. Abhimanyu Pandey, Mr. Rajan Kotru International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICOMOD) - Kailash Sacred Landscape*

The Kailash Sacred Landscape (KSL) covers an area between India, Nepal and China and embodies the sacred values and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Bon and Sikhism. Here sacred sites serve as mediating points between multiple stakeholders to dialogue about nature conservation.

**Presentation 3** – *Liza Zogib, Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi and others.*

We provide an insight into the Sacred Natural Sites of Bhutan, places of retreat and worship, where pilgrims and spiritual practitioners perpetuate their energy. These revered sites have been protected from external forces that might disturb their sanctity, creating important buffers and corridors for biodiversity.

**Presentation 4** - *Radhika Borde – Wageningen University*

The role of sacred natural areas in indigenous community rejuvenation in Eastern India. Sacred natural sites are places where communities and culture are revived, sometimes in a political sense. Indigenous culture at sacred natural sites provides an alternative to mainstream culture and conservation.

Read more about the work of the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative at the World Parks Congress online at: [www.sacrednaturalsites.org](http://www.sacrednaturalsites.org)