

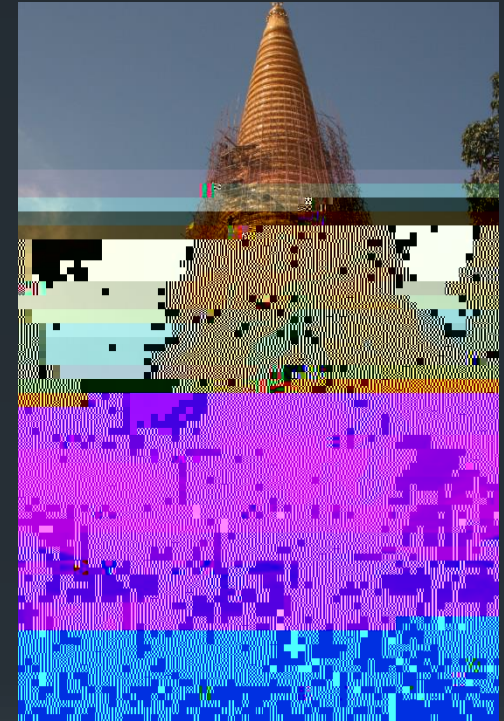


The principle of contagion

- The idea that divine force can 'jump' between objects and between objects and people via touch.
- E.g., the efficacious power of a relic buried in the core of a Buddhist stupa flows to the surrounding fabric and outward to the bodies of pious believers.

The principle of responsiveness

- Believers are constantly monitoring and assessing the efficacy or responsiveness of divine beings as manifest in the fabric of their sites. They are keen observers of the efficacy of temples, monuments, statues, amulets and so on.
- The performance of spirits and deities via their sites helps determine whether people will repair, restore, or elaborate temples and shrines.



Phra Pathom stupa, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand (Denis Byrne 2010)

Secularizing Aboriginal heritage

We see a similar tendency to secularize on the part of heritage experts working with Aboriginal heritage in Australia.

- A dichotomization of the sacred and the archaeological, embedded by the 1960s, continues to condition the recording and assessment of Aboriginal heritage sites.
- E.g., shell middens in NSW are almost always framed entirely in archaeological terms and are precluded from having spiritual significance.
- Heritage professionals are in danger of reiterating the missionary message that belief in the sacramental nature of the landscape was childlike and evil.
- To reconcile heritage practice and 'the supernatural' we need to better understand the context our practice has in modernity.

This paper draws on research published in: *Denis Byrne, Counterheritage: Critical Perspectives on Heritage Conservation in Asia*. Routledge 2014.