

**Using Heritage for Politics: A Comparative Study of Religious Symbolism in Naypyidaw (Myanmar) and in Putrajaya (Malaysia)**

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**Abstract:** The opening ceremony of the Uppatasanti Pagoda in Naypyidaw, the capital of Myanmar, on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009 marked the political symbolism making use of cultural and religious heritage. The new pagoda can be taken as a replica of the Shwedagon pagoda in Yangon, attracting Buddhists from all over the country because of Buddha's relics enshrined there. But the Uppatasanti pagoda now houses a tooth relic – thus being able to compete with the “old” Shwedagon and use religious heritage and symbolism for politics. A similar process can be observed in Putrajaya, the new political administrative centre of Malaysia, being established in the late 1990s. The public buildings there clearly focus on the propagation or at least on the display of Islam, symbolised through the Putra Mosque and the Perdana Putra. The architecture of these building also aims to highlight cultural-religious heritage to support political interests. This paper will discuss these two recent processes of city building. Despite the strong diversity of religious heritage engaged (Buddhism vs. Islam) the handling of such heritage runs widely parallel to foster political acceptance.