

Human Rights and Culture in the Asian Region

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Abstract

Numerous attempts to create a regional human rights system in Asia have proven unsuccessful, and human rights are still intended as an ideal principle. Nevertheless, the last two decades witnessed a proliferation of “human rights talk” at both the regional and national levels.

This article offers an interpretation about past and current official human rights talks at the regional level in Asia and considers the reasons for privileging a specific conception of human rights over other competing visions. In addition, it assesses the impact that the human rights visions articulated in Asian talks have upon the creation of a regional human rights system. This article gives particular attention to the official talks on human rights at the regional level, considering how the relationship between rights and culture is conceptualized.

On the whole, the article demonstrates how the utilization of culture as a concept in talks about rights in the last thirty years has changed only partially, indicating different but equally opportunistic approaches to the concept of human rights.