

MEDIA RELEASE

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Guangyu Ancestral Hall (Guangdong Province, China) Awarded Top Prize at the UNESCO 2003 Asia-Pacific Heritage Conservation Awards

Bangkok, 25 August 2003 – The UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific announced today that Guangyu Ancestral Hall (Conghua Province, Guangdong Province, China) has been honoured with the Award of Excellence in the UNESCO 2003 Asia Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The two Awards of Distinction went to the Water Towns of the Yangtze River (Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, China) and the Astana of Syed Mir Muahmmad (Ghanche District, Baltistan, Pakistan). Three Awards of Merit and three Honourable Mention prizes were also announced today.

A total of 22 project entries were submitted from nine countries and administrative areas in Asia Pacific that included five religious buildings, five institutions, two residential buildings, four commercial projects, three urban conservation programmes, one memorial, one bridge and one botanical garden.

A panel of international conservation experts in architecture, urban planning, landscape design and heritage conservation conducted the selection process. The jury panel noted that the range of proposals received this year point to the increasing momentum and level of conservation in Asia and the Pacific. All winning entries demonstrated sound understanding of the issues of conservation in relation to the structure's cultural, social, historical, and architectural significance. In addition, they all made an important impact in the surrounding environment; consequently contributing to the cultural and historical continuum of the community.

Award of Excellence:

- **Guangyu Ancestral Hall**, was praised for its thoughtful choices in restoration and a high level of traditional craftsmanship. By consciously adhering to the principles of the Venice Charter and the Nara Document on Authenticity, the project team has successfully demonstrated methodical rigor and sensitivity in documenting, assessing and interpreting the building's heritage value. In carefully preserving the layers of historical change seen in the building, the Lu clan ancestral hall has not only become a living record of the history of Qiangang village, but has also captured the sweep of Chinese history from the Song dynasty to the People's Republic.

Awards of Distinction:

Two projects are:

- **Water Towns of the Yangtze River**, was praised for setting an important milestone in the protection of living cultural landscapes. The six towns include Zhouzhuang, Tongli, Luzhi,

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Nanxun, Wuzheng, and Xitang. The comprehensive approach adopted by the project allows for thorough understanding and interpretation of the area's natural and cultural heritage at both the local and regional levels. The ambitious scope of the project promises to have a major impact on shaping future development in the towns as well as conservation practice throughout China.

- The second *Award of Distinction* **Astana of Syed Mir Muahmmad**, was praised for returning an important architectural and community landmark to its former prominence in the northern Pakistan highland settlement of Khaplu. The building's aged patina and historic character have been carefully retained through skillful and sensitive conservation techniques. In seeking to revive local building crafts as part of the overall conservation agenda, the project demonstrates how heritage preservation can become a catalyst for local economic development.

Awards of Merit:

Three projects are:

- **Cangqiao Historical Street** (Shaoxing City, Zhejiang Province, China) The urban and architectural conservation of Cangqiao Historical Street marks an important first step in protecting the unique amphibious landscape of historic Shaoxing. By providing improved urban services while respecting the historic fabric, the conservation project successfully demonstrates the viability of the historic town as a living and vibrant showcase of Chinese heritage.
- **The Medina Grand Adelaide Treasury** (Adelaide, Australia) The sophisticated conversion of the historic Adelaide Treasury building into a high-end hotel complex successfully demonstrates the commercial viability of reusing historic building stock. The project displays exemplary technical standards of conservation work, with a thorough archaeological survey that has guided the restoration and interpretation work.
- **Virtuous Bridge** (Medan, Indonesia) The successful restoration of Virtuous Bridge stands as a moving testimony to the unprecedented cooperation between the residents, businesses and government agencies of the multicultural city of Medan. Careful historical research has been translated into a thoughtful restoration and interpretation scheme that is firmly rooted in the community.

Honourable Mentions:

Three additional projects were given:

- **Gota de Leche** (Manila, Philippines) The careful restoration of the 1917 building provides a welcome model for preserving Manila's rich architectural and social history. Returning the building to its original appearance and prominence in the University Belt neighborhood provides a worthy and appropriate setting for the sustained operation of Gota de Leche's charitable programmes, while demonstrating a commendable commitment to advancing the local conservation agenda.
- **Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception** (Hong Kong SAR, China) The preservation of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception has revitalized a religious landmark which has been in continuous use for 115 years. By undertaking much-needed repair work and upgrading the services in the Cathedral, the conservation project has not only consolidated the physical historic fabric of the building, but has also renewed the spiritual and social life of Hong Kong's Roman Catholic community.
- **Dalongdong Baoan Temple** (Taipei, China) The conservation of the 1805 Dalongdong Temple represents a major technical accomplishment and is to be commended for its ambitious scope and depth of conservation work. The project has taken a balanced approach between using modern scientific conservation methods and traditional architectural and decorative crafts in order to recover as much of the historic building fabric as possible.

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Full descriptions and photographs of the winning entries, along with the jury citations, are posted on the Awards programme Website at <http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/heritageawards>

The UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Awards recognise the efforts of private individuals and organisations that have successfully restored and conserved structures and buildings of heritage value in the region. Eligible projects must be more than 50 years old and the restoration must have been completed within the past 10 years. Buildings must have been in viable use for at least one year from the date of the Awards announcement. UNESCO believes that recognising private efforts to restore and readapt historic structures can encourage other property owners to start conservation projects within the community, independently or by seeking public-private partnerships.

A Call for Entries for the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage 2003 Awards will be announced in October 2002. Information and entry forms will be available on the Website.